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HOW POLITICAL IS A POLITICAL SUBCULTURE?

The Paradoxical Place of Politics within the Squatter Movement

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Introduction

The squatters' movement emerged in Western Europe in the early 1970s and traces its roots to the student and youth revolts of the late 1960s.¹ The combination of a massive housing shortage and large swaths of vacant houses in many of the larger cities of Western Europe led radical youths to try and solve the former problem with the occupation of the latter. From the mid-1970s onwards, squatting also spread to smaller cities and even provincial towns. In the 1990s, squatting spread to former communist states in Eastern Europe.²

From the beginning, squatters were a colourful mixture of political activists and youths from alternative scenes. Some of those involved saw squatting mainly as a political means to raise awareness of issues such as the housing shortage and the destruction of historical sites. The political horizon of most political activists was more encompassing, however. It was based on anarchist ideals which were at the forefront of anti-capitalist, ecological, antimilitarist and feminist activism. Other squatters saw squatting as a practical means to solve individual housing problems and to provide cultural space. For them, squatting was a means to overcome homelessness, but also to create spaces for alternative music, art and socialising. As a result, squatting acquired a distinct subcultural character in which do-it-yourself-attitudes fuelled an urge to experiment and move beyond mainstream culture. A third group did not make a strong distinction between politics and subculture and felt attracted to both.

Radical politics, alternative culture and practical action against homelessness thus came together and even merged within the squatter movement. They made up three different currents within the movement, although there was a large degree of overlap. The same goes for the identities of those involved. Some squatters were mainly (or even mostly) interested in anti-capitalist direct action, while others were in it 'purely' for the parties or the shelter that squats provided. Mostly, however, squatters were sympathetic to all three goals, albeit in varying degrees. Still, these differing goals and identities could lead to strife or even (physical) conflict, for example, when subcultural attitudes infringed on political norms. Conceptually, the overlap raises the question what squatters truly form: a political movement, a subcultural scene, both or something entirely different? Answering this question has

implications for the concepts, sources and methods we use when researching (the history of) squatters.

In this chapter, I claim that there is a political squatter movement, even though the role of politics within squatting is contested. Because this movement organises informally, focuses on direct activism and merges politics and subculture, it should not be researched in a traditional way. Research on squatter politics has little to gain from a focus on communiqués, political statements and conference reports. Instead, I argue, research should take into account the above-mentioned characteristics of the movement and focus on the way politics take shape within squats and squatter groups; how they are developed, practised and communicated and how squatters experience political activity. This chapter explains why such a focus is preferable over more traditional political history approaches and offers hints as to how such a research can be conducted.

The squatter movement has left its mark on many European cities and even on European culture. Squatter activists played an important role in struggles against technocratic urban renewal in the 1970s and 1980s, in protests against nuclear energy and nuclear weapons in the 1980s, in the antiglobalisation movement of the 1990s and the anti-war and anti-austerity movements since 2001 and 2008, respectively. Underground music and lifestyle currents such as punk and techno house trace their origins to the squatter movement. In many cities, boroughs with a strong squatter presence have become tourist hotspots – Kreuzberg in Berlin and Christiania in Copenhagen are only two of the best-known examples.³

The subcultural nature of squatter politics has become a distinguishing feature of the movement. In the squatter movement, radical politics and subculture merge. Some claim that this feature explains the movement's enduring existence. Others, however, identify it as a source of weakness. According to the latter, the subcultural element has impeded the movement's political strength. Since the movement mainly organises youths, the turnover is high and movement learning processes are continuously disrupted. Furthermore, since many are attracted to the movement's subcultural elements, a large part of the movement is either uninterested in or even hostile to political theory (Geronimo 1992; Ziere 1992; Hillenkamp 1995; Duist 1986; Ruyter 1986a and 1986b; Schwarzmeier 2001). The place of politics within the movement is thus contested. At the same time, there is a distinct kind of squatter politics, with a specific political programme, organisational culture and action repertoire.⁴

Squatter politics can best be characterised by its radicalism. First of all, political squatters are radical in their political analysis in the sense that they focus on the root cause of social and political conflicts, which is that society sustains a high degree of inequality when it comes to wealth, power and knowledge. At the same time, squatter politics is radical in the sense that it denounces traditional ways of political representation, dialogue or compromise. Instead, it focuses on direct action as a way to subvert political routines. Finally, the movement is radical in that it criticises internal power relations and aims to demolish inner movement hierarchies. Over time, the movement has grown to become increasingly aware of class, race and gender inequalities within the movement, although this does not necessarily mean that it has been capable of dealing with them in a generally satisfactory way. Rather, it is the negotiating between radical ideals and coarse realities that cause debates or conflicts. Reconstructing these conflicts offers a way to analyse the social and political outlooks of squatter activists and inner movement dynamics – more so than its often more general political statements.

Next to arguing for a distinct research method, this chapter investigates the politics and political philosophy that drives squatting and explains the paradoxical place of politics within the movement. In doing so, it focuses mainly on the overtly political currents within

the movement. The difference between ‘squatting’ and ‘political squatting’ is made explicit in Germany, where one can distinguish between squatters and autonomists, the latter being more explicitly political. In other countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, such a subdivision is rarely made in wording, although it exists in practice (Steen 2014a, 3).

The first part of the chapter uncovers the origins and development of squatter politics and reconstructs the movement’s struggles to balance its political and subcultural parts. The second part investigates how this double nature has influenced the inner life of the squatter movement. To do so, it focuses on moments in which politics and subculture clashed within squatted places and social centres.

A Movement Focused on Practice

Researching the politics and ideology of a social movement such as the squatter movement poses specific challenges. It is very different from researching a political party. In the latter case, one can base oneself on the texts of leading party intellectuals, party manifestoes and electoral programmes to reconstruct the party’s ideology and its behaviours. The squatter movement does not have a national organisation or governing body, and no regular conferences where programmes or manifestoes are passed – it even lacks clearly visible leading intellectuals, since programmatic texts are generally published anonymously or signed collectively by a group (Katsiaficas 2006).

Some have deemed autonomist Marxism, or *operaiismo*, the guiding philosophy of the squatter movement, and have identified Tony Negri as one of its leading philosophers (Kraatz 1986; Balestrini and Moroni 2002; Wright 2002; Turchetto 2007). Although autonomist Marxism has a certain influence on parts of the squatter movement, it would be an exaggeration to equate squatting with autonomist Marxism. Within the squatter movement, interest in Marxism and labour struggles has generally been marginal.

Rather, it has been accepted generally within the movement that squatting is first of all a practice. Moving into a building or organising the collective occupation of a larger construction first of all requires practical knowledge: how to get in, how to keep unwanted people out, how to isolate the roof, how to fix the plumbing, etc. Even political interventions and campaigns, such as protests against urban renewal projects, or the construction of a road or nuclear power plant, can be framed as thoroughly practical: the organisation of blockades, demonstrations and acts of sabotage all are foremost dependent on practical and organisational skills. This, next to the previously mentioned subcultural nature of the movement, has led many observers and even squatters to state that there are no political ideals driving the movement.

This attitude can be illustrated by the squatter handbook. In many countries where squatters are active, squatter handbooks are circulated. These texts rarely dwell long on the motivations to squat and focus instead on the *how*. Guides provide thoroughly practical information about squatting and securing a building (Lucy Finchett-Maddock 2014, 221–2; Geronimo 2014, xvi–xvii).

The fact, however, that the act of squatting needs little or no explanation, that it can be adopted by various groups and that it spreads easily does not mean that there is no politics behind it. Rather, these politics are often implicitly acknowledged or assumed to be well-known. The politics of the squatter movement can be abstracted from its practices, by looking (i) at the historical development and roots of the movement, (ii) the way in which the squatter movement delineates itself from other movements and (iii) the way in which major controversies are played out within the movement.⁵

The primary source material for this analysis has been gathered mainly from squatting and autonomist activism in (West) Germany and the Netherlands in the 1980s. The discussion also draws on secondary literature about the movement in other European countries.⁶

The Crystallisation of a Political Movement

The squatter movement has multiple points of origin. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, radical activists in the Netherlands and West Germany lamented the conservative and oppressive political culture and claimed autonomous spaces to experiment with new ways of life and living together, free from the taboos, prejudices and often violent repression of alternative lifestyles in mainstream society. The Vietnam War and other anti-colonial struggles, next to debates about the connections of ruling politicians, government and business officials to the Nazi era provided a global and national framework in which oppositional, critical and non-conformist behaviour became linked to radical oppositional politics (Schildt and Siegfried 2006; Reichhardt and Siegfried 2010).

In the Netherlands, squatters soon started to focus their political attention on protests against urban renewal projects that aimed at levelling historical boroughs and on international solidarity with what was then referred to as the Third World (Duivenvoorden 2000; Kadir 2014). In West Germany, some groups were inspired by wildcat strike movements in Italy and made attempts to organise unskilled labourers and migrant workers. In places such as Frankfurt and Hamburg, these groups were also involved in squatting campaigns (Frombeloff 1993; Ebbinghaus 2003, 2007; Arps 2011).

The squatters' movement emerged in the wake of the decline of the student movement and was heavily influenced by this development. As the student movement declined, some of the radicals within it redirected their energies to the rediscovery of pre-World War radical currents in Western Marxism. Soon however, the stereotype of the radical intellectual emerged. This described the person who wrote cryptic texts while refraining from practical activism – a negative image of the radical that had a lasting influence on the squatter movement.⁷

Others focused their energies on building up neo-Leninist parties, often of a Maoist inclination. Although nowadays generally forgotten, these parties attracted hundreds of activists in the Netherlands and even thousands in Western Germany. It is estimated that in the 1970s between 100,000 and 150,000 people in Western Germany were for a longer or shorter time involved in a Maoist party or related organisation. By 1980, most of these projects had faltered, but not without thoroughly traumatising a number of highly vocal veterans, who lamented the strict party discipline, the fetishising of 'the worker' and a party culture that tended to make members' personal needs subservient to that of the party organisation.⁸

A third group that grew out of the student movement strove to avoid the twin trap of intellectualism and party politics, and aimed to strike a real blow at capitalist power. These anti-imperialists formed armed underground groups that sought to undermine corporate and state power through kidnappings, bank robberies, bomb attacks and even executions. The most infamous became the Red Army Faction in West Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy, although similar groups were formed in almost all Western European states. As their actions became more violent and murderous, popular support for them decreased, thus initiating a vicious cycle of evermore violent and unpopular armed attacks (Aust 2008; Kraushaar 2008).

While the three main heirs of the student movement pinned their hopes on abstract knowledge, the party/proletariat or the Third World, the radical feminist movement emphasised

the need to *live* political ideals as a way to avoid alienation.⁹ According to this view, politics had to be tangible, concrete and direct. Consciousness-raising – through theatrical and mediatised actions and internal group discussions – became key, as did the commitment to give everyone involved a voice. Horizontal forms of organisation, in small local groups, were adopted as standard. In creating a network of women's houses, bars and book stores, the feminist movement laid out an organisational model that the squatters' movement would also soon adopt (Notz 2004; Melzer 2012, 2017).

Finally, the squatters were influenced by the massive and at times radical forms of protest against the construction of a series of nuclear power plants in Western Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. Hundreds of thousands of protestors were mobilised by campaigns against nuclear installations in Brokdorf, Gorleben and Whyll and elsewhere. These protests included both peaceful actions and gatherings, and militant demonstrations, sabotage actions and the occupation of building sites. Political parties and trade unions tried to keep the protests peaceful and under their control, but they were only partly successful. To squatters, these protests showed that there was potential and support for radical activism and that the position of traditional left or liberal left organisations was weak. Squatters soon positioned themselves as the militant wing of the antinuclear movement (Grauwacke 2003; Geronimo 2012).

The 1970s thus witnessed the evolution of the squatter movement into a new kind of radical movement. As their political profile crystallised, especially in opposition to other groups and parties, their political horizon also broadened. Next to squatting and the struggle for autonomous spaces and the protection of historical sites, the squatter programme expanded to include international solidarity, ecology and feminism. The movement developed a strong aversion to party politics, became committed to the feminist ideal of living politics, horizontal organisation and direct action. Its strategy focused on radical protest against both corporate and government actors and included militant demonstrations, occupations and acts of sabotage. Although militant demonstrations could give way to riots and sabotage actions could result in property damage, the movement generally refrained from targeted violence against individuals, thus drawing a clear line between itself and the armed urban guerrilla groups like the RAF.

Autonomist Squatting in the 1980s

The first wave of squatting reached its height by the mid-1970s. By the end of the decade, however, the movement was on the rise again. In 1979, for example, cautious attempts were made at squatting in Amsterdam and West Berlin. In 1980 and 1981, respectively, eviction attempts by the police led to days of rioting in both cities. In the following months, squatting spread rapidly throughout both cities and the rest of the country – a development which was accompanied by more police interventions and resulting riots (Bodenschatz 1983). In 1981, Amsterdam counted more than 206 squatted houses, while West Berlin counted 165 squats (Raad 1982, 14; Grauwacke 2003, 40). The willingness of the squatters to defend their squats with force and confront the police head-on impressed contemporaries (Mak 1980; Wetenschappelijke Raad 1980; Hofland 1981; Jugendwerk 1981; Enquete-Kommission 1983). Images of militant squatters, wearing leather jackets, balaclavas and motor helmets, appeared in the newspapers and soon became a staple of European protest culture. The militant squatter movement also became known as the autonomist movement and was especially strong in West Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark.

The renewed militancy was, in part, the result of the coming together of squatting and punk. While squatters provided space for punk concerts, practice rooms and gathering places,

the punks provided the squatter movement with a militant aesthetic and attitude. Thus, the music historians Goossens and Vedder mention how ‘the sandals and Afghan jackets were replaced by Mohawks, army boots and black leather jackets’. According to them, ‘it may go a bit too far to state that punk was responsible for the hardening of the squatters movement ... But at the same time it is remarkable that the militant squatter manifested itself after the punk and squatter movement had formed an alliance’ (Goossens and Vedder 1996). As dozens of new houses were squatted, thousands flocked into the squatter movement. Not all of them were motivated by radical politics, but politics did play an important role in the movement. For many, entering the squatters’ movement was the beginning of a political learning process. One veteran activist remembered how his group adopted the name ‘autonomist’ because ‘we could not really choose between communism and anarchism and it seemed a good compromise to call ourselves simply “autonomist”’ (Schulz 2010).

Through informal meetings and public gatherings, the movement’s media – consisting of dozens of magazines and pamphlets – and (inter)national contacts, ideas and experiences were exchanged. The text that comes closest to a foundational document was the text ‘Anarchie als Minimalforderung’. This appeared in the magazine *radikal* and was the result of a meeting between West-German and Italian radicals (Anarchie 1981). The text specified that the autonomist movement was not to fight in the name of others, as the Maoists had done, but only for itself. It further laid out that the movement was not to articulate any political demands that could be fulfilled by those in government, since this would result in co-optation by the government. It however did not say much about forms of organisation, political goals or action repertoires. By this time, these were considered to be well-known.

While some autonomist squatters were driven by classical anarchist ideals, these were certainly not shared by all. Classical anarchism, as articulated by Bakunin and Proudhon, was deemed old-fashioned, tame and too intellectual. The attitude was summed up by an autonomist in the late 1990s, who stated: ‘They (anarchists) are scared of us because we do the kinds of things they only talk about’ (Katsiaticas 2006). At the same time, other political ideologies, such as anti-imperialism, have not become dominant either. Although there is a political ideal that drives squatting, it is often left implicit.

The Paradoxes of Implicit Rules

In practice, libertarian ideals form the heart of the movement’s politics and philosophy, as it sets out to confront and attack all forms of political, economic and cultural inequalities. It aims to do so in a confrontational way, not by working for compromise but by principled acts of protest and/or resistance. These ends are achieved by organising in local, horizontal groups. Interregional coordination takes shape via networks of groups. The movement’s repertoire ranges from traditional political means such as picketing to radical forms of action such as militant demonstrations and sabotage actions. The same libertarian ideals guide the internal life of the movement. Squatters set out to replace the hierarchies, taboos and violence that shape personal contacts in mainstream society by more egalitarian, caring and honest ways of living together (Jeugd en Samenleving 1981; Marge 1986).

These ideals tie the movement together, but certainly do not ensure a life without conflicts, since neither politics nor living together is ever without conflict. When it came to politics in the 1980s, the main conflicts revolved around informal hierarchies and militancy. Although the movement adhered to horizontal forms of organisation, many groups and even cities knew informal leaders. The adversity towards formal ways of organisation made the hierarchies within the groups all the more unclear. The debates about hierarchy became even

more intense when groups or individuals pleaded or opted for controversial (militant) forms of action. With hindsight, it is clear that the autonomist movement had a clearly defined action repertoire, but throughout the 1980s, there was a fear – both amongst observers and activists – that some may cross the line, going over to armed struggle.¹⁰ Here too, the lack of any clearly defined rules was one of the causes of continuous debate – although it must be said that the movement also drew strength from its seemingly ‘limitless’ action repertoire; had it clearly defined its repertoire from the outset, it would not have been as threatening to the authorities. Finally, the practice of confronting the authorities in a militant way led to criticism because it stimulated some to assume macho or all too masculine attitudes (Haunss 2004, 131–90; Op den Camp 2013).

Within squats and social centres, the ideal of creating free spaces clashed with practical problems that resulted precisely from this absence of rules. Many squatted places went through an initial phase in which ‘all’ were welcome, ‘everything’ was possible and ‘everyone’ tolerated each other. Soon, however, rules were agreed upon with regard to bills, chores and behaviour. In many cases, this process developed relatively smoothly and peacefully. Some even claim that they were truly socialised within the movement. Thus goes the story of Henk Borst, a difficult young man, who had spent most of his youth in boarding schools. After his return to Amsterdam in 1980, he spent his days on the streets, sleeping with his parents, with friends or in squats. ‘It was the riots that attracted me’, he stated later, ‘I was not political at all’. His drug use and resulting behaviour, ‘stealing and ego-tripping’, led to conflicts and even fights with other squatters. Even so, he would later claim that the squatter movement ‘saved’ him. Here, he learned the skills of a construction worker and was introduced to social skills he had not picked up earlier: ‘The squatters accepted you, even when you were a petty thief. There were more like me, I was not the only one’ (Poppe and Rottenberg 2000, 84–89).¹¹

However, not all experiences were as positive. As the movement evolved, norms grew stricter and tolerance for antisocial behaviour diminished. Transgressive behaviour did not only include drug abuse, stealing, ego-tripping and physical assault, but could also lead to sexual violence against women. In June 1984, a woman was molested and raped in the squatted Hafenstrasse in Hamburg. The other squatters responded with violence against the perpetrators, not knowing what else to do. The tragedy led to intense debates among the West-German radical left, but the squatters of the Hafenstrasse mainly felt ‘horror’ and ‘powerlessness’ (Amantine 2011; Borgstede 2013; Küllmer 2013). In 2013, one squatter stated: ‘Up to now it has not been dealt with properly, neither publicly nor internally’ (Küllmer 2013, 76). In Amsterdam, in the early 1980s, the Wyers squat evolved into a venue that during the weekend ‘would sometimes attract eight hundred people’. Jaap Draaisma was a squatter who would later remember how heroin users and pushers claimed a floor and ‘completely uncontrollable individuals would come directly from the train station to Wyers’. After a woman was molested and raped within the building, the squatters took matters more firmly into their own hands. Draaisma: ‘We were forced to organise evermore. A security team was formed. We then disbanded the heroine-club and rehoused the junkies in other collectives; others were evicted and housed elsewhere. It was heartbreaking’ (Poppe and Rottenberg 2000, 14–21).

In both cases, the main traumas were caused by the fact that women were molested within squats – places that were supposed to be free of the oppressive and violent behaviour associated with mainstream society. The traumas were however intensified by the fact that squatters had up to that point not imagined this possibility, or reflected on how to deal with these kinds of transgression. In practice, the movement responded by increasing social control and

exclusion of those who did not conform to the norms within squats. In 1986, two veteran Amsterdam activists remarked that the number of ‘internal evictions’ far outnumbered the number of ‘official evictions’ (Lovink and Spek 1986). In other words, people who caused trouble were removed from squats – by the squatters themselves. This situation was however only rarely reflected on. These developments also came at a time where the squatter movement’s expansion had ended and its claim to space was diminishing. In Amsterdam, it was very easy to get or get into a squat in 1980/1981. Thus, one squatter remembers: ‘I took the cargo tricycle, moved my stuff and I lived there’. When another squatter went to Amsterdam in 1983, looking for a place to live, he found out that all squats were full or closed to strangers (Wietsma 1982, 20–22; Luchteling, 1997).

Autonomism and Its Discontents

By the end of the 1980s, the autonomist movement had grown more aware of the position of women within the squatter movement and within squatted social centres. In the 1990s, several groups advocated a politics to combat sexual violence within the movement, by making the names of accused perpetrators public and demanding that other groups exclude the accused from their networks. This strategy was controversial and did not become a standard practice within the movement (Haunss 2004, 149–69). On the other hand, social control within social centres did increase and focused on preventing assaults on women. Occasionally, jokes are cracked about the strictness of social centres, which is especially ironic given the fact that the squatter movement emerged with one of its goals being to overcome the overly restrictive and prudish nature of mainstream society (Biskamp 2017). The rules are however testimony to the movement’s commitment to feminist politics.

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, another debate within the movement focused on the organisational structure of the movement, with critics lamenting the movement’s focus on campaigns and actions and its neglect for concerted attempts to move towards a more developed political theory or permanent organisation. In Germany, West-Berlin autonomist activists established just such an organisation under the name Fels (Für eine linke Strömung – for a left current), while autonomist antifascists also tried to set up a nationwide organisation (Geronimo 1992, 1997; Fels 2011). While Fels remained active until 2015, the nationwide antifascist organisation disbanded in 2001. Overall, the autonomist squatter movement viewed the attempts to form nationwide permanent organisations with interest, but did not support them *en masse*.

A major point of division within the German movement since 9/11 has been the question of how to relate to the military conflicts in the Middle East. Traditionally, the autonomist movement had been critical of Israel and the US and supportive of Palestine and its allies. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a significant part of the German radical left grew critical of traditional anti-imperialism, and instead pleaded for support of Israel and the US in their struggle against Islamic fundamentalism. These debates had a lasting impact on the German autonomist movement, but went by relatively unnoticed in other countries (Mohr and Haunss 2004; Ogman 2013).

The main focus of the autonomist movement in the 1990s became antifascism, which included both counterdemonstrations and blockades of marches by extreme right groups, but also more general activism for radical left causes (Birchall 2010; Hann 2013; Testa 2015; Copsy 2016). Antifascism became especially important in Germany, both amongst autonomists and anti-German activists, even though they underpinned their antifascist activism in a different way. From the late 1990s onwards, the autonomist movement has played an important role in mobilisations against international summits of the G8, the IMF and the European

Union (Grauwacke 2003, 203–38; Rilling 2008). While the autonomist movement's main strength was in Northern Europe in the 1980s, the movement now has an especially strong presence in the Southern Europe (Schwarz 2010; Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011; Harvey 2012; Mason 2012, 2013; Cattaneo and Tudela 2014; Kritidis 2014).

Politics in Movement

In 1995, when autonomist activists organised a conference in Berlin, the left liberal *Tageszeitung* asked: 'How long will the autonomists remain?' (Rada 1995) Around the same time, the social scientist Ruud Koopmans predicted that the autonomists would stick around, but argued that they had lost their role as politically significant actors (Koopmans 1995, 210–14). Ten years later, however, the autonomists played an important role in the antiglobalisation movement. Currently, they play a leading role in anti-austerity protests in Greece, Spain and Italy. Historically, the significance of the movement cannot be denied. Apart from the political and cultural impacts mentioned in the introduction, it has been estimated that in the Netherlands alone, 50,000 people at one time or another lived in a squat between 1965 and 1999. The city of Amsterdam acquired 200 squats during this era, thus legalising them and adding them to the social housing stock (Pruijt 2004; Duivenvoorden 2000, 323).

The autonomist squatter movement is driven by a specific political philosophy, but it is often underdeveloped and remains implicit. To reconstruct, analyse and discuss its political philosophy, it is therefore more useful to focus on the development of the movement and the way in which it delineated itself from other actors. The advantage of such a method over focusing on political statements and pamphlets is that it provides a more nuanced, detailed and historically contextualised image of the movement's political outlook.

An even more promising way of examining squatter politics is to focus on the activities of the movement and the specific conflicts and controversies it confronted. Through the reconstructions of controversies, it becomes clear which political opinions and attitudes were generally accepted and which were more controversial. By focusing in detail on how conflicts over social or political issues within squats or within the squatter movement played out, one can move beyond mere political statements and assess what specific statements or decisions meant in practice.

The digitation of newspapers and other sources makes it ever easier to research social movements from home or from the office. The history of squatting in Berlin and a number of other European cities has been visualised in digital maps that allow for browsing both over time and space in the city.¹² Social movement researchers have, however, warned against an excessive focus on newspaper and mainstream media in researching social movements (Eilders 2001; Haumann 2005; Zelizer 2008). Many squatter and autonomist movement publications have not been digitised, and many individual experiences and recollections have not yet been documented.¹³ Focusing on these sources will produce an insider view of the movement and give voice to those who were involved in it. Such an approach from below seems fitting for a movement that traditionally rejected officialdom and formal organisation.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Knud Andresen, Albertine Bloemendal, Ruth Kinna and Irina Pulyakhina for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this text.
- 2 This chapter focuses on squatting in Europe, and more specifically on squatting in (West) Germany and the Netherlands. For a European survey and guide to the main literature, I refer to: Steen 2014a and 2014b. See also Katsiaficas (2006) and Pruijt (2012).

How Political Is a Political Subculture?

- Already before the fall of communism, there were attempts made at squatting, albeit often in a less public or overtly political way than in Western Europe. See for this Grasshoff (2011).
- 3 On squatting and tourism, see Owens (2008) and Blechschmidt (2007). Strongly related to these developments are debates between squatting and gentrification. For this, see Holm (2010); Häussermann (2002); Kuhn (2014).
 - 4 Classic histories that are sympathetic to the movement are Katsiaficas (2006) and Geronimo (2012).
 - 5 Those who are interested in a more traditional approach towards political history can rely, for example, on position papers, conference texts and documentations. See, for example, Anarchie (1981); *Arbeitsergebnisse* (1987); *Drei zu Eins* (1993); *Autonomie-Kongress* (1997); Wantok (2011).
 - 6 Throughout the text, references are included as advice for further reading. Next to the references in endnote 2, this text relies on the following studies.
For Germany: Anders (2010); Haunss (2008); Manns and Treusch (1987).
For the Netherlands: Duivenvoorden (2000); Kadir (2014); Owens (2009); Adilkno (1994).
 - 7 This sentiment was among other articulated by the popular Hamburg punk band Slime in their song 'linke Spießler', which appeared on their album *Alle gegen Alle* (1983). There it went: 'Always critical and political / Marx and Lenin on the bedside table / But you've got something against clashes / And you happily make room for the police. ... And when we become aggressive / You are all suddenly conservative'.
In German, the lyrics are: 'Immer kritisch und politisch / Marx und Lenin auf dem Nachttisch / Doch ihr habt was gegen Rabatz / Und macht den Bullen gerne Platz ... Und werden wir mal aggressiv / Seid ihr auf einmal konservativ'. See also: Ryser (2013).
 - 8 On Maoism in Western Germany and the Netherlands: Kühn (2005); Koenen (2001); Baum (2010); Beekers (2005); Verbij (2005).
For contemporary reflections by party veterans, see *Wir warn die stärkste* (1977); Schlögel et al. (1981); Zomeren (1994).
 - 9 This concept was summarised in the slogan 'the personal is political' and in many ways precursor to the prefigurative politics propagated by Occupy activists. See Graeber (2009).
 - 10 Only in Frankfurt on 2 November 1987 did a demonstration end in a deadly shooting of police officers by an autonomous activist. In the wake of this tragic and unique action, the local autonomous scene was not only repressed but also faced disintegration as many activists no longer identified with the movement. For a discussion of the shooting and its aftermath, see Geronimo (2012).
 - 11 Jan-Henrik Friedrichs has reconstructed how squatters in Zurich during the 1980s tried to develop new and less repressive ways of dealing with drug addicts within the movement, which set them apart from squatters in other cities, who often tried to exclude drug abusers. See Friedrichs (2016).
 - 12 These maps can be found under <http://berlin-besetzt.de> and <https://maps.squat.net/en/cities>. See also: Aquilera (2016).
 - 13 A number of personal recollections and interview books have been published. See among other: *Stand der Bewegung* (1995); Langer (2004); Poppe and Rottenberg (2000); Wietsma (1982); Adilkno (1994); *De stad was* (1998); Luchteling (1997).

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