



The Arctic University of Norway (UiT)

Department of Social Sciences

Human Rights Policy and Practice

Dissertation, 30 ECTS

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Policy and Practice and the Right to Housing in Europe

How do activists in neoliberal urban environments
frame and address the housing crisis?

by

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22.05.2023

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA
Erasmus Mundus Human Rights Policy and Practice Master's Programme

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Spring 2023



Acknowledgement

I am grateful for the opportunities this programme and the scholarship have offered me and want to express my gratitude to the professors, colleagues, family and friends who have accompanied and supported me on my way. I want to especially thank Anniken Førde, who supervised this thesis for her invaluable advice and expertise.

Abstract

Cities all over the world are rising up against the neoliberal structures holding their living places captive. The struggles have been labelled cost of living crisis, taking back the right to our city or unaffordability of housing. According to David Harvey, creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights. But living in a city, the social reality does not always let people choose the place they live in. Housing has become a commodity in many countries and cities worldwide. Facing these violations of fundamental human rights, people become activists, advocating equal access to adequate housing for everyone. This thesis aims at looking into the right to housing in policy and practice in Europe. Through a comparative case study approach combining Romania, Turkey and Germany and qualitative interviews with activists in these countries, it develops knowledge on how the right to housing can be addressed and realised in order to overcome the housing crisis in Europe.

Key words

right to housing, comparative case study, Romania, Turkey, Germany, neoliberal urban politics, activism, right to the city

Word count

18,672

Contents

1. Introduction – Europe’s housing crisis	1
2. Theoretical Framework: Housing in neoliberal times	4
2.1 Globalisation and urban development	4
2.2 The neoliberal city: A critical approach	5
2.3 A review: Capitalist economic developments and urban transformations	6
2.4 The right to the city and activism	9
2.5 Conclusive Remarks: A comparison	11
3. Methodological Remarks: Research Design	12
4. Legal Analysis: The right to housing	16
4.1 International legal framework	16
4.2 The right to housing in Germany	18
4.3 The right to housing in Turkey	19
4.4 The right to housing in Romania	20
4.5 Conclusive remarks: Similarities and differences	21
5. Analysis: Findings from three countries	23
5.1 Multi-layered violations of the right to housing – <i>between evictions, discrimination, unaffordability and homelessness</i>	23
5.2 Challenges, strategies and the daily struggle of housing rights activists	28
5.2.1 Demands posed: <i>“Demanding what can be done in the existing legal framework and also attempting to go beyond that“</i>	28
5.2.2 Challenges faced and strategies applied: <i>“We use what we have at our disposal. And this kind of works in a way“</i>	33
5.2.3 Creating solidarity and mobilising the public: <i>“I didn’t expect it to be that difficult“</i>	37
5.2.4 Conclusive Remarks: The daily struggle	41
5.3 Discussion and recommendations: <i>“We just need some kind of spark to kind of actually put that in political terms“</i>	43
6. Conclusion – Addressing the housing crisis in Europe	47
Bibliography	50
Appendix	A-1

1. Introduction – Europe’s housing crisis

“The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart’s desire. [...] The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights“

– David Harvey, 2008

“For people that have money, it’s not a big problem. They can just sell their houses and then they can move if there is a problem about like earthquakes, etc. But here in this apartment where my aunt’s living, they cannot leave their apartment because they don’t have anywhere to go“

– Tuğba, housing activist Istanbul¹

From Brazil to Turkey and from Egypt to Germany – we have seen in the past ten years cities all over the world rising up against the neoliberal structures holding their living places captive. The struggles have been labelled cost of living crisis, taking back the right to our city or unaffordability of housing and the aim of non-governmental organisations (NGO) can be framed as claiming back the power of shaping the places they live in. Creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights. It is also enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals², underlined by The World Bank (2022) and put forward by a number of global movements, networks and documents published³. But living in a city, the social reality does not always let people choose the place they live in as Tuğba’s statement shows. Today, even cities of smaller scales experience the impact of global and capitalist influences and embody the processes and consequences in their economic structure as well as in the spatial and even social dimensions of their landscape. Housing has become a commodity in many countries and cities worldwide and divisions in the spatial landscape and social inequality are represented by segregation and housing unevenness in urban settings. It is in these contexts and facing these violations of fundamental human rights that people around the world take up the struggle, organise themselves and become activists, advocating equal access to adequate housing for everyone. Against this background, this thesis aims at looking into the right to housing in policy and practice in Europe and explores the question: How do activists in neoliberal urban environments frame and address the

¹ The interview was part of the research conducted for this thesis.

² More specifically goal 11 “Sustainable cities and communities“ to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable: sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11 (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

³ Compare for example: The World Charter for the Right to the City; European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City; World Charter on the Right to the City.

housing crisis in Europe? Considering the role they play, the aim is to develop knowledge on how the right to housing can be advocated and realised in order to overcome the housing crisis in Europe.

Within this scope, I will consider the following research questions:

- How is housing addressed in Romania, Germany and Turkey in legal frameworks, policy and practice and what violations of the right to housing occur?
- How do NGOs in different countries address the issue?
What are their demands? What challenges do they face? What strategies and activities do they develop?
- How can successes in fighting the housing crisis in Europe be achieved?

In the past years, the spiral of rent prices has been constantly going upwards in many cities worldwide. Having lived in Germany, Romania and Turkey, I observed that housing is becoming more and more expensive. Even in a town as small as Timișoara in Romania with 400,000 inhabitants, I was realising how gentrification was unfolding, new real estate projects popping up everywhere, while poorer parts of the population had to move to the outskirts of the city. On the other hand, however, having a secure, private retreat is a fundamental basic need of every human being. One's own home is an existential centre of life and must not become a luxury. In its very essence, it is a human right. Here the motivation for this thesis was born. During my research, I have seen the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria where tens of thousands of people died under the rubble, and millions of people lost their homes. Housing is closely connected to other rights and can even put the life of people in danger when the places that we call home turn out to be inadequate. Built spaces are political products. Someone plans and monitors them, and someone designs, constructs, controls and sells them. At the other end, someone buys, rents them, moves into them and builds up a life inside of them. In order to capture the experience of a broad range of urban places, countries and activists, I have chosen to do case studies and conduct interviews in Romania, Germany and Turkey. The methodological approach is a comparative one; not of comparing one to one but of tracing across in order to learn from each other. I hereby seek to explore housing policies and urban realities in the places the interview partners were located.

The analytical framework for this thesis is formed most importantly by the work of David Harvey (2006) on the neoliberalisation of urban space and in this context the financialisation

of housing, and Lefebvre's call (1968/2009) to "the right to the city". I will also look at the latter one's practical realisation referring to other authors who have studied different social movements around the world that can be united under this slogan. Building upon this theoretical basis, housing policies and the (lack of) realisation of the human right to adequate housing can be contextualised and understood as a part of global processes that also link different cities and form the experience of their inhabitants in similar ways. I argue that violations of the right to housing are the direct result of neoliberal redevelopment. Urbanisation as the process of urban development is related to theories of globalisation and neoliberalism. This thesis aims at adding to the theoretical picture the experience on the ground by analysing the daily work and struggle of activists fighting for the right to housing in their cities and countries. The discussion will focus on the experiences of the activists I interviewed. However, the perspectives of those affected by violations and of political stakeholders need further consideration.

Starting with the theoretical approach, I will in the third chapter go on and outline methodological concerns. Chapter four will follow with the legal international as well as national framework and the document analysis of constitutions, laws and regulations. Against this backdrop, the main part of this thesis, the analysis of qualitative interviews with activists from Romania, Turkey and Germany, will assess and compare insights on how they address violations of the right to housing, frame demands and policies, develop strategies and implement actions. Concluding with a discussion of lessons we can draw from the data collected and ideas of how to convey housing for all, I will come back to the initially posed question and illustrate the central role activists play in human rights struggles and in claiming back "one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights".

2. Theoretical Framework: Housing in neoliberal times

More than fifty per cent of the world is living in cities today (The World Bank, 2022). Over the last twenty years, the growth of these economic centres has accelerated remarkably. Today, we read about issues that are connected to this form of spatial organisation: overcrowding, homelessness, ghettoisation and unaffordability of housing. The development of cities, their growth, upsides and downsides are closely connected to global processes and the spread of capitalism. Thus, we will see in this chapter how the development of urban places takes on a certain shape under the influence of neoliberal processes and how access to housing is defined by it. The city as the space where global processes intersect will serve as the analytical field. Starting with the theoretical framework of the connection between globalisation and urban development, I will go on and critically explore the structures of neoliberal cities and underline the application of a critical urban studies approach. On this basis, I will continue to practically reflect on capitalist economic developments and urban transformations in Romania, Turkey and Germany, reviewing previous research. Finally, activism will be contextualised within the “right to the city“ movement.

2.1 Globalisation and urban development

Megacities, global cities, metropolises, world cities – there have been many denominations for the spatial organisation of human settlement that we call the city in the course of the past twenty years. What they all have in common is the aim to find a term that captures all the facets, processes and changes that went along with the globalisation of the world and the acceleration and urbanisation of life on it.

Today, globalisation has become a fact, in practice and in theory (Rehbein and Schwengel, 2008). In the past fifty years, the world has seen processes of acceleration that have irreversibly impacted life on this planet. No theoretical debate has been that dominant, vivid and polarising in the past twenty to thirty years spanning disciplines. The core characteristic of modern life that everyone can agree on is that the world is growing closer together (Rehbein and Schwengel, 2008, p. 11). Not in a geographical sense, but the ascendance of information technologies, transportation, communication and the flows of capital, goods and people are crucial features of the processes of globalisation. Litonjua (2008, p. 254) argues,

“globalization is the global spread of the economic system of capitalism. Promoted by the ideology of neoliberalism”. I have to add that globalisation encompasses the economic system as well as culture, the social system and scapes of ideas (Appadurai, 1996). In research, it is often that the impacts of globalisation are studied either on the global or on the local level. But urban development and with it housing are impacted in various places in similar ways by processes that have their origin on the global level. Therefore, an analysis of the work of housing activists in different localities will link the global and the local.

In what he calls “Overheating“, Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2016, p. 85) observed that “of all the overheating processes witnessed in the early twenty-first-century world, urbanisation is one of the most striking ones, possibly the contemporary development with the greatest implications for social organisation“. Neoliberal urban development influences not only the landscape of the city but also its social structure. The space⁴ of the city must not be seen as something static or secluded but as the object of struggles of power and continuous change: “Urban patterns are not inevitable. Patterns of growth and decline are not simply the product of human desires“ (Levine, 2016, p. 13). They are created, shaped and contested by different actors in the city: residents, political administration and financial interests. People can be included, excluded, can have access to and can be deprived of space. But they can as well reclaim it. An observation that will become important in researching access to housing.

2.2 The neoliberal city: A critical approach

Neoliberalism as an ideology is promoting the economic system of capitalism in a globalised world. Beginning from the 1950s up until today we can observe that this system has “restored power to a narrowly defined capitalist class“ (Harvey, 2005, p. 38). There are great gaps in society where land is owned by a few. As Harvey (2005, p. 38) underlines in his critical analysis of the history of neoliberalism: “For the elite, living comfortably in their gilded ghettos, the world must indeed seem a better place [...] leaving a pittance for the rest of us“. Building upon this theoretical foundation, it is a critical urban studies approach (Davies and Imbroscio, 2010) that I use in my research to understand and change social reality.

⁴ Also on the concept of space, Henri Lefebvre (1991, p. 35) in his book *Production of Space* remarks that “space serves as an instrument of thought and action; it is at the same time a means of production, a means of control, hence of domination and power, but it partially escapes, as such, from those whom it serves“.

In relation to the urban process, neoliberalism and the capitalist mode of production are interrelated with themes of accumulation and class struggle: The “urban process implies the creation of a material physical infrastructure for production“ (Harvey, 2009b, p. 116). In this understanding, urban development provides the means for the capitalist system to function. Eriksen (2016, p. 88) takes up this argument and follows that “the growth of cities is *de facto* a result of the neoliberal hegemony“, where urbanisation results from “accumulation by dispossession“. This term includes practices of land grabbing, privatisation of public spaces and property speculation.

In addition the pull factors of the city as well as the direct impact, that neoliberalism on the urban living environment has, need to be taken into consideration. As Simmel (2002, p. 12) argued already in 1903 in his essay on The Metropolis and Mental Life and what created a foundation for urban sociology: “The metropolis has always been the seat of money economy because the many-sidedness and concentration of commercial activity have given the medium of exchange an importance which it could not have acquired in the commercial aspects of rural life“. Thus, there must be a certain characteristic that the city offers, which supports the settling of the money economy back then and today with multinational corporations and foreign investment as two important factors. As David Harvey (2009b, p. 116) underlines: “the 'urban' has a specific meaning under the capitalist mode of production“. The urban process is inextricably linked to themes of accumulation and class struggle. If we follow this argument until the end, urban development, including planning strategies and housing policies, serves profit-making. Urban lifestyles and services changed so that they could absorb vast surpluses of money. Those who do not have access to the places, from which the capital comes from, are excluded from the new living spaces.

2.3 A review: Capitalist economic developments and urban transformations

Since the 1970s Turkey and West Germany implemented a restructuring of their economy according to liberal market ideas and global processes. After 1990 Romania’s and East Germany’s economic development has been shaped lastingly by the transition from socialism to capitalism. This shift has defined the path the development of urban places would take and whose impact we can observe today in the three biggest cities of Romania, Bucharest, Timișoara and Cluj as well as Berlin and Istanbul. Today, e.g. Turkey’s economy is highly

dependent on the construction sector and Romania's economy relies on foreign investment. I will take a closer look at the economic history, urban planning and housing policies as well as the underlying ideology and inherent inequalities reviewing relevant literature to create the foundation on which this thesis will further build.

Although the three countries have different histories, the transformation to a liberal market has formed all three nations in similar ways with an impact that can be traced into the present. While Turkey and West Germany experienced the transition earlier on, Romania and East Germany followed in 1990. The latter two depict the particularities of the system change that will have to be considered. After forty years of communism in December 1989, Romania has undergone a fundamental transformation of its political, economic, social and legal systems in its transition to capitalism⁵. One of the biggest structural changes has been the privatisation of the formerly state-owned industry and through neoliberal policies, the private sector started to boom. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, East Germany as well joined the capitalist market economy. Since the 1980s and more intensively with the new government in 2002 Turkey and since the 1950s West Germany's strategy had been to attract foreign direct investment. Drastic austerity and inflation measures were the strategy of the Turkish government described as "neoliberal populism" by Yilmaz (2020). Today it is criticised for its high dependence on the construction sector, which only offers short-term yields.⁶

Not only the country as a whole but also particular cities were very successful in attracting investors. Bucharest, Timișoara and Cluj, Berlin and Istanbul illustrate the impact the economic shift meant on the social structure of their urban landscape. Romania and East Germany, societies, which had been built for forty years with a strong focus on housing as a public good, experienced a sudden shift to privatisation of housing and the neoliberalisation of space. In studying cities in that geographical area we must not "reject and/or ignore the significance of persisting legacies from the socialist period" (Andrusz, Harloe and Szelenyi, 1996, p. 2).

⁵ After a short depression in the 1990s, the economy started to grow steadily, registering on average 4.9 % of annual GDP growth in the 2000s, followed by an even faster growth rate of 5.3 % per year during the 2010s (NIS, 2023). The Guardian wrote in 2017 that "Romania shrugs off label of Europe's poor man as economy booms" Information retrieved from: www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/14/romania-economy-booming (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

⁶ See for a more detailed evaluation of inequalities in the building sector in Turkey: <https://merip.org/2018/12/unequal-turkey-under-construction/> (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

In all three countries, several authors added to the critical analysis of urban transformations and the market-oriented urban management style with new perspectives. The urban restructuring was often accompanied by a process of privatisation (Aguirre, Eick and Reese, 2006) that resulted in serious spatial inequalities and locally uneven development (Soaita, 2014; Smith, 2010). For Istanbul, authors have reported on an increasing number of profit-led and state-led urban projects and policies that result in displacement caused by gentrification and spatial inequality (cf. Uzun, 2022; Can, 2021; Serin, Smith and Williams, 2020; Cavuşoğlu and Strutz, 2014). Studies of scholars in Berlin have shown that a few thousand multimillionaires own almost half of the city (Trautvetter and Knechtel, 2023; Holm, 2020); profit-oriented housing companies and investors own a large share of rental property, a situation that is highly criticised.⁷ Ideological assumptions of the neoliberal model of development are underlying decisions of public servants in Romania, Turkey and Germany. For the former, the belief, that not the state, but the market will offer the best solutions to development problems is a huge “ideological baggage“ (Cojocaru, 2020, p. 37), which negatively impacts the development of cities. Areas are privatised and old buildings are demolished to redevelop plots of land that are left to real estate developers in “trusting“ them to build something that will benefit the whole of society. Several organisations raised the accusation that privatisation⁸ and lack of development of public and social housing marked the state as a definite accomplice to the ambitions of transnational neoliberal finance and real estate sectors (FCDL, 2014). Although in many cities the housing stock is rising, it is private housing that dominates, while affordable and social housing remain left unattended.⁹

Segregation has been defined as the process by which polarisation and spatial division of residents of a city according to certain characteristics can be observed and a large body of research has shown how socioeconomic and ethnic segregation exist in different cities (c.f. Bolt, Van Kempen and Van Ham, 2008; Wacquant, 2008; Musterd and Ostendorf, 2005; Wilson, 1987). Housing takes a central role in the production of spatialised divisions in capitalist cities (Vincze and Zamfir, 2019, p. 439). For Romania, many authors have argued

⁷ It culminated in the movement *Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen* (Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co.). For more information on the movement visit: <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2022-02-11/rethinking-land-and-relation-in-berlins-struggle-for-housing-justice/> (Access: 19 May 2023)

⁸ In Romania after 1990 this process was paired with restitutions, see Lancione (2018) on the issue.

⁹ Romania has one of the highest home ownership rates in Europe (95 %), whereas in Germany it was only 50 % (increasing trend) and in Turkey 57 % (declining trend) in 2021 where more people has to rent places (Eurostat, 2023) and is exposed to e.g. rising rents, shortage of affordable and available housing in cities.

that a racist distribution of property lies at the heart of the post-socialist property regime (Teodorescu, 2019; Vilenica, 2019). A distribution that continues to disadvantage Roma in the housing market.¹⁰ In Turkey, Roma are targeted as well together with Kurdish communities in urban redevelopment where earthquake resilience plans become a central tool for turning space into profit (Gambetti and Jongerden, 2015; Dikeç, 2002). Akçakaya Waite (2023) argues that problems associated with the right to the city particularly affect vulnerable groups in society that experience several forms of exclusion in urban settings.

The housing market in Romania and Turkey is thus one that includes race and ethnicity as a category and disadvantages urban minorities who have also become the target of house evictions and displacement¹¹ in recent times. An analysis of housing policies in different cities must take into consideration the specific geographical, historical and political contexts they are located in.

2.4 The right to the city and activism

In the past decade, we have observed how cities joined in solidarity against neoliberal politics and each rose up to claim their “right to the city“. Many activists and citizens worldwide rediscover the term by Lefebvre (1968/2009). How we can put it to use and what opportunities it offers will complete the theoretical framework.

David Harvey (2019, p. 5) takes up Lefebvre’s concept and defines it as “claiming some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade“. He poses the question of how cities might be reorganised in more socially just and equal ways and how they can become the starting point of anti-capitalist resistance. The right to the city is more than a right of individual access as it relies on a collective power (Harvey, 2008) and therefore Harvey (2019) supports it as a demand, slogan and political idea that can combine different struggles within the locality of the city.

¹⁰ After 1990 the public housing stock in Romania went through a process of privatisation (cf. Popovici, 2020). As was the case in most Eastern European countries, legislation was introduced that enabled a vast majority of the population to buy nationalised property, namely the apartments they were occupying. In this context, many Roma who belonged to lower-income parts of the population were not able to acquire the places they were living in but had to continue to rent a place.

¹¹ While in Romania evictions are taking place, in Turkey we find informal settlements that face displacement in urban redevelopment projects, so-called *gecekondus*, that were formed by migrants from Anatolia in Istanbul on illegally occupied state-owned land due to a lack of social housing. Since the 2000s the state has labelled them “invaders“ (cf. Can, 2020).

It is in cities that different classes, ethnic groups and professions come together beyond social divides and differing interests and unite in the common goal of gaining the right and the power of deciding how the places they live in are going to look like. As Judith Butler (2020, p. 203) in her call for resistance observes: “We do not have to love one another to engage in meaningful solidarity“.

In recent years, Europe has seen an increased number of protests for the right to the city and on the issue of housing. The European action coalition for the right to housing and to the city and the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) are the most prominent examples.¹² In single countries, activism can build up on a history of civic engagement e.g. in Italy (Mudu, 2004) or new movements develop such as in Spain (Di Felicianantonio, 2017; García-Lamarca, 2017) defending the right to housing and to the city. Their analysis shows that NGOs succeeded in implementing a new agenda by imagining alternatives to the neoliberal housing model. Some have already realised alternative models for housing and social coexistence in urban places, for example through a decommodification of housing in South Korea (Ronald and Hyunjeong, 2012) or the development of social housing in Israel (Schipper, 2015). Sociologists in their research of urban movements in Budapest and Bucharest have shown how opportunities for new alliances are emerging (Florea, Gagya and Jacobson, 2018). Referring to these examples, this thesis will explore how a different future can be made possible through the action of housing activists.

Harvey (2019, xvii) asks in his influential book *Rebel Cities*: “How else and where else can we come together to articulate our collective cries and demands?“ Where else if not in the cities on this planet? He speaks of an urban revolution and of urban places as the context in which “something different“ can not only be envisioned but where it is also possible to create change. Gibson-Graham (2006) talks of the “politics of possibilities“ in which social movements negotiate. But it only begins with imagining new possibilities and has to end with the final goal – as already Lefebvre knew and many organisations are aware of today – to overcome the capitalist system with its elites and injustices.

¹² Access to their websites: <https://housingnotprofit.org> and <https://www.feantsa.org/en> (Accessed: 19 May 2023). BAG W was a member of FEANTSA and Căși sociale ACUM! was a member of the European action coalition.

2.5 Conclusive Remarks: A comparison

We have seen how in Germany, Turkey and Romania, daily life and public space become more and more intertwined with the capital-scapes of the city, where the resident becomes a consumer and the purpose of space is the (re-)production of capital. This conclusion aligns with Harvey's criticism that capitalism annihilates space to ensure its own reproduction (Harvey, 2009a). While often the aim of urban projects is labelled "regeneration", the results are gentrification and segregation in the city where lower-income groups have to move to the peripheries of the city. The place where people live directly influences the goods one can access: health services, education, public transport, consumerism, and solidifies class demarcations. Questions regarding the right to affordable housing, equality and equality of opportunities, cumulate in the call for the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1968/2009).

In urban places several struggles take place and the aim has to be to unite them under the common goal of "the right to the city" in order to overcome the neoliberal structure that dominates our cities today. Purcell (2009, p. 291) calls it "networks of equivalence" which are made up "of different but equivalent popular struggles" and Harvey labels it an urban revolution. Activism fighting for the right to housing in Europe can be understood as part of this greater fight for the right to shape the places we occupy.

Against this backdrop, a case study of the legal framework in the researched countries regarding the right to housing, shortcomings in the realisation and activists' strategies will follow in the next chapters. Applying a critical urban studies approach and relating to the theoretical framework, the data analysis will locate housing policies within greater processes and include the intersection of capitalist development, neoliberal policies, socialist city structures and discrimination.

3. Methodological Remarks: Research Design

“For one week now we have been watching the news from morning till evening and talking to friends on the phone. Each day I feel more paralysed. Helpless. Seeing those pictures, realising the horror. [...] How can I ask people for interviews now? It just feels wrong.”¹³

It was in the early morning of the 6th of February 2023 when the news reached us. The earthquakes in Turkey and Syria that I experienced while I was in Istanbul had a considerable impact on the direction my research took. I had arrived one week earlier with the intention of reaching out to an NGO and conducting two to three interviews. At that moment, it felt inappropriate and irrelevant to even consider contacting them regarding their participation. Reflecting with some distance, more importantly, have the events shaken up a debate on urban “regeneration“ and neoliberal housing policies. It made me realise once again that cities are the result of complex social and political processes. So it is up to us to take action. We have to ask and answer the question: How do we want to live in the future? While these are some considerations that came up during my research, I will further reflect on the methodological implications that they had.

Sometimes when we are doing research the urgency of our work is put so vehemently in front of our eyes that it leaves us frozen in the moment. But when the aftershock is passing we are left with anger and a realisation of how relevant it is what we are doing. During my stay in Turkey, the absurdity of the moment caught me. Here I was trying to investigate the right to housing and then suddenly it is violated to such an extreme extent. It woke me up at the same time and gave my purpose impetus. It reminded me of how important it is to do research, to be critical and to translate all this into action – so as to create change in the end. The right to housing is interconnected with other human rights and what I did not see as clearly before it can even be interrelated with the right to life. Thus, there was an urgency to what I was doing that I felt throughout my research and especially in the interviews with activists from Turkey.

Initially, my interest in housing rights arose from the work I did in Germany for a neighbourhood association called bi’bak that developed projects to counteract urban injustices within the city of Berlin and that visiting and living in different cities in Europe had intensified. In Berlin, London, Istanbul and Timișoara, I saw how the right to housing was

¹³ Excerpt from the author’s diary on 13 February 2023, one week after the earthquakes took place.

violated and wanted to find ways of counteracting this development. So I decided to turn this interest into the topic for my master's thesis and to collect the experiences of activists fighting for equal access to housing in Europe. This motivation is not only a source of insight but can also constitute a personal bias toward the field (Maxwell, 2008, p. 224) or as Robson (2002, p. 273) phrases it: "Biases are difficult to rule out". But the bias was partly intended and appreciated as well as paired with critical subjectivity, in the sense of quality of awareness (Maxwell, 2008, p. 225). Being conscious about my own position within and toward the field I realised that emotion and empathy are considered important aspects of my research. As my aim was to get an idea of the transnational picture and to come up with ideas that could be applied at least in a European context and maybe even adopted globally; the idea occurred to me to apply a comparative case study approach and conduct research in the three countries I knew best: Germany, Romania and Turkey. My intention was not to compare the experiences one to one but to use a strategy of "tracing across", suggested by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017), to see context not as fixed but relational. Having also knowledge of all three languages was another advantage I wanted to use. Moreover, through an internship in the city of Timișoara for the Intercultural Institute in 2019 and my work in Berlin, I had access to organisations that were focussing on housing. At that point, I made the first crucial decision that shaped the direction of my research.

I followed an inductive approach and as recommended by Maxwell (2008) used an interactive model for my research design. Although I tried to plan ahead, the field proved unpredictable and demanded flexibility. I began by researching NGOs focussing on the right to housing and selected them based on their thematic scope. In Turkey, the search proved more difficult than in Romania and Germany. As the right to housing and activism in Turkey is closely connected to the Gezi protests in 2013, not many organisations focus on the topic today. Imece, a social innovation platform in Istanbul seemed, at first sight, to deal with the issue but during the interview with Tuğba, it turned out that it was not part of their daily work. I changed my strategy and contacted scholars at universities, Şennur and Duygu, who were both urban planners by education. In Germany, my point of reference was the nationally operating Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe (Federal Working Group for Assistance to the Homeless, BAG W) an association that represents and defends the interests of homeless people. During my internship in Timișoara, I had already been in contact with the group Dreptul la Oraș (Right to the City) and one of its core members, Dan. Căși sociale ACUM! in Cluj, was a movement that focused exclusively on the fight for social housing.

Mihai one of the core activists met me for an interview. Both of these local groups were part of the national network Blocul pentru Locuire (Block for housing). Finally, as I wanted to gain an overview of the European solutions for the housing crisis, I contacted FEANTSA and interviewed Maria who was a lawyer by profession.

Qualitative interviews formed the core method of my research. I conducted a total of seven semi-structured expert interviews that were recorded and transcribed. The data analysis took place simultaneously with the collection. Interviews can always cover only a certain number of people and it can be difficult to claim universality for the theory developed. But interviews, as they are very time intensive, enable the researcher to collect “rich“ data “that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on“ (Maxwell, 2008, p. 244). I conducted the interviews that were based on a set of open questions regarding strategies, housing policies, legal frameworks, demands and challenges (refer to interview guide, Appendix I) with people who were professionally in contact with the right to housing in their cities and who signed a consent form (see Appendix II). Their real names have been replaced by pseudonyms. I initially considered using their real names as all of them could be identified through the position that they executed and the NGO they were working for. During the course of my research, I realised that the environment in some countries required a reconsideration of this assessment. For stated reasons, in Turkey, interviewees have insisted that their names be anonymised. Thus, I decided to apply the same procedure to all interview partners. An overview of all interviews conducted with the countries and cities the people were placed in, the organisation and their role can be found in the table below. The interviews have been recorded from February to April 2023 online and in person. The language of all interviews for Romania and Turkey was English with some Romanian or Turkish when the interview partner felt more comfortable in their mother tongue. In Germany, the interviews were held in German and in person. I travelled to Turkey (Istanbul) in January, then to Romania (Timișoara and Bucharest) in February and to Germany (Berlin) in March in order to gain a personal impression of the different cities. In Timișoara, I visited the office of the activist group Dreptul la Oraș. The visit in person of an NGO in Turkey could unfortunately not take place due to the circumstances mentioned. Here, I applied a new strategy and planned the interviews a month after the earthquakes online. Besides the interviews, I did a document analysis of legal documents related to the right to housing including international human rights instruments, national constitutions and legislations of the three countries.

When we conduct research we try to plan as much as possible ahead, before entering the field. But it is impossible to be prepared for every scenario. As researchers, we have to react according to the situation we find ourselves in. While I felt paralysed immediately after the disaster and thought it wrong to approach activists in Turkey, I had to adapt the steps I had scheduled. The same happened when I decided to anonymise the interviews. In the field, we are part of our environment and exposed to people, events, and emotions that shape the way we take and that formed my research path in Turkey, Romania and Germany.

Interview partner	Country	City	Organisation	Role
Tugba	Turkey	Istanbul	imece <i>social movement network</i>	Coordination of Entrepreneurship Programs
Mihai	Romania	Cluj-Napoca	Căși sociale ACUM! <i>grassroots community-based organisation</i>	Planning and implementation of actions, research and report drafting
Sennur	Turkey	Istanbul	University affiliation, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), Istanbul	Academic researcher and teacher, urban planner
Dan	Romania	Timișoara	Dreptul la Oraș <i>grassroots community-based organisation</i>	Coordination of projects, community management
Duygu	Turkey	Istanbul	University affiliation, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), Istanbul	Academic researcher and teacher, urban planner
Alexander	Germany	Berlin	BAG W <i>association of social services</i>	Consultant and chair of working group on migration
Maria	Belgium / Europe	Bruxelles	FEANTSA <i>EU-level NGO</i>	Policy officer with a focus on housing rights and coordinator of the platform <u>Housing Rights Watch</u>

4. Legal Analysis: The right to housing

Housing in its very essence is a human right. It was recognised already 1948 in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) included in the right to an adequate standard of living and later on in Article 11 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and in other international instruments.¹⁴ In its definition, the right to housing contains more than just having a roof over one's head. Furthermore, we will see over the course of this thesis that it is related to other rights and directly affects the security, dignity and well-being of a person.

In this chapter, I will analyse the global legal approach to the right to housing and move on to the domestic level of the three nation-states of Germany, Romania and Turkey and compare similarities and differences and their relation to international frameworks.

4.1 International legal framework

The UDHR and the ICESCR refer to the right to housing within the scope of defining and guaranteeing an adequate standard of living. Moreover, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) emphasises in General Comment 4 that housing must be adequate and states in paragraph seven:

The right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one's head or views shelter exclusively as a commodity. Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.

Whether housing is adequate is measured by different criteria of which three will be relevant for the further analysis: the legal protection of housing, more concretely against forced evictions, the affordability of housing and the non-discriminatory access to housing. On the European level, the revised European Social Charter (RESC) includes the right to housing in Article 31 and obliges states to take measures to “promote access to housing of an adequate

¹⁴ See, for example, article 5 (e) (iii) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 14 (2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 27 (3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 10 of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development. Moreover, since 2000 a Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing has been monitoring the issue.

standard; prevent and reduce homelessness with a view to its gradual elimination; make the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources“. The additional protocol to the RESC provides for a collective complaint system and the optional protocol to the ICESCR to establish an individual complaint mechanism on the international level.

Under international law, the state bears the obligation to ensure the implementation of the human right to housing. By ratifying international treaties states take on the threefold duty, to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Thus, they must not obstruct people from exercising their right to housing (duty to respect) and at the same time protect them from non-state actors' interference (duty to protect). For instance, states must refrain from arbitrarily evicting people from their homes and stop others from taking such actions, discriminatory practices that deny certain groups of the population equal access to adequate housing must be abolished, and also the protection against speculation is part of these duties. Similarly, the state must create the conditions necessary to ensure that people can exercise their right to housing (duty to fulfil). Article 11 (1) of the ICESCR states that state parties have to “take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right“. Although they are allowed to progressively guarantee housing, steps must be taken and especially the legal framework must be created e.g. to prevent evictions and to protect the legal security of the tenure. Measures such as housing allowances and subsidies should be implemented to progressively guarantee the availability and affordability of public and private housing and to improve the precarious housing situation of vulnerable people. The state must also provide shelter for people who have lost their homes. Finally, legal mechanisms for remedies must be available.

In order to implement the right to adequate housing, a human rights-based housing strategy on domestic levels is needed. First of all, the realisation of the right to adequate housing has to take place in a non-discriminatory manner. Paragraph eleven of General Comment 4 states that countries “must give due priority to those social groups living in unfavourable conditions by giving them particular consideration“. Secondly, the right to housing is embedded in a net of human rights and freedoms, which are impacted when a person does not have access to adequate housing and thus, cannot be viewed in isolation. Human dignity, non-discrimination, freedom of expression and association, the right to freedom of residence, to participate in public decision-making and the prohibition of arbitrary or unlawful interference with one's privacy, family and home open up very important dimensions in defining the importance of the right to adequate housing and the urgency of its realisation.

Against this backdrop, I will take a look at the legislation in Romania, Germany and Turkey and especially assess it against the legal criteria just discussed: reference to the right to housing in laws, legal remedies in case of violations and monitoring mechanisms.

4.2 The right to housing in Germany

Germany ratified the ICESCR in 1973 but has not signed the optional protocol. In the list of fundamental rights in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz, GG)¹⁵, there is no explicit reference to housing¹⁶ beyond the protection of the inviolability of the home (Art. 13). The idea was that enforceable social rights should be the responsibility of legislative actors. All attempts in Germany by political parties and NGOs to include housing as a fundamental right and state objective in the GG have failed so far. Nevertheless, social rights in Germany are not without constitutional protection, as I will further elaborate in the following.

From the constitution, an obligation of the German nation-state to guarantee social rights, the right to housing can be derived. More precisely, the guarantee of human dignity enshrined in the GG in conjunction with the principle of the welfare state (Sozialstaatsprinzip, Art. 20) results in a regulatory mandate for political decisions. Article 1 of the GG states: “(1) Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority“. Therefore, it is imperative that the state guarantees the conditions for a dignified existence, which includes not only a physical but also a so-called socio-cultural minimum subsistence level. Although the Basic Law only states in Article 13: “The home is inviolable“. The minimum subsistence level also encompasses housing. Corresponding entitlements are concretised in social legislation and provide, for example, subsidies, housing allowances and housing assistance, all of which are legally enforceable – in principle. Anti-discrimination law and tenancy protection in Germany, which is robust by international standards, also contain relevant protective provisions that can be enforced in court. Even the police and public order laws of the federal states (*Länder*) are relevant insofar as it results in a claim for shelter for homeless people. On the basis of the respective act of assent, international human rights

¹⁵ The GG was ratified in 1949 in West Germany and remained the constitution after the reunification of both states in 1990. It was deemed provisional but, although promised, a constitution was never given by all Länder. This could have opened up the opportunity for the inclusion of social rights, e.g. the right to housing. The obstacles here will be discussed more closely.

¹⁶ Although a right to housing, formulated as a state objective, can be found in some federal states constitutions (Free State of Bavaria, Berlin, Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Free State of Saxony), it has hardly attained any practical legal significance.

treaties are incorporated into domestic law with the rank of federal law in Germany. However, German courts hardly ever refer to social rights enshrined in international law. Moreover, the federal government does not yet allow individual complaints regarding the ICESCR, or collective complaints under the RESC, neither has it ratified Article 31 (RESC) on housing.

In 2017 the parliamentary group and left-wing party Die Linke unsuccessfully introduced an ambitious bill for the inclusion of basic social rights in the GG, which, among other statements included clear specifications for the right to housing.¹⁷ In the next chapter, I will further discuss whether such an article should be included in the constitution and could be part of a solution to achieve the right to housing.

4.3 The right to housing in Turkey

Turkey became a party to the ICESCR in 2003 and also ratified Article 31 of the RESC. The right to adequate housing is included in Article 56 and Article 57 of the current constitution (CRT) which was adopted in 1982.¹⁸ Although the articles are titled “right to housing”, I will argue that the content does not directly bestow the right itself, but only emphasises the duties of the state. In this section, I will shed light on this contradiction in the legislation of Turkey.

The Turkish constitution (Art. 56) states: “Everybody has the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment“. Article 57 continues “the state takes necessary measures to meet the need for housing within the framework of a plan that takes into account the characteristics of the cities and environmental conditions and also supports community housing projects“. Although the title of the article is “right to housing”, the wording does not offer a guarantee of equal access to affordable housing itself, but outlines the negative obligations of the state. No direct emphasis on positive obligations is made. Contrarily, Article 65 of the CRT says: “The state shall fulfil its duties as laid down in the constitution in the social and economic fields

¹⁷ The exact formulation reads: “(1) Everyone has the right to a dwelling fit for human habitation and accessible without discrimination and to a supply of water and energy. Rent must be commensurate with income. (2) The state shall provide tenant protection and equalise rent and housing burdens. It shall ensure access to water and energy. (3) The eviction of housing is inadmissible if no reasonable substitute housing is provided“. Information retrieved from: <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/18/108/1810860.pdf> (Accessed: 19 May 2023). It proved unsuccessful due to a lack of political support from other parties and the discourse around it was not prominent enough as will be discussed in chapter 5.

¹⁸ The ratification of the constitution followed a coup d'état and was drafted by the military council. It is the fourth one that has been adopted after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and is still in force with major amendments in 2010, mostly inspired by the EU accession process, and 2017, with the change into a presidential system.

within the capacity of its financial resources, taking into consideration the priorities appropriate with the aims of these duties“. This article gives state-wide discretionary powers according to social rights and can be seen as a pretext for political actors to refrain from their obligation of fulfilling the right to housing for everyone. Thus, it allows the state to set priorities and decide the allocation of financial means and is a way around the duty of progressive realisation enshrined in the ICESCR. As underlined by a report of the research project Ethos (2017) on representative justice regarding the right to housing in Turkey in practice: “To date, it is not possible to say that the existing law has been implemented effectively and any case law on the implementation of the law cannot be reached“. The existing legislative framework provides no effective and accessible means of judicial or quasi-judicial remedies, redress or compensation in case of violations of the right to housing.

Although in Turkey the right to housing is enshrined in the constitution, the implementation does not hold up to the legal obligations. As certain regulations open up the possibility to refrain from the duties described by referring to financial priorities.

4.4 The right to housing in Romania

Romania has become a state party to the ICESCR in 1974 but has not accepted the individual complaints procedures. Romania ratified the RESC in 1999, excluding Article 31. The right to housing is not enshrined in the Romanian constitution, but several aspects are regulated by legislation. However, this section will show how it falls short of international standards.

The general legal framework for housing in Romania is the housing law, Law 114/1996, which provides a definition of adequate housing, regulates evictions and provides a frame for social housing. This Housing Act applies to the private housing stock. It is supported by Emergency Ordinance 40/1999, which lays out the protection of tenants. Although domestic law regulates property owner and tenant relations in Romania, there is no legislation at a local level. The ministry of regional development and tourism has delegated authority on housing issues to the local agencies. No framework for the monitoring of actions taken by local authorities to protect and realise the right to housing in their communities is in place. While forced eviction is illegal under international law, cases have been reported where municipalities become actors in the forced evictions of Roma people (Amnesty International, 2011). The Romanian housing law (Art. 2) defines adequate housing as a “convenient

dwelling which covers the essential resting needs, preparation of food, education and hygiene, ensuring minimal requirements”. Furthermore, it specifies criteria for physical adequacy but does not take into consideration other factors. This was criticised by the UN Special Rapporteur (2003) on the right to adequate housing who, after a visit to Romania in 2002, stated: “the adequacy of housing needs to be understood in a broader sense. It should cover not only the physical aspects of housing but also social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other factors”. Although the law ensures that “free and unrestricted access to dwelling is a right of every citizen”, those whose rights were violated are not always able to access justice. Remedies for evictions are mainly available to tenants and do not adequately cover other groups of people, for instance, living on public land.

In this section, we have observed how the detailed elaboration of a housing law might still not guarantee the fulfilment of this fundamental human right. Nonetheless, shortcomings in the protection of the right to housing and the principle of non-discrimination are a reality against which the housing law fails to protect.

4.5 Conclusive Remarks: Similarities and Differences

All three countries are parties to the ICESCR and the RESC but have not signed the protocol on collective or individual complaints. Only Turkey ratified Article 31 of the RESC. In Germany, the right to housing is not explicitly guaranteed in a constitutional framework but is included and implemented through many domestic laws. In Turkey, on the other hand, the right to housing might be enshrined in the constitution but not in the legal realisation. In Romania where a law devoted to housing exists, control and monitoring mechanisms and implementation are lacking. Therefore, we can conclude, that a legal manifestation of the right to housing in the constitution must be supported by a detailed formulation of state duties that ensure the realisation, as the constitution of Sweden¹⁹ has illustrated, and whose relevance I will further discuss.

¹⁹ Sweden’s constitution states at the beginning in Article 2: “The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the individual shall be fundamental aims of public activity. In particular, the public institutions shall secure the right to employment, housing and education, and shall promote social care and social security, as well as favourable conditions for good health“
Information retrieved from: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Sweden_2012?lang=en (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

	Germany	Turkey	Romania
Ratifications of international treaties - ICESCR - European Social Charter (revised) -> Article 31 on the right to housing	1973 2021 (accepting 88 of its 98 paragraphs) NO	2003 2007 (accepted 91 of the 98 paragraphs) YES	1974 1999 (accepting 65 of the 98 paragraphs) NO
Party to the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR?	NO	NO	NO
Included in the Constitution?	NO	YES	NO
Domestic laws on housing	Implicitly enshrined in social rights laws in Germany	Art. 56 and Art. 57 of the current constitution	Housing law 114/1996 offers a detailed elaboration
Authority	Local level: Länder	National level	Officially: national In practice: local level
Remedies	No specific compensation mechanism for violations of the right to housing are in place. Through judicial remedies compensation can be accessed.	The existing legislative framework provides no effective and accessible means of judicial or quasi-judicial remedies, redress or compensation in case of violations of the right to housing	Not everyone whose housing rights are violated is able to access justice. Remedies for evictions are mainly available to tenants and do not adequately cover other groups of people, such as people living on public land.
Relevant state institutions	Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building and Länder governments	Ministry of the Environment and Urbanisation and Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ)	Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism (responsibility delegated to local authorities)
Monitoring	Specific monitoring entities in Germany have not been installed. The competence lies with local authorities of the Länder in Germany	No monitoring or complaint mechanisms are in place in Turkey, neither on local nor national levels	No framework for the regulation and monitoring of actions taken by the local authorities to protect and realise the right to housing in their communities is in place.
Jurisprudence	German courts do not refer to international human rights legal frameworks in rulings regarding the right to housing.	Any case law on the implementation of the law cannot be reached in Turkey. International frameworks are not dominant.	Reference to international standards is not made during law suits in Romania regarding the right to housing

5. Analysis: Findings from three countries

In legal theory, housing is a human right. But as the analytical discussion has touched on, the reality seems profit-driven. Taking up the thread, this chapter contextualises the experience on the ground and links it to the observations collected so far. Activists demand that housing be reframed from a commodity to a basic right again. The idea seems easy enough at first glance, but in the interviews it became clear that the realisation proves difficult. Although the people who are working on the issue, be it research, activism or planning, are aware of the urgent social question that housing poses already today and is going to pose in the future, political interest in the subject is scarce, friendly noticing at best and actively repressing at worst. What violations do we currently see? What role do activists play, what challenges do they face and what activities do they develop in their fight? Finally, how can housing for everyone be conveyed? These questions will be part of the following analysis. Furthermore, I will discuss how what we observe on the ground has its origin in global processes.

5.1 Multi-layered violations of the right to housing – *between evictions, discrimination, unaffordability and homelessness*

There are multiple limitations to access to housing that can be observed among different countries and cities. What they all have in common is the danger that they pose to a person's dignity and ability to create a decent living for themselves and their families. Moreover, they all cause further violations of other human rights and basic needs such as health care, security, privacy, work and education. At the same time the restriction of e.g. the right to assembly or freedom of expression impacts the ability of people to advocate their right to housing. From the unaffordability of housing to homelessness and discrimination to house evictions – I will look at how violations are similar and connected. While they may be present in all places, their urgency or focus in the activists' work may differ. On these insights, the analysis of activists' strategies will further build up.

A common issue that organisations and activists from both Romania and Turkey encountered was the displacement and (forced) evictions of people from their homes and relocations to

other houses but often also areas of the city.²⁰ As emphasised by OHCHR and UN-Habitat (2009) forced evictions are a prima facie violation of the right to adequate housing and protection against them constitute a central element of the same right. Many activities implemented by activists in Romania and Turkey fought the eviction and displacement of people. I will take a closer look at how it is interlinked with urban developments, state-led interventions and discrimination.

The cause for housing displacement was most of the time new development projects where real estate developers were buying the land, demolishing existing buildings and constructing new complexes for profit and where homeowners decided to either sell or renovate and re-rent their house. Here various developments merged: Politically incited urban regeneration projects intertwined with incentives for homeowners to renovate their houses or to sell them off to companies buying up many plots and starting a new project. These developments result in rising rents that also lead to the “voluntary“ abandonment of homes but also forced evictions.²¹ Especially vulnerable are the people who do not have an official renting contract or title for the land that they were occupying. George Zamfir (2022), an activist at Căși sociale ACUM! and scholar, estimates that a hundred thousand forced evictions took place in Romania from 1990 to 2017, affecting hundreds of thousands of individuals. Often discrimination preceded and was interlinked with the process. In my interview with Şennur from Istanbul, she told me about her experience during her PhD research:

For example in Sulukule area it was the Roma citizens it was a well-known Roma neighbourhood so the Roma citizens were very well affected. I know in Tarlabası Kurdish citizens were quite affected. But I can say that for the national or local state they are trying to get rid of poverty as a whole and it is a bonus point for them if they get rid of the urban minorities as well. Because these areas are stigmatised from before and they are considered as an urban isle by the other parts of the public. It just makes it easier because people don't really bad an eye or they think maybe they did something to deserve this kind of treatment.

Racism, discrimination and prejudices in society and the structural marginalisation of minorities found the preconditions for state-led evictions. While in Istanbul urban minorities such as Kurdish and Roma were targeted by policies, the latter also experienced

²⁰ Forced evictions are defined as the “permanent or temporary removal against the will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection“ according to General Comment 7. Displacement on the other hand is used to describe also the coordinated demolishing of whole neighbourhoods in Turkey.

²¹ The “voluntary“ abandonment of a home can also be defined as a forced eviction. While the matter of force is a different one, direct physical but also other forms of pressure can make tenants leave their homes. As Mihai said: “You can also self-evict“. Tenants can choose to vacate their homes instead of waiting for officials to evacuate them.

discrimination in Romanian cities and were disproportionately affected by evictions as Mihai told me during the interview. Enikő Vincze (2013), who is a sociologist and one of the core personalities in the housing justice network in Romania, analyses the socio-spatial marginality of Roma as part of a wider process of inter-sectional injustice to which Roma are subjected in Romania, placing evictions at the centre. The consequences of evictions are complex and deeply impact the lives of people. Mihai told me: “it is a process, not an event“. Zamfir also elaborates: “An eviction does not start and stop when the police come and go. The process cuts through the social fabric, individual biographies, politics, infrastructure, and institutional construction and practice“ (2022, p. 38). Here we see once again how human rights are interdependent, indivisible and interrelated.

Evictions and relocations are closely linked to the security of tenure. The final consequence of evictions is that people that lose their home struggle to find a new one. Most often they can no longer afford to rent a place in the same neighbourhood but have to move to the outskirts of cities. Duygu from Istanbul mentioned an example from her case study:

People in deep poverty have their informal networks and informal ways of helping each other out. [...] So they lost all of that, like people got dispersed all over the place, you know, which was the government’s policy from the beginning, they claimed. And they also lost their jobs due to relocation. You know, like you move. Eight kilometres away. And it was a very distant location, no public transportation or very, very, very weak. So it was really hard, you know, like their lives were shattered, basically.

People who lose their homes sometimes can rely on the support of relatives, but sometimes they do not succeed in finding a new place and remain homeless. A home is more than just a dwelling or having a roof above one’s head. The loss of a home means losing stability, memories, safety, trust. As Alexander from Berlin at BAG W also said: “Having to leave your home, that does something to you“. Homelessness is a particularly burdensome form of poverty and social exclusion (Ratzka, 2012, p. 1218) and needs to be tackled taking into consideration also the social exclusion it means for people affected.²² The total annual number of homeless people in Germany is estimated to have increased from 237,000 people in 2018 to 256,000 in 2020, an overall increase of 8 per cent (BAG W, 2021a). The main reasons also in

²² Experiencing homelessness means not having stable, safe and adequate housing, nor the means and ability of obtaining it (UN General Assembly, 2020, p. 7). But as the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing (n.d.) underlines: “The experience of homelessness is not fully captured without a richer understanding that goes beyond the deprivation of physical shelter. Reducing the matter to putting a roof over one’s head, would fail to take into account the loss of social connection – the feeling of “belonging nowhere” – and the social exclusion experienced by persons living in homelessness“.

other European countries are the still insufficient offer of affordable housing, the further shrinking of the social housing stock and an entrenchment of poverty.²³ Housing shortages and homelessness are among the biggest social problems in Germany. Those who do not have a home now have particularly great difficulties in finding affordable housing.

Evictions, displacement, lack in social and public housing, homelessness, unaffordability of housing – all these symptoms can be traced back to the underlying problem of the capitalist market and the consequence of housing privatisation. Real estate and with it housing becomes a means for capital accumulation in cities. Speculation becomes desirable and rising prices profitable. Consequences such as gentrification and class as well as spatial segregation are the side effects unaccounted for. In Turkey there is talk of “kentsel dönüşüm“, in Romania of “regenerare urbană“, and in Germany of “Reurbanisierung“, all three a facade for urban regeneration with the purpose of turning space into profit. Harvey (2006, p. 77) argues capital accumulation creates not only spaces “but different forms of spatiality“. In the urban landscape classes are segregated and evictions or targeted housing policies are a tool of the state to shape these developments. While in Romania and East Germany for many years housing was understood as a common and public good, after 1989 with the shift to market economy it has become a commodity. This development does not only impact the equal access to housing for the less affluent parts of society but also other public services such as health care, education, public transportation and cultural activities.²⁴ Whether it is Istanbul or Timișoara and Bucharest that I encountered during my research stays or Berlin that I knew since my birth, new building complexes shape the urban landscape. Housing is becoming more and more expensive. But in a certain way this development actually does make sense when we analyse it through the lens of capital surplus disposal. Urbanisation and the whole new lifestyle and services that go along with it changed in ways that could absorb vast surpluses (Harvey, 2008) and result in the exclusion of whole groups. Social and publicly subsidised housing, on the other hand, are at the lowest point in the history of Germany (5 per cent) and Romania (2 per cent) as well as in Turkey where a system for rent is non-existent.

²³ There is a lack of affordable housing for people on low-income or receiving social benefits. Low-income single-person households, single parents and families with many children are particularly vulnerable groups.

²⁴ Capitalism as all encompassing does not only define where we live, but also what we consume and how we think. In the neoliberal city, private actors with the help of the local administration do not only shape the built environment, influence the economic structure of society and impact which people live in which neighbourhood. But they are also involved in the privatisation of public services and space and thus framing the opportunities people have in life. Private companies provide services that should normally be universal and public but now become the right of the wealthy.

This chapter has shown that today housing is not solely for shelter but for profit. Instead of a fundamental human right it has become a luxury in many European cities. We have seen how the violations of the right to housing that we observe on the ground have their origins in processes that start at a global level. In Istanbul, Bucharest, Timișoara and Berlin we see how these violations of the right to adequate housing are examples of the consequences of the capital driven (re-)development of urban spaces and the neoliberal agenda that political elites follow. House evictions, discrimination and displacement are in many cases state-led processes and rising rents, lack in housing (private as well as social and public) are in similar ways controlled by governments. Urban “regeneration“ programmes or so-called safety measures due to earthquake risks by governments and the neoliberal baggage of civil servants lead to the privatisation of housing and create an unevenness between different groups of society where minorities and vulnerable groups are especially affected. On this basis, I will now come back to the work of activists in addressing these issues and finding solutions.

5.2 Challenges, strategies and the daily struggle of housing rights activists

In the face of the violations that are taking place in their home countries, defenders of the right to housing take up the work of research, reporting, blaming and demanding protection and change. The network of housing rights activists in Romania and Turkey is small, one interview partner even described it as “intimate“ where everyone knows everyone. In Germany, quite a few associations are involved of which the BAG W was active on a national level. While in Turkey the profession was one of urban planners, in Romania as well as in Germany it was sociologists, and the colleague at FEANTSA had a legal background. This difference is closely connected to the work that they do. In this section I will consider the demands they pose, the challenges they face and the strategies and activities they implement. Part of the analysis will be an assessment of the effectiveness of certain actions and a search for answers to the question: How to realise equal access to housing against all obstacles, systemic hurdles and political unwillingness.

5.2.1 Demands posed: *“Demanding what can be done in the existing legal framework and also attempting to go beyond that“*

I will now analyse and compare the demands that housing justice activists in the three countries have developed according to what Mihai explained as: “also kind of an activist strategy. One of it is demanding what can be done in the existing legal framework and also attempting to go beyond that. Go beyond that particularly“. Thus, we will see in the following where activists use not only the existing legal framework and political contexts but also where they go beyond what is given and envision a different social reality. The three housing justice movements differ in their focus. Therefore, a consideration of the specific context will be part of the analysis.

Fighting for the right to housing is a highly political issue in all three countries, underlined by all actors. Alexander emphasised: “It is a highly political question, the right to housing“. Activists address their demands at political stakeholders through whom they try to realise change. The level of engagement can differ. While in Romania activists were doing local work and addressing regional administrations, the work of the BAG W in Germany was directed towards the national government. In Turkey housing activism due to a history of repression was focused solely on single projects where mostly the developer was the

opponent and not directly the government as in previous protests. Thematically social aspects were dominating in Cluj, Bucharest, Timișoara and Berlin; architects and urban planners in Istanbul and lawyers at the European level at FEANTSA were putting legal aspects at the centre of their work. This setting of priorities is related to the strategies that these organisations have defined as most effective in achieving the final goal of implementing the right to adequate housing for everyone.

In Romania the main demand formulated by the housing movement around Block for housing and the local action groups has been, partly also represented in the names of the organisations, the investment into and bolstering of social housing. The BAG W in Germany also promoted this solution as it was defined as a way in achieving their main goal of preventing and ending homelessness. When I asked Dan from Dreptul la Oraș in Timișoara about solutions, his first reaction was: “Well, social housing. Just develop the social housing stock and quality housing. Right. Decent housing“. One concrete policy that he suggested:

One thing we can think about is the fact that the government, the administration always says that they cannot do anything about the rent, for example. But that’s a lie because the local administration can put some measures, some rent subsidies. And, you know, again, from a very leftist point of view, subsidies are not very radical.

A cap on rents has also been discussed in different instances and an obligatory social housing percentage for new development projects and protection of long-term inhabitants of areas where gentrification takes place have been mentioned as further concrete measures. Alexander presented the position of the BAG W as follows: “How is it possible that homelessness does not happen in the first place. That all people can get into housing. That would somehow be the realisation of the right to housing for all. Unconditionally“. This also includes a demand for the equal access of migrants to social services e.g. housing, who are consciously excluded by political actors. Besides improving the social reality for homeless persons in Germany (e.g. health services, standards in shelters), the BAG W sees it as their task to also support the fight against poverty. It is a precarious financial situation that can combined with rising rents lead to loss of the home and is one of the most complete violations of the right to housing as observed before. Therefore, creating social security systems that encompass housing – no strings attached – can be seen as a way of protecting the right to shelter. While in this context the unaffordability of rents has been on the agenda

of Romanian and German based activists, Şennur who was located in Istanbul shared her observation:

When it comes to rise in rents and unaffordability in housing market, they cannot do much and they have not done much, too. Rent has not or private rent has not been on their [housing activists'] agenda for a very long time. The urban movements especially since the Gezi park protest are more or have been more focused on bigger urban mega projects or big infrastructure projects and the displacement that comes out of state-facilitated or state-led projects.

The causes for rising rents and possible measures lie within the authority of governments. They can not only remain inactive but take recourse to other human rights violations such as prohibitions of protests, censorship and arbitrary arrests, where then activists have to adjust their work. Strategies that have proven as a safer way of defending the right to housing have been the legal path through lawsuits. Here we see that displacement can become an article of accusation and is often connected to legal demands. When evictions are ordered lawsuits are the way to go as also Mihai reported from his work experience. Framed as a broader policy claim, tenants and their entitlements must be better protected in legislation. Stopping evictions and the legal protection against it is a demand that Dan and Mihai and the network Block for housing share with their fellows in Turkey and have published a report as well as legislative recommendations (Blocul pentru Locuire, 2019a; 2019b). In recurrence to international law, it is proposed that forced evictions be prohibited by law, meaning no eviction should take place without relocation to adequate housing and reporting and monitoring measures have to be put into place.

Continuing on the legal aspect of claims formulated, the biggest legal adaptation that is demanded in Germany is the inclusion of the right to housing as a constitutional right within the Basic Law. Alexander reasoned: “if it is a constitutional right, then that has a completely different weight, because other laws would certainly have to be practically oriented to it in their implementation. [...] Yes, I think that would be more than just a political signal if the right to housing were enshrined in the Basic Law“. Although the importance of this step is underlined by the BAG W since their foundation and has been discussed by the now federal president of Germany, Frank Walter Steinmeier (1992) in his doctoral thesis. No political party actually went through with it or included it as a goal in their political programme so far. The reasons behind it I will further explore.

What all three national movements and the international approach of FEANTSA share is the conclusion that to achieve fundamental and structural change, a new perspective of housing needs to be embodied in the wider public and political conception. At the moment housing is seen as an individual and privatised commodity not as a basic right for everyone, irrespective of ethnic categories, economic status and social conformity. Housing must be (again) framed as a fundamental right as opposed to a profit-making business and this understanding must be brought to and rooted in the awareness of the public and politicians. As Marx (1844, italics in original) already realised and criticised: “Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only *ours* when we have it – when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., – in short, when it is *used* by us. ... In place of *all* these physical and mental senses there has therefore come the sheer estrangement of all these senses – the sense of *having*“. Possession and private property continue to be what matters in especially urban contexts today. Mihai described how he experienced in Cluj that housing is seen more as a merit than as a right:

Whenever you talk about it as a right the replies would be in social media or stuff like that, the most vocal opponents would be like: ‘well, living in Cluj is not a God-given right. There are a lot of villages, empty villages 50 km away. If you cannot afford living in Cluj just move out’. And you would understand if it would come from investors or from people who just bought a couple of apartments and are very interested in keeping the rents high. But I think it comes from a lot of other people, false consciousness – or however you want to call it – who have become very proud of living in Cluj although they cannot really afford it.

Here we can observe already one of the greatest challenges that were described by activists from Romania: public opinion and changing it. Thus, the demand that has been formulated implicitly – as it cannot be found in any position papers but became apparent in my conversations with all activists – was a very fundamental one that touched the pillars of society. For Germany, Alexander even went one step further and traced the obstacles in realising a (constitutional) right to housing for everyone back to a logic that is inherent to all capitalist societies and to an idea of humanity that is formed by it:

The counter-arguments always play along with ‘Well, if people don’t have to, then. Then they just lie in the sun and become inactive.’ And that is the image of humanity behind it. In addition to these ideas of exploitation, which are the foundations of our society. So you can reject them personally. But fundamentally, this is inscribed in capitalist society. Some have and others must. In order to survive, they have to sell their workforce, and they won’t do that if they don’t have to. That is the idea. That is already quite fixed. So that’s not just freely negotiable: We now want to include the right to housing in the constitution. There is more at stake. That’s why there probably won’t be a political movement that can implement it with substance.

A demand that certainly goes beyond the existing framework. But brings again to the debate the question: If we really want to achieve change, what needs to change? What do we have to change? Or by what we are demanding, are we actually only treating the symptoms without finding a cure for the root cause? Therefore, I find it important to highlight that there is an underlying belief that pervades all accounts, strategies and activities. Although it does not seem realistic for the economic world system to change too soon or for any of their actions to achieve the shift that would actually be needed, activists in the housing justice movements share a (more or less) silent understanding of the deeper interplays at hand. Finally, the fight for equal access to adequate housing is also part of the greater struggle for social justice, the ending of poverty and the abolishment of the capitalist market system with its inequalities.

The aim that all activists share is to hold political stakeholders responsible in the eye of the public and to hold them accountable in front of the courts. Public discourse and awareness need to be raised on the issue of housing as the important social question of our time that affects everybody equally and where solidarity is necessary to develop a wider outcry beyond class divides. While there are very concrete demands that can be implemented with some public pressure and are already realised in some countries such as rent subsidies and the prohibition of evictions and displacement without adequate relocation there are other demands that are countered with more opposition. On the one hand, there is the inclusion of a state obligation to guarantee adequate housing for everyone in the constitution. On the other hand, spanning all three countries there is the wish of changing the system itself as a precondition for a more equal society. What other challenges organisations in the housing justice movement face and what strategies they apply will be the focus of the next part.

5.2.2 Challenges faced and strategies applied: *“We use what we have at our disposal.*

And this kind of works in a way“

Demands are posed, solutions drafted and models imagined. Activists are continuously developing their work but they are facing obstacles in actually transferring ideas into practice. The challenges are systemic, political, public, historically grounded, legal and logistic. While at one end stand mentality and public support at the other end repression poses the greatest threat to the activities that groups can implement. In the preceding chapter I looked at the hurdles that the existing economic system means for the fight that activists carry out every day and that does not let them see fundamental changes but only small steps forward. This section will compare the experiences of the activists I interviewed in the course of my research as well as reflect on the challenges that they encounter in their daily work and discuss the strategies that have been developed and their potential.

Besides capitalism as a systemic challenge that has already been discussed extensively, but interlinked, political unwillingness, amnesia and disinterest are one of the main obstacles activists face. Mihai concluded: “Promoting the right to housing in such an area is like in this very neoliberal, let’s say ultra-capitalist discourse doesn’t fare very well. The municipality is more interested in promoting this kind of you know real estate business“. There is a political agenda that is supporting this development, be it in Germany, Turkey or Romania or other places in the world. But the political will to actually change something and to better protect the vulnerable groups of society is a precondition to realise activists’ demands. Dan noticed regarding the challenges they encountered: “Well, I guess false consciousness. Yeah, I mean, it needs input from the government, right. Some laws and social policies. And I guess there isn’t any political will for that“. While it is the discourse that hinders the work of all activists there is another systemic hurdle in Germany that complicates the protection of homeless people: The federal system. Even if the national government decides to make changes, it is the level of the Länder that has to actually implement them. Alexander described one of the main challenges the BAG W was facing:

Due to the federal system, the implementation of the laws, the legal situation, is then often the responsibility of the Länder or the municipalities. So, in many places, the municipal treasury decides what assistance is to be given and how it can be made as inaccessible as possible, so that costs can be saved. [...] And that is a classic issue for such an umbrella organisation. To demand that the thresholds be lowered and that the legal will formulated in the law be implemented.

Sometimes it can already be effective to remind politicians of legal frameworks and their own agenda to actually take or to abstain from certain actions that limit people in exercising their right to housing. In most instances, a friendly reminder is not sufficient to gain collaboration from political stakeholders but publicity and pressure that are created through support from society are needed. To be able to create public awareness and to shape public opinion to finally influence policy-making, data collection, reporting and monitoring are crucial methods that NGOs apply. The BAG W (2021a; 2021b) was publishing updated numbers on homeless people who died because of cold, cases of violence and numbers of homeless people in Germany as an official database was missing until last year.²⁵ Block for housing (2019a; 2019b) in Romania reported on evictions and published numbers combined with demands. Căși sociale ACUM! in Cluj similarly documented evictions and with these proofs supported people in applying for social housing. Mihai emphasised: “So preparing this roughly a hundred applications per year is a major pillar of the efforts because on top of them, we can actually advance the fight and the claims and actually hold them responsible, hold the institutions responsible for something“. In a similar way, Dan also explained to me that they had established a social centre in Timișoara in order to help people with other daily needs such as applying for ID cards and emergency shelter. Often vulnerable groups face difficulties not only in the housing market. This very practical activity of supporting people whose right to housing had been violated, which also extended to lawsuits was reported by Şennur as well. In Turkey there also exists in regard to data collection, a website on urban (mega-)projects in Istanbul with information on displacement and their effects on nature, collective memory and identity and Duygu told me how people during her research in the redevelopment project and displacement of tenants in Ayazma, Istanbul, made their resistance and demands public through a WordPress website.²⁶ Alexander explained that the importance of this work is that it builds the basis for all further activities that are implemented and also the ground for the demands that they formulate:

Instruments, how such an organisation works, always try to provide statistical data as well and to substantiate the problem indication. That it is not something that is felt. The three neglected people at the central station, if you are lucky, someone notices them and then someone is outraged and does something, but that this happens more substantially and continuously. That is one of the tasks of BAG W.

²⁵ On the issue see: [https://www.bagw.de/de/presse/show?tx_netnews_newsview\[action\]=show&tx_netnews_newsview\[controller\]=News&tx_netnews_newsview\[news\]=248&cHash=1d2daec890ab05e9454905634011448c](https://www.bagw.de/de/presse/show?tx_netnews_newsview[action]=show&tx_netnews_newsview[controller]=News&tx_netnews_newsview[news]=248&cHash=1d2daec890ab05e9454905634011448c) (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

²⁶ For access to the websites visit: <https://en.megaprojeleristanbul.com> and <https://ayazmamagdurlari.wordpress.com> (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

Here we see the importance of substantiating the argumentation with facts when then pressing for new policies or laws. Another strategy that was applied at this point was involving media and the press to report on actions implemented, recent numbers and demands brought forward which also guaranteed a wider distribution and public attention.

While the work of documenting is a continuous effort of all organisations and single actors, there are other activities that are more bound to a certain moment. When an issue suddenly becomes more pressing because of recent developments, this offers the opportunity to develop actions that are more effective as publicity, for instance, press reports or campaigns. Times of political change offer such a chance, prior to and in the aftermath of elections, such as in Timișoara where the recent mayor only came into power in 2020 and in Germany where the administration changed the same year, organisations defined the moment right to remind them of their demands e.g. through a campaign such as the house building action of the BAG W shown in the pictures below in front of the ministry for housing in Berlin²⁷ or in exposing their failure of fulfilling election campaign promises.



House building action of the BAG W in front of the ministry on the Day of the Homeless on 11 September 2022, where the minister for housing, urban development and building, Klara Geywitz herself joined and held a short speech. The activists handed her the “key“ to the action plan for ending homelessness in Germany.²⁸

²⁷ For more information on the action and the campaign visit: <https://www.bagw.de/de/veranstaltungen/aktkamp/wohnung-los> (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

²⁸ Source of the picture: <https://www.bagw.de/de/veranstaltungen/aktkamp/wohnung-los> (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

In Cluj on the other hand, where the mayor has been in office for many years it proved more and more difficult to achieve real change. But here again, continuous effort is important. As Dan reflected with an amusing anecdote:

They've been pounding the mayor's office and the mayor – because the mayor has been three terms or something like that same guy. And they have been just bombarding them with messages and protests and stuff. And again, it's a bit tricky because, like the mayor has also sometimes co-opted their slogans like Make Cluj a Livable City, A city for humans, not for profit or something like this. But actually, he's not doing anything for this. And I mean, we've also joked that the next step would be for the mayor to actually come to the protest and say some slogans against himself. *laughs*

Also for Turkey, Duygu saw the political establishment as a main obstacle in changing housing policies where the president has been in power for twenty years. In tackling this challenge, discourse is important as through it public awareness is raised and governments and local administrations are put under pressure to actually do something about the status quo. Dan observed: “I would say that what has had most impact in Timișoara was us just producing discourse [...] how the mayor's office is failing in its own promises, not even some kind of basic appeal to housing as a right, just even their own campaign promises“. Maria from FEANTSA also underlined the centrality of public awareness in getting local administrations and even national governments to cooperate. She commented: “Although I believe that all different activities can help bring some change, but probably activism will bring more change than the law. We all know that the law sometimes goes behind – the change in reality“. The activities that FEANTSA was realising were in the area of litigation and advocacy with a focus on common complaints issued against governments that are party to the RESC's right to housing (Article 31) and the additional protocol. She described the difference between local partners of their network which are focussing on homelessness and her own work accurately:

The non-governmental organisations that are helping the homeless on a national level, they work in the social area in a context of collaboration with public authorities. So they help run services that are important for the homeless people. But I think, what litigation brings to the table is a bit of confrontation – not only litigation but advocacy. It is making governments accountable. And that goes beyond collaboration. And I think that is the role of civil society. To ask governments to make the necessary changes.

In a successful collective complaint against France for example FEANTSA succeeded in creating change where the French government as a final step decided to implement a new

social security law.²⁹ The law sometimes goes behind the change in reality as Maria observed as it has to react to social deficiencies but at the same time it provides a central basis for reality to improve and violations to be eliminated. Given that the preconditions are inscribed in law in a way that they have to be adhered to and make no excuses possible as has been discussed in the analysis of the demands activists put forward. In the meanwhile, protests are an activity that activists in Turkey and Romania made use of and that can be followed also in Germany to raise awareness and build up pressure while they address issues with broader public support. How to take this important step from awareness to public action will be the subject of a more detailed analysis.

5.2.3 Creating solidarity and mobilising the public: “I didn’t expect it to be that difficult“

The previous chapter has shown that to put pressure on governments, public support is crucial and has to be supported by all strata of society in unity. A social reality that seems difficult to achieve in the case of housing. As Dan observed, solidarity is not easily formed:

I think there’s not much solidarity between different social strata here in Timișoara. So I think someone who is like poor but not so poor that they can’t afford the rent or a house or something or a bank loan. They would say that the other people who can’t afford the house deserve it because they don’t work. People who are even wealthier say that you should just get a 30 or 40 years loan from the bank and buy a home and then all your housing problems are solved. So I don’t think there’s much solidarity among groups.

Economic competition over resources as well as group forming and boundary making are marking divisions in society. Alexander also highlighted. “Now it is a very pressing issue because it affects not only less well-off and poor households but also because the fact that people can no longer afford housing has easily reached far into the middle class. That is why this is a political issue in the first place. It would not be an issue if it was only about the poor. For so long it has not been an issue“. These divisions extend to ethnic groups who are discriminated against in the housing market as examples from Şennur and Duygu have shown. Solidarity is easier to create when there is a common enemy or a “villain“ as Dan called it or when the effect of an injustice is felt among more groups. He also shared a

²⁹ For more information on the case visit: <https://housingrightswatch.org/jurisprudence/collective-complaint-feantsa-v-france-392006> (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

strategy with me for addressing this issue that was implemented by his colleagues in Cluj and proved successful in uniting people:

I think one way of trying to create solidarities – and people in Cluj have been trying to do this – to not talk about housing but the cost of living. So everyone is now affected by the rising cost of living, which has to do with rising rents, but also with rising cost of goods. [...] So there's I would say because of this, some tension is accumulating in the society and it's, you know, let's see if we can tap into that. It's precondition for stuff to happen.

Here we see how activists have to be creative and flexible in their work and continuously have to come up with ideas that fit the current social reality and can e.g. help them to gain the support needed from the public to press for the demands they put out to be heard and implemented. Protests can then be a form of manifesting this social discontent. In the picture below we see an example of an action in Cluj that called people to the streets.



Protest of Căși sociale ACUM! in Cluj against financial speculation and for the right to housing on 05 October 2017 in accordance with the European coalition's actions on housing.³⁰

³⁰ Source of the picture and more information on the action: <https://casisocialeacum.ro/archives/4405/specula-financiara-credite-ipotecare-si-dreptul-la-locuire/> (Accessed: 19 May 2023)

This strategy of highlighting the cost of living crisis instead of a housing crisis to mobilise more people for the cause also addresses a mentality that can be traced back to the economic system we are living in that defines success as something solely financially measurable and purely individualistic and where the social welfare system is not holding up to its purpose. Based on the historic background of each country, in Romania for example, as in other post-socialist countries, these topics and their advocates are marked as “communist“. Similarly in Turkey, where private property is the highest good in society and a support system for tenants is non-existent. In Germany, where the social system can in comparison be defined as the most resilient one, restless and diligent work stands at the centre of social coexistence and the value of each member is measured by its contribution to the labour market. Therefore, also a reframing of social housing as a measure is needed, as Mihai described it in the case of Romania:

Social or public housing is very much perceived as knitting it because you're poor, you're poor because you're unsuccessful, you're unsuccessful because you're a failure and you don't work enough – the general neoliberal mantra that's taken hold on this kind of issues. So people are ashamed of admitting that there's a problem because that would be marked as a personal failure.

This observation does not only apply to Cluj or Romania. The perception of social and public housing as well as a subsidy system needs to change in order to gain broader public support for the cause of housing activists. While maybe “single“ cases or violations such as homelessness, discrimination, evictions and displacement that affect only a limited number of people might not reach as much public outcry, sympathy and support, it is through subjects that everyone can relate to and ever more people need to fear to be personally affected by, that a strategy to get the attention and collaboration of politicians can be developed and to finally press for broader demands such as new laws, policies and support systems that will then also protect the most vulnerable in society.

Not only public support inside national borders but also mobilising international attention can be used as a strategy. Besides communication, public statements and position papers, another tool of advocacy that was widely and effectively used, was the one of “naming-and-shaming“. FEANTSA, Dreptul la Oraş and Căşi sociale ACUM! as well as BAG W, were putting it to use with different nuances. The strategy that Mihai described I found quite interesting as they were actually making use of the local administration's own branding agenda. Cluj and also Timișoara as the European Capital of Culture 2023 are competing for

foreign investment, companies and tourists and use strategies of urban branding to give the cities a European, metropolitan and modern image. He explained:

They want to be perceived as very European oriented [...] So shaming them for being anti-European and you know bringing up this kind of coalitions of European institutions you know Western Europe based NGOs for example can make quite a fuss and is really disturbing for them because they don't want to get this kind of negative publicity that they are pissing on human rights. It's not very European.

Where political unwillingness becomes an issue, tools of advocacy, media coverage and naming-and-shaming prove effective and international actors such as Amnesty International can be allies or can offer support in increasing the international attention on events and human rights violations taking place. For example, in case of house evictions, pressure from outside can help to stop them from happening. But Mihai also realised that what works now might not work in the future, something that we see when we look at Turkey.

More critical does it prove to be when international pressure on governments does not have any effect any longer and human rights violations become the rule where then not only the right to housing is ignored but security and life are in danger when criticising actions the government is taking – or not taking. Duygu acknowledged: “Resistance and activism is a difficult thing to do here in Turkey. The agenda changes so fast, the government can get really coercive, you know. Discouraging?” When I also asked Şennur about the activism in Turkey fighting for the right to housing and grassroots organisations she told me:

We could say that there is like before-2013 and after-2013 for neighbourhood organisations, which is when the Gezi park protests happened. [...] After 2013 most of the neighbourhood organisations dissolved because of how brutal the crashing of the protesters were. They did not want to be involved or they lost their spirit.

In this light, we have to see the decision of many, who did not give up the struggle, to retreat to, maybe not less dangerous, but less exposing actions and made lawsuits against single urban projects their main focus, as a strategic step. Şennur explained the reason that they care so much about the legal challenges was because “when you change a certain kind of law or when you somehow even re-politicise a certain kind of law it would be possible to use it as a precedent or change other things that are going on as well so it could create a chain effect“. On the other hand, she also reflected that the legal approach might make it more difficult for people to follow because of the terminology and de-politicises an issue.

Here the circle closes and we see again how we always return to the support that the public provides and in the final instance, the pressure on local administrations and the national government that can be created. Mihai concluded and shared his frustration with me:

Everybody knows something is wrong. You just have to make your personal calculations, right: how much you earn, how much the rent is. And people are very affected by it. But they don't manage to translate it into a political action. Which is very frustrating for us.

Mobilising the public proves to be the greatest challenge that translates or determines the success of any activity planned or any demands posed. What plays a role here again is the background of a country and the history of social movements and political activism it experienced similar to the conceptualisation that the right to housing experiences. Dan summarised for Romania: "I think that's missing, a lot of the post-socialist countries who came out of the nineties with nothing like no social movements, nothing, nothing. And then there's not anything to build on". Similarly, Duygu shared her experience from a case she worked on in Istanbul: "Those human rights activists got involved after the resistance started and it became public. So in Turkey for housing rights claims, there is no established tradition of community and NGO collaboration". In Germany, on the other hand, the movement itself is organised through many social service providers, welfare associations, religious institutions, unions, NGOs and single activists. Nevertheless, there are strong interests at play that prevent a realisation of the right to adequate housing for everyone.

5.2.4 Conclusive Remarks: *"We have to keep at it so that these issues are not forgotten"*

In conclusion, the analysis of the interviews with activists from Romania, Germany and Turkey revealed that although challenges are country-specific and embedded in a historical, social and political landscape that has been shaped through past developments, experiences and new trends as well as policies that are supportive of certain discourses. There are nonetheless similarities and conclusions that can be comparatively drawn and generalised into a hermeneutic reflection on strategies of housing movements. The task that can be formulated for all movements as Alexander expressed it: "We have to keep at it so that these issues are not forgotten and that they are not just dealt with pro forma. Exactly, bring the issue into the public eye, inform, create pressure". Stakeholders need to be held responsible as well as accountable. Activities that are implemented by activists are based on violations that they observe and challenges that they face and are directed towards the changes that they want to

see realised. Ranging from very practical steps such as documentation, collection of proof, monitoring and support of vulnerable groups and people affected, actions which are taking place continuously to more singular events such as campaigns, press releases, protests and marches that are closely tied to certain events or recent developments. The latter kind of activities makes certain aspects more pressing or rather sheds more light on them and therefore opens up a good opportunity to achieve more publicity for the aims of the movements. While some organisations focussed on a legal approach in their work such as actors in Turkey through lawsuits and international organisations such as FEANTSA through litigation. The housing network in Romania and the association aiding the homeless in Germany made use of advocacy tools such as campaigns, reports and press releases. On the one hand, the local administration has been the main addressee of actions in Romania, on the other hand, the national government in Germany and in FEANTSA's work in combination with a supra-national level of EU institutions, whereas in Turkey single actors of the private real estate industry have been the focal point of lawsuits. These differences in their practical approach and their level of engagement have to be contextualised as conscious decisions made according to the conditions encountered as we have seen e.g. with repression in Turkey. Challenges hereby decisively form the strategies developed. The greatest challenge that I analysed through all interviews was mass mobilisation, social solidarity as well as a public outcry and awareness for the issue that activists were missing in their daily work. Political unwillingness is what most activists face and that needs to be changed with the support of the public. It is public pressure that can make civil servants change their agenda and implement new measures or sometimes abstain from certain violating acts. It is small successes that are won in the daily struggle for housing rights that make a difference and important recommendations can be developed out of the experiences of the activists interviewed, as we will also see in the following.

5.3 Discussion and recommendations: *“We just need some kind of spark to kind of actually put that in political terms“*

The question that we have to pose and find answers to is: How to convey housing for all? In order to formulate recommendations on how to realise the right to adequate housing for everyone everywhere, as is the purpose of this thesis, I will reflect on what works and what does not work. This chapter will discuss the insights that the analysis of demands, challenges and strategies has brought concerning steps that have proven effective in achieving an improvement for the situation of people who are affected by housing rights violations. Moreover, did the activists I interviewed share with me different conclusions that they had drawn on what had to happen for change to take place. Two opposite positions became apparent: either first, the system has to change or the change has to be bottom-up. This contrast will be part of the following discussion and compared to other studies in the field.

An observation that has already been made in the preceding section is the importance of continuity in the work of housing justice activists. Dan reflected: “I think that in Cluj they have managed to gain some traction because especially Enikő [one of the central activists in Romania who has been quoted in this thesis as well], she’s been doing this work like this for two decades and constantly that’s important“. Moreover, Duygu underlined: “Sustainability is very important. You know, you may get immediate outcomes, positive outcomes in the means of housing rights now. But if you can’t maintain that positivity, it inevitably becomes a negative thing“. We also have to differentiate between the short-term and long-term effects of activism and certain actions. While it may bring small wins, it might not trigger change in the long run. Nevertheless, it is also the small achievements that count and can build up to sustainable change e.g. through new policies and laws. The most important lesson we can learn from the activists’ experiences is the significance of constantly pounding at stakeholders’ doors and reminding them of their duties and shortcomings. At the same time, the ongoing discourse in the public sphere is central to keeping up awareness and support. As Maria remarked: “I guess something that we have learnt is that something that is not communicated does not exist in any way. And it remains invisible. So the raising awareness part is really important“. Alexander also noticed:

There is currently a great willingness on the federal political level to deal with the issue. It has never been so high, I have to say. Whether this is due to the BAG W or simply to the

fact that the BAG W is continuously doing this work. That is important. [...] and it is a continuous effort. So you can't say, now we've achieved a goal and now we don't have to worry about it any more. Actually, that you have to take care of it again and again. How does the legal implementation look like? What loopholes are opening up again right now? Who has still somehow found a trick?

The struggle for housing rights is ongoing and there are always new developments, new violations occurring and new challenges coming up. Therefore, activists are also continuously re-adjusting their strategies and aligning their actions. Şennur sarcastically added: "So far it seems the most resilient thing out of all this is neoliberalism. Honestly, maybe we should be as resilient as neoliberalism *laughs*". Although many of them shared with me their frustration and exhaustion because they are only a few in Romania and Turkey in the housing rights movement and a lot of trial and error is included in the process. Everybody underlined the importance of continuity and the public being concerned about the issue in order to gain political attention and action. It is through public support that change can be triggered.

Following the public protest and pressure, it is political stakeholders that hold the strings that can bind and enable change. Here, besides communication, building alliances and commonly confronting the government has been a strategy that proved successful. Maria underlined the tactics of FEANTSA in collaboration with local organisations: "I see these activist groups as allies. But is true that there is the collaboration that NGOs are working together with the cities, the governments – and then there is the confrontation part. And sometimes it is through confrontation that we change things". Although some are highlighting some positive sides, the outlook on the future of housing rights that most interview partners shared with me was a pessimistic one. Mihai said: "There is a difference right between what has to be changed and how that change can be achieved". Alexander went into more detail:

There may be individual measures that can perhaps have a positive effect here and there. But there will not be this right to housing. It would have to be enshrined in law, you can't do that with one measure, because that's something that has to be realised again for every generation that grows up. And if there's a positive political climate at the moment, it would have to result in such a fundamental specification. And I don't think the situation is such that someone will actually do it, it will be more of a Sunday speech.

Thus, for substantial change to hold not only for the current moment but also for future generations to come, it is a legal foundation that we need. While in Turkey the right to housing is enshrined in the constitution, we have seen how the violations of the very same

are the most severe. In Germany on the other hand, social and regulatory laws do offer a certain degree of protection. Therefore we also have to register that inclusion in the constitution has to be backed by a detailed description of the state duties that does not allow for excuses due to e.g. financial restraints. The same can be concluded for other social rights as well whose fulfilment is lacking in many countries.

Another realisation that is shining through in all the quotes is the importance of building alliances. In Romania, the network Block for housing, FEANTSA and BAG W with their member organisations have been examples. As other studies mentioned in chapter two by Di Feliciano (2017) and García-Lamarca (2017) showed for Spain and Florea, Gagy and Jacobson (2018) for Bucharest and Budapest, NGOs and activists come together and unite forces to strengthen their demands and increase pressure on governments. Although struggles might differ, as theoretical approaches of “networks of equivalence“ by Purcell (2009) and “politics of possibilities“ by Gibson Graham (2006) have emphasised, the fight for a common goal or against a common enemy can combine them under one umbrella. The “right to the city“ and an urban revolution by Harvey and Lefebvre can provide the framework for different urban movements whose greater unifying purpose is the fight against neoliberal politics. This can also provide for the missing mobilising factor that Dan, Mihai and others were missing in their work. With different slogans such as “cost of living crisis“ more people can be reached and moved to support their cause.

Finally, who can realise the change that we want to see? Can it be through a top-down approach that the housing rights of everyone can be protected? Or does the source of the movement have to be bottom-up? The assessment of this question turned out to vary depending on whom I asked. When I shared the assumption with Dan that maybe it was a public movement that came first, and then the system would change. He agreed and replied:

I am 100% the believer in that. The fact that that's the only way that sustainable change can happen. As someone who doesn't believe a lot in party politics, I mean, I do acknowledge that change can happen from top down, but I don't see any reason to invest your energies there because I don't think that's where change should come from. So definitely, I think only if we have a good, strong social movement, something fundamentally changes.

While Dan saw as the source of fundamental and sustainable change a social movement on the ground, Şennur would have disagreed with him. When I asked her a similar question, she went on to share her view with me:

I am again starting on the legal level but that is where it needs to change first in order to trickle down to other levels and the grassroots [...] First the system needs to change. Because otherwise you just get silenced or you just falling in the bureaucracy of things. Not much changes in the end. It maybe affects one person in one neighbourhood but it does not mean that it has any big scale changes. [...] I think the system needs to change for that.

We can make sense of this contradiction when we look at it taking into consideration the political context the two activists came from and were located in. Duygu on the other hand, who was working and doing research in Istanbul as well, concluded: “So I find the neighbourhood solidarity groups very important. So it shouldn’t be left to the hands of the government, whoever is in power, I think. So, the bottom-up-organising is what actually works, in my opinion“. But still she also noted: “The policies have to change. Of course, it’s all about policies and politics. The government has to genuinely be interested in all different classes, segments of society, elevating the lives“. Therefore, we can say that it is a combination of both, although it differs according to which point of the process we are looking at. If we ask who is the one that can trigger change the answer is: local community resistance and organisation, supported by NGOs and activists. But if we ask who can implement the change that is demanded it is the political level that has the authority.

Although the national government and local administrations are the stakeholders that decide about policies, urban (re-)development plans, earthquake resilience and the agenda that they follow: Building for profit instead of housing as a basic right. This section has shown that it is activists and local movements who become central actors and demand and initiate change for the good of society. It is an ongoing fight where small gains are made through a continuity of efforts and actions. Communication and public awareness are crucial in demanding the implementation of the right to adequate housing for everyone. Finally, we have seen that a legal basis is indispensable if we want to guarantee equal access also in the future when issues such as social justice will become even more pressing.

6. Conclusion – Addressing the housing crisis in Europe

“I would say that the need to shelter is a human right and I don’t see how we can exist without it. It is almost turning into a dystopia wherever you go. And right to housing or to shelter is related to all of those things because it is a basic fundamental human right. People cannot really have anything else until they have some sort of security in their living situation and livelihood.” – Şennur, Istanbul

In the past years, we have seen access to adequate housing in urban places threatened. In Şennur’s quote, the importance of the very same shines through. Violations of the right to housing are related to global processes and the neoliberalisation of space. Challenging this development, inhabitants, researchers, lawyers and others have turned activists. NGOs and grassroots movements are fighting for the right to housing in their cities. This struggle can be considered part of a larger movement advocating for the right to the city.

The analytical framework has placed housing policies in Romania, Turkey and Germany within a broader context where urban policies reflect global processes and can be traced back to transnational patterns. Neoliberalism has been observed in their economic and urban developments. Already in the 19th and 20th-century, sociologists, such as Engels (1848/1952), Simmel (1903/2002), Park and Burgess (1967) and Weber (1958/2002) criticised the changes in places of rapid urbanisation. Today, possibly more than ever, we can see the effects in 400,000-inhabitant cities such as Timișoara or Cluj. Finding out, how in this context, in neoliberal urban environments activists succeed in (re-)framing housing, has been the purpose of this research. While through the theory, I contextualised the current state of housing, this thesis adds to the picture, the experience on the ground by looking at the violations of the right to housing and the struggle of activists comparatively tracing the analysis across three countries.

Against the backdrop of the first research question, housing in policy and practice in the three countries I examined has become a commodity and a luxury instead of a fundamental need and human right. Social housing stocks are at the lowest point in history, while the private real estate market is booming. The urban process has always been closely related to capitalism, providing the means for profit-making, and housing has become a structural component in urban societies and a tool in policies of fragmented cities. Violations of the right to housing

are manifold, spanning from discrimination to displacement and from unaffordability to homelessness. Different human rights are impacted, not only the adequate standard of living as enshrined in the UDHR and the ICESCR but also privacy, family life, security of the home and even dignity and the right to life are endangered as the earthquakes in Turkey have shown. Vulnerable or stigmatised groups in society, such as Roma people in Romania and Kurdish people in Turkey, are especially affected.

The core of this thesis is the qualitative interviews with activists and the analysis of their experience considering demands, challenges, strategies and activities in reference to the second research question from which I derive insights on how the housing crisis must be addressed so as to demand adequate and affordable housing for everyone in Europe.

Demands activists develop stay not always within given frameworks but go beyond and envision a different social reality. The aim is to hold political stakeholders responsible and accountable. Concrete and less radical solutions suggested are rent subsidies, an increase in social and public housing and the legal prohibition of evictions. Other demands are more fundamental, meeting strong opposition or better to say no support: the inclusion of a state obligation to guarantee adequate housing for everyone in the constitution and the wish of changing the system itself as a precondition for a more equal society.

Secondly, challenges and strategies are closely connected. NGOs realise activities based on violations and changes intended that range from very practical and continuous steps such as documentation, monitoring and support, to more singular events such as campaigns, press releases and protests. The latter kind of activities enables them to gain more publicity for their demands. While actors in Turkey and at FEANTSA focussed on a legal approach, the housing network in Romania and in Germany made use of advocacy tools. Local administrations in Romania, the national government in Germany and in FEANTSA's work and in Turkey the real estate industry have been the addressees of actions. The greatest challenge activists encountered was mass mobilisation, social solidarity as well as public awareness for the subject. Political unwillingness needs to be changed with the support of the public.

Last but not least, asking how successes can be achieved, I want to conclude, that it is public pressure that can make civil servants implement the right to housing for everyone and that activists need to create. A common enemy and goal can be unifying factors as we have seen. Important in this work is continuity. So to achieve access to housing not only for today but guarantee it also for the future when the crisis will even intensify. Therefore, a legal enshrining of the right to housing (and social rights in general) in the constitution of a country can be an important basis. As we have learnt from the case of Turkey, such a step must be backed by clearly formulated and binding state obligations.

If we want to take control over our cities the revolution has to be urban. The fight for housing is part of greater struggles for social justice, ending poverty and equal societies. All of them are interlinked and share the aim of overcoming neoliberal politics and capitalist structures that dominate urban places and turn rights into commodities as we have seen in the privatisation of housing. Considering the everyday experience of activists living in those cities and fighting for their right of shaping them, makes it possible to see how urban processes can be resisted and reclaimed. The analysis has shown that NGOs play a fundamental role in challenging state policies and in making us see a different, more equal social reality. Here further research will be needed to also add the perspective of people affected and political stakeholders to the debate, so as to develop sustainable solutions.

Finally, this thesis also includes a call on political stakeholders to counteract these developments and to implement intervention measures in the housing market and a shift in urban planning policy. In this context, the development of different cities in Europe must be followed also in the upcoming years and a comparative approach applied to learn from each other and combine forces. Under the slogan “right to the city“ groups are uniting which gives hope that a movement starting on the ground and spanning the globe will be able to achieve “one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights“: To claim back our right to create a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality and to decide how we want to live together now and in the future.

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Appendix

I. Interview guide

1. Personal questions

- a) Could you briefly tell me about your personal (academic and professional) background?
- b) What is your current position / occupation, what are your responsibilities? Since when do you work in this position / for (organisation's name)?
- c) Could you briefly describe the work that the organisation does? Could you tell me about its history? Have there been changes over the years in the focus followed?

2. The right to housing in your country / city

- a) How is the public and political discourse approaching the right to housing today? How is the municipality in (city) approaching the topic? How does the legal framework look like?
- b) Could you please give me a short historical overview? Regarding the right to housing and urban planning and development in the past years: What changed in the past ten years?
- c) Are there certain influences / processes that you see most formative in this development? How did they impact the urban development and housing in the country / bigger cities?
- d) You have (not) used the term ... (neoliberalism / neoliberalisation / capitalism). Could you please elaborate more? How do you see these processes in the local level in (country) / (city)? How / in what way did they impact the right to housing?
- e) How would you describe / characterise the housing policies in (country)? What role has social housing played and plays?
- f) What achievements and what shortcomings do you see in realising the right to housing for everyone?
- g) Do you see certain parts of society affected differently? (vulnerable groups) / What kind of segregation / inequalities do you see in (city)? (disadvantaged groups) How does gender / ethnicity / class / age come into play?

3. Work / NGO Activism

- a) How is housing addressed in (organisation's) work? Which position does it have?
- b) Which activities are part of your work?
- c) How is advocacy part of your work? Do you have claims regarding policies? / How are claims formulated and framed? What demands does the organisation put forward?
- d) What struggles / obstacles do you face during your work? On which level? From which actors?
- e) From these what do you see as your biggest challenge?
- f) What are successes that you made during your work? Could you elaborate on one example?
- g) What networks do exist and what role do they play for your work? Local and national? How do you work together with (example)?

4. General questions / The right to housing in general

- a) What changes are necessary (on which level) in order to solve the housing crisis?
- b) How would you relate that to developments in other countries?
- c) What do you think is the importance of the right to housing today and its relevance for the future?

5. Personal experience in relation to the right to housing (optional)

- a) Since when have you been living in (city)?
- b) Did you ever encounter any difficulties on the housing market? Of which nature were they? Can you tell me more about this experience?
- c) In your surroundings (family, friends) have you heard similar stories?

II. Consent form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

”The Right to Housing in Europe“?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to identify challenges in fulfilling the right to housing for everyone in Europe. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The sole purpose of this project is to collect data for my master’s thesis. The master is called Human Rights Policy and Practice. In my final thesis I will collect data on the realisation of the human right to housing in three different countries in Europe in order to analysis obstacles, structural problems and political hurdles that oppose the guaranteeing of this right. I will be using two lines of approaching the topic: a geographical and a thematic one. I will focus on three different localities (Germany, Romania, Turkey) and on three different themes (migration and homelessness, racialisation of housing, gender and housing). On the neoliberal housing market housing is not treated as a human right but as a commodity. This conception will be challenged and solutions will be drafted to overcome the manifold struggles people face all over Europe and worldwide. Laws and policies will be compared and recommendations exchanged.

Who is responsible for the research project?

This thesis is for a joint-degree masters programme that is a cooperation between University of Gothenburg, University of Deusto, University of Roehampton and UiT, the Arctic University of Norway. UiT - the Arctic University of Norway has responsibility for the thesis and my thesis supervisor at UiT is Anniken Førde (anniken.forde@uit.no). The supervisor will not have access to the data collected for this project, only the anonymized data in the thesis. I, Anna Krauss, am the only person that will have access to the personal information collected for this project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

For this project employees of NGOs that work with housing in three different countries (Romania, Germany, Turkey) will be interviewed in their professional capacity to share their perspective on the implementation of the right to housing for everyone. 8-9 other people have been asked to participate. I have found your contact details on the website of your NGO.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you take part in an interview. It will take approx. 45 to 60 minutes. The interview includes questions about your work, the challenges that you encounter in your work and the changes that you would like to see. Your answers will be recorded via sound recording with a mobile phone.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

I will only use your personal data for the purpose specified in this information letter. I will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The supervisor will not have access to the data collected for this project, only the anonymised data in the thesis. I, Anna Krauss, am the only person that will have access to the personal information collected for this project.

I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. The data will be stored on a password protected laptop that only I, Anna Krauss, have access to.

You will be recognisable in the final publication through your position / occupation and the name of the NGO that you work for. If you want your real name to be used you can share this wish with the interviewer. Otherwise your name will be anonymised.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end 22 May 2023. At the end of the project, all sound recordings and personal data will be deleted. The collected data (interview transcripts) will be anonymised.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with UiT, the Arctic University of Norway, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- UiT, Arctic University Norway, Institutt for samfunnsvitenskap via
Anniken Førde: anniken.forde@uit.no +47 77 64 54 64

- Our Data Protection Officer: Sølvi Brendeford Anderssen Email: personvernombud@uit.no
Phone: 00 47 776 46 153
- Data Protection Services, by email: (personvertjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Anniken Førde
(Researcher/supervisor)

Anna Krauss (Student)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project The Right to Housing in Europe and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview
- for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised, this concerns my position at my organization which can identify me

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 22 May 2023

(Signed by participant, date) *Please state your full name.*