Abstracts

Squatting in Europe

by Hans Pruijt (Erasmus University of Rotterdam)

Existing frameworks tend to break when applied to the analysis of urban squatting. Five basic configurations, combinations of features that fit together well and are therefore effective, are discussed in this paper. In the case of squatting, configurations differ with respect to the characteristics of the people involved, type of buildings, framing, demands made by activists, mobilization and organization patterns. Each configuration also entails specific problems. Deprivation based squatting involves poor people who are distressed because of severe housing deprivation. In squatting as an alternative housing strategy people organize squatting to meet their own housing needs. Entrepreneurial squatting offers opportunities for setting up nearly any kind of establishment, without the need for large resources nor the risk of getting bogged down in bureaucracy. Conservational squatting involves squatting as a tactic used in the preservation of a cityscape or landscape against efficiency-driven planned transformation. Political squatting is a field of action for those who are engaged in anti-systemic politics.

Key words: squatting, urban movements, housing, urban renewal, social movements.

Squatting and Urban Renewal: The Interaction of Squatter Movements and Strategies of Urban Restructuring in Berlin

by Andrej Holm (Humboldt University of Berlin) and Armin Kuhn (University of Potsdam)

Squatting as a housing strategy and as a tool of urban social movements accompanies the development of capitalist cities worldwide. We argue that the dynamics of squatter movements are directly connected to strategies of urban renewal in that movement conjunctures occur when urban regimes are in crisis. An analysis of the history of Berlin squatter movements, their political context and their effects on urban policies since the 1970s, clearly shows how massive mobilizations at the beginning of the 1980s and in the early 1990s developed in a context of transition in regimes of urban renewal. The crisis of Fordist city planning at the end of the 1970s provoked a movement of 'rehab squatting' (Instandbesetzung), which contributed to the institutionalization of 'cautious urban renewal' (behutsame Stadterneuerung) in an important way. The second rupture in Berlin's urban renewal became apparent in 1989 and 1990, when the necessity of restoring whole inner-city districts constituted a new, budget-straining challenge for urban policymaking. Whilst in the 1980s the squatter movement became a central condition for and a political factor of the transition to 'cautious urban renewal', in the 1990s large-scale squatting — mainly in the eastern parts of the city — is better understood as an alien element in times of neoliberal urban restructuring.

Key words: squatting, urban movements, urban renewal, housing, Germany.

Italian Social Centers: toward three decades of squatting and self-management of spaces

by Pierpaolo Mudu (University of Washington)

In the 1970s, Italy experienced a difficult crisis that marked the end of the economic model carried out after world war two. The resulting changes in production relations led to the disappearance of traditional public spaces and meeting places such as open squares, workplaces, party offices or the premises of left extra-parliamentary groups. Within this context, in the 1980s and 1990s, these groups managed to create new social and political

spaces by setting up Self-Managed Social Centers, ie squatted properties which became the venue of social, political and cultural events. In Italy, over 300 Social Centers have been active over the past 25 years, especially in urban areas. Their organizational modes indicate examples of successful direct democracy in non-hierarchical structures and may provide alternative options to the bureaucratic organization of so many aspects of social and political life. Social Centers have turned abandoned places into public spaces relying mostly on collective action, that is cooperative working modes which do not come under the provisions governing regular employment contracts. Their actions explicitly contest marginalization and exclusion processes which are becoming more and more fierce in our cities. An analysis of the evolution of this original Italian movement provides the opportunity to address a number of issues associated with alternative practices to neoliberal globalization.

Keywords: self-management, squatting, social movements, public space, Italy.

The Squatters' Movement in Spain: A Local and Global Cycle of Urban Protests

by Miguel Martínez (Complutense University of Madrid)

Squatting in abandoned houses and buildings in Spanish cities has been a continuous occurrence since the early 1980s. CSOAs (*Centros Sociales Okupados y Autogestionados*/Squatted and Self-managed Social Centres, SC from now on) acquired greater public importance than buildings squatted only for residential purposes. Nevertheless, both forms of squatting have taken place simultaneously. This article delineates the main characteristics of this movement by taking into consideration: a) spatial trends, b) the ideological principles, c) attempts for coordination and d) the interrelationship with other social movements. This exercise develops a working definition of the squatters' movement in Spain that allows us to argue that its repertoire of protest and political objectives represent an innovation in the cycle of alter-globalization demonstrations which the squatters' movement has actively joined, although local transformation and mobilizations were also intensively promoted.

Key words: squatting, urban movements, counter-culture, alter-globalization, Spain.

How activists make decisions within Social Centres? A comparative study in an Italian city

by Gianni Piazza (University of Catania)

The Social Centres in Italy are autonomous groups set up by left-wing radical activists, who occupy and/or self-manage unused buildings, where they organize political campaigns, social and countercultural activities. In this article, a typology of decision-making and internal democracy models, based on decisional method and preferences' treatment adopted (*Consensual vs. Majoritarian*), is here proposed and tested through the binary comparison of two Social Centres, as empirical cases, in the same city (Catania in Sicily), with the most dissimilar characteristics (campaigns/activities, political ideological orientations, national networks, legal position, attitude towards institutions). The research, methodologically founded on participant observation, the analysis of self-produced documents and a set of semi-structured interviews, provided unexpected findings, entailing an explanation through the procedure of re-identification and/or cultural recollocation of Pizzorno. As a consequence, the diverse models of decision-making and internal democracy adopted by activists of the two Social Centres seem to be depended on their different ends, collective identities and political-ideological orientations

Key words: squatting, social movements, social centres, democracy model, decision-making.