

The Politics of the Crowbar: Squatting in London, 1968-1977

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the London squatting movement and argues that it was a key radical social movement which redefined the ownership of space and politicised housing.¹ I challenge the dominant framework through which both squatters and scholars currently view squatting. Squatting is predominantly framed as a binary between political squatters who take buildings in order to engage in political activism and deprivation squatters who live in empty homes out of necessity due to their homelessness. I propose that all squatting is inherently political as it challenges ownership of property and the authority of the state in allocating housing, and forces confrontation with the state. Thus, whether out of need or choice, all squatters are political agents.

Keywords: *London anarchism, squatting, radical democracy*

INTRODUCTION

A squatter is someone who occupies an uninhabited building unlawfully. Once it has been occupied this building becomes a squat. Squats are usually occupied with the intent of relatively long-term use. The modern squatters' movement developed as a response to the housing crisis across the UK, particularly in London, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.² Beginning in 1968 as a family rehousing scheme, the squatting movement involved moving people into abandoned buildings as a direct action solution to the British government and local councils' inadequate response to this crisis. The 1971 census showed that there were over 675,000 empty dwellings in England and Wales. In the Greater London area alone in April 1973 there were 51,365 privately owned residential dwellings that had been empty for over three months. In Greater London over 99,700 dwellings across the public

and private sector were vacant. At the same time 189,900 people were listed on the Greater London Council (GLC) housing waiting lists, another 15,805 were housed in Part III accommodation and bed and breakfast hotels, 15,000 were in insecure hostel accommodation and at least 2000 people sleeping rough.³ Given these conditions the squatting movement quickly diversified not only beyond the initial aim of rehousing families, but also in demographic makeup as many different sorts of people such as students, the unemployed, punks, and others took to squatting.

People squatted for many reasons, including the inability to find affordable housing and as a base for political groups and projects. Both participatory accounts and sociological studies suggest a false dichotomy between deprivation squatters and political squatters. I critique this binary, and argue instead that squatting is always a political act. In section one I explore the binary that squatters and scholars have constructed to explain the differences between those who squat out of necessity (non-political) and those who squat from choice (political). This binary ought to be discarded both because it is false, and because its propagation has negative ramifications for squatters as it tends towards the legitimization of some squatting actions and squatters, and the condemnation of others. In section two I outline how squatting is inherently political. Using a radical democratic approach to politics, I argue that politics is defined by a conflict among and between various actors over what is considered just.

Applied to the context of squatting, I argue that squatters enter into a political conflict with the state and landowners who enforce the rights of the propertied above the property-less. I then situate the challenge to property in the broader historical and geographic context of the fight for the commons, looking at how there has historically been resistance to the expropriation of public space and privatisation of common land, and how similar conflicts over squatting and public vs. private space were taking place in other European countries at the same time. I then offer examples of how this conflict manifests in various forms of state aggression towards squatters: through legal procedures, evictions, and the withdrawal of resources. Finally, I conclude by suggesting that the reconception of all squatting as political can help establish a new historiography of squatting and return agency to those previously dismissed as 'non-political' as well as recognising the significance of the reclamation of space as a political act. For no matter whether you are squatting for a roof over your head or to produce insurrectionary literature in your basement, squatting ought to be seen as a political engagement, the diversity of its aims and make-up only reinforcing the fundamentally radical nature of occupation in itself.

THE PROBLEMATIC BINARY

The squatting movement that grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s originated as a movement primarily oriented towards housing those in need: the homeless or badly housed. The London Squatters Campaign (LSC) was set up by Ron Bailey in 1968 as a direct solution to the poor standard of temporary housing and rentals and the vast numbers of homeless people across London.⁴ The movement gained a significant amount of support in the media for providing a much needed response to the crisis that the councils appeared to be ignoring.⁵ In addition, negotiations between the councils and the LSC led to a number of licensed squats, which were squats that the council granted a formalised temporary occupation. The creation of licenced squats resulted from Bailey and Jim Radford's campaign at Redbridge, a campaign I will look at in more detail later, in which the logic of squatting was put to councils as a sensible response to the housing shortage and the re-housing of families.⁶ The first licences were granted to squats in Lewisham in December 1969. By May 1973 the Family Squatting Advisory Service (FSAS) estimated there were 2500 licenced squats across London.⁷

With the involvement of more overtly political squatters the 'good' were distinguished from the 'bad' squatters, which led to tensions within the movement. The initial sympathy for the movement was based on the understanding that squatting offered a solution to homelessness and council incompetence; the media and squatting movement alike did not consider it 'political'. As one critic suggested with reference to the squat at 144 Piccadilly, a short lived occupation of a prominent building in Hyde Park in September 1969 by a group of young people calling themselves the London Street Commune:

There is a world of difference between the young layabouts who occupied 144 Piccadilly and those homeless families who have squatted in empty properties elsewhere ... Neither type of squatting is to be supported, but it would be mistaken to cast an equally disapproving eye on both.⁸

The media took advantage of this tension within the squatting movement, setting the squatters against each other, blaming the openly political or riotous squatters for crackdowns against the whole movement, rather than the repressive actions of councils and property owners.⁹ Many of those involved in the LSC resented the 'dosser' squatters, those who inhabited places like 144 Piccadilly (1969), and spoke out against them. Participants in the LSC complained that that their hedonistic lifestyle and apparent lack of interest in squatting for housing need gave the

movement a bad name, After 144 Piccadilly was violently evicted, the same more aggressive ‘anti-hippy’ methods for evicting squatters were legitimised and then used against the ‘official’ London Squatters of the LSC. Subsequently, Jim Radford of the LSC said of the Piccadilly squatters, ‘they tend to be badly organised. The sites they choose are far too provocative. And they don’t take squatting seriously enough’ and suggested that the London Squatters should be distinguished from the ‘dilly dossers’.¹⁰ This critique was unfair as the Commune openly proclaimed their concern for homelessness,¹¹ but it is indicative of the way in which tactical differences precipitated and presupposed ideological conflicts. In contrast to the London Street Commune, the LSC framed their squatting in terms of a moral duty towards re-housing during a severe crisis.¹²

Likewise, there were tensions between licenced and unlicensed squats. Unlicensed squatters warned those in licenced squats that they were jeopardising the interests of unlicensed squatters. Councils would use the presence of a licenced squat in an area to try to force the eviction of an unlicensed squat on the grounds that the houses the unlicensed squatters occupied had been allocated to a licenced group.¹³ The very existence of licenced squats emphasised a division between ‘responsible’ family groups and other squatters. As a result, divisions formed between those that were able to get concessions out of councils and those who could not.¹⁴ Licenced squats were put in the compromising position of being somewhat under the sway of the council but also largely unwilling to reject the needs of the wider squatting movement. This tension was heightened in Islington in 1972 where there were three houses squatted in an area earmarked for redevelopment, occupied by nineteen squatters. When facing eviction, Radford, as a representative of the LSC, attempted to negotiate with the council for licences on behalf of the unofficial squatters without first consulting them.¹⁵ Instead, they chose to resist, erecting barricades at either end of their street to prevent the bailiffs and police from evicting them. This action was supported by a sympathetic lorry driver and local social workers and gained much media attention at a time when the limitations of licences were becoming apparent to squatters. Thus, Radford’s intervention was seen as an unwelcome interference, especially since the squatters subsequently won the struggle, achieving council housing for the families and undisturbed habitation in the squatted properties until demolition for the rest of the squatters.¹⁶ The tension between the licenced and unlicensed squatters also arose during the long occupation of Elgin Avenue in 1975. Several houses in Elgin Avenue were squatted and a community built around them. However, there was a long-term council campaign to evict the squats, during which the council manipulated the relationship between the squatted buildings and the licenced squats in the

area, pressuring the licenced squats to condemn the occupation. In the event, a high proportion of official squatting groups resisted the council pressure to evict fellow squatters in favour of supporting the right for all to struggle, and the occupation. The GLC eventually re-housed all 200 of the squatters, demonstrating the effect that solidarity between squatters in different circumstances could achieve.¹⁷

Squatters were aware of the danger of divisiveness within the movement. It was frequently mentioned at squatting meetings as something to resist as it would undermine solidarity and weaken the movement. In the mid-1970s, Advisory Service for Squatters Conference reported:

Some want to continue living 'normal lives', others to live 'alternative' lives, others to use squatting as a base for political action. Any squatting organisation needs to recognise this diversity or it will fall into the trap of saying there are good squatters and bad squatters. We must reject any attempts to create an internal class structure within the squatting movement ... Everyone has a right to a home.¹⁸

One squatter, Celia Brown, attempted to combat these divisions by running a workshop around the word 'dosser':

Some squatters use 'dosser' to refer to antisocial squatters of whatever background. This is insulting to those who think of themselves as dossers and further harms their public image.¹⁹

She wanted to campaign to reclaim the word dosser and to stop the instances of squatters blaming other 'types' of squatters for issues inflicted by councils and the government. The frequency of the mentions is indicative of how pervasive and insidious the tension was.²⁰

In an effort to overcome the stigmatisation of their activities by the mainstream media, squatters became enthusiastically involved in the burgeoning underground press. Throughout the seventies, underground magazines such as *International Times* or the notorious *Oz* would contain articles supporting squatters, defending their activities, and posting updates and call-outs for on-going campaigns.²¹ Specific squats would also publish their own material, one of the most dedicated and long-lasting was Elgin Avenue's *EASY* (Elgin Avenue Struggle – Yes!) tirelessly updated by the ever-enthusiastic Piers Corbyn for over 120 issues. *EASY* was used to spread awareness of the Elgin Avenue campaign, organise meetings and rallies and also drum up support for other related issues, such as child

care, unemployment, or anti-police initiatives.²² Through these alternative media, squatters were able to protect themselves from falling prey to the divisiveness stoked by the press and also spread their own messages of solidarity and unity in the face of attack, which they hoped would bring the movement together.²³

Building solidarity was not an easy task. Splits existed between different political factions: squatters involved in the International Marxist Group resented the anarchists; anarchists resented the liberals; trade unionists resented the non-workers. These tensions were amusingly played out in the debate between the Marxist and anarchist factions over whether a housing banner ought to read 'Free Housing for All' or 'No Evictions – Housing for all', a seemingly small distinction for most, but indicative of the kind of minute issue that could divide a squat.²⁴ But the most theoretically significant divisions formed between those who valued squatting as a political tool and those who saw its success as a result of attempts to depoliticise and de-radicalise the movement for mass appeal. This division often distinguished those who were part of a political faction from those that wanted licenced squats and council deals.

Many squatters disliked the attempts by the overtly political few to harness the whole movement for their political agenda. Many people squatted to provide a roof over their heads and resented being crowbarred into other political campaigns. Indeed, in the document *Squatters: Myth and Fact* produced in 1977 by the Self-Help Housing Resource Library, which collated information from over 300 squatters surveyed in different London boroughs, only eight per cent of people surveyed said they squatted as a protest and a mere three per cent stated it was in order to get involved in some kind of social or political action. Indeed, ninety-six per cent of people asked stated their reason for squatting was that they could not find any rented accommodation that was suitable or cheap enough.²⁵ Yet the framing of this survey assumed the binary by suggesting that the decision to re-house oneself by direct action was not a political move and that housing more generally was not a politicised issue. The survey questions contributed to the squatters' self-perception as political or not. The debates between those who viewed squatting as an open political challenge and those who wanted to keep their heads down often reproduced the language of us/them, replicating the binary within the movement.

A clear instance of this tension between the self-identifying political and the strategically 'non-political' squatters was manifested in the debate about the Squatter Action Council's (SAC) pamphlet, *Squatting: What's it all about?* This pamphlet was meant to offer an insight into the reasons for and causes of squatting in order to gain more widespread sympathy and understanding of the movement:

‘A systematic squat-bashing campaign has been conducted by the mass media to create a false image of squatters. We present accurate information which exposes major anti-squatting stories’.²⁶ The pamphlet attracted fierce criticism in a review of the text, published in a later edition of the SAC newsletter for its ‘sophisticated attempt to depoliticise squatting’.²⁷ The review critiqued the document’s appeal to a sympathetic perspective in which “everyone” wants to pay rent, is deserving, really does want to go out to work and settle down and have children’ when in fact the reality was a lot more complex. The review lists people who squat in order to avoid tedious work, those who reject the nuclear family or who choose to squat in women’s, migrant or gay communes as a refuge from persecution. By erasing these important and counter-hegemonic aspects of squatting (anti-work, anti-nuclear family, anti-oppression), the SAC document was doing what ‘non-political’ squatters often complained about: attempting to reduce the whole movement to one idealised image of squatting. Although the reviewer acknowledged that it would not be ‘helpful’ to suggest the squatting movement is led solely by radical political individuals, it also disputed the attempt to ignore different needs and voices within the movement and thus the real sense of unity and solidarity that existed.

Scholarly analysis of squatting has tended to replicate this unhelpful binary between political and non-political squatters.²⁸ In his sociological study on the nature of squatting, Hans Pruijt lays out five configurations of squatting which he applies to squatters all across Europe, focusing on the Netherlands, the UK, Italy and Germany, all of which have seen sustained squatting movements throughout the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Pruijt identified five different ways in which squatters would orientate themselves towards their activities, such as whether they adopted an overtly political rhetoric or justified their activities in terms of housing need, entrepreneurial activity or community social centres.²⁹ The configurations included in separate categories ‘deprivation squatting’ and ‘political squatting’, with the even more polarising statement that ‘a squatting project can only belong to a single configuration’.³⁰ Pruijt thus underestimates the significant overlap between different ‘configurations’. I argue that a squat can house those in need whilst also enabling people to engage in radical projects, and furthermore, that squatting is intrinsically political as it creates a conflict with hegemonic forms of power.³¹

Although many of the scholars who study squatting tend to focus on its multiplicity of forms, with political squatting being just one of many configurations, others hint at its radical centre. ETC Dee and Deanna Dadusc refer to the ‘resistant potential of the practice’, which suggests that there is a dormant subversive nature.³² However, throughout their analysis there is an imprecision regarding the word

‘political’, which seems to shift from referring to all squatters to just a subset of squatters.³³ A similar confusion is present in the introduction to the edited volume *The Squatters’ Movement in Europe: Commons and Autonomy as Alternatives to Capitalism*. The authors initially suggest that the whole of the squatting movement is political as ‘the radical orientation of squatting may also be distinguished in any opposition action against those public policies that are deemed to fuel the reproduction of capitalism and social inequalities’.³⁴ However, later the authors define their project as an analysis of the ‘political squatting movement’, suggesting that the movement as a whole is not political and their focus is instead on a specifically *political* subset. Even Colin Ward, who is recognised for his anarchist orientation towards housing, contends that ‘there has always been a distinction between squatting as a *political* demonstration ... and squatting as a personal solution to a housing problem’.³⁵ As I go on to argue, the distinction is false as autonomous housing solutions represent a political stance, and the act of squatting itself forces a confrontation with the state, thus making it inherently political.

A problem that runs through the literature on squatting is a reluctance to define what is meant by the term political. By refusing to pin down its meaning authors are able to utilise assumptions about political actions and political actors to support or condemn squatters and their actions as they please. The folly of making distinctions between what is or is not political without first defining what politics is was recognised by George Orwell:

Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.³⁶

The failure to provide a clear definition gives authors the flexibility to change the boundaries of the political to suit whichever demarcation is desired at a given time; to delegitimise certain actions as outside the acceptable realm of the political without having to justify their claim; and to replicate the moralistic arguments about housing that were produced across the contemporary media and the squatters’ movement.

These distinctions in the literature and the movement are thus not only historically and analytically inaccurate, but also potentially harmful. The discourse of ‘good/bad’ squatters only serves to delegitimise the elements of the movement who are deemed ‘undeserving’. This critique can and has led to persecution and repression of individuals or groups who do not fit the designated image of a ‘legitimate squatter’. In 1969 an *Observer* journalist was applauded for rightly distinguishing

'between those who are genuinely idealists and want to work for improvements in our society and those who are deliberately opting out of the affluent society'.³⁷ This kind of understanding of the movement is overly simplistic and harmful, indicated by the reference to the 'affluent society'- an term used to describe a specific style of society-making through taxation and increasing standards of living to further consumerism and economic well-being. Thus this statement forms an implicit value judgement, suggesting the affluent society model is what is 'good' and any other forms of society-making are therefore 'bad'. This paper shall endeavour to offer a broader analysis of the political nature of squatting, thus legitimising all elements of a diverse, radical, movement.

THE POLITICAL HEART OF SQUATTING

You don't need a degree in politics to know that property is the cornerstone of this society, property is power, and the need to own is what keeps us in line.³⁸

In this section I outline the main thesis of my work: squatting is inherently political as it necessitates confrontation with the state. To correct the binaries evident in the scholarship on squatting I use radical democratic theory to frame the 'political'. As I will argue, politics is best understood as a confrontation between opposing forces. I use this idea to explain the significance of this political division by looking at the place of property for state control and thus the significance of its reclamation. Having done so, I then detail the different ways in which this conflict manifests, namely in the siege, the court, and the eviction, thus reinforcing the argument that the relationship between squatters and the state is one of politicised violence.

THE MEANING OF THE POLITICAL

It is important to define politics in order to sustain an analysis of a political event. The problem of definitional vacuity is pervasive in much of the scholarship. I understand politics to be defined by a conflict over what is considered just. This conflict constitutes a political arena as it is explicitly between those within the status quo and those without. The framework that best articulates this understanding of politics is radical democratic theory. Unlike the various liberal traditions that treat politics as the striving for peace or consensus, where conflict is erased from the domain of politics, radical democratic theorists see conflict as central to politics.³⁹ 'The political', Chantal Mouffe argues, 'is the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations'.⁴⁰ Mouffe argues that the presence of a conflictual us/

them division is integral to politics, and indeed, fundamental to the creation of a political sphere.⁴¹ Divisions and exclusions are ontologically central to the creation of any community. For a community to exist there must be those who exist outside of it. This necessarily creates conflict between those within the system and who view it as just, and those without, who don't. Under a democratic system, Mouffe suggests that the antagonism is non-conflictual, pacified into a condition of 'agonism'. For Mouffe, agonistic politics attempts to convert the 'enemy' who must 'be destroyed' into the 'adversary', whose position is to be respected if a compromise or solution is to be found.⁴² In other words, politics aims at domesticating violent divisions, whereby groups can contest each other without destroying one another. We can use the agonism/antagonism split as a heuristic device to explain the essentially conflictual nature of squatting. In the context of squatting, there clearly exists an us/them division, and one that is explicitly between individuals and the state, or the agents of the state in the form of bailiffs or police. Yet, inattention to the *material* reality of the *space* of the political has led theorists to overlook squatting and occupation more generally, as a limit case for radical democratic theorising: squatting, represents a type of conflict that the state cannot domesticate because its existence directly challenges one of its foundational institutions: private property.

Although squatting is antithetical to the values of modern capitalist society and can never be fully domesticated, instances where squatters are made licensees or are assimilated into housing cooperatives could arguably be seen as a temporary pacification of the conflict. However, despite the presence of licences for some squatters, licences were never considered a full solution to squatting nor have I come across any evidence to support the idea that squatters assumed that they someday would all receive licences. Licences were an individualised, case by case measure that only some people would receive, rather than a policy rolled out to the larger body of squatters as a whole. This explains some of the divisions between the larger squatting body, divisions between those who qualify for licences (however unofficially) and those who don't, and those who would accept licences and those who wouldn't.⁴³ Thus the relationship never shed its inherently antagonistic nature as only specific elements within a larger struggle were momentarily pacified. A relationship that moves from one of open antagonism to precarious agonism never sheds its political nature. This is because the terms of the agreement are always sensitive and open to contestation, as Mouffe demonstrates.⁴⁴ Squatters in licenced squats do not have the security of a rental contract; they know they can still be kicked out of their homes if the landlord changes his mind or when an occupied block is demolished. They also know that their fellow squatters are not all receiving the same deals and thus are aware of the inherent inequality in the process.

So the pacification of the conflict in individual cases is only ever viewed as a temporary fix to a much broader political problem. The fact that they are squatters and the reason for their 'deal' is that they were found squatting by those backed by state power is ever-present. The risk of conflict always lurks in the background, and is forcefully realised when the terms of the licence come to an end. So long as this power differential remains in place, the conflict can never be fully pacified nor become fully agonistic in nature. It is also worth noting that in London councils only begrudgingly gave out licences and usually at the end of a long and drawn out battle with the squatters or when public or media support ebbed away. The contestation is further exemplified by the government's open antipathy towards squatting and the introduction of the 1977 Criminal Law Bill which made trespass a criminal offence and functioned as a forceful reminder of the squatters' precarity. More recently and more dramatically this antipathy was underlined in the criminalisation of squatting in residential buildings in 2012, which fundamentally altered the nature of squatting in London. The conflict is ever present and arguably growing ever more antagonistic in nature as squatters are forced to go to further lengths to find a home.

There are of course limits to this model. Mouffe's model of radical democracy does not wholly account for the divisions that were present within the squatting movement and the way in which different 'types' of squatters were treated with different levels of active antagonism and likewise responded with different methods and degrees of force. Similarly, one has to be careful not to oversimplify the character of 'the state' as it is a form of political association, rather than a single entity.⁴⁵ The hegemonic force dealing with squatters was made up of different bodies with different agendas: police, bailiffs, councils, construction workers, and property developers were all motivated by different concerns. Nevertheless, these interests and loyalties coalesced in conflict with squatters. The battlefield was ever present; it was simply the manner of manoeuvring it that changed. The direct confrontation brought about by the act of occupying a property that was not *legally owned* did not cease. By closing the gap between antagonism and agonism it is possible to expose the political radicalism of all forms of squatting as a form of action that directly challenges assumed rights to property and land and which physically reclaims that which has been historically expropriated from the commons.

If conflict is inherent in the act of occupation, should the political actors themselves be aware of this? I suggest not. If the conflict is inherent in the act then it is not necessary for individuals to know themselves to be political agents in order for their actions to be classed as political acts. According to Schmitt, whose work Mouffe adapts: 'Any distinction that can serve as a marker of collective identity

and difference will acquire political quality if it has the power, in a concrete situation, to sort people into two opposing groups that are willing, if necessary, to fight against each other'.⁴⁶ In the context of squatting, squatters acknowledge the potential need to barricade, to resist, and to go to war against the powers that seek to make them homeless, whether or not they recognise the political nature of this resistance. Likewise, the act of choosing to re-house oneself actively rather than passively waiting for council housing to be assigned is political as it undermines the council's authority to grant access rights to housing. Gramsci writes of the tension between conscious thought and the value of actions, particularly under capitalism.⁴⁷ Squatters who actively seek to protect their squat, through barricading and building traps, by constructing legal defences to challenge the council in court, or even by simply moving on to squat somewhere new, are resisting the actions of the state against squatting, whether or not they are able to articulate this. This is evidenced in the first *Squatters Handbook*, published in 1974. The handbook indicated no party political stance, no overarching ideology or agenda, aside from offering and supporting one solution to the housing struggle. Yet it contained detailed information on how to resist eviction, how to barricade, and how to defend oneself in court.⁴⁸ The handbook functioned as an aid in the conflict against those who wished to repress squatting, and thus was a political tool in a political struggle. Like the handbook, the squatters themselves were part of a struggle they may have been reluctant or unable to acknowledge.

While I argue that squatting is intrinsically political, given its conflictual character, to call all squatting political is not to homogenise the diversity of squatting experience. After all, plurality is a key condition of (agonistic) politics. There were degrees of political awareness, degrees of politicisation, and degrees of political intent. One openly political occupation was that of Tolmers Square. Between 1957 and 1976 residents of Tolmers Square in Central London united with squatters, students and workers to resist a property development by the much-hated developer Joe Levy. This was actually one of the few high profile squatting cases during this period which was targeted against developers rather than local authorities (a fact which highlights the changing nature of property and land ownership in London, if compared with squatting actions today which are predominantly targeted against developers and in resistance to the sale of council land).⁴⁹ The developers planned to demolish the buildings in the square, some of them empty houses, but many more happily occupied, in order to build a high-rise office block. It was only through the collaboration between the different groups, including the occupation of several buildings by squatters, that the development was resisted. The protest was openly political because the resistance was directed against a clear target and

it made a public statement against property development and the destruction of communities.⁵⁰ An occupation such as Tolmers Square which brought tenants and squatters together against property developers was a very different sort of political battle to that waged by families rehoused by the LSC in 1969. Whereas Tolmers Square was an *explicitly* political campaign, the LSC actions were *implicitly* political because the occupations represented an autonomous solution to the housing crisis. Yet to deny *a priori* the political nature of occupation disavows the wider implications of squatting's challenge to the institutions of property and state control.

SQUATTING AND THE COMMONS

In most European countries squatting is considered a violation of private property rights.⁵¹ Nevertheless, since the Second World War, there have been persistent and militant squatting movements in several countries. Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands all have enduring squatting movements, alongside the UK. Although they faced similar challenges through hostility and aggression by official and unofficial bodies, they also had somewhat different characters. While every squatting movement is diverse and resists easy reduction, there are tendencies which broadly stand out within each of these scenes. Italy's squatting scene largely revolved around the social centre movement, creating autonomous social spaces for people to come together and work on projects such as political campaigns, social and countercultural activities, and self-management of unused buildings in cities.⁵² The German movement was very strongly associated with the broader autonomous movement and tied into a myriad of militant movements, often providing bases for these activities to take place.⁵³ The Dutch movement was arguably closest to the British scene in its emphasis on reclaiming space not only as a radical intervention into power dynamics and as a base for countercultural projects, but also as a means to re-house people who could not afford to live within cities.⁵⁴ But what is significant is that every movement, whether openly 'political' or oriented around re-housing, recognised the importance of reclaiming these spaces for common use, and in each case, the government viewed squatting as a threat to social peace, and to the propertied.

Looking at the impending criminalisation of residential squatting in Britain in 2012 Victoria Blitz framed the argument thus: 'the problem for the government is that squatting is more radical than this: inherent in its actual practice is the contestation of private property rights'.⁵⁵ Property forms a visible divide between the private and the common, the individual and the collective. By contesting property and land ownership squatting challenges the legitimacy of traditional forms of domination and the basis of capitalist structures. Property has been used

as a tool of repression of the lower classes since feudalism, when land ownership was first established and tied to societal status.⁵⁶ In addition, private property asserts individual rights over collective need. This is best exemplified in the enclosures of common lands from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, during which agency over one's own agricultural production and also common access to communal events such as feast days and carnivals diminished.⁵⁷ Enclosure centred the control of agricultural production and thus of agricultural workers in the hands of local elites. Like the actions of property developers today, the practice of enclosure was fiercely resisted by men and women in communities across Britain, contributing to fierce riots and rebellions, such as the Oxfordshire Rising of 1595, the 1607 Midland Revolt, and the Western Rising of 1630-32, as well as numerous uprisings in Wales and Scotland, the mirror of which can be seen in the battles against fracking in Wales, and against the privatisation of highland land in Scotland today.⁵⁸ In the context of this strong history of resistance to the theft of common land for private greed, squatting can be understood as the expropriation of private property, as the return of privatised space to the commons. In reclaiming private property for collective use, squatting challenges hegemonic forms of domination and historic state control. Rob Bailey, who ran the LSC, appears to agree when he says '[Squatting] must become the living demonstration that ordinary people will no longer accept the intolerable housing shortage. It must become the threat that will compel government, national and local to change its priorities'.⁵⁹

VIOLENCE AND COUNTER-VIOLENCE

Confrontation was an unavoidable reality of squatting. Whatever their politics, squatters would fight to defend their squat, whether through explicitly learning how to barricade and set traps, or more implicitly, by writing petitions and picketing courts. Methods varied depending on the make-up of the squat. Overtly political squatters would tend to favour an open, publicised confrontation more than a family groups. But in all cases, squatters would use all means at their disposal to fight back against the property owners or council officers who threatened to take their homes away from them. The process of the squatting campaign at Redbridge in 1969 exemplifies the different mechanisms of attack utilised by the state against squatters, and also debunks the myth that it was *only* the openly antagonistic squatters who were faced with physical violence.

Redbridge was set up in November 1968 as the first official project by the London Squatters Campaign. Its aims were:

- To take over disused property to re-house families living in inhuman conditions in hostels and slums
- To spread the influence of direct action
- To instigate an attack on the housing authorities
- To radicalise the housing field⁶⁰

In February 1969 two hundred people marched to a street containing multiple empty council properties in Redbridge, East London, with much media coverage. They were keen to not break any laws, so took meter readings of the properties occupied and researched them thoroughly before entering. At least thirteen homeless families were housed in squats in Redbridge during this campaign, including one family with seven children who had been homeless for twelve years. Despite the legality of their occupation and the media and public support for their action, which provided a solution to the housing crisis whilst the councils proved inept, Redbridge council responded with hostility and sought to quash the rising tide of squatters.⁶¹

The Council's first move was to use the courts to try to convict the squatters for trespass. On losing this action, council workers smashed up empty properties along the street to halt the spread of the movement. Squatters either moved to a different house or found that they had enough volunteers with DIY skills to fix up the buildings themselves. The council hired thugs to attack the squatters, including the families. One man ended up in hospital for two weeks with a broken jaw⁶² and one woman was beaten so badly in the stomach that she lost her baby.⁶³ These tactics showed how it was not only the so-called 'hedonistic, drug-taking' squatters that were treated with open aggression but also the supposedly non-political family groups.

By taking squatters to court, councils like Redbridge engaged in a type of warfare in the field of knowledge, and within a physically intimidating site, using the legal system as a form of domination since, as Foucault described it, 'knowledge is a major resource of power'.⁶⁴ As Turkel writes, 'in modern society, law combines with power in various locations [such as the court] in ways that expand patterns of social control, knowledge and documentation of individuals for institutionally useful ends.'⁶⁵ The institutional weight of the court system was deployed against squatters to support the interests of property-owners. Given the nature of precedents in common law, the English court system significantly tends towards the preservation of the status quo. Trained barristers, whose work requires detailed knowledge of the nuances of common law, confronted untrained homeless people in court. Unpaid, squatters had to scrap together pieces of legal knowledge and

test cases and, having put together whatever defence they could muster, enter into the courtroom to fight for their homes against professionals who were often better educated and more articulate, and certainly working within their comfort zone.⁶⁶ The courtroom was not only an alien battleground to the uninitiated but replete with legal jargon and archaic procedural rules functioned as a form of ‘epistemic violence’.⁶⁷ As Turkel writes, ‘[d]iscourses are controlled by the conditions that restrict access to communication and shape the process of communication, limiting discourse to speakers who are deemed ‘qualified’ in terms of formal education and professional certification ... in effect discourse becomes a form of exclusive communication and interaction’.⁶⁸ This courtroom experience could undermine the squatters’ confidence, self-esteem or desire to squat. It was therefore, all the more significant on the occasions when the squatters won.

It is also worth noting that a legal procedure could often be the best outcome of an occupation. One of the reasons that squatters often targeted council-owned properties rather than those of private developers was that local authorities had to observe due law and process, so fast, illegal and aggressive evictions were less likely (though not unheard of, as the case study of Redbridge demonstrates). One tactic squatters used was to string out legal proceedings for as long as possible by requesting adjournments on the grounds of legal technicalities and by swapping squats after a Possession Order was granted squatters could invalidate the order by ensuring that the individuals named were no longer in residence. With the assistance of groups like the Advisory Service for Squatters, who advised on legal protocol, helped prepare squatters for court and provided test cases, squatters could potentially stay in properties for months after the initiation of proceedings by the councils and have the satisfaction of using the state’s judicial tools against them.⁶⁹

Beyond the juridical realm, violent evictions exemplified the physical war that squatters were engaged in. In January 1977 residents of St Agnes Place were awoken by the sound of a huge crane with a demolition ball moving into position, with two hundred police officers to prevent trouble as the ball smashed into the roofs and upper floors of the empty houses. It is telling that unionised Lambeth Council workers refused to do this job and a private firm was hired for £13,600.⁷⁰ The obvious violence of the attack against a squat was recognised by workers as a violence they refused to engage in. The councils were prepared to use physical aggression and violence in order to evict squats, also exemplified by the Redbridge example, above. Physical conflict frequently emerged between squatters and different agents and was an ever present possibility for those in occupation.

Another means by which the state inflicted violence upon squatters was by using siege tactics, such as cutting off vital resources. In April 1976 Lambeth

Council announced a five point attack against squatters that included cutting off power, the use of private investigators and the refusal to fund local groups that were tolerant of squatters.⁷¹ This was not an isolated policy. Three years earlier, the Greater London Council (GLC) refused the London Electricity Board access to squatted houses on Charrington Street, leading to pickets and protests against the council.⁷² On 25 June, 1974 the GLC ordered the gas to be cut off on two squats occupied by families, while the mother was in hospital. This family then had no cooking facilities at a time when a primary carer was unavailable to provide assistance.⁷³ In the *Consultation Paper on Squatting* released in 1975 the Department of the Environment (DOE) suggested that in order to deter squatters it would be willing to consider 'not making supplies available to houses notified to them by a local authority'.⁷⁴ This is a form of corporeal violence; the violence of restricting access to water, heat and electricity necessary for the body's reproduction. By restricting access to these necessities, the council constrained the ability of the squatters to care for their own well-being. Councils also refused to allocate local school places to the children of squatters and denied squatters access to refuse collection services (fuelling the myth that squatters were all filthy and living in squalor). In 1973 Camden Council even tried to ban squatters from using library facilities.⁷⁵ These siege tactics were designed to wear squatters down and were recognised by squatters and their advocates as a form of back-door eviction. Unlike the court room or physical eviction, sieges illustrate a more insidious form of violence, as squatters could rarely fight back against their forcible displacement.

Whether in the court, the eviction, or the siege, this was a war that squatters did not choose to participate in. Jim Radford of the FSAS emphasised this when he stated that the Service's practical purpose was to alleviate housing need, but that 'to this end we were prepared to work, organise, negotiate, and, if necessary, fight'.⁷⁶ This clearly suggests that he did not see fighting as a metaphor for the process of negotiation but as a real, physical possibility, due to the conflict squatters were engaged in. The violence of the state and its agents was present in every preventative measure made against squatters during this period. Taking squatters to court was a violence, wrecking properties was a violence, and hiring policemen and 'heavies' to evict squatters by force was yet another all-out act of violence. The violence of this conflict made squatting political, whether or not groups within the movement consciously perceived their struggle as such. The character of the conflict could change depending on media presence, the degree of antagonism within the occupation, the age of the squatters, the nature of their domestic arrangements, even as a result of the political affiliation of the local council. But active engagement in this conflict resulted regardless of intent, from the use of external force and the need to

defend squats against lawyers in the court room, bailiffs on the street and councils in resource and service control.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have argued that squatting is inherently political. This argument is a direct response to the false binary between political and non-political/deprivation squatters propagated in the literature of both the squatters' movement and scholarly material. In part one I argued that this binary is dangerous as it disrupts unity and allows the discourse to be shaped by those hostile to squatting. It was harmful to the movement at the time, and still affects the language and self-identification of the squatting community today. The discourse of 'good squatter/bad squatter' is as pervasive as ever, despite attempts to resist this unhelpful division.

The binary is a false one for several reasons. First, it suggests that there can be no overlap between those who squat out of housing need and those who squat as a form of political activism or as a base for political projects. Second, the binary is false because all squatting is political as it creates a conflict with the state and because housing is a politicised issue. In part two I define politics as conflict between those within the status quo and those without. I show the ways in which squatters and the government, councils and police enter into a violent conflict. This violence was symbolised in legal battles in which the squatters were at a rhetorical and epistemological disadvantage. Violence was also expressed through aggressive evictions and through siege tactics against squatters. The antagonism is a measure of the challenge that squatting posed to property rights. I explore the importance of re-appropriating land for common use which has been privatised. Property has been a contested field of class war since 1066, reaching peak political antagonism during the period of enclosures. Squatting sees a return to this battlefield, with an antagonism just as fraught and just as politically driven between the propertied and property-less.

This paper has drawn out some of the problems pervasive in the squatters' movement and also in the literature surrounding it. The situation for squatters today is in many ways different to that of the 1970s, particularly since the 2012 criminalisation of squatting in residential properties and the on-going sell-off of public land to private corporations which challenges assumptions of who we are fighting against and who we can negotiate with (many squatters who would feel comfortable accepting a licence from a public body would balk at entering negotiations with a property developer).⁷⁷ However, the fundamental framing of the binary remains the same. This paper hopes in a small way to change that.

Within the movement, once the binary can be dissolved then energies can be refocused around issues of changing the media perception of squatting as a whole. It can also provide agency to those outside the traditional political domain through lack of property and allow them to redefine themselves as political agents. Likewise it can help to assuage some of the guilt that 'political' squatters, who do not need to squat out of deprivation, feel regarding their place in the movement, particularly as within the UK there is still an emphasis on the legitimacy of deprivation squatting over political in the media and amongst some squatters. To call the act of squatting political legitimises those who choose to engage in it for ideological reasons, as squatting should be encouraged regardless of social or economic background as a domain for resistance to hegemonic control over our homes, our lives and our consciousness.

For scholars this paper hopefully opens up new avenues of investigation. To reassert the political quality of deprivation squatters calls for reconsideration of how deprivation squatters engage with politics, and what, indeed, the politics of deprivation are. To break down the rigid configurations of squatters suggests that those who were previously demarcated as one category can now fit multiple and thus can be understood in more complex ways. New histories and investigations need to happen as those outside the traditional domain of politics are understood as agents with political histories. This essay can be seen as a framework through which to explore these subjects and studies, as a foundation for a new historiography of squatting that no longer seeks to apply false divisions within a fluid and political movement. For scholars should always remember the basic idea presented throughout: once the crowbar has been wielded, the confrontation has begun.

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NOTES

- 1 With thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their help in making this a stronger paper, Ruth Kinna for assisting me through the editorial process and offering valuable critiques, and to Aylon Cohen for consistently supporting and challenging my ideas.
- 2 By 'modern' I refer to the movement that began in the late 1960s. Following World War Two, there emerged a strong squatting movement of ex-soldiers, their families, and associates, who occupied empty barracks. In addition to being a short-lived phase

- of squatting, reception and public engagement of squatting during this period was very different to that of the late-sixties movement. In contrast, the movement of the 1970s was most sustained and was a part of a broad political awakening and engagement among people in varying but interconnected social movements, such as campaigns against nuclear arms, the student revolts, and the women's liberation movement, in the UK and beyond. Squatters themselves also perceived their legacy as having begun in 1968, as Nick Wates, a squatter, explains in the introduction to *Squatting: The Real Story* (1980), 'Squatting is an ancient practice, and has occurred at some stage, in different forms, throughout the world. Yet the last 12 years in Britain [since 1968] has seen a spectacular rise in the number of people who have taken over empty buildings. No longer does "squatting" describe the isolated actions of numerous individuals. Instead, it has become a social movement of great significance'. Thus, I have chosen to situate the legacy of today's movement in 1968. For information on squatting prior to 1968, see Colin Ward's *Cotters & Squatters: The Hidden History of Housing*, (Nottingham, 2002) which looks at the history of squatting since ancient times.
- 3 CHAR/Shelter/ASS/PHAS, *Empty Property: A Guide for Local groups*, (26 March 1975), part III accommodation is residential accommodation provided by local authorities, under the terms of Part III of the National Assistance Act 1948, for adults who, because of age, disability, illness, or any other reason, are in need of care and support.
 - 4 Ron Bailey, *The Squatters*, (Middlesex, 1973), p.27.
 - 5 Ibid, pp 21-32.
 - 6 International Marxist Group, *Housing, Squatting & the Urban Crisis Developments & the way forward*, (1975), p.10.
 - 7 Nick Wates & Christian Wolmer, *Squatting: The Real Story*, (1980), p.29.
 - 8 *The Times*, 'Goodbye Piccadilly', (22 September 1969)
 - 9 Squatter Action Council, *Dossier of anti-squatting lies*, [Approximately 1976]
 - 10 *Observer review*, 'Squatters Complain', (28 September 1969). It is worth noting that more recently some members of the London Squatters Campaign have revised this view: 'we were pretty condemnatory... I think it was terrible... you cannot condemn other people who are fighting for a better way of life and we did. And it was wrong' (Member of the London Squatters Campaign interview with Kesia Reeve, Reeve, K (2009), *De Britse kraakbeweging, 1968-1980* [The UK Squatters' Movement, 1968-1980], *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor socialistische Discussie en Analyse*, pp.135-157.
 - 11 Newsweek, 'Hippies vs. Skinheads', 6 October, 1969.
 - 12 *Guardian*, 'Raided Hippies Held at Bay by Squatters', (October 22 1969), Spokesperson from Endell Street Squat: 'we are turning away everyone from Piccadilly. They are an undisciplined mob.'

- 13 CHAR/Shelter/ASS/PHAS, *Empty Property: A Guide for Local groups*, (26 March 1975)
- 14 Ibid
- 15 Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting: the real story*, p.31
- 16 Ibid, p.31
- 17 International Marxist Group, *Housing, Squatting & the Urban Crisis Developments & the way forward*, (1975), p.10
- 18 Advisory Service for Squatters Conference Statement [Approximate date, 1975]
- 19 Celia Brown, *Single homeless people, squatters and dossers*, [Mid-seventies]
- 20 London Squatters Federation: *A suggestion for organisation*, 'we reject any attempt in the squatting movement to discriminate against any squatters such as "dossers" or people whose style or politics conflict with the "orthodox" squatting movement.', [Approximately 1973]
- 21 *International Times*, 1:52 (14 March 1969), 'Squatters Re-people Empties'; *International Times* 76:2 (1 January 1976) 'Mediations on a Crowbar'; *Oz* 22 (July 1969).
- 22 *EASY* 73, (Dec 1974);
- 23 *EASY*, (1974), 'No to Divide and Rule'; *EASY* 14 (3 August 1973), 'Only a united active movement can defend itself'
- 24 Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting the real story*, p.133.
- 25 Self-Help Housing Resource Library, *Squatters: Myth and Fact*, (June 1977)
- 26 Squatters Action Council, *Squatting: What's it All About?* [Approximately 1976]
- 27 Squatters Action Council Newsletter, Review of *Squatting: What's it all about?* [Approximately 1976]
- 28 There is very little analysis of the squatting movement available. Most major scholarly studies are mentioned in this section.
- 29 Hans Pruijt, 'The Logic of Urban Squatting', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol 37.1, (Jan 2013), p.21
- 30 Ibid, p.22; Hans Pruijt, 'Squatting in Europe', in *Squatting in Europe: Radical Spaces, Urban Struggles*, ed. Squatting Europe Collective, (New York, 2013), pp.17-60.
- 31 Nick Wates, *The Battle for Tolmers Square*, (Abingdon, 2013),
- 32 E.T.C Dee & Deanna Dadusc, 'The Criminalisation of Squatting: Discourses, moral panics, and resistance in the Netherlands and England and Wales', *Moral Rhetorica*, (June 2014), p.112
- 33 Ibid, pp.109-132; At some points in their article they appear to acknowledge the issues surrounding the binary between 'good/bad' squatter and how it is 'therefore delineating a clear moral distinction'. (p.120) They also seem to suggest the movement is inherently political by critiquing attempts to gain sympathy that revolved around

discourses of homelessness as ‘flattening a political matter of contention into a humanitarian problem’. (P.120) However, at other times they refer to ‘political’ squatters as an entirely separate category to deprivation squatters.

- 34 Claudio Cattaneo and Miguel A. Martinez, ‘Squatting as an Alternative to Capitalism: An Introduction’, in *The Squatters’ Movement in Europe: Commons and Autonomy as Alternatives to Capitalism*, Squatting Europe Kollektiv, edited by Cattaneo and Martinez, (London, 2014), p.1
- 35 Ward, *Cotters and Squatters*, pp.167-168
- 36 George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*, (London, 2013), pp.8-9
- 37 Richard Luce, ‘Hippies or hooligans’, *Observer*, (October 1969)
- 38 Hackney Community Defence Association, “Squats ‘n’ Cops”, (1992), in Anders Corr, *Anarchist Squatting and Land Use*, p.15
- 39 Criticisms of the liberal conceptions of politics (Rawles, Habermas) as striving for consensus in Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London, 1993), pp.135-154; *The Democratic Paradox* (London, 2000), pp.17-25;
- 40 Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London, 2000), p.101.
- 41 Ibid, p.105
- 42 Ibid, p.102
- 43 Although the distinction is largely framed as between families and single squatters, there were many who qualified for licences who refused to accept them as they felt it would compromise their values and destroy the ‘family’ that they had created, however unorthodox. See *Villain*, No. 15 produced by the Villa Road Squatters, (July 1976) which details the Villa Road squatters’ argument for resisting the offer of rehousing.
- 44 Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, p.102
- 45 Chandran Kukathas, *A Definition of the State*, conference presentation, (University of Wisconsin, Madison, March 29 2008) online at <http://philosophy.wisc.edu/hunt/A%20Definition%20of%20the%20State.htm>
- 46 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Expanded Edition (1932), trans. by G. Schwab, (Chicago, 2007), pp.37-8
- 47 T. J. Jackson Lears, ‘The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities’, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 90, No 3 (June, 1985), p.569
- 48 *The Squatters Handbook*, 1974, pp.1-14; This radical potential was, however, recognised by John Szemerey, prospective conservative parliamentary candidate for Islington South and Finsbury, as an ‘incitement to crime’, as he saw its instructions as an incentive to squat, a sign of ‘twisted values’, Peter Rudd, ‘Squatters book stirs up crime says Tory’, *Islington Gazette*, (1974)
- 49 See fightfortheaylesbury.wordpress.com for details of a squatting campaign that took place in London in 2015 against the sale of the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark by

Southwark Council to Barratt Homes., one of the UK's biggest private property development corporations, and Notting Hill Housing Trust, one of the UK's largest "Housing Associations", run along corporate lines with highly paid executives and a board of directors including Conservative politicians and the chairman of a big housebuilding company. Privately sold and rented homes make up a growing proportion of its business.

- 50 Wates, *Tolmers Square*, pp.162-172
- 51 Dee & Dadusc, 'The criminalisation of squatting', p.112
- 52 Gianni Piazza, 'How do activists make decisions in social centres? A comparative study in an Italian city', in *Squatting in Europe: Radical Spaces, Urban Struggles*, Squatting Europe Kollektive, (New York, 2013), p.89
- 53 George Katsiafikas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, (California, 2007)
- 54 That said, these comparisons ought to be dealt with in greater sophistication than I can reach in one paragraph, as one should avoid contributing to the idea that a squatting movement in any given territory can be defined by one quality only. The level of overlap and mutual agreement on tactics, ideology (whilst also facing internal divisions over exactly those things) between the UK and European movements should be considered a greater indication of the motivations behind squatting and reclaiming space generally than any superficial differences in emphasis. For a greater discussion of the similarities and differences between the various movements in Europe the Squatting Europe Kollektive books are an excellent resource, written by academics and squatters alike. Squatting Europe Kollektive, *Squatting in Europe: Radical Spaces, Urban Struggles*, (New York, 2013); *The Squatters Movement in Europe: Commons and Autonomy as Alternatives to Capitalism*, (London 2014); and Bart van der Steen, Ask Katzef & Leendert van Hoogenhuijze, *The City is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present*, (California, 2014)
- 55 Victoria Blitz, Our Society is Bigger than Yours: Squatting and the wider political rumblings <http://www.squashcampaign.org/2011/06/our-society-is-bigger-than-yours-squatting-and-the-wider-political-rumblings/> (12 January 2015)
- 56 J. C. Holt, 'Politics and Property in Early Medieval England, *Past & Present*, No. 57 (Nov 1972), pp.3-52
- 57 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*, (New York, 2004), pp.68-75
- 58 John Walter, 'A "Rising of the People"? The Oxfordshire Rising of 1596', *Past and Present*, no. 107 (May 1985); Steve Hindle, 'Persuasion and Protest in the Caddington Common Enclosure Dispute 1635-1639', *Past & Present*, No. 158 (Feb., 1998), pp.37-78; Buchanan Sharp, *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West*

- of England, 1586-1660, Berkeley, (1980), also referenced in Ward, *Cotters & Squatters*
- 59 Bailey, *The Squatters*, p.34
- 60 Ibid, 34
- 61 <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/counterculture/livingdemonstration/licensedsquattting/licensedsquattting.html>
- 62 Bailey, *The squatters*, p.73
- 63 Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting: The Real Story*, p.18
- 64 In my experience, trying to defend a squat in court is very intimidating, not because we don't know what we are talking about- we tend to have a pretty sound grasp of property law- but because of the weight of this institution against you, and the physicality of the structures, asserting legitimacy in every marble pillar, mahogany staircase and gowned official.
- Alan Hunt & Gary Wickham, *Foucault and Law: Towards a sociology of law as governance*, (Pluto, 1994), p.13
- 65 G. Turkel, 'Michael Foucault: Law, Power and Knowledge', *Journal of Law and Society*, 1990, p.170
- 66 *The Squatters Handbook*, 1974, pp.1-14
- 67 Gayatri Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak?, 1998, pp.282-83
- 68 Turkel, 'Michael Foucault: Law, Power and Knowledge', p.177
- 69 Kesia Reeve, (2009), *De Britse kraakbeweging, 1968-1980* [The UK Squatters' Movement, 1968-1980], *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor socialistische Discussie en Analyse*, pp.135-157. It is worth noting that squatters would sometimes occupy properties owned by developers, such as the case of Tolmers Square, but this was less common than it is today for two reasons. First, there was simply much more council owned property then there is today, when much council land has been sold to private companies and whole estates are being demolished and sold to property developers for rebuilding into luxury flats. Second, Local Authorities were deemed responsible for creating, sustaining, and refusing to combat the housing crisis which led to the need to squat in the first place. Councils have a responsibility towards homeless people and so squatting council property was a form of protest, highlighting their failings and showing them up by proving the possibility of housing for all.
- 70 Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting: The Real Story*, p.82
- 71 Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting: The Real Story*, p.82
- 72 Ibid, p.56
- 73 Letter from All London Squatters about GLC harassment to chair of Housing Development Committee, (28 June 1974)
- 74 Department of the Environment, *Consultation Paper on Squatting*, 1975 in Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting: The Real Story*, p.56

75 Wates & Wolmer, *Squatting: The Real Story*, p.56

76 Ibid, p.29

77 Section 144 LASPO, offence of squatting in a residential building, became law in September 2012 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/section/144/enacted> (14 January 2016)