



From the streets to the statehouse: how tenant movements affect housing policy in Los Angeles and Berlin

Kenton Card

To cite this article: Kenton Card (2022): From the streets to the statehouse: how tenant movements affect housing policy in Los Angeles and Berlin, *Housing Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/02673037.2022.2124236](https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2022.2124236)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2022.2124236>



Published online: 07 Oct 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



From the streets to the statehouse: how tenant movements affect housing policy in Los Angeles and Berlin

Kenton Card^{a,b,c}

^aUrban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles, USA; ^bHuman Geography, Free University, Berlin, Germany; ^cPresident's Research Group, WZB: Berlin Social Science Center, Germany

ABSTRACT

How can tenants affect housing policy? This paper compares rental housing politics in Los Angeles (USA) and Berlin (Germany) between 2008-2020 by examining how political processes influenced policy. It serves as a case of the emergence, escalation, and impact of tenant power. Tenant movement organizations employed five mechanisms to affect policymaking: (1) making demands, (2) forming coalitions, (3) promoting referendums, (4) engaging government officials in dialogue, and (5) transferring agents to government. The paper draws on multiple data sources, including interviews and participant observation over ten years. The cities witnessed policy episodes with four parallel characteristics: (1) locally progressive and regionally moderate, (2) shifting from defensive to offensive, (3) shifting from particular to universal, and (4) signs of a breakthrough beyond neoliberal housing policymaking. The findings suggest that the rise of tenant movements and their allies help drive policy change via multiple channels, exhibiting both similarities and differences across cities, especially in terms of money power and people power.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 November 2021

Accepted 23 August 2022

KEYWORDS

Housing policy;
rental housing;
tenant movements;
Los Angeles;
Berlin

Introduction

Housing justice movements have exploded around the world since the onset of the 2008 global financial crisis, achieving some major wins, and expanding the political horizon of the possible. Yet, the impact of housing movements on policy outcomes remains understudied (Martinez, 2019, p. 1588). Housing politics in Los Angeles (USA) and Berlin (Germany) had not witnessed such influential tenant mobilizations for decades. I compare each city's episode of contentious politics between 2008 and 2020, their structural similarities and differences, and what political processes contributed to policy outcomes. The article presents a pair of case studies, each linking key mechanisms endogenous and exogenous to tenant movements to policy episodes.

CONTACT Kenton Card  kentoncard@ucla.edu  Institut für Geographische Wissenschaften, Globalisierung, Transformation, Gender, Malteserstr. 74-100, Raum K168, 12249, Berlin, Germany.

© 2022 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

My comparison intentionally caps the time period before the health and economic crisis of COVID-19, to paint a picture of the trajectory of tenant movements and housing politics leading up to 2020.

This article is structured around two questions. (1) How did rental housing policy trajectories shift in Los Angeles and Berlin between 2008 and 2020? (2) To what extent did tenant movements influence these policy shifts? The episodes of housing politics analyzed below have typological parallels across other rich capitalist economies and spillover into and from other social movements. Housing movements have rarely, if ever, risen to the national level in the United States (Marcuse, 1999); and in Germany, they were marginalized during reunification (Marcuse, 1991). Yet, increasing housing financialization, ownership consolidation by financial institutions, rising precarious tenancies, exacerbated by racial and migrant inequalities, have situated housing as one of the major political fault lines of our time.

My research reveals two multilayered findings. First, despite different historical and political economic contexts, Los Angeles and Berlin witnessed parallel episodes of rapid change in rental housing policies, exhibiting four strikingly similar characteristics. (1) Local policies leaned progressive, whereas regional policies leaned moderate. (2) Policies shifted from defensive (e.g. anti-gentrification) to offensive (e.g. price controls). (3) Policies shifted from particular (e.g. affordable housing funding, anti-development) to universal (e.g. expanded tenants' rights). (4) Cumulatively these developments illustrated a breakthrough beyond neoliberal treatment of housing markets.

Second, my findings suggest that new organizations helped drive policy change through five mechanisms endogenous to the movement: (1) making demands, (2) forming coalitions, (3) promoting people's referendums, (4) engaging government officials in dialogue, and (5) transferring agents into government. Three other factors exogenous to tenant movements also played an important role: (1) allied interest group resource deployment, (2) policy competition and transfer, and (3) landlord opposition actions. In some cases, the first two assist tenant-friendly reforms, and the third sets it back. Los Angeles's and Berlin's patterns were similar, but with some important differences: notably, the resource power of the movements and their allies varied.

Comparative logic

Political economists compare the United States and Germany as paradigmatically distinct welfare-capitalist regimes (Hall & Soskice, 2001), respectively liberal and coordinated market economies. Housing scholars have extended such analyses predominantly to national housing regime types (e.g. Kettunen & Ruonavaara, 2021): United States as 'dualist rental system' and Germany as 'integrated rental market' (Kemeny, 2006, p. 3). This study conducts a subnational comparison that shows striking parallels in cities across distinct regimes. The analysis fits in the tradition of 'divergence comparison' (Kemeny & Lowe, 1998) – wherein Los Angeles and Berlin represent a more general family of cities: large, left-leaning, majority renter, with rich activism histories – illustrating what may be seen in analogous rich capitalist cities.

I focus on new regulations of the private rental housing (PRH) market: rental housing owned by private landlords and not receiving government subsidies. Why? PRH encompasses the largest quantity of units occupied by low-income residents, in comparison to subsidized or state-owned units. Yet, neoliberal economics – the dominant framework for generating governance strategies around the world for the last four decades – universally discourages PRH price controls: esp. those that freeze rents or allow for vacancy control (Slater, 2021).¹ Rental housing has also globally become a site of financial investment by institutional landlords (Fields & Uffer, 2016; Wijburg *et al.*, 2018), leading scholars link inequality (e.g. Piketty, 2014) to housing in a new asset-based class taxonomy (Adkins *et al.*, 2021). Rents continue rising in Berlin (Holm, 2021; Kadi *et al.*, 2021) and Los Angeles (Nelson *et al.*, 2021) with negative spillover effects for tenants (e.g. racial banishment, see Roy, 2017).

Los Angeles and Berlin (a city and state) exhibit a number of similarities, serving as the largest and most politically active cities within respective political contexts pertaining to PRH – California and Germany – regions of significant economic power. California serves as the capital of tech (headquarters to Google, Apple, and Facebook), and Los Angeles has for years ranked among the most unaffordable housing in the United States (Ray *et al.*, 2014). Meanwhile, Germany has undergone the largest privatization of public housing in world history since the early 1990s (3 million units; see Aalbers, 2019), with Berlin emerging as a leading European city for tech start-ups, and the site of the greatest real estate investment across Europe (over €40 billion between 2007 and 2020), exceeding London, Paris, and Amsterdam (Calatayud *et al.*, 2021).

In the majority renter cities (Los Angeles 62% and Berlin 85%), governing coalitions have politically shifted slightly to the left in the past decade. The Los Angeles City Council has fourteen Democrats, one Independent, and zero Republicans. Between 2016 and 2021 in Berlin, a so-called Red–Red–Green coalition came into power, with left-wing candidates and allies in the tenant movement. More idiosyncratically, both cities have people’s referendum processes (i.e. initiatives), allowing citizens, following a petition period, to directly vote for/against the creation of laws, a type of bottom-up policymaking (‘direct’ democracy), in contrast to conventional top-down policymaking by elected officials (‘indirect’ democracy). Bottom-up policymaking remains susceptible to interest group influence via political advertisements to sway voters, whereas top-down policymaking remains susceptible to backdoor pressure via lobbying and campaign contributions.

This article takes an analytically dynamic, rather than static, approach, drawing on a comparative tradition well-traveled in sociology: social movement studies. My research design is intentionally not a typical matched comparison, but meant to complement such approaches. The article considers the ‘paired comparison of uncommon cases’ approach in order ‘to discover whether similar mechanisms and processes drive changes in substantially divergent periods, places, and regimes’ (McAdam *et al.*, 2001, pp. 82–83). Finally, Giugni argues for the importance of comparing ‘similar movements in different contexts’ to understand movement outcomes (1999, p. xxiv).

Framework: linking tenant movements and housing policy

I compare two episodes of contentious housing politics, Los Angeles and Berlin from 2008 to 2020, to illustrate how similar political processes help explain, despite contextual differences, analogous policy changes. The timeline between 2008 and 2020 is intentional: to identify and interpret the possible connections between *growing tenant movement activities* and *policymaking outcomes* prior to the 2020 health and economic crisis of COVID-19. The episodes serve as an arena for observing emergence and escalation of political activity. Episodes of contentious politics capture a spatial-historical sequence of mesolevel phenomenon: relationships between agents, institutions, and structures over time and space, in contrast to micro- (single site or policy) and macro- (large-n or national comparative) approaches. As opposed to static variables, processes and mechanisms characterize change, to capture causal dynamics that can be abstracted and observed across space and time.

The article draws on a number of theoretical and empirical currents in housing studies. Clapham calls for breaking down the crude dichotomy in housing studies between ‘positivist’ policy research and ‘theoretical’ critical work by researching ‘the housing policy making process’ as one viable option to transparently link theory and evidence (2018, p. 176). Rental market regulation often entails conflict between tenants and landlord organizations, which Teitz (1998) suggests can be studied through policy adoption, implementation, and termination. Herein I focus on adoption, termination, and add agenda setting. Urban movement scholars have also created generative findings on how place, identity, and claims like ‘the right to the city’ play out in movements, yet often focus on single case studies, creating another opportunity for exploring the messiness of governance across regimes and legal contexts. Finally, this article also builds on past work on the two cities under study, for instance, in Berlin the transition ‘from protest to program’ (Holm, 2021), and in Los Angeles from local community struggles to mass coalitions ‘with *positive* as well as *defensive* orientations’ (my emphasis, Haas & Heskin, 1981, p. 562).

Policies serve as the starting point. I profile two subnational configurations of political actors and actions to capture the breadth of contentious politics, albeit admittedly, at the expense of depth. Political scientists have recently advocated for more subnational, policy-centered research on interest groups (Anzia, 2019).

This article contributes to our understanding of how movements and interest groups impact housing policy. I begin downstream with policy outcomes, and then link those policies back to movement actions upstream. Tenant movements constitute a type of social movement, which I define as large groups of ordinary people systematically challenging elites and forms of entrenched power. They are ‘sustained campaigns of claims-making’, Tilly writes, employing a range of strategies, and ‘displaying supporters’ worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC)’ (2010, p. 182). Tenants leverage worthiness (widespread housing unaffordability), unity (organizations and coalitions), numbers (volunteers and large protests), and commitment (consistent action). Key ‘elements of a modern tenant movement’, Heskin suggests, are ‘mass organization, a rent strike, and confrontations over evictions, political action and litigation’ (1981, p. 186).

Tenant movement organizations (TMOs) are defined as tenant-led and issue-focused ‘movement organizations’, as explained by Zald and Ash: purpose motivated groups

with ‘bureaucratic features’ that both ‘have goals ... [and] aim to restructure society or individuals, not to provide it or them with a regular service’ (1966, p. 329).²

Zald and Ash also state that a ‘coalition pools resources and coordinates plans, while keeping distinct organizational identities’ (1966, p. 335). Recent work on coalitions and networks focusing on housing issues suggest that such formations foster trust building, mutual learning, and strategy sharing (Howell, 2018; Lira & March, 2021), even when including non-housing organizations (Lima, 2021). However, this does not make all such coalition partners TMOs. For instance, in the California case analyzed here, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation acts as an external ally to the California tenant movement, as it is neither tenant-run, grassroots, nor primarily housing focused.

‘Little work on social movements’, Burnstein suggests, ‘tries to gauge their impact in the context of theories of electoral competition and legislative action’ (Burnstein, 1999, p. 19). The classic model evaluating movement ‘success’ from Gamson (1975) suggests scholars identify movement goals, whether they were achieved, or whether opposition acknowledged challenger groups. Tilly challenges Gamsonian ‘scorecard’ approach because it focusing exclusively on intended outcomes. Tilly suggests linking upstream (movements) to downstream (outcomes) and to ‘work midstream by examining whether the internal links of the causal chain operated as the theory required’ (1999, p. 270). Similarly I follow three steps suggested by Giugni (1999, p. xxvi): (1) ‘specify the types of consequences to be studied’ (policies); (2) ‘search for plausible relevant causes’ (mechanisms); and (3) ‘reconstruct causal patterns and histories’ (spatial-historical sequence of events). In the two cases, below I identify five mechanisms endogenous and three mechanisms exogenous to tenant movements that link movements to policy outcomes, although sometimes these dynamics interact.

Methods

Methodologically the findings emerge from the analysis of multiple data sources: participant observations, one-on-one interviews and dialogues, and content analysis (newspapers, social media, and government records). I draw on over 1000 h of discontinuous, embedded participant observation and over 70 one-on-one conversations.³ This article draws on 10 years of discontinuous primary and secondary research conducted over four periods of time across Berlin and California. Part 1 began between 2011 and 2013 by launching participant observation and conducting 35 interviews with experts and activists on strategies to address the housing crisis in Berlin. This early project focused on alternative housing models (e.g. Baugruppen and Mietshäuser Syndikat, see Card, 2020), and the birth of the current tenant movement, in which I focused on the Kotti & Co tenant initiative. Part 2 included professional participation and observation while working in housing and environmental planning advocacy organizations in Sacramento, California between 2014 and 2015, supporting in the coordination of the Residents United Network, and observing meetings with lobbyists, affordable housing developers, and government officials. I conducted no research interviews during this period, but a dozen informational interviews on advocacy and planning. Part 3 began in 2017–2018 with direct participation with LA-based tenant activists, and 10 new interviews with

tenant organizers and intellectuals across the United States and Germany documenting movement continuity and theories of social change; in this phase, I began comparing the cities (Card, 2018). Finally, Part 4 began since 2020 when I relocated to Berlin, renewing participant observation and interviews with 25 tenant activists, experts, landlord advocates, bureaucrats, and politicians across Los Angeles and Berlin, as well as a fellowship at the Abgeordnetenhaus (State Parliament) of Berlin. I also drew on a few other sources to complement and verify my findings, such as newspaper reports, policy documents, social media posts (twitter), and campaign contribution disclosures (California Secretary of State and State Election Commissioner for Berlin).

Findings

The findings make up the last five sections: (1) TMO emergence and escalation, (2) shifting public awareness of rental housing, (3) eight causal mechanisms, (4) tracing policy trajectories, and (5) comparing the policy episodes.

TMO emergence and escalation

‘No account of the housing system is complete,’ suggest Marcuse and Madden without an understanding of the collective power of inhabitants’ (2016, p. 83). In Los Angeles and Berlin, tenant movement organizations (TMOs) played a central role to shift public consciousness, party platforms, and policymaker positions on housing policy.⁴

Scale and scope

In both cities, tenant organizations and coalitions burgeoned in the years preceding and encompassing the policy episodes. As shown in [Table 1](#), TMO names signaled to the public that groups organized in response to both direct neighborhood displacement (e.g. Defend Boyle Heights or Bizim Kiez) and wider ranging visions (e.g. Tenants Together and Mietenwahnsinn Bündnis). The quantity of new groups and online followers also escalated over time leading up to 2020. The lists in [Table 1](#) just represent the tip of the iceberg. Holm (2021) estimated that 150 new tenant organizations emerged during the past decade in Berlin, and the referendum Expropriate DW & Co. reports 350 organizational endorsements; newly emerging tenants’ rights coalitions in California also report large numbers: the LA Right to Counsel Coalition reports 56 groups and the statewide Tenants Together reports 60 organizational members and partners. Large coalitions also include support from allied organizations.

The scale and scope of tenant movements illustrate how large and what kind of activities get deployed. A selection of influential groups and quantity of online followers provide one measurement of how many people express interest in a political group’s claims and activities. TMOs often leveraged new media across a range of social media platforms, especially Twitter, Facebook, Instagram. In some cases, they also developed deeper reporting and analysis on blogs (Gentrification Blog and Knock LA), podcasts (Renter Power Hour and Von Menschen und Mieten),

Table 1. Tenant movement organizations and allies.

Scale	Founded*	Type	Name	Twitter handle	Online followers**
Global	1987	Ally	Aids Healthcare Foundation (AHF)	@AIDSHealthcare	49.2K
	2008	TMO	Tenants Together	@TenantsTogether	10.2K
California	2010	TMO	Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)	@CalOrganize	11.2K
	2015	TMO	Residents United Network	@ResidentsUnited	536
	2017	TMO	Housing Now!	@HousingNowCA	2344
	1973	LTMO	Coalition for Economic Survival	@CESinAction	568
	1985	Ally	Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing (SCANPH)	@SCANPH	2488
	1994	Ally	Thai Community Development Center	NA	NA
	2011	TMO	Crenshaw Subway Coalition	@CrenshawSubway	751
	2012	TMO	TMO Chinatown Community for Equitable Development 華埠公平發展會	@ccdLA	3473
	2012	TMO	Democratic Socialists of America: Los Angeles	@DSA_LosAngeles	29.3K
	2012	TMO	People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER)	@PeopleOrganized	1271
Los Angeles	2015	TMO	Los Angeles Tenants Union	@LATenantsUnion	16.5K
	2015–2021	TMO	Defend Boyle Heights	@DefendBoyleHts	2016
	2017	TMO	Ground Game Los Angeles	@GroundGameLA	18.9K
	2017	Ally	Housing Is A Human Right	@HousingHumanRt	6798
	2018	TMO	Hillside Villa Tenants Association	@hillside_villa	1066
	2018	TMO	Right to Counsel Los Angeles Coalition	@RTCLosAngeles	1271
	2020	TMO	Better Neighbors LA	@better_la	2266
	2021	TMO	Healthy Los Angeles	@HealthyLA_Coa	761
Germany	1999	Ally	Interventionistische Linke (Interventionist Left)	@inter_linke	21.1K
	2018	TMO	#Mietenwahnsinn-Bündnis (Rent Madness Alliance)	@MietenwahnsinnB	6478
	2019	TMO	Housing Action Day	@HDay2021	1174
	2021	TMO	Rent Freeze in Germany	@MietenstoppDE	2671
Berlin	1888	LMTO	Berliner Mieterverein (Berlin Tenant Association)	@BMieterverein	3839
	2006–2009	TMO	Mediaspree versenken (Sink mediaspree)	NA	NA
	2012	TMO	100% Tempelhof Field	@thf100	1383
	2010	TMO	Karla Pappel	NA	NA
	2012	TMO	Kotti & Co	@KottiU	2331
	2011	TMO	Haben und Brauchen (To Have and to Need)	NA	NA
	2012	TMO	Initiative Stadtneuenken (To Think the City Anew Initiative)	NA	NA
	2014	TMO	Stadt von Unten (City from Under)	@stadtvonunten	4616
	2015	TMO	Mietenvolksentscheid Berlin (Rent Referendum Berlin)	NA	NA
	2015	TMO	AirBnB v. Berlin	NA	NA
	2015	TMO	Bizim Kiez (Bizim Neighborhood)	@bizimkiez	6238
	2018	TMO	Deutsche Wohnen & Co Enteignen (Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co.)	@dwenteignen	31.2K
	2019	TMO	Stadtbodenstiftung Berlin (City Soil Foundation)	@Stadtbodenstift	900

Type: TMO: New Tenant Movement Organization; LTMO: Legacy Tenant Movement Organization; Ally: Ally Organizations. The size of TMOs range from a few residents in a house project to hundreds of tenants in a neighborhood.

*When founding dates could not be located, social media page registration (e.g. Twitter) or website birth were used (via Wayback Machine).

**Represented via Twitter followers as of June 16 2022.

educational videos (Cancel Rent & Mortgage: Policy Platform), and numerous online workshops, complementing traditional organizing modes, such as newsletters or op-eds.⁵ TMOs leverage social media to promote actions and pro-tenant demands like ‘Housing is a Human Right’ or ‘Wir bleiben Alle!’

Tenant movements also expanded the scope of their activities. In both cities, tenant movements responded to inequality, leveraged negative public sentiment about that inequality for mass recruitment, and bridged between educating, providing care and support for tenants-in-crisis, and direct-action targeting landlords or state actors. Housing justice coalitions practiced both intensive and extensive dynamics: *intensive* by linking multiclass, multiracial, and multilingual base-building, and *extensive* by connecting labor, refugee, Black Lives Matter, environmental, socialist movements, among others. Intersectional organizing in Berlin included practices of Turkish women-led Kotti & Co. and the Right to the City international working group of Expropriate DW & Co. to spotlight the inclusion/exclusion of non-citizens: *included* in the unaffordable housing market and *excluded* from voting to reform it. Kotti & Co. challenged public narratives around social housing in Berlin, and with the coalition Initiative Stadtneuenken, organized a conference to reformulate solutions to the housing crisis across the city (Hamann & Türkmen, 2020). In Los Angeles, LA Tenants Union (LATU) and Democratic Socialists of America Los Angeles (DSA-LA) both represented emergent, multiracial, organizations fusing tenant solidarity, education and resource deployment, access to tenant legal assistance, and a variety of neighborhood and thematic working group (Card 2018). ‘We see tenants,’ one LA organizer said, ‘as the revolutionary subject’. TMOs aim to change policy, and their scale and scope suggests that they have the potential to do so.

Shifting public awareness of rental housing

Housing politicization also contributed to advancing public awareness of housing issues, which incentivizes action by elected officials. Numerous polls suggested that housing dominates as the most important political issue for the public in these cities. In 2019, 95% of polled Angelinos identified homelessness as greatest threat to the city (Oreskes et al., 2019), in 2020, 81% of Angelinos said ‘protecting tenants’ is ‘extremely important’ or a ‘major’ priority for the city (Los Angeles City Planning, 2020). In 2019, 51% of polled Berliners worried about not being able to afford rents and displacement (Paul, 2019), and in 2021, 47% of Berliners said rising rents was their biggest worry (Fahrin, 2021).

Eight causal mechanisms

TMOs deployed a range of repertoires of contention that included both contained (speaking at hearings, registering voters) and transgressive political action (spontaneous mass demonstrations, rent strikes, eviction blockades, hosting phone hotlines, aiding tenants-in-crisis, squatting abandoned buildings, etc.).⁶ The article suggests that eight causal mechanisms influenced policy change. While I have

Table 2. Linking policies, mechanisms, and evidence.

Year	Policy outcome	Status	D/O	Mechanism: Endogenous (Ex) or Exogenous (En) to TMO?	Evidentiary linkage	Policy source
California						
2017	AB 1506: Residential rent control: Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act	-	0	Ex: Allied interest group resource deployment; landlord opposition actions En: Demand making	Ex: Bloom, Chiu & Bonta responding to AHF funded Prop 10 (government records) En: pro-Prop 10 coalition mobilization (ACCE; government records)	https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1506
2018	Proposition 10: Local Rent Control Initiative	-	0	Ex: Allied interest group resource deployment; landlord opposition actions En: Referendum formation	Ex: AHF spent \$26 million in support (government records) En: ACCE & EDN support & mobilization (policy documents)	https://www.oag.ca.gov/system/files/initiatives/pdfs/17-0041%20%28Affordable%20Housing%29_0.pdf
2019	AB 1482 Tenant Protection Act of 2019: tenancy: rent caps	+	0	Ex: Policy competition & transfer; landlord opposition actions En: Demand making	Ex: OR & NY passing statewide rental market reforms; Governor Newsom needing housing win (public reporting; interview) En: TMO written endorsement (e.g. POWER; government records)	https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1482
2020	Proposition 21	-	0	Ex: Allied interest group resource deployment; landlord opposition actions	AHF spent \$40 million in support (government records)	https://lao.ca.gov/BallotAnalysis/Proposition?number=21&year=2020
Los Angeles						
2010	Suspension of Rent Increases	-	0	En: Demand making	Coalition for Economic Survival demanded reforms (government records)	https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=10-0613
2016	Tenant Buyout Ordinance	+	0	En: Demand making; dialogue with government officials.	Coalition for Economic Survival claimed victory (TMO website)	https://www.lamayor.org/mayor-garcetti-i-signs-tenant-buyout-ordinance
2017	Affordable Housing Linkage Fee	+	0	Ex: Allied interest group resource deployment	Affordable housing advocacy coalition leading campaign to build LA Housing Trust Fund (SCANPH)	https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/t774d99baf-d4e2-4dcd-8625-1cee7dac991b/ImplementationMemo.pdf
2018	Short-Term Rental	+	0	Ex: Allied interest group resource deployment En: Demand making	Ex: Thai Community Development Center (LA Times reporting) En: New Coalition formation; Better Neighbors LA (TMO website)	https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=14-1635-52
2018	Temporary Eviction Moratorium	+	D	Ex: Policy competition & transfer	Following statewide AB 1482 passage (government records)	http://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2019/19-1232_ord_draft_10-17-2019.pdf

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Year	Policy outcome	Status	D/O	Mechanism: Endogenous (Ex) or Exogenous (En) to TMO?	Evidentiary linkage	Policy source
2018	Eviction Defense Program	+/-	0	En: Coalition formation; demand making; dialogue with government agents; agent transfer	Right to Council Los Angeles (website); consist public campaign with demands (social media and government records); conversations with allies and sympathizers in government (interviews)	https://housing.lacity.org/residents/eviction-defense-program
2019–2022	Eminent Domain of Hillside Villa Apartment Building	+	0	Ex: Landlord opposition actions En: Demand making; fostering dialogue with government officials	Ex: Landlord renegotiating on handshake deal with Councilmember Cedillo (government records) En: Hillside Villa Tenants Union demanded eminent domain and funding (newspaper reporting, participant observation)	https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=20-0148
2020	Homes Guarantee LA	+/-	0	En: Demand making; dialogue with government officials	LA-based TMOs co-wrote nationwide People's Action 'Homes Guarantee' and pressured and collaborated with Councilmember Mike Bonin to adapt it for LA (interviews and government records)	https://11thdistrict.com/homesguaranteela/
Germany						
2015, 2019, 2020	Rent Price Brake: Tenancy Law Adjustment Act; (Mietpreisbremse or Mietrechtsnovellierungsgesetz)	+	0	Ex: Policy competition & transfer; allied interest group pressure En: Demand making (indirect)	Coalition formed in reaction to growing housing activism including interest groups representing landlords such as the Verband Berlin-Brandenburgischer Wohnungsunternehmen E.V. (interview) Ex: Berlin tenant movement growing (interview)	https://www.bundesgerichtshof.de/DE/Bibliothek/GesMat/WP18/M/MietNovG.html
Berlin						
2009	Sink Media Spree (Mediaspree Versenken)	+/-	D	En: Referendum formation	Referendum countered 'Mediaspree' development along the Spree River (government records)	https://ms-versenken.org/
2014	100% Tempelhof Field	+	D	En: Referendum formation	Referendum to stop development at Tempelhof Field after closure of airport (government records)	https://www.berlin.de/wahlen/historie/volksbegehren-und-volksentscheide/tempelhofer-feld-2014/artikel.770335.php

2015	Berlin Rent Referendum (Mietenvolksentscheid Berlin)	+/-	0	En: Referendum formation; coalition formation	Referendum to reform rental housing system including new TMOs (e.g. Kotti & Co) (interview)	https://www.dw.com/en/grassroots-plus-h-law-to-ease-berlin-housing-crisis/s/a-18520497 https://mietenvolksentscheidberlin.de/druck-wirkt-der-kampf-geht-weiter/ https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/wohnraumversorgung/download/VorlageBeschlussfassung_WoVG_Bln.pdf
2015	Law on Realignment of Social Housing (Gesetz über die Neuausrichtung der sozialen Wohnraumversorgung in Berlin)	+	0	En: Demand-concession; fostering dialogue	In reaction to Berliner Mietenvolksentscheid (interviews)	https://www.berliner-mieterverein.de/recht/infoblaetter/info-115-zweckentfremdung-von-wohnraum-zweckentfremdungsverbot-gesetz.htm
2015	Short-term rental: Zweckentfremdungsverbot-Gesetz (Misappropriation Prohibition Act)	+	0	En: Demand making	Activists formed coalition to counter new short-term rentals, e.g. AirBnB v. Berlin (organizational data and newspaper reporting)	
2016	Milieuschutz (Mileu Protections)	+	0	En: Dialogue with government agents; agent transfer	New Red-Red-Green coalition allies (e.g. Florian Schmidt) advocated for implementing (interview)	
2017	Right of First Refusal (Vorkaufsrechten)	+	0	En: Dialogue with government agents; agent transfer	New Red-Red-Green coalition allies (e.g. Florian Schmidt) advocated for implementing (interview)	https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/s-taedtbau/foerderprogramme/stadterneuerung/soziale_erhaltungsgebiete/download/VZK-Konzept_Vorkaufsrechte.pdf https://www.berlin.de/wahlen/abstimmungen/deutsche-wohnen-und-co-enteignen/artikel.1040424.php https://mietendeckel.berlin.de/
2019	Expropriate DW & Co. (Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen)	+	0	En: Coalition formation; referendum formation	Coalition formed to expropriate institutional landlords (participant observation and interviews)	
2020	Rent Cap (Mietendeckel)	+	0	En: Demand making; dialogue with government agents; agent transfer	Red-red-green coalition capped rents in response to DWE campaign on horizon (interviews)	

Type: TD-; Status: + passed, - died, +/- mixed outcome. D/O: Defensive/Offensive.

provided snapshots of the mechanisms at play in the narrative below, see [Table 2](#) for a comprehensive list of all policies, causal mechanisms, and evidentiary linkages.

Five mechanisms operate endogenously to TMOs. (1) *Making demands* constitutes tenants collectively formulating general or specific action-oriented claims – reverberating from the streets to the statehouse – that address grievances, alter the political climate, and sometimes win concessions. (2) *Forming coalitions* amounts to TMOs bringing organizations of different constituencies, places, and practices together to struggle for common goals. (3) *Promoting people’s referendums* comprises of bottom-up policymaking that begins by defining a policy goal, followed by gathering signatures to advance the initiative onto the ballot. (4) *Engaging government officials in dialogue* occurs when activists develop active working relationships with elected politicians, political parties, agency officials, and judges to exchange ideas, broker compromise, and address policy solutions. And (5) *transferring agents into government* means getting activists elected, appointed, or hired into formal government positions. The first four are closely linked and come up frequently: movements continuously made demands, and to advance those demands they continuously built coalitions, pursued referendums, and foster dialogue. Transferring agents is more episodic and more ambiguously central to moving the policy agenda.

Three mechanisms exogenous to the tenant movement also influenced policy change. (1) *Allied interest group resource deployment* constitutes outside groups – in direct collaboration or not – furthering the general agenda of the tenant movement independent of the tenant movement. Whereas forging coalitions is driven by TMOs, this point is about external (non-tenant) organizations as the driving force. Next, building on policy transfer literature – which Soaita *et al.* suggest addresses ‘policy-(regime) change; ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of housing policies to transfer or lessons to be learned; potential for transferability; and the role of institutional actors that are seen as drivers of change’ (2021, p. 7) – (2) *policy competition and transfer* amounts to the sequential dynamic of policy agendas influencing, albeit without attributing direct causation, the introduction of policies elsewhere, irrespective of success. And finally (3) *landlord opposition actions* comprise of individual or landlord association activities and resource deployment that influenced policy change. Whereas the first two may assist tenant-friendly reforms, the third usually sets it back.

Tracing policy trajectories

Slum lords! Slum lords! [...] I’m pissed off about it. I’m taking care of three grand-kids and I’m older than you might think I am. It’s hard. I’m on disability. And it’s rough. These landlords want you to have three times the rent. They want you to have a credit score of 650 or 620 for everyone that is over 18 years old. They’re going to do a background check on you. Then when you move into their property and you tell them that you’ve got problems, they want to come up with every line in the book of why they don’t have to fix it. Or it’s your fault. Or it’s your kid’s fault. And then when your lease is up, instead of them being decent — and it costs a lot to move — they

say: “we don’t want to renew your lease.” Why? Because you have complained just for your basic rights. [...]

What brought me out today is that I hope [the California Assemblymembers] do something about this stupidity, that they repeal this Costa-Hawkins law because it’s hurting poor people.

—Barbara Ramsey-Clark, Sacramento Renter (January 11 2018)⁷

Housing policies in Los Angeles and Berlin have evolved in strikingly similar ways in the years since 2008. As Los Angeles and Berlin represent the largest cities within their parent jurisdictions (California and Germany), the cities account for a disproportionately large share of social movements, resources spent by interest groups, media attention, and political activity. Thus, I will trace policy trajectories first at the state and national levels, and then, at the city level for each case, and identify the mechanisms at play. As we will see, the tenant movements had less relative power at the state- and federal-levels and the reforms were more moderate, and vice versa for the city-level, suggesting the importance of understanding movements and their outcomes across jurisdictional scales.

State- and national-level rental reforms: California and Germany

This section highlights the reforms in California at greater length, in contrast to Germany, for two reasons: (1) California saw more numerous policy fights during the period than the federal level of Germany, and (2) the California policy disputes had more substantial impact on the Los Angeles-level policy fights (via transfer). In California the ‘moderate’ Democrats and in Germany even left-leaning parties had promoted neoliberalization of PRH throughout the 1990s–2000s. As the political climate shifted, the same parties (and even center-right parties in Germany under Chancellor Angela Merkel) passed modest rent regulations.

The California push to regulate PRH began in 2017 and can be captured in two bottom-up and two top-down policies. In 2017, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) – a billion-dollar nonprofit of extraordinary wealth due to its worldwide healthcare services and pharmacies – began pouring money into pro-renter advocacy. The tenant movement had already been growing across the state, with a new state-wide coalition Tenants Together founded in 2008, new tenant unions across cities (e.g. LATU), and even rent strikes emerging. As a new ally organization to the tenant movement, AHF founded a front-group called Housing Is a Human Right in Los Angeles, recruited leading grassroots organizers as paid staff, and launched a coalition to advance a pro-renter referendum. In California, statewide referendums must gather signatures from 5% of the registered voting population, which in 2018 amounted to 623,212 signatures.⁸ AHF funded signature gatherers across the state to advance a referendum called Proposition 10 (2018) to repeal a law called the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act (1995). While technically not overturning local ordinances, Costa-Hawkins neutralizes some local rent controls and limits local government from expanding them: prohibiting (1) vacancy control, (2) rent controls on housing built after 1995, (3) rent control on single-family homes, and (4) changes in the dates for which controls can apply, limiting cities to those previously

established (e.g. 1978 for Los Angeles).⁹ Prop 10 would not have expanded rent control in itself, but the political opportunity for local jurisdictions to enact and expand controls. The referendum would have allowed cities and counties to implement vacancy control, apply rent controls to younger or new buildings and single-family homes. In a 2017 tenant meeting, one organizer said that Prop 10 was the single most important policy for tenants across the state. Even though 60% of polled Californians generally supported rent controls in 2017 (DiCamillo, 2017), after a fierce campaign that saw campaign contributions over \$76 million in opposition and \$24 million in support, Prop 10 was defeated 59.4% to 40.6% by voters.

In 2020, the AHF led a near repeat referendum to repeal Costa-Hawkins called Prop 21, amending the previous referendum by exempting new and recently constructed buildings, only applying to buildings over 15-year old. Landlord coalitions contributed \$59 million in opposition and AHF \$40 million in support, with a nearly identical outcome: defeat 59.9% to 40.1%. Both Prop 10 and 21 failed, despite being endorsed by the Democratic Party, numerous prominent California politicians, and supported by TMOs across the state. However, multiple longstanding California housing advocates privately disdained AHF's leadership and strategy on Prop 10 and 21. The referendums were 'guaranteed to lose', one told me, claiming that AHF lacked a broad enough coalition or sufficient pre-referendum public support to withstand a negative advertising blizzard. Political advertising allows opposition to sow doubt and reject change. The director of Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, Mark DiCamillo, explained the opposition's strategy: '[i]t's a formula. You confuse, and you befuddle and you whatever. You raise enough doubts with voters and you win' (cited in Dillon, 2020).

Two top-down policies also contributed to the statewide episode. While signatures were being gathered for Prop 10 in 2017, California State Assemblymembers Bloom, Chiu, and Bonta proposed a one-line law called AB 1506: 'This bill would repeal [the Costa-Hawkins] act'. On January 11 2018, hundreds of tenant and landlord activists clashed in protest during a committee hearing in the California statehouse. The hearing garnered around a thousand public comments and heated debate (see quote above by Ramsey-Clark), but AB 1506 did not receive enough votes and died in committee.

Despite failing, Prop 10 received nationwide media attention, and other states picked up the momentum; New York and Oregon passed statewide rental restraints. Following other states and as a new referendum emerged on the horizon (Prop 21), California Governor Newsom wanted to boost the state's progressive image and needed a win on housing, so advocates brokered a compromise on an anti-rent gouging policy.¹⁰ AB 1482 proposed to limit landlord's ability to implement yearly rent increases by more than 5% plus Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 10%, whichever is lower. Along with this weak price control, the legislation included 'just cause' eviction protections for tenants, narrowing the conditions wherein landlords can indiscriminately evict tenants unless in violation of a lease or other exemptions. AB 1482 applied to properties over 15-year old, exempting single-family home rentals (unless owned by real estate trusts, corporations, or LLCs with one corporate member), and will sunset in 2029. AB 1482 passed and became law on January 1 2020. Institutional landlords supported the anti-rent gouging legislation and AHF opposed it, both for the same reason: the high price ceiling. Institutional landlords felt they

could still yield sufficient long-term returns, whereas some local landlords groups opposed.

While tenant movements influenced the statewide episode through demands, coalitions, and referendums, the exogenous mechanisms accelerated the statewide activity. AHF poured over \$64 million into gathering signatures, advertising, and coalition building for Prop 10 and 21. The financial infusion – exogenous to the movements themselves – expanded the media impact and drew attention to TMO coalitions like Tenants Together. AHF's money initiated the referendums; landlord money killed them. Yet interviewees believed that the referendum threat contributed to the ultimate adoption of AB 1482.

Policy agenda setting contributed to policy transfer. Prop 10 failed, but motivated assembly members to introduce AB 1506, led to mass protests, triggered local and national news attention, and educated the public and politicians on Costa-Hawkins. After similar policies passed in New York and Oregon, Governor Newsom threw his weight behind AB 1482 and pushed to reduce the ceiling on rent increases from 7% to 5% plus CPI.

In 2006, German federal restructuring distributed some powers to the sixteen states (Länder), including housing ('housing system' was deleted from Article 70.1 of the German Basic Law) (Burkhart *et al.*, 2008). Article 30 declares that states have power unless otherwise specified. Between 2014 and 2020 legal experts disagreed whether states had distinct or mixed control (competing competencies) over the housing system, which created a legal opening for new housing policy in Berlin.

On April 21 2015, a center-right coalition (so-called Grand Coalition led by Merkel) passed a five-year Rent Price Brake (RPB), with the opposition parties abstaining.¹¹ With tenant mobilizations growing in large cities, landlord advocates and politicians acted to compete with this pressure from below by passing RPB from above. Therein states could designate tight housing markets (based on rents, population, vacancy rates) to implement an anti-rent gouging law. RPB limits price increases to 10% above local Rent Price Index (i.e. local comparative rents), taking into account building age and amenities of the neighborhood. In 2019, amendments to the RPB strengthened the law by limiting renovation price increases to 8%. In 2020, the RPB was extended to sunset in 2025, streamlining some tenant-landlord relations, such as rent disclosure and challenging rent increases, exempting new construction (after October 1 2014) or major renovations including energy or sustainability retrofits. On June 1 2015, Berlin was declared a tight rental market under RPB, whereas other eligible states have not, yet researchers found it ineffective at slowing rising rents (Kholodilin *et al.*, 2016).

Thus, in both California and Germany, centrist politicians passed reforms to PRH markets (anti-rent gouging and increased rights for tenants), yet these concessions seem to have neither slowed rising rents and the resulting precarious housing conditions, nor, as we shall see below, quelled the growth of tenant movements.

City-level rental reforms: Los Angeles and Berlin

Los Angeles and Berlin witnessed important shifts in local policy episodes post-2008. In Los Angeles, activists and advocates escalated their contentious politics around

housing unaffordability and homelessness. Voters in Los Angeles took up numerous referendums, some beyond the scope of housing: to expand mass transportation (2008, 2012, 2016), increase minimum wage to \$15/h (2015), and fund services and shelters for the unhoused (2016) (see [Appendix Table A1](#)). Three iterations of rental housing policy reforms followed: (1) rent stabilization, (2) short-term rentals, (3) eminent domain, and other proactive regulations of rental housing.

Los Angeles

First, Los Angeles saw some successful and unsuccessful reforms to its Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO) that had been passed in 1978. RSO limits yearly rent increases to 3–8% (depending on CPI) on multifamily units built on or prior to October 1 1978. In 2010, after legacy TMO Coalition for Economic Survival pushed for expanded rental regulations, the Economic Roundtable generated a city-funded report on the hardships tenants were facing (Flaming *et al.*, 2009), resulting in the Housing Committee introduced a ‘Suspension of Rent Increases’ for four months. This bill attempted to lower the 3% price floor, especially when CPI is lower, yet it died in committee. In 2016, the City Council passed a ‘Tenant Buyout Ordinance’, requiring landlords to disclose to tenants their rights and document actions with the city if they attempt to ‘buyout tenants’: in other words, pay tenants ‘cash for keys’ to voluntarily vacate their rent stabilized unit.

Following AB 1482, the LA City Council passed a Temporary Eviction Moratorium and emergency renters relief program to shield renters living in a regulatory grey zone: units that would soon be covered by the new state law, but were not covered by LA’s RSO. The measures prevented landlords from rent-gouging or evicting prior to AB 1482s effective date. Next, in June 2018, the Renters’ Right to Counsel Coalition-LA formed to exert pressure on city officials, and by August 17 City Council leveraged the housing unit to investigate the prospects of providing legal aid to all tenants in crisis. Yet, the government coalition reduced the scope of the program following negotiations, devolving into an Eviction Defense Program citing insufficient funds. The program has only allocated \$2,937,000 in assistance, far shy of New York City’s \$100–200 million.

At the local level, agenda setting also influenced policy transfer, which illustrates that policymakers associate lower risks with proven models, especially when compounded by TMO pressure, and to avoid appearing retrograde in comparison with competing jurisdictions.

Second, in 2018 Los Angeles passed regulations on short-term rentals facilitated by online platforms, which remove units that may otherwise be on the PRH market, yet the regulations lacked sufficient implementation resources, which led to follow-up amendments. Thousands of hosts continued renting units even when a \$500 fine went into place, which was perceived as a marginal cost for repeat hosts. The city negotiated a special agreement with AirBnB to remove ineligible hosts, but shielded the company from some liabilities. While these reforms did not altogether curtail expansion of new short-term rentals, the reforms nonetheless, at a minimum, signaled some action by local government and discouraged some hosts. Some tenant activists criticized the reforms as grossly insufficient, leading to ongoing coalition pressure in 2022.

Third, since 2019 city councilors explored employing Eminent Domain to purchase housing units and advancing a vision of more proactive government intervention into the housing system. Tenants facing eviction – due to their inability to pay rents doubling and tripling after affordability covenants expired – formed a group called the Hillside Villa Tenants Association and began excerpting pressure. In response to protest and demands made by the group, City Councilmember Cedillo advanced a motion on January 31 2020, later passing City Council, for the city to employ Eminent Domain to acquire the 124 units of Hillside Villa. The bill advanced following pressure from tenants, and the landlord pulling out of a handshake deal made with Cedillo to keep the units affordable over 10 years in exchange for \$12.7 million. My sources suggest that the both landlord backing out, along with tenant pressure, impacted Cedillo. For months the bill stalled in the Budget and Finance Committee. Yet, tenants remained persistent, organizing protests to target councilmembers one-by-one, shifting between contained and transgressive tactics.

We called. We emailed. We've done all the things we were supposed to do to ask nicely. We showed up and [LA Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez] still wouldn't talk to us. She called the cops. We just wanted to talk to her for five minutes.

–@hillside_villa Tweet on 9/24/21¹²

On Friday May 27 2022 scores of tenant activists flooded City Hall for a hearing on the eminent domain funding, ultimately resulting in City Council unanimously approving the loan to Eminent Domain Hillside Villa.

Citing a shortfall of 516,946 affordable units, on February 12 2020 Councilmember Bonin – introduced a Homes Guarantee LA platform, following active collaboration with local TMOs, notably People Organized for Westside Renewal and Ground Game LA, groups that had been involved in the nationwide People's Action coalition.¹³ Homes Guarantee LA advanced a number of reforms: (1) amending the RSO rent floor of 3% by instead restricting rent increases to 60% of inflation, (2) requiring landlords to disclose ownership, (3) supporting the repeal of federal limits on new public housing (i.e. Faircloth Amendment) to allow such construction in Los Angeles, among others. Yet, the policy slate largely remains in the agenda setting phase and stalled, with only some partial approvals and bills in process.¹⁴

Over the past decade, former tenant activists have been appointed into government positions (e.g. housing and planning departments, and councilmember offices), wherein they support the tenant-friendly political climate through policy analysis, facilitate community planning processes, and share strategies with TMOs (and progressive councilmembers) on leveraging formal political channels. In 2020, one sign of continued escalation was the election to Los Angeles City Council of an insurgent, activist candidate Nithya Raman, whom had been recruited by a TMO organizer to run for office, and endorsed by DSA-LA and other left organizations. Activists inside government create direct channels of communication and can attempt reforms from-the-inside.

Berlin

Post-2008 Berlin also witnessed a sequence of urban and housing market reforms. Berlin's urban restructuring since reunification can be summarized in three policy

phases: (1) neoliberal restructuring between 1990 and 2000s (Bernt *et al.*, 2014) (2) the rise of people's referendums and tenant power beginning in 2009 (Vollmer, 2015; Rink & Vollmer, 2019), and (3) active collaboration between tenant movements and the governing coalition between 2016 and 2021 (Vollmer, 2017). Prior to the fall of the Berlin wall and unification, East Berlin implemented a rent freeze, and West Berlin rent controls until 1987. Thus, 1990 signaled an expanded exposure of Berlin's housing stock to international markets. Below addresses the second two phases.

The referendum has become a regular and active tool of ordinary people's power and bottom-up policy change in Berlin. In 2009, a number of neighborhood initiatives mobilized a district referendum called Mediaspree Versenken (Sink Mediaspree) to challenge a tech company cluster development (branded Mediaspree) along the Spree River in a site dense with subcultural uses since unification. In 2014, activists formed another city referendum to contest redeveloping the former Tempelhof airport (100% Tempelhof Field) succeeded in securing the former airport as a green space for the public.

You can scream abolish high rent or even abolish capitalism, but there is no button to press. You have to do everything yourself. You have to understand what your rights are and then you have to dig into the laws. You have to figure out who are the owners. Then you have to go through the bureaucracy.

–Berlin tenant organizer, Kotti & Co.

In 2015, as a direct outgrowth of new TMOs like Kotti & Co., the Mietenvolksentscheid (Rent Referendum) launched to reform social housing in the city – later held up in court by litigation from landlords – and withdrawn after the governing coalition agreed to concessions. One scholar pointed to the 2015 referendum as an example of movements working to deneoliberalize housing (Diesselhorst, 2018). Lawmakers introduced the Gesetz über die Neuausrichtung der sozialen Wohnraumversorgung (Law on Realignment of Social Housing) (2015) in response, reforming the management of social housing and appointing a few activists to agency positions (e.g. to the social housing management board). In 2019, the Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co. referendum launched to expropriate landlords owning over 3000 units in Berlin and transfer ownership to the city, essentially an attempt to nationalize institutional landlords that own as many as 240,000 units across Berlin.¹⁵ The initiative built a widespread grassroots network, with thousands of volunteers organized on the neighborhood level. In July 2021, over 349,658 signatures were submitted, the most in Berlin history, advancing the referendum to the voting booth, which passed on September 26 2021, with 56% in support; a fight over implementation continues.

Between 2016 and 2021, the governing coalition in Berlin combined the Social Democrats, the Left, and the Green parties, called the Red-Red-Green (R2G). Three additional policies that emerged top-down from the R2G coalition, in response to escalating tenant power, were regulations of (1) Short-Term Rentals, (2) Milieu Protections, (3) Right to First Refusal, and (4) the Rent Cap. In 2016, Berlin led the way internationally by imposing strict regulations and high fines on Short-Term Rentals, which eased in 2018 after a court ruling, even though fines increased (Beck, 2018). Second, co-founder of tenant coalition Initiative Stadtneuenken (2011) Florian Schmidt won an election for Councilor for Construction in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg in 2016,

resulting in leveraging his political office to advance tenant-friendly projects, build stronger relationships with activist groups, and help establish the city's first community land trust (Stadtbodenstiftung). He played a central role advancing the local implementation of federal Milieuschutz (Milieu Protections) conservation law to preserve population characteristics of specifically zoned neighborhoods. In 2017, Berlin passed a Vorkaufsrechten (Right of First Refusal), in which district councils may require the first offer of a building's sale to a foundation, cooperative, or non-profit housing organization in designated social preservation areas (~65 designated), yet later overturned by the court. Finally, in 2020 a five-year Mietendeckel (Rent Cap or freeze) became law, which Senate Secretary for Housing Wenke Christoph acknowledged catalyzed by R2G following pressure 'from the streets' and dialogue over how to 'take over landlords.'¹⁶ However the German Federal Constitutional Court ruled it unconstitutional on March 25 2021, leading to a spontaneous mass protest of over 20,000 mostly young people and hundreds of thousands of residents owing backpay on their rents to landlords. While Expropriate DW & Co. on the horizon seems to have pressured the R2G coalition to pass the Rent Cap, the unpopular nature of the court's overturning the law appears to have accelerated momentum for the successful passage of the referendum.

Comparing the policy episodes

Explaining why the policy episodes turned out similar is beyond the scope of this article. Rather I observe similar policy patterns and identify a number of causal mechanisms at play (see [Table 3](#)). The policy episodes composed of four characteristics: (1) progressive local versus moderate regional reforms, (2) shifting from defensive to offensive policies, (3) shifting from particular to universal market regulations, and (4) new policy breakthroughs.

First, progressive reforms have been proposed or passed at the city level (rent freeze, expropriation/ eminent domain, new public housing agenda, eviction defense program), whereas moderate reforms have passed at the state and regional levels in California (AB 1482) and Germany (RPB). The difference in outcomes across scales corresponds to differing levels of TMO influence and institutional barriers at the two scales. Whereas the three mechanisms exogenous to TMOs played a significant role in moderate reforms at the state- and national-levels, endogenous mechanisms also influenced these fights. At the city-level, endogenous mechanisms drove progressive city-level reforms.

Second, policies shifted from defensive (e.g. anti-gentrification, funding homeless shelters) toward offensive policies (e.g. new rent controls, expropriation tools). Critical urbanists have long explored the normative implications of movements and advocates (Castells, 1983; Dreier, 1984; Pickvance, 1985), distinguishing housing struggles as 'defensive' and 'expansionist' (Mironova, 2019), offensive or defensive commoning (Joubert & Hodkinson, 2018, p. 8), among others. Even in these cities, scholars distinguish movements in Berlin as 'defending social needs' and 're-produce the city by DIY-activists' (Holm, 2021, p. 49), or in Los Angeles on housing advocates 'proactive' or 'reactive' policy strategies (Yerena, 2019, p. 11). My analysis attempts to build on these insights.

Offense and defense imply relationality, as offensive for one is defensive for another. This article centers tenants and tenant movements, so I apply offensive

Table 3. Interpreting policy episodes.

	Defensive (Particular)	→	Offensive (Universal)
Los Angeles	Conventional Affordable Housing Tenant Buyout Ordinance (2016) Measure HHH (2016) Measure JJJ (2016) Affordable Housing Linkage Fee (2017)	→	Regulating Private Rental Housing Right to Counsel (2017) Eviction Defense Program (2018) Short-Term Rental (2018) Temporary Eviction Moratorium (2018) Eviction Defense Program (2018) Eminent Domain (2019) Homes Guarantee LA (2020) United to House LA (2021–2022)
Berlin	Anti-Gentrification and Anti-Development Sink Media Spree (2009) 100% Tempelhof Field (2014)	→	Regulating Private Rental Housing Housing Supply Act: Rent Referendum (2015) Law on Realignment of Social Housing (2015) Short-term Rental (2015) Mileu Protections (2016) Right of First Refusal (2017) Rent Cap (2020) Expropriate DW & Co. (2019–2021)
	Proposed Policies (Progressive)		Passed Policies (Moderate)
California	AB 1506 (2017) Prop 10 (2018) Prop 21 (2020)		AB 1482 (2019)
Germany	National Rent Freeze (ongoing)		Rent Price Brake (2020)

vis-à-vis tenants. I define *defensive policy strategies* as those addressing symptoms of housing precarity for tenants and conforming to rules of the rental housing market status quo. Whereas, *offensive policy strategies* address root causes and systematic operations of the housing system. Defensive policies tend to be more particularistic, softening the blow of dominant actors and inequalities, whereas offensive policies tend to be more universalistic and intervening generally in market controls, rights, or widespread redistribution.

The cases differ when and why the policies changed. In California, 2010–2017 represented defensive policymaking until money power by AHF entered the scene, thus, 2017–2020 shifted to offensive. In Berlin, 2009–2014 constituted defensive policymaking until people power of grassroots mobilization in the 2015 Rent Referendum, thus, 2015–2020 shifted to offensive. Of course, these pivots could be contested by different actors. As a landlord lobbyist said: ‘We are on the defense. At least in the last 10 years, we rarely proactively sponsor legislation.’ The explosion of money and people power distinguish the shifts.

Third, policies pivoted away from particularistic or single-project programs (affordable housing funding, anti-development) toward more universal regulations of rental housing markets. Policymakers implemented new anti-rent gouging laws and explored additional tools (rent freeze, expropriation, public housing).

Forth, policy breakthroughs in cities include agenda setting, adoption, implementation, and termination of tenant-friendly policies. While recent scholarship has shed light on ongoing extensions to neoliberal governance in housing policymaking around the world (Fields & Hodkinson, 2018; Kadi *et al.*, 2021), my cases tell a different story. Some housing policymaking appears to be, in response to

growing movements and their allies, shifting away from neoliberal economic frameworks, which has long consisted of deregulating rental markets, defunding and privatizing public housing, and providing tax breaks for large new development projects. The findings appear consistent with others (Diesselhorst, 2018; Möller, 2021). These policy episodes demonstrate a breakthrough to new regulations of rental markets, tenant services, legal representation, expropriation, and refunding public housing.

Comparing TMOs and their resources advantages

The TMOs across Los Angeles and Berlin had distinct resource advantages – money power and people power – driving referendum formation. ‘Measuring mobilization’, Tilly suggests, includes assembling ‘union membership’ and to ‘prepare comparable series of those indicators of the set of groups under study’ (1978, p. 79). People power can be approximated in (1) volunteer networks (interview and group chatroom), (2) membership numbers (organizational websites), (3) street protest numbers (newspaper reporting), and to a lesser degree (4) online followers.¹⁷ I measure money power primarily through ally organizational campaign contributions.

In Berlin, tenant movements had a greater resource advantage in terms of people power, having large tenant union membership, huge networks of volunteers for canvassing, and annual large-scale protests (performing WUNC). In California, TMOs had AHF as an organizational ally, funneling money into referendums to expand rent control.¹⁸ Whereas AHF leveraged over \$64 million in California to fund the gathering of 595,096 (Prop 10) and 987,991 (Prop 21) signatures to advance the referendums, in Berlin the campaign Expropriate DW & Co. only reported €45 thousand in contributions to gather 350,000 signatures.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Housing Is a Human Right (AHF’s front group) only had 6790 Twitter followers, whereas Berlin-based Expropriate DW & Co. has 27,300. Large housing justice demonstrations in Los Angeles amounted to a few hundred participants, whereas in Berlin they amounted to over 20,000. Membership numbers also differ substantially in the two cities. The Berlin Renters Association (est. 1888) has 180,000 members and Tenant Protection Association (est. 1953) has 37,000 members, among others. Whereas in LA the Coalition for Economic Survival (est. 1973) or Los Angeles Tenants Union (est. 2015) only a few thousand members.

Money power and people power influenced policy – alongside confounding factors – distinctively across the cases. In Los Angeles, money power drove policy episodes by funding referendums, which transferred into other states (New York and Oregon), and then, back to California, especially Los Angeles. In Berlin, people power – the ability to mobilize 2000 volunteers to canvas door-to-door for the Expropriate DW & Co. referendum, and semiregular mass protests of over 20,000 – fueled influence.

Conclusion

This article addresses the gap in our understanding of how tenant movements impact housing policy, with two central findings. First, despite different contexts,

Los Angeles and Berlin exhibited surprisingly similar housing policy episodes between 2008 and 2020. New rental housing policies had specific characteristics: (1) locally progressive and regionally moderate, (2) shifting from defensive to offensive, and (3) shifting from particular to universal. (4) The policies collectively demonstrate fractures forming, perhaps only preliminary, in the dominance of neoliberal economic theory in governing housing markets. The aim of the article has not been to explain why significantly different cities witnessed parallel policy changes, but rather explore the patterns of movement mechanisms transforming housing policy.

Second, the rise of tenant movements, new organizations, and coalitions, served as central political processes influencing these policy shifts. Tenant movements have advanced policy changes by (1) making demands, (2) forming coalitions, (3) promoting people's referendums, (4) engaging government officials in dialogue, and (5) transferring agents into government. However the movements leveraged and benefited from resources in different ways: people power in Berlin and money power in California. To not overstate the case, three mechanisms exogenous to the tenant movement also played a central role in the episodes: (1) allied interest group resource deployment, (2) policy competition and transfer, and (3) landlord opposition actions. The escalation of tenant movements and ally resources shifted policy agendas to advance breakthroughs in more tenant-friendly policies, which may suggest fractures in the domination of neoliberal policymaking, and warrants further investigation in linking movements to policy.

Notes

1. 'Vacancy control' constitutes a type of restriction on rental prices, whereby when a unit is 'vacated' it retains some form of price adjustment restraints. Thus, 'vacancy *de*control' allows landlords to increase rental prices, without restriction, upon vacancy.
2. For recent developments on how tenant movement organizations impact urban life see Michener & SoRelle (2022).
3. Participant observation included paid and unpaid work with housing rights organizations and co-teaching community engaged projects on housing.
4. TMOs here could be either legal entities or not, but groups with an established and long-running collective identity, vision for change, and action.
5. For example, in Berlin 'Gentrification Blog', <https://gentrificationblog.wordpress.com/> and 'Knock LA' in Los Angeles <https://knock-la.com/>. Podcasts in California include 'Renter Power Hour', <https://soundcloud.com/renterpowerhour>; in Berlin 'From People and Rents' ('Von Menschen und Mieten') by Expropriate DW & Co, <https://podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/von-menschen-und-mieten/id1555028798>. Educational video 'Cancel Rent & Mortgage Policy Platform' from Healthy LA, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaIvmwf6RFE&t=3s&ab_channel=LAFowardAction. All Accessed on 5 November 2021.
6. For more on contained versus transgressive dynamics, see McAdam *et al.* (2001, p. 6).
7. January 11 2018, Outside Sacramento Capitol (Smith, 2018).
8. See California Secretary of State info on Referendums: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/referendum> last accessed on 19 June 2021.
9. California has allowed local rent regulation since the state Supreme Court ruled in the case *Birkenfeld v. City of Berkeley* (1976). 17 Cal 3rd 129 that the state did not occupy the field of rent regulation and that local jurisdictions can adopt rent control.

10. Many of my interviewees (including lobbyists and government officials) interpreted Newsom's leadership on the issue directly in response to other states' policy adoption.
11. Center-right national coalition included the Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union, and Social Democratic Party.
12. Tweet by 'Asociación de Inquilinos de Hillside Villa' 山景園租戶協會, @hillside_villa, on September 24 2021: https://twitter.com/hillside_villa/status/1441244908954669061 Accessed on 6 November 2021.
13. 'Bonin pushes 'Homes Guarantee LA,' <https://11thdistrict.com/news/bonin-pushes-homes-guarantee-la/> accessed on 16 October 2021.
14. List of legislation 'approved,' 'previously introduced and in process,' and 'being introduced' on Mike Bonin's Homes Guarantee LA website: <https://11thdistrict.com/HomesGuaranteeLA/> Accessed on 6 November 2021.
15. Deutsche Wohnen is one of the largest private institutional landlords in Berlin.
16. During conference 'For a Right to Housing from New York to Berlin,' hosted by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, April 28 2021.
17. The measurement of people power here differs from a broader model laid out by Tattersall & Iveson (2022).
18. California Secretary of State, Ballot Measure Total Contributions, Proposition 10, <https://www.sos.ca.gov/campaign-lobbying/cal-access-resources/measure-contributions/2018-ballot-measure-contribution-totals/17-0041-expands-local-governments-authority-enact-rent-control-residential-property-initiative-statute> and Proposition 21 <https://www.sos.ca.gov/campaign-lobbying/cal-access-resources/measure-contributions/2020-ballot-measure-contribution-totals/proposition-21-expands-local-governments-authority-enact-rent-control-residential-property-initiative-statute>.
19. State Election Commissioner for Berlin (Landeswahlleiterin für Berlin): <https://www.berlin.de/wahlen/spenden/deutsche-wohnen-und-co-enteignen/> accessed on 12 October 2021.

Acknowledgements

This article improved significantly via feedback from my colleagues. Thanks to Chris Tilly, Jutta Allmendinger, Margit Mayer, Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Antonie Schmitz, Paavo Monkkonen, Andrej Holm, Allan Heskin, H. Bryan Card, Johannes Riedner, Jan Breidenbach, Greg Preston, Janina Dobrusskin, Sam Stein, Jason Spicer, Joseph Pierce, and three anonymous reviewers. Thanks for funding from the Haynes Foundation, Study Foundation of the Berlin House of Representatives, DAAD: German Academic Exchange Service, and the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at Johns Hopkins University. Mistakes are my own.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Kenton Card is a PhD Candidate, teacher, and filmmaker in the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is currently a Doctoral Fellow at the Berlin House of Representatives, the Haynes Foundation in Los Angeles, and formerly a Dissertation Research Grantee from the German Academic Exchange Service. In Berlin, he is a Guest Scholar at the Freie Universität Berlin and a Visiting Researcher at the Berlin Social Science Research Center. His latest film 'Geographies of Racial Capitalism with Ruth Wilson Gilmore' was released by the Antipode Foundation.

References

- Aalbers, M. B. (2019) Financial geography II: Financial geographies of housing and real estate, *Progress in Human Geography*, 43, pp. 376–387.
- Adkins, L., Cooper, M. & Konings, M. (2021) Class in the 21st century: Asset inflation and the new logic of inequality, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 53, pp. 548–572.
- Anzia, S. F. (2019) Looking for influence in all the wrong places: How studying subnational policy can revive research on interest groups, *The Journal of Politics*, 81, pp. 343–351.
- Beck, L. (2018) Berlin had some of the world's most restrictive rules for airbnb rentals. Now it's loosening up. *Washington Post*, March 28. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/berlin-had-some-of-the-worlds-most-restrictive-rules-for-airbnb-rentals-now-its-loosening-up/2018/03/27/e3acda90-2603-11e8-a227-fd2b009466bc_story.html.
- Bernt, M., Grell, B. & Holm, A. (2014) *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag).
- Burkhart, S., Manow, P. & Ziblatt, D. (2008) A more efficient and accountable federalism? An analysis of the consequences of germany's 2006 constitutional reform, *German Politics*, 17, pp. 522–540.
- Burstein, P. (1999) Social movements and public policy, in: Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam & Charles Tilly (Eds) *How Social Movements Matter*, Vol. 10, pp. 3–21 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Calatayud, J. M., Homolova, A., Lehmann, H. & Team Cities for Rent. (2021) Wie Internationale Investments Den Wohnungsmarkt Umwälzen. *Tagesspiegel*. <https://interaktiv.tagesspiegel.de/lab/mietmarktlabor-berlin-wie-internationales-investment-den-mietmarkt-veraendert/>.
- Card, K. (2018) Thinking across tactics of tenant movements: Los Angeles and Berlin, *Progressive City*, February. <https://www.progressivecity.net/single-post/2018/02/05/THINKING-ACROSS-TACTICS-OF-TENANTMOVEMENTS-LOS-ANGELES-AND-BERLIN?wix-music-comp-id=comp-ivh7vxm&wix-music-track-id=5629499534213120>.
- Card, K. (2020) Contradictions of housing commons: Between middle class and anarchist models in Berlin, in: D. Ozkan, & G. Baykal (Eds) *Commoning the City: Empirical Perspectives on Urban Ecology, Economics, and Ethics* (London: Routledge).
- Castells, M. (1983) *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Clapham, D. (2018) Housing theory, housing research and housing policy. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 35, pp. 163–177.
- DiCamillo, M. (2017) *Half Say Housing Affordability an 'Extremely Serious' Problem in Their Area. Majority Have Considered Moving Because of High Housing Costs, 25% out of State* (University of California, Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies).
- Diesselhorst, J. (2018) Wenn stadtpolitische bewegungen das terrain des staats betreten: Zwischen berliner mietenvolksentscheid und „wohnraumversorgungsgesetz, *PROKLA. Zeitschrift Für Kritische Sozialwissenschaft*, 48, pp. 265–282.
- Dillon, L. (2020) Why liberal California keeps saying no to rent control. *Los Angeles Times*, November 4. sec. Housing & Homelessness. <https://www.latimes.com/homeless-housing/story/2020-11-04/liberal-california-defeated-rent-control-again-housing-crisis>.
- Dreier, P. (1984) The tenants' movement in the United States, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 8, pp. 255–279.
- Fahrn, J. (2021) Berlin trend: Mieten sind für die Berliner größtes Problem. *Berliner Morgenpost*, June 18. <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article232574739/Berlin-Trend-Mieten-sind-fuer-die-Berliner-groesstes-Problem.html>.
- Fields, D. & Hodkinson, S. N. (2018) Housing policy in crisis: an international perspective, *Housing Policy Debate*, 28, pp. 1–5.
- Fields, D. & Uffer, S. (2016) The financialisation of rental housing: a comparative analysis of New York city and Berlin, *Urban Studies*, 53, pp. 1486–1502.

- Flaming, D., Burns, P., Matsunaga, M., Ponce, M., Baar, K., Bostic, R.W., Bennett, M. & Sumner, G. (2009). *Economic Study of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance and the Los Angeles Housing Market*. Economic Roundtable.
- Gamson, W. A. (1975) *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Homewood: Dorsey Press). HN64. G35 1975.
- Giugni, M. (1999) Introductions: How social movements matter: past research, present problems, future developments, in: Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam & Charles Tilly (Eds) *How Social Movements Matter*, Vol. 10, pp. xiii–xxxiii (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Haas, G. & Heskin, A. D. (1981) Community struggles in los angeles, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 5, pp. 546–564.
- Hall, P. A. & Soskice, D. (2001) *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hamann, U. & Türkmén, C. (2020) Communities of struggle: the making of a protest movement around housing, migration and racism beyond identity politics in Berlin, *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 8, pp. 515–531.
- Heskin, A. D. (1981) The history of tenants in the United States, struggle and ideology, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 5, pp. 178–204.
- Holm, A. (2021) From protest to program Berlin's anti-gentrification-movement since reunification, in: L. Fregolent & O. Nel-lo (Eds) *Social Movements and Public Policies in Southern European Cities*, pp. 33–52. Urban and Landscape Perspectives (Cham: Springer). doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-52754-9_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52754-9_3)
- Howell, K. (2018) Housing and the grassroots: Using local and expert knowledge to preserve affordable housing, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 38, pp. 437–448.
- Joubert, T. & Hodkinson, S. N. (2018) Beyond the rent strike, towards the commons: why the housing question requires activism that generates its own alternatives. in Gray Rowman (Ed) *Rent and Its Discontents: A Century of Housing Struggle. Transforming Capitalism* (London: Littlefield International).
- Kadi, J., Vollmer, L. & Stein, S. (2021) Post-Neoliberal housing policy? Disentangling recent reforms in New York, Berlin and Vienna, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 28, pp. 353–374.
- Kemeny, J. (2006) Corporatism and housing regimes. *housing, Theory and Society*, 23, pp. 1–18.
- Kemeny, J. & Lowe, S. (1998) Schools of comparative housing research: from convergence to divergence, *Housing Studies*, 13, pp. 161–176.
- Kettunen, H. & Ruonavaara, H. (2021) Rent regulation in 21st century Europe. Comparative perspectives, *Housing Studies*, 36, pp. 1446–1468.
- Kholodilin, K. A., Mense, A. & Michelsen, C. (2016) Die mietpreisbremse wirkt bisher nicht, *DIW Wochenbericht*, 83, pp. 491–499.
- Lima, V. (2021) Housing coalition dynamics: a comparative perspective, *Comparative European Politics*, 19, pp. 534–553.
- Lira, M. & March, H. (2021) Learning through housing activism in Barcelona: Knowledge production and sharing in neighbourhood-based housing groups, *Housing Studies*, pp. 1–20.
- Los Angeles City Planning. 2020. *New Housing Poll Reveals That Angelenos Support More Housing Citywide & Support Tenant Protections*. <https://planning.lacity.org/blog/new-housing-poll-reveals-angelenos-support-more-housing-citywide-support-tenant-protections>
- Marcuse, P. (1991) *Missing Marx: A Personal and Political Journal of a Year in East Germany, 1989-1990* (New York: Monthly Review Press).
- Marcuse, P. (1999) Housing movements in the USA, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 16, pp. 67–86.
- Marcuse, P. & Madden, D. (2016) *Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis* (London: Verso Books).

- Martinez, M. A. (2019) Bitter wins or a long-distance race? Social and political outcomes of the Spanish housing movement, *Housing Studies*, 34, pp. 1588–1611.
- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S. & Tilly, C. (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*, *Cambridge Series in Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Michener, J. & SoRelle, M. (2022) Politics, power, and precarity: How tenant organizations transform local political life, *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, 11, pp. 209–236.
- Mironova, O. (2019) Defensive and expansionist struggles for housing justice, *Radical Housing Journal*, 1, pp. 135–152.
- Möller, P. (2021) Der Einsteig Zum Ausstieg. Der Berliner Mietendeckel Könnte Eine Post-Neoliberale Phase in Der Wohnungspolitik Einleiten, in: Philipp P. Metzger (Ed), *Wohnkonzerne Enteignen! Die Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Ein Grundbedürfnis Zu Profit Machen*, pp. 205–224 (Mandelbaum: Kritik & Utopie).
- Nelson, K., Gromis, A., Kuai, Y. & Lens, M. C. (2021) Spatial concentration and spillover: Eviction dynamics in neighborhoods of Los Angeles, California, 2005–2015, *Housing Policy Debate*, 31, pp. 670–695.
- Oreskes, B., Smith, D. & Lauter, D. (2019) 95% of voters say homelessness is L.A.'s biggest problem, times poll finds. 'you can't escape it', *Los Angeles Times*, November 14. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-11-14/homeless-housing-poll-opinion>.
- Paul, U. (2019) Exklusive Forsa-Umfrage: Jeder zweite Berliner hat Angst vor steigenden Mietkosten. *Berliner Zeitung*, March 1. <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/mensch-metropole/exklusive-forsa-umfrage-jeder-zweite-berliner-hat-angst-vor-steigenden-mietkosten-li.21378>.
- Pickvance, C. (1985) The rise and fall of urban movements and the role of comparative analysts, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 3, pp. 31–53.
- Piketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Harvard University Press).
- Ray, R., Ong, P. M. & González, S. R. (2014) Impacts of the widening divide: Los Angeles at the forefront of the rent burden crisis. UCLA Center for the Study of Inequality. <https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/Documents/areas/ctr/ziman/2014-08WPrev.pdf>
- Rink, D. & Vollmer, L. (2019) Mietenwahnsinn stoppen!: netzwerke und mobilisierungen der mieter*innenbewegung in deutschen großstädten, *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen*, 32, pp. 337–349.
- Roy, A. (2017) Dis/possessive collectivism: Property and personhood at city's end, *Geoforum*, 80, pp. A1–A11.
- Slater, T. (2021) From displacements to rent control and housing justice, *Urban Geography*, 42, pp. 701–712.
- Smith, E. D. (2018) If not rent control, then what? California renters can't afford to wait. *The Sacramento Bee*, January 12. <https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/erika-d-smith/article194389979.html>
- Soaita, A. M., Marsh, A. & Gibb, K. (2021) Policy movement in housing research: a critical interpretative synthesis, *Housing Studies*, pp. 1–21.
- Tattersall, A. & Iveson, K. (2022) People power strategies in contemporary housing movements, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 22, pp. 251–277.
- Teitz, M. B. (1998) The politics of rent control, in: W. Dennis Keating, Michael B. Teitz & Andrejs Skaburskis (Eds) *Rent Control: Regulation and the Rental Housing Market*, pp. 61–78 (New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University).
- Tilly, C. (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: Random House).
- Tilly, C. (1999) From interactions to outcomes in social movements, in: Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam & Charles Tilly (Eds), *How Social Movements Matter*, Vol. 10, pp. 253–270 (University of Minnesota Press).
- Tilly, C. (2010) *Regimes and repertoires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Vollmer, L. (2015) Die berliner mieter_innenbewegung zwischen lokalen konflikten und globalen widersprüchen, *Sozial. Geschichte Online*, 17, pp. 51–82.
- Vollmer, L. (2017) Keine angst vor alternativen. Ein neuer munizipalismus. Über den kongress FearlessCities, Barcelona 10./11. Juni 2017, Sub\Urban. *Zeitschrift Für Kritische Stadtforschung*, 5, pp. 147–156.

- Wijburg, G., Aalbers, M. B. & Heeg, S. (2018) The financialisation of rental housing 2.0: Releasing housing into the privatised mainstream of Capital accumulation, *Antipode*, 50, pp. 1098–1119.
- Yerena, A. (2019) Strategic action for affordable housing: How advocacy organizations accomplish policy change, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.
- Zald, M. N. & Ash, R. (1966) Social movement organizations: Growth, decay and change, *Social Forces*, 44, pp. 327–341.

Appendix

Table A1. Index of supplementary referendums in Los Angeles.

	Los Angeles	Status	Policy source
2008	Measure R: Los Angeles County Sales Tax	+	https://www.metro.net/about/measure-r/
2012	Measure J: Los Angeles County Sales Tax for Transportation,	+	https://ceo.lacounty.gov/measure-j-background/#:~:text=On%20November%203%2C%202020%2C%20the,development%2C%20job%20training%2C%20small%20business
2015	\$15 per h Minimum Wage Initiative	+/-	http://ens.lacity.org/clk/elections/ckelections52490036_09102014.pdf
2016	Measure M: California, Sales Tax	+	https://www.lavote.net/Documents/Election_Info/11082016-Measures-Appearing-on-Ballot.pdf
2016	Measure HHH: Homelessness Reduction and Prevention Housing, and Facilities	+	https://www.lamayor.org/HomelessnessTrackingHHH
2016	Measure JJJ: Affordable Housing and Labor Standards Initiative	+	https://bca.lacity.org/measure-JJJ#:~:text=Passed%20by%20the%20voters%20on,fees%20into%20the%20City's%20Affordable

Type: TD-P: Top-down policy; BU-R: Bottom-up referendum; AS: Agenda Setting. Status: + passed, - died, +/- mixed outcome.