The Power of the Magic Key. Scalability of squatting in the Netherlands and the US.

When considering alternatives, a classic question is whether they can be scaled up beyond a proof of concept. In the case of squatting, activists have tried this and this chapter taps into this experience. It is based on evidence from the Netherlands, especially Amsterdam and the US, especially New York City. The Netherlands is interesting because squatting grew to be widespread for a relatively long time. In the US, squatting was possible but it was much less sustained. Also the context is different, in the US there is what Esping-Anderson (1990) calls a liberal welfare state regime. The Dutch welfare state regime can be seen as combination of the social democratic and paternalistic types.

The history of squatting is quite complex, especially in the Netherlands because there was such a large and variegated movement. A book chapter can only cover a small part of it; this chapter focuses on the question of how squatting can grow to encompass more people, become more durable or entail greater cultural and economic change. It also addresses limitations and mechanisms that can force squatting into a decline.

Below, I will examine various episodes in the history of squatting in the Netherlands and the US. First I will discuss some theoretical considerations that relate to movement growth.

A unique power

Within the complete stock of real estate, there is a section consisting of buildings that are void, but not for sale or offered for rent, although many people would like to use it, or are even desperately in need of it. Squatting is virtually the only practical way for citizens to get access to such properties. As such, it is a unique power. It is also a precarious power. Viable, growing squatting involves dealing with the challenge of (re)discovery, propagation, legitimation, harnessing, maintenance, expansion and preservation of the power of squatting. A further challenge for squatters is to assure the day-to-day viability of their squats, given the uncertainty that squatting entails.

Squatting can lead to further cultural and economic change when it constitutes, beyond being a form of self-help, an intervention in urban politics and urban planning. Spatial transformations

tend to manifest themselves by the appearance of empty buildings, which takes place between the moving out of the first tenant and final razing of the site. By pushing for preservation or a change in plans they can make their mark on the urban fabric, possibly in a way that differs from a profit-driven development.

Squatting can also contribute to a sector in society that can be seen as to some extent, and to varying degree, in opposition to some of the capitalist principles. However it needs to be noted that ideologies espoused with squatter's movement vary, as well as the interpretations made by observers. Squatting is not the implementation of some anti-capitalist program.

Squatting in the Netherlands

Events in Amsterdam show, that without prior organization or promotion, and without much support, provided that the authorities do not interfere with it, relatively large-scale squatting can start on an urban renewal site. In 1963, tens of people, including a community of artists, were squatting on Kattenburg, an island in the central district of Amsterdam, were the city was moving all tenants out to prepare for a complete demolition followed by the construction of new housing. Utility companies refused to connect water or electricity; squatters were able to get water from still-remaining legal neighbors, electricity sometimes from lampposts. As their number increased, squatters increasingly got together socially and cooperated. The communist newspaper De Waarheid (1963) publicized the opportunity, describing squatted Kattenburg as the 'Monmartre' in Amsterdam and in n 1964, the student weekly Propria Cures exhorted students to move to Kattenburg: "Save a small property".

A problem for the squatters on Kattenburg was the appearance of people who made a mess. Poldervaart (2004) recalled "Empty buildings also attract less pleasant people. Thus, around the corner two ether abusers were living who got into a fight almost every night and started to throw stuff. Next door, on the third floor there were American junkies who let their dogs shit on the second floor, which cause an enormous stench." Such behavior triggered a media backlash. The newspaper Telegraaf wrote about "human rats" of Kattenburg. It also brought some of the remaining tenants on the verge of attacking squats; squatters were able to prevent this by evicting addicts themselves.

Organizing squatting

Squatting on Kattenburg was spontaneous, but in 1965 the first organized squatting action followed in the Vetterstraat. It focused on housing newly-wed couples and garnered a lot of media attention.

In 1966 the Provo Anarchist group took up the theme when they issued a pamphlet on a *Witte Huizenplan* (White Houses Plan, see Box 1). In this pamphlet, a "working group" announced

that they would distribute lists of empty houses and would paint doors and doorjambs of empty homes white.

Box 1: Provo (Margot Verdier)

Between 1964 and 1967, a neo-anarchist social movement called Provo engaged in a political struggle meant to transform the manners in addressing dominant culture. Its unpredictable success transformed the traditional political culture of Holland (based on a confessional system called the Verzuiling) and influence urban struggles of the time. Its self-dissolution led to the formation of the first groups of squatters who formed, a few years later, the Dutch Krakers' movement.

Publishing was an important part of the movement as pamphlets, posters and a magazine were produced. Presses were set up in Amsterdam and other cities in the Netherlands. Provo become an easily reproduced franchise that spawned local groups across the Netherlands. Maastricht Provo groups publish the magazine Ontbijt of Bed and are involved in "experimental" "non-object" art practices.

A series of "white plans" were produced in which an object was adopted for its symbolic value, painted white and used to stage a "happening". The "white bicycle plan" positioned bicycles as an alternative icon to the private automobile and by creating a small fleet of white bicycles available for public use. Not intended to be a practical solution, the plan served rather to precipitate a repressive response from the police and force issues of private property and public space into popular discourse. Other white plans addressed issues of gender and family structure, mirroring modernist attitudes towards the collectivization of childcare except with a communitarian bent.

The "white housing plan" politicized squatting practices that were already becoming common and took issue with both the inefficiencies of state housing policy and the vacancy rate caused by speculation in a perversely-incentives real estate markets. A system for listing vacant spaces was instituted and an office set up to place people in squatted housing.

In 1969 the term "kraken" came in use for squatting. The group "Woningbureau (Housing Bureau) de Kraker" published the first squatting manual (Van Tijen, 2008). This group expanded the scope of squatting by not restricting squatting to married couples, as had been the case in the 1965 actions, and by linking squatting to protest. They protested against the planned demolition of a tenement to make room for student housing, against a hotel conversion plan and against a lack of affordable housing policy in general. They were allowed to stay

temporarily in a bank office that they squatted, were the first group to barricade a squat to make eviction difficult, and the first squatter group to be evicted by police in riot gear.

In 1970 there was a big leap in squatting. Neighborhood action committees, trying to stop bulldozer urban renewal, started to employ squatting as a tactic (Pruijt, 2004b). A new informal organization, Aktie '70, made it easier for people to join in actions, by being much more accessible than previous groups that only had a PO Box number, and by reaching out to home seekers. Aktie '70 set up a stall outside the municipal office where home-seekers needed to go to register for the waiting list. A wealthy former advertising executive-turned activist supplied Aktie '70 with resources and public relations expertise. (Duivenvoorden, 2000)

In 1970, there was a national diffusion of squatting, through, among others, the Kabouter (Gnome) Movement, founded by former Provos. The Kabouter movement was nationwide, and declared an "alternative state", Oranje Vrijstaat. Oranje Vrijstaat's infrastructure consisted of squats, recycled goods shops, and organic food stores.

In various cities, there were alternative youth aid agencies that involved their homeless clients in squatting. In contrast to some of the other groups, the youth aid agencies systematically respected eventual eviction orders. Not only did youth aid agencies stimulate squatting, it was also the other way around. Aktie '70 organized a national squatting day, which prompted the creation of Release in Haarlem, a still existing alternative aid agency that started squatting for families in precarious conditions.

At Release's instigation, lawyers began to challenge the legal basis of evictions in court. As a result, the Dutch Supreme Court in 1971 decided that the "house right", which protects homes from being entered against the will of the occupants, applies to squatters. From that moment, it became illegal for landlords to evict squatters and squatting was no longer considered to be a criminal offense, provided that the building was neither in use nor being worked on. The history of squatting in the Netherlands (Duivenvoorden, 2000) clearly shows the effect of legal protection. The 1971 Supreme Court decision that gave squatters protection meant a turnaround. Prior to that point, the police had evicted squatters swiftly and it proved impossible to establish long-living squats. This changed completely. Squatters were now even able to re-squat and finally secure some buildings from which they previously had been evicted (Duivenvoorden, 2000: 69).

The Nieuwmarkt neighborhood struggle

In the early 1970s, the Nieuwmarkt neighborhood in Amsterdam was planned to be cut through by an urban motorway built in a corridor cleared for subway construction, and lined by office

blocks as well as to be the site for a new hotel. Activists, determined to fight for preservation of the neighborhood, set up a group that distributed houses that would be squatted. To be accepted, prospective squatters had to meet criteria such as being prepared to stay to the end i.e. the eviction and be ready to fight. The activists backed this up by establishing a scheme in which the squatters would collectively pay for necessary repairs, which made squatting houses that were in an exceptionally bad condition a more reasonable proposal, and by running a technical service center where various construction tools could be borrowed. They also made a commitment to arrange for re-housing after a possible eviction.

The group's informal leaders exercised control in the neighborhood, sought to remove drug addicts and to traditional green (Bosma et al., 1984). Activists had to manage the conflict of interest between the preservationists and inhabitants who wanted to move out of the neighborhood anyhow and were planning to benefit from a re-housing scheme when their home was demolished, and the problems caused by conflicting lifestyles of squatters and long-standing residents. They regularly produced newsletters that gave information about developments in the fight for preservation, and on the work that was done to convert squatted commercial buildings into living space. An old Smithy (de Smederij) was squatted to use as a meeting place for the neighborhood.

In the end, squatters could hang on to their buildings on the Zwanenburgwal and Ververstraat, preserving them from demolition. The struggle against a planned motorway through the Nieuwmarkt neighborhood, in conjunction with a subway line underneath, and surrounded by office blocks involved a coalition between elitist conservationists, who were mainly interested in preserving monuments, and anarchist activists who wanted a mixed-use, affordable vibrant neighborhood in which the human scale dominates. The subway line was built as planned but the motorway project was stopped after an activist campaign, which caused prospective developers of office buildings to lose interest. Furthermore, the City made two changes to the plans that were in accordance with the activists' demands that entailed restoring the original street plan. One decision was to place a new housing block at the south side of the Anthoniesbreestraat in such a way, that only a space wide enough for a narrow street remained, precluding an eventual later development as a major traffic artery. This decision was made after a violent confrontation at an attempted demolition in 1974 and following a recommendation made by officials to give in to the demands as a way to prevent further deterioration of the relations (Hoekema, 1978). The second decision was to construct new housing on top of the subway tube, a considerable extra outlay, which was put on the subway construction budget (Mamadouh, 1992).

In 1975, while the squatters were preparing the defenses of the squats on the Rechtboomsloot, which included a hanging and covered bridge across the canal, the City Council revoked an earlier decision to create new subway lines after the one that cut though the Nieuwmarkt.

Full squatting

After the Nieuwmarkt battles, activists across the Amsterdam squatter scene got together to systematically strengthen the squatters' movement. The strategy built on the concept of office hours at which prospective squatters could get information. Long-foreshadowing social policy ideals that would become mainstream around 2010, a stated principle was to "emphasize from the beginning that the squatting action itself, the fixing up and/or conversion, and preventing eviction, are based on the home-seekers' own initiative, and that otherwise it is better to refrain from squatting". Groups were organized for legal, technical and strategic support, care for evicted squatters and their stuff coordinated, vacancy was studied. A bi- or triweekly squatters newspaper, the Kraakkrant, was started. Its articles informed squatters about what was discussed in meetings, and disseminated experience gained in squatting actions. It also publicized squatting opportunities. In 1979, the Kraakkrant introduced the circle and arrow squatters' symbol. In 1979 a squatters' radio station began operation.

In many of Amsterdam's neigborhoods, squatters' bars were opened that served as meeting places and hangouts for the neighborhood squatters' groups, hosted meeting and operated office hours for prospective squatters. Profits from the sale of beer went into funding for actions. Regular city-wide squatters' meetings were organized. Other cities in the Netherlands organized squatting by and large in the same way as Amsterdam (Pruijt, 2013a).

There were also regular national squatters' meetings. A key point on the agenda was counteracting government strategies to outlaw squatting. Squatting had become virtually legal in 1971, basically as a result of legal technicalities, against the preference of the political majority in Parliament. Right away, political efforts came under was to stamp out squatting. Such efforts were met with protest, including national squatting days. In 1978, a proposed anti-squatting bill failed in parliament after lobbying by the Council of Churches. They issued a detailed report about squatting in the Netherlands. Squatters or former squatters were involved in the research. It was the result of a deliberate strategy to build an alliance with progressive people within church organizations.

It took more than a decade, before legislation was passed with the aim to curtail squatting. It provided for the protection of only those buildings that were registered in a special file for vacant buildings. It turned that this this file never materialized; for squatters, the law remained inconsequential.

Thus, squatting could proceed relatively undisturbed by legal measures. In Amsterdam, the city inadvertently helped squatting grow by writing off largely the existing housing stock in the 19th century ring, envisioning to replace it with office blocks, other 'city functions' and lower-density housing. Tenants were moved out, apartments partially wrecked to prevent squatting. Nevertheless, these houses were systematically squatted and fixed up, an often relaxed affair because the owners could not do much with their buildings anyway. That is, except criminal owners who wanted to illegally get extortionate rents from desperate home seekers. Organized defense kept such owners at bay. City officials barely reacted to the massive squatting, utility companies normally connected squats without problems. Especially for people with a relatively short-term perspective on housing, such as students, there was hardly a downside to squatting these types of buildings.

Relatively relaxed was also squatting buildings that had lost their function but for which there we no new plans, such as, in Amsterdam, the monumental Haarlemmerpoort, the last remaining city gate, the firehouse on the Prinsengracht, the rows of lock operator's houses at the Oranjesluizen, schools, military buildings, the warehouses that became unused after the seaport on the east side of the city shut down, or the gigantic shipyards that had gone bankrupt. A further example is the entire village of Ruigoord, that was slated to disappear for an expansion of the Amsterdam harbor.

More ambitious in terms of risk was squatting a building for which the owner had more or less speculative plans. Still, this was feasible, because when an owner could not get an eviction on the basis of trespassing, the only road to eviction was to take the squatters to court in a civil dispute. For years, squatters used to prevent this by keeping their family names secret until a change in law made it possible to sue anonymous occupants. Owners employed spies in some cases.

By and large, one could say that around 1980, squatting in the Netherlands was expanded to an extent that few opportunities remained unused. Squats housed artists' work spaces, practice facilities for bands, recording studios, women's houses, restaurants, print shops, theaters and movie theaters, tool lending services, alternative schools, daycare centers, party spaces, art galleries, book- and info shops, spiritual centers, give-away shops (shops in which everything is free), food shops, saunas, workshops, e.g. for bicycle repair or car or boat restoration, environmental or third world oriented projects or social projects such as a shelter for people in distress or an advisory service with language training for migrants. Some of these squats were in prominent locations, such as the former NRC newspaper building next door to the Royal Palace in Amsterdam. Ostensibly defying the capitalist spatial logic, it featured among others a vegetable shop. A few commercial companies grew out of squatting, such as a brewery and a

specialty beer importer. In Utrecht, there is the Strowis hostel that is part of the social center ACU, that was bought by the squatters themselves.

Effective for expansion was the practice to combine artistic, cultural or political entrepreneurial squatting projects with housing. Therefore, these squats were, unlike south European style social centers that do not include housing, not in a zero sum competition for a share of the alternative audience.

Taking with them the notion of applying direct action to troubled spots in society, some squatters branched out into other fields. A few examples are: blockading the road leading to the nuclear power plant in Dodewaard and blockade actions against transportation of nuclear waste on its way to be dumped in the sea. Squatters blockaded the entrances to the Shell laboratory complex in Amsterdam as part of anti-apartheid protests. Direct action tactics, pioneered in the squatters' movement, were also transferred to anti-militaristic protest. Military command bunkers and one military office were raided, documents detailing contingency plans in case of a State of National Emergency stolen, displayed and published. A similar action occurred at a building used by a covert police observation unit. A raid to disrupt an extreme-rightwing party meeting in a hotel ended in a devastating fire caused by a smoke-bomb, leaving the party leaders' girlfriend mutilated. Squatters also played a major role in urban protests, for example against the construction of the new town hall – occupying the site with an "anti-City circus"- or ruining Amsterdam's campaign to attract the Olympic Games – by harassing the International Olympic Committee members assembled in Lausanne.

Many of the protests and direct action that involved squatters had a festival-like atmosphere, helped by, for example, the still-existing marching band Fanfare van de Eerste Liefdesnacht; more in general, life in the squatter scene meant that was no shortage of parties,

Around 1980, the Netherlands was in the midst of an economic crisis with a high unemployment rate. For unemployed people, squatting and related movement activity was am opportunity to do something useful and fun. Thus the movement benefitted from indirect subsidies.

Consolidation

Many squatters abandoned their buildings when the rightful owners claimed them. In the Netherlands, this especially applied to tenements slated for replacement by new low-income housing. Squatters tended to leave such buildings voluntarily without protest in time for the scheduled demolition and construction work to start. In Amsterdam, in 1981, slightly more than half of all squatters lived in the working class neighborhoods that were built at the end of the

19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Van der Raad, 1981: 37). Virtually all squats in these areas were eventually replaced by low-income housing. With very few exceptions, squatters in these areas left voluntarily (Pruijt, 2003). Basically, squatters did not want to get in the way of the construction of affordable housing, something that neighborhood group had fought for. Also this city rehoused some of the squatters.

It was completely different when squatters did not agree with the owners' or the authorities' plan for the building. One line of approach was to try to change the plan. An opening was that the government had failed to deliver on an earlier promise to create more housing for young people. It seemed, and later proved, to be possible to induce social housing providers to buy squatted buildings for low prices, this because of the real estate crisis that erupted in 1978, and to arrange for funding of renovations in cooperation with the squatters.

There was also a second line of approach. Three years after the Nieuwmarkt battles, the tactic to make eviction difficult was revived. A turning point was an eviction in the Kinkerbuurt in 1978. Planning to put the movement on a more militant tack, a group of squatters barricaded a building that was slated to be demolished and replaced by a small park. Squatters who turned up to show their solidarity in a nonviolent blockade, hoping that this would give the pause to the city administration, were severely beaten by police officers in riot gear. This led to debates about the possibilities for effective resistance against evictions. This was never really resolved, but in 1979 a row of five canal houses on the Keizersgracht, the Groote Keijser, were barricaded with welded steel plates and beams in defiance of a court order for eviction. Authorities prepared for eviction involving a force of around 2000, but the mayor, fearing that people could get killed called it off. Eventually, the houses were bought and turned into social housing. Early in 1980, a building on the Vondelstraat was re-squatted, after an eviction based on a fake rent contract. Squatters chased away riot police and occupied the square. With the help of army tanks the police retook the square, but squat was not again evicted, but it was legalized.

Justified concern among the authorities that at the upcoming coronation of Queen Beatrice, a few weeks later, there would be riots, prompted the city to quickly purchase a set of big squats, including the NRC Newspaper building next door to the Royal Palace.

After the Vondelstraat, resistance against eviction had little direct effect. Some squatters felt, however, that causing high eviction cost would induce the city to try and avoid further evictions. When the eviction of luxury apartments on the Prins Hendrikkade was announced, squatters barricaded the building and lined the rooftop with objects like washing machines, making it clear that they would be prepared to actively defend the building. A large police force appeared for the eviction, accompanied by marksmen from the army who installed themselves, with guns, in skips that were hoisted high in the air by mobile cranes. To their surprise, they found one lone squatter waiting for them, with flowers. In the days before, the squatters had

made an underground passage into the basement of the neighboring church. Nevertheless, a riot broke out on the streets.

At the end of 1980, squatters tried to save a large squat, the Grote Wetering, from being demolished and replaced by an office building. They did this by trying get the building listed, and by attacking the developer and the mortgage bank that pulling the strings behind him. When eviction seemed inevitable, the building was barricaded and people mobilized for street actions. The police came with a force of over one thousand and an armored car to break through the barricades; plain clothes policemen molested demonstrators.

The violence put off many people, both outside the movement and within. It seems that for some people resisting evictions became somewhat of an end in itself. In 1983, many of the active squatters did not want to participate in an almost paramilitary campaign to re-squatting and defend the Lucky Luijk squat that had been evicted earlier. The city had already made the concession to allocate the building for social housing, thus in the end the dispute was more about control than about housing. In the riot, a tram was destroyed by fire. This event is often noted as the occasion at which the squatters' movement lost all support (Van Noort, 1988). The Lucky Luijk case shows a weakness of the decentralized autonomous movement model: participants can avoid a full debate about the wisdom of a proposed action by either just doing what they want to do of by just voting with their feet. Nevertheless, squatters later proved to get a lot of support in their campaign to prevent criminalization (Pruijt, 2013b).

A completely different approach was followed in 1984 by the squatters of the immense Weijers buildings. When the court ordered eviction, in this building there were already several collectives living communally, a squatters' bar, a restaurant, an espresso bar, and a performance space; the buildings full potential was not yet realized, and new initiatives were being added. It was not barricaded, instead opened up for anyone who wanted to support the squatters. Finally, inside about a thousand supporters awaited the police.

Over time, the Municipality of Amsterdam bought two hundred of the buildings that were occupied by squatters (Duivenvoorden, 2000: 323), thereby legalizing them. In the beginning, the justification for this was the contribution to affordable housing for young people, later the emphasis shifted to the economic value of squats as "breeding places" providing workspaces and living/working spaces for individual artists and groups of artists and cultural entrepreneurs (Pruijt, 2004a). The strategy of legalization tended to be relatively successful when the real estate prices were low, and in cases where the owners did not have very defined plans for the building.

Officials turned most of these buildings over to established housing associations, which concluded lease contracts with individual squatters (Draaisma and Hoogstraten, 1983). Soja

(2000: 124) labels this policy as "slightly repressive tolerance". This institutionalization was not the end of squatting in Amsterdam. The heyday of legalization was in the early 1980s. Three decades later, squatting was still going on. One observer, Van Noort (1988: 180) suggested that concessions even contributed to the radicalization of the movement.

One may wonder whether legalization results in the loss of the oppositional edge. An in-depth study on squatted "free spaces" in Amsterdam describes commonly occurring effects of legalization as: a loss of links to various societal structures, of ties with other free spaces, and a decline of dynamism and political engagement (Breek and de Graad, 2001: 77).

There are projects where the oppositional identity did not whither away, rather it died abruptly with legalization, such as the Groote Keijser, the already mentioned canal houses Keizersgracht 242-252. In other legalized squats it eroded gradually, e.g. the NRC-complex, Tetterode in Amsterdam. Sometimes a role in alternative culture has remained, such as in the case of the Poortgebouw in Rotterdam, which has remained a venue for alternative music. An important factor is the level of control that occupants can retain after legalization. Often legalization involves a housing non-profit organization taking control of the building and turning the squatters into individual tenants. In other cases, the ex-squatters remain in control as a collective (Breek and de Graad, 2001: 50).

Legalized squats, far from being monuments for co-optation, are still low-revenue generating functions on expensive land i.e. potential focal points for future conflicts. A precursor of this is the conflict recently won by the anarchist volunteer-run bookshop "Fort van Sjakoo" in Amsterdam, established in a squat in 1977, legalized in the 1980s and almost strangled by a 900% rent increase in 2003.

Consolidation of squats was important because opportunities for opening new squats declined. The city started to handle urban renewal more cautiously, and to avoid causing massive vacancy. Real estate prices soared, making it easier for developers to push their plans through. In 1984 squatting buildings that had been empty for less than one year became illegal, in 2010 this happened for all squatting (Pruijt, 2013b). A very important development in terms of curtailing squatting is the success of the 'anti-squat' companies that offer to protect empty buildings by placing people in them, who are not tenants but basically tightly controlled guards, and who have hardly any rights but have to pay for the privilege. In 1980, the first anti-squat company, de Zwerfkei, started in 1980. The sector expanded to such an extent, that the number of anti-squat guards can be estimated to be at least ten times the number of squatters. Cites and social housing providers routinely use anti-squat services, as do the owners of the millions of square meters of offices space that is empty and remains listed on the investors' books at unrealistic values. By putting only a handful of students in an office building, anti-squat companies can make these impossible or hard to squat.

Nevertheless, there are still places that only seem to be accessible through squatting. An example is the former animal shelter near the Muiderpoort railway station. It was squatted in 2010 and is now the social center "De valreep"(www.valreep.org). It a solitary building, that, because it is a listed building, remained after surrounding buildings were demolished as part of de redevelopment scheme. When clearing soil pollution, all connecting piping and wiring was stripped from the area, leaving a kind of sand desert. There was no anti-squat company involved, which seems likely to be due to the complete lack of connections for water, sewer, power and gas on the site. A rented Portaloo and wood stoves help squatters to make de Valreep it into a successful social center and living space.

Squatting in the US, especially in New York City

Like in the Netherlands, 1970 was a peak year for squatting in the US, at least in New York City. This is probably not a complete coincidence. The peak in squatting was part of the late 1960s protest wave that authorities could not handle. A dramatic example is the killing of unarmed students at an anti-war protest at Kent State University in 1970.

Squatting on urban renewal site on the Upper West Side of Manhattan

In 1970, the Upper West Side of Manhattan, then a working class area, was in the throes of urban renewal and planned displacement of poor, predominantly immigrant families, to make room for more upmarket housing. In the neighborhood there were scores of empty and still (partly) occupied buildings that were slated for demolition, while some families doubled or tripled up because they could not find an affordable apartment. These circumstances made a squatting wave possible, that was started from a housing movement encompassing various social movement organizations that were trying to stop and reverse the displacement of low-income families, destruction of usable housing, and lack of maintenance and warehousing of empty apartments. The city gave an extra impetus to the mobilization because it promised that displaced tenants could return to the neighborhood, but it failed to deliver on this. Squatting followed an incident in which a boy died from carbon monoxide poisoning due to a boiler that the city had refused to fix, despite repeated pleas by the boy's mother.

Activists mobilized families, including the family that had suffered the tragedy, to squat in thirty vacant apartments that were in better shape than the ones that the families were coming from. Muzio (2009, 121) describes the action as 'more spontaneous than part of a deliberately planned strategy of an organized movement.' It was the start of the organization Operation Move-In (OMI), which focused on squatting city-owned buildings and set up an office in a squatted storefront.

The squatter's movement attracted people from a wide variety of locations. This was against the preference of a group of Puerto Ricans, named El Comité, operating from a squatted storefront, who got involved in OMI with the goal to restrict squatting in the area to residents, or former residents, from the neighborhood (Muzio, 2009, 124). One of the organizers explained:

'We decided we wanted to control the housing situation in a more organized fashion. [..] We started planning which building should be taken over, which families should go here or there. We became more organized, rather than spontaneous.' (Muzio, 2009: 124).

Also, activists involved in the fight against gentrification on the Upper West Side started to use squatting as a tactic to pressure urban planners to allocate a higher proportion of low-income housing on redevelopment sites (Muzio, 2009). Schwartz (1986, 12) states that they 'tried to use the squatters as bargaining leverage'; in the end, some squatters were evicted, others legalized.

Squatting Church-related property on Morningside Heights

In neighboring Morningside Heights, organized squatting occurred in buildings that were standing virtually empty because the owner, and non-profit organization, was planning to build a facility for the elderly apartment buildings were planned to make way for on old people's facility. A small team of five or six young men who lived in the area and studied or worked there this. They were interested in housing issues, and according to Brotherton (1978: 196), looking for a 'summer project'. The activists recruited families from Operation Move-In's waiting list, and organized meetings, the actual squatting, legal assistance and contacts with the media and supportive organizations. In this case, repression was not an urgent problem, since the developer was church-related and therefore sensitive to normative pressure to avoid police action against poor families. This suggests that a subtle difference in the opportunity structure can affect a development in either the autonomous or institutional direction.

The organizers planned to transfer leadership to the squatters, who continued to hang onto their buildings as a loosely self-organizing group, their main collective project being 'Plaza Caribe', a park which they constructed themselves in a vacant lot (Brotherton, 1978). In her ethnographic study, Brotherton (1978: 53) notes: 'I soon discovered [..] that in spite of the squatting being done on Morningside Heights, there was no squatter organization there comparable to Operation Move-In in the urban renewal area. The Morningside Squatters were their own organization.' Compared to OMI, this was a bold experiment because it entailed privately-owned buildings. Squatters wanted to consolidate their project and works out a plan to by the buildings, which was not successful. However, in a 1979 court ruling, the Morningside squatters won the title to their buildings. A spillover effect was the creation of UHAB (Urban Homesteading Assistance Board) sponsored by the Episcopal Cathedral of St John the Devine to

assist squatters. UHAB supports the self-management of buildings saved from abandonment. Unlike squatters on the Upper West Side, the Morningside squatters did not have to worry much about repression, since the developer was church-related and therefore sensitive to normative pressure to avoid police action against poor families. The organizers found that the media were interested, but mainly in the human interest side, making it difficult to propagate squatting: "The more generalization about our situation is made public, the more likely it is that it will happen elsewhere."

Hippies

A further category of people active in the are were 'hippies' (Muzio, 2009). A collective of activists opened the 'Local Storefront,' a 'free, squatter store.' According to their mission statement, they aimed for a 'collective life.' They chose to bring people together by means of events such as film screenings and a food co-op, and to inform neighborhood residents by publishing a newspaper, *The Broadway Local*. *The Broadway Local* covered squatting in the area, and helped mobilize supporters. It also, for example, brought news about squatting in Italy, and information about birth control. Three decades earlier than similar initiatives in Europe, the Local Storefront also served as a give away-shop.

The disappearance of squatting in New York

It is apt to see the squatting in New York covered above as a wave. Most of it happened in 1970, and it declined rapidly. In contrast, squatting in the Netherlands was not a wave-like phenomenon. An explanation for the difference is that in the US, squatting as an end in itself did not develop, partly as an effect of the dependence on organizers who saw squatting as a tool. In the Netherlands, activists constructed a movement that was more focused on squatting as an end in itself.

The abandonment crisis and urban homesteading

In the US, squatting resurfaced in the late 1970s. The backdrop was a crisis situation in which several cities faced an accumulation of thousands of abandoned buildings that had become city property because the owners had not paid their taxes.

A widely promoted solution was urban homesteading: self-help housing in abandoned buildings and 'sweat equity,' the substitution of labor for money. Following experiments in several cities, a national framework for urban homesteading programs was enacted in 1974, in Section 810 of the Housing and Community Development Act (Borgos, 1986). This act specifies the conditions under which a public agency or a 'qualified community organization' could be funded to act as a 'local urban homesteading agency.' It requires local homesteading agencies to select potential homesteaders who are relatively poor but simultaneously able to repair properties. The act also mandates the conclusion of 'homesteader agreements' (e-CFR 2012). Borgos (1986: 432) describes official homesteading programs as a way to 'tame' squatting.

However, it seems that official homesteading helped to legitimize squatting. In 1978 a group named Banana Kelly in the South Bronx squatted in three buildings as a strategy to speed up an official homesteading project. A contact within the city administration suggested to the group that they might start clearing rubble from the buildings before the official permission came through (Brandes Gratz, 1989). Some officials were weary of bureaucratic delays while suitable buildings were deteriorating. Jonnes (1980) quotes Philip St. George, an official at the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, as saying:

'I've been an advocate of a squatters' zone in a place like the South Bronx. Typically, people see squatters as evil, but they have a tremendous creative energy that would be good to harness in places like the South Bronx. Using their own labor and materials, they would be creating something for nothing. I can already hear the buildings code people howling, but when you have a situation like the South Bronx these may be the only people who could pioneer it again.'

The launch of the urban homesteading model, and the disappointment that followed when the bureaucracy blocked its widespread implementation, opened up opportunities to fill the gap by squatting. An organization that played a large role in this was the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), a formal organization with 75000 members and branches in 27 states. In 1979, ACORN's Philadelphia office lambasted the city councilman who was in charge of homesteading for diverting buildings to speculators, and started a squatting campaign. ACORN's rules mimicked the rules that were laid down in the Housing and Community Development Act: ACORN required prospective squatters to sign a 'squatters contract' (Borgos, 1986).

In 1985, the ACORN groups in New York organized squatting in 25 buildings in Brooklyn, enticing a state senator to participate in the action. The city had originally planned to auction the buildings off, but after the squatting action the city changed its policy and turned 58 buildings over to ACORN/Mutual Housing Association of New York, which incorporated the squatters. Furthermore, the city provided funds for rehabilitation.

It is worth noting, however, that the cooperative attitude of state actors was far from uniform. In several cities, ACORN's squatting actions met with repression (Borgos, 1986).

The legitimacy created by the urban homesteading concept affected the field of urban squatting in New York as a whole. The urban homesteading frame appealed to a wide range of home seekers. That this frame appealed to a wide range of people is understandable because it does not focus on deprivation but on renovation of abandoned buildings. This made it interesting for people such as artists, who had a low income but did not identify themselves as deprived. However, some of them found themselves excluded from the institutional movement. Lower East Side artist and squatter Rolando Politi explained:

'You were either "good" or "bad." "Good" if you had connections with the Lower East Side network of Catholic churches who had the leverage to deal with the city for turning over the properties to them and fit them in the official "Homesteading Program," and also "good" if you had access to local politicians who would somehow legalize you into the system under any obscure program they could come up with.' (e-mail communication)

A further aspect of exclusion attached to official homesteading was that the city did not allow homesteaders to move into their buildings before all the work was finished, which could take years. This reduced risk because abandoned buildings often had no floors nor stairs left, and a roof that was leaking or partially missing. One squatter was killed in a falling incident, others were injured. An effect of this policy was that it excluded people who had nowhere else to live. Finally, the volume of institutionalized homesteading opportunities was minute compared to the number of people who needed cheap housing and the number of abandoned buildings.

On the Lower East Side of Manhattan, people who did not fit into an institutional movement or who were excluded by institutional groups squatted anyway, thereby starting an autonomous squatters' movement. This autonomous squatters' movement was organized in the sense that there was cooperation and mutual help, and an arrangement in which squatters worked together to help prevent evictions, but there was not an organization behind it. Residents moved from one squat to the next, and there was a general squatters' scene in the neighborhood (Ferguson, 2007). There was no alignment with political or other organizations. Frank Morales, a long-time New York and Lower East Side activist explained:

'As far as the left goes, we would often interact with various sectors of the left. Whether it's the housing movement or the political left, whoever that might be, from The Nation to various sectarian parties to the various leftist groups, and none of them wanted to deal with us, probably because we were autonomous.' (quoted in Jaffe, 2007: 202)

Squatting was the core of the movement's identity; it was end and means at the same time. This helped making squatting continuous. New squats were opened on the Lower East Side of Manhattan from 1983, when six buildings were squatted in 13th street until 1992 (713 East Ninth Street) (Ferguson, 2007). A total of 25 buildings were squatted. In 2002, a legalization processes started for eleven buildings; in 2012 some buildings were legalized and renovated, while other buildings were still at the first stage of legalization.

While exclusion drove some squatters towards building an autonomous movement, it left them slightly marooned in terms of their social identity. International diffusion solved this. The squatters' movement has, to some extent, become transnational. Self-labeling of squatters involves the use of the international squatters' sign, first seen in the Kraakkrant in Amsterdam. Europeans, acting as movement brokers (McAdam et al., 2001) linked the New York and

European squatters' scenes. An Italian artist who left the anarchist scene in Berlin to move to New York organized the squatting of vacant apartments in three buildings on the Lower East Side in 1981. A British woman introduced the New York scene to political ideas that were common among squatters in Europe. In 1988, a Dutch girl took the initiative to open up a large building in New York. She had previously squatted in the Netherlands and tried, with partial success, to introduce the cooperative features that were common in the Netherlands, such as a squatters' bar, regular consultation and mutual support between buildings, a tool exchange, facilities for artists and a theatre. In turn, American squatters made visits to European squatters' movements.

The institutional homesteading frame entailed dissonance for home seekers who were attracted by it but simultaneously excluded because of their social circumstances (cf. Walder, 2009). This dissonance made a favorable reception of the European squatting frame possible. A Lower East Side squatter recalled:

'We were still arguing about the use of the word squatting, and whether we should be squatters or homesteaders. Most people wanted to call it homesteading. [..] But we weren't homesteaders. We didn't qualify for any of the [homesteading] programs, and most of those programs wouldn't want us anyway, even if we did [laughs]. Then English Steve and Cathy came and started using the term squatting left and right, and we kind of went with it from there.' (Ferguson, 2007: 151).

Michael Shenker noted:

'We found a lot of reinforcement and encouragement through hearing what was going on in Europe. It helped to validate our analysis that this thing is possible, that it is real.' (interview).

Another activist reminisced:

'I took to preaching the reformed gospel of the European Squatters with the irritating zeal of some television preacher.' (Tolia, 2007: 479)

A significant difference between New York and Amsterdam is that technical obstacles to squatting were more severe in New York. This can be seen by comparing squatters' manuals. The New York manual explains to would-be squatters how to assess whether a building is in danger of collapsing. It prepares them to deal with roofs with big holes in them, rotten timber and floors, missing water pipes, staircases with missing steps and the need to provide a front door and doorframe. As far as the manual goes, the squatters should not expect to be able to install flush toilets. Elsewhere in the New York squatting literature, we see a particular squat described as having flush toilets as a special feature. By contrast, the 1996/1997 edition of the Amsterdam squatting manual does not mention any construction-related hurdles. The earlier

edition from the 1980s contains some construction advice, without suggesting that extensive damage was the most likely condition that squatters would encounter. A New York activist noted about Amsterdam: "Dutch squats had flush toilets, restaurants, radio stations but all this luxury just made squatters cynical" (Tobocman, 1999: 238).

Consolidation

However, consolidation of about half of the buildings proved to be possible. Legalization through the mediation of UHAB started in 2002. What helped here is that typically, the opponents of squatters on the Lower East Side were not for profit organizations planning to develop low-income housing on the sites. In contrast to Amsterdam, where non-profit developers in urban renewal areas could be counted on to be reliable and predictable, to charge affordable rents and comply with neighborhood committees' wishes, in New York it tended to be uncertain whether building plans would go through, and commitments to charge affordable rents were time-limited. This made the not for profit developers vulnerable and the squatters could argue that they already successfully created low-income housing (Pruijt, 2003).

A spectacular case of consolidation is the arts/community center ABC No Rio in New York. Organically, the city had made the building available to a group of artists as part of a deal to make them give up another building that was occupied to house an art show. Subsequently, city officials tried for nearly twenty years to get rid of ABC No Rio, for example by cutting the water supply. Finally they offered ABC No Rio the opportunity to by it $1. ABC No Rio is now in the process of raising funds for the construction of an all-new building on the site.

Diffusion or lack thereof

In 1987, Matthew Lee, after gaining experience as an official homesteader and as a squatter in the autonomous movement on the Lower East Side, moved to the Bronx where he started a neighborhood newspaper in which he promoted squatting. He then organized a group named ICP (Inner City Press) / Community on the Move that squatted in twenty buildings. The European style, autonomous squatting of the Lower East Side did not diffuse. Several buildings ware lost because of fires and evictions. As an outgrowth of the autonomous squatters' movement on the Lower East Side, in 2012 the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space was created in a legalized squat on the Lower East Side. In 2011 and 2012, activists with a background in the autonomous movement on the Lower East Side played an important role in the collective Organize for Occupation and the organization Picture the Homeless, with the aim of organizing the occupation of empty buildings by people from the homeless shelter system (Picture the Homeless, 2011).

Concluding notes

A society, a city, a neighborhood, in which squatting takes place is different from one in which there is none. This depends on how ambitious the squatting is in terms of the constraints it puts on the owner, by violating her or his property rights, or on a third party. We can picture this as a ladder

1 The squatting of empty buildings that the owner does not care about at all. Citizens are empowered to take action when they are faced with immediate needs for space, that can be met by squatting at no cost to anyone. Authorities are under some pressure not to intervene or to facilitate it. Both in the US and in the Netherlands, this was possible.

2 The squatting of empty buildings that the owners are prepared to try to take back, but where the owner, or any third party, does not have a legitimate interest that is being hurt by squatting. In Amsterdam, squatters often put up effective organized resistance against criminal owners.

3 Squatting actions that hurt the legitimate interests of the owner or a third party, such an organization planning new construction on the site, but were the owner or the third party are subject to a moral obligation to take the interests of the needy into account. Examples are church- and state-related organizations. A nice example is the squatting on Morningside Heights in New York that cause a church-related developer to change his plans.

4 Squatting actions that hurt the legitimate interests of the owner or a third party, such an organization planning new construction on the site, but were the owner or third party are purely profit-driven. Citizens are empowered to take action in a way that pushes use value over exchange value; speculators and those that support and finance them are held accountable. Of the two countries, this only occurred in the Netherlands.

Finally, wen consolidation succeeds, this leads to the existence of little-revenue generating functions on expensive land. Even when this is small scale, it creates symbols that alert to the possibility of alternative development.

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