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URBAN SQUATTING:
An Adaptive Response to the Housing
Crisis

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submitted for honors in Sociology

Oberlin College

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INTRODUCTION

What is squatting?

Urban squatting is the unauthorized occupation of empty buildings. Squatting is usually thought to be a Third World phenomenon associated with urbanization, poverty, and rural-urban migration. However, there is a history of squatting in the US and Europe as well. Squatting has been reported in New York, San Francisco, Newark, Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Los Angeles. Since World War II and particularly in the last thirty years, urban squatting has received much attention in Europe. The major European centers for squatting have been London, Amsterdam, and Berlin.¹ In Britain, the squatting of buildings scheduled for renovation or demolition became an organized and public movement. In the United States, squatting is a criminal offense and has not been widely publicized (Welch:1992, Adams:1986).

Squatting has a dual purpose. It can provide immediate shelter while being a political tactic to draw attention to neighborhood neglect, the lack of available and affordable, low-cost housing, the dwindling stock of housing, and homelessness. This direct-action technique serves to empower its participants who are usually people disempowered through their participation in the housing system.

Squatting has a long history in the United States. It was a common form of tenure during the pioneer and settler days of this country. The

¹ Although West Berlin had a larger squatter scene, squatting occurred in East Berlin as well. Currently there is squatting throughout the city, but most especially in former East

homesteading acts of the nineteenth century institutionalized it. Since then we have had different terms for the same actions. Whereas homesteading is a legal and institutionalized means of taking over and rehabilitating an abandoned building, squatting is not.

Squatting is most common during periods of economic recession or depression. During the Great Depression, many squats or shantytowns appeared in towns all over the country. These "Hooverilles" protested the lack of government response to the financial crisis. Additionally, they were organized and focused on mutual aid (Welch:1992).

In recent European history, particularly in Britain, there have been several waves of squatting. The initial one, in Britain, was in 1945. The focus was on self-help in housing. The squatters did not have strong bonds to each other, but all had high post war expectations (Franklin:1984). It was publicly well-received because many soldiers returning home after the war could not find homes of their own. In 1968, squatting reemerged in Britain as a direct response to increasing homelessness and the large number of vacant buildings (Kinghan:1977).

Why am I interested in squatting?

My first experiences with squatting were in two very different locations. Initially, I saw squatting in San Francisco. In the summer of 1994, the City of

Berlin because, despite the major rebuilding effort, there are many decrepit and abandoned buildings in those areas.

San Francisco was in the process of implementing an inflexible program to reduce crime, vagrancy, and loitering in the city; it was called the Matrix program. A law banning all loitering within thirty feet of an automated teller cash machine (ATM) was implemented. Street people were harassed. Many local businesses hired off duty police ("specials") to patrol certain neighborhoods and "scare off" street people. The "crack down" on crime extended to the three strikes legislation. Under this law, any individual who had been convicted of three felonies could be subject to life imprisonment.

Despite this conservative backlash, there was a small squatting scene in San Francisco. Closely affiliated with the Tenants Union and Food Not Bombs, an organization devoted to providing two free meals daily to homeless and poor individuals, most organized squatting occurred under the auspices of Homes Not Jails. These activists tried to find suitable housing for anyone who needed it and wanted to squat. They went on weekly expeditions around the city to look for abandoned buildings. Their goal was to open a new squat each week. Additionally, they would try to publicly take over a building monthly. I witnessed the takeover of an abandoned federally owned building and its immediate eviction.

The Polk St. squat had been taken over the summer of 1993. Prior to that it had been abandoned after the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) had seized it; it had been a "crack house". The building had been occupied by squatters for over a month and the DEA was willing to negotiate with the city. The DEA offered to give the house to the city for squatters to maintain and

rehabilitate. Unfortunately, the city refused the offer. The housing takeover I saw was the same abandoned building one year later. Three people occupied it in the early morning and five people were arrested that afternoon. I witnessed several fire trucks and nine police cars rush to the scene. It took all those "peace officers", law enforcement officials, several hours to break into the building. Meanwhile, we, the supporters and by-passers on the streets were harassed by the police officers.

Immediately after I left San Francisco, I moved to Amsterdam. Upon arrival, I was ignorant of Amsterdam's history of squatting. However, it was not long before I discovered it for myself. When wandering through the streets in the center of the city, I often noticed brightly colored banners and signs in the windows. I even went to the squatters' museum and on a tour of squats through the city. In Amsterdam, squatting has been common for the last several decades. It is possible to go to bars, cafes, clubs, galleries, restaurants, and theaters run by squatters. Amsterdam's housing shortage is a relic from World War II. The city has not been able to completely rebuild.

The Netherlands is a socialist country; its socialized housing system entitles all people to affordable subsidized housing. Nonetheless, there is a homeless and squatter population there. Because of the long and complicated waiting lists for housing, it is often difficult for young people, students, and people just moving to the city to obtain housing. This is the population most likely to squat in Amsterdam and under similar socialized housing systems.

Four days after I visited the Kraaken Musee, the squatters' museum, it was evicted by the police. Although, many squats have become legalized in Amsterdam, others are still evicted regularly. It was not an uncommon sight to see a street blockaded and the police attempting to physically evict a squat by accessing the roof and trying to go in through the windows of the building.

Evictions in Amsterdam were not similar to the ones I saw in San Francisco. In the US, squatters have no legal protection from eviction. In the Netherlands, once squatters create a domicile with a bed, a chair, and a table, the police cannot evict them without going through the legal process first. The housing movement, of which squatters are a part, has won greater legal protection for tenants and squatters from eviction.

Being in an environment in which private property was differently defined because of the socialist state and the gains of the squatters movement, encouraged me to study urban squatting in the US. I have been particularly interested in how people make the decision to squat and what they hope to obtain as a result. I have realized that there are different motivations and goals involved in this decision.

Methodology

This research results from both primary and secondary sources. In my initial search for sources, I discovered a wealth of information about squatting in the Third World. Although that is definitely squatting in an urban setting, I found that because much was already written about it and because it is not

what piqued my interest initially, I wanted to limit my inquiry to squatting in Europe and the United States. I've noticed that a large factor in Third World squatting is rural-urban migration. While that is relevant, in the cities I wanted to look at, it was not central. Other reasons why I chose to narrow my scope in this way reflected the types of squatting in different places. Although there are shantytowns and make-shift lean-tos in US cities as well as Latin American ones, I am particularly interested in the challenge to private property and housing policy that urban squatting poses when people choose to squat in publicly owned buildings.

I have gathered the bulk of my information from written sources. For information about squatting, I've sought out community papers, mainstream newspaper accounts, 'zines written by squatters, and first hand accounts. In order to augment my sources, I attempted to interview individuals who squat or have squatted and those who have been active in the squatter networks, but may not have actually squatted. Of the two interviews included in the appendix, one was done in person and the other over e-mail. Because there does not seem to be an active local squatter scene, I have not had too much access to this form of information gathering. I've obtained the two documents in the appendix from the Internet where there is a surprisingly large number of sites about squatting.

In order for me to understand urban squatting, I have had to learn about other urban housing processes. The dual function of squatting as a form of protest and as an immediate way of providing housing entails researching

social movements in addition to changes in the housing system. Since many squatters have been homeless and are in search of creating a home, I think it is necessary to discuss homelessness in this country. Although, it has not been possible to deal with this in depth, I have tried to examine the situation particularly in light of squatting. Similarly, I've chosen to examine recent urban changes as well as recent reconceptualizations of urban theory. I have tried to examine urban squatting from a variety of perspectives including conceptualizing it as deviance and as numerous types of social movements.

What is my goal in doing this research?

Primarily, I want to explore the motivations and reasons for squatting and develop a theoretical understanding of this phenomenon. In order to do that, it is necessary to present a non-deviant perspective on squatting. In exploring the structural situations that encourage or force people to squat, I think it becomes evident that squatting is neither deviant nor antisocial. It is a way of adapting to existing societal standards in the face of massive structural constraints. However, it is possible to create and participate in an anti-cultural community through squatting. Using Merton's Theory of Adaptation, I describe two possible modes of squatting. Despite the number of ways in which it is possible to discuss squatting as a social movement, Merton's typology is applicable.

THEORIES

Housing as a Need

Although there is a widespread assumption that all people need homes, that is not prioritized in public policy. This sense of entitlement is not applicable to all social classes. Many people in this country do not have homes. In order to begin understanding squatting it is necessary to explore the meanings of home and homelessness. Finally, solely having a home is not enough. Most people require some sense of authority, control, and power over their homes.

The Meaning of Home

In a basic sense that is most commonly taken for granted, there is a general definition of "home". We know that it is necessary for all people to have food, clothing, and shelter. Although shelter and home are not equivalent, when discussing necessities, they are equated. Whereas shelter is a purely structural concept, it is understood that home can refer to a specific house, but that it is symbolic of more emotional ties. The American Heritage Dictionary has the following definition:

home (hÅm) n. 1. A place where one lives; a residence. 2. The physical structure within which one lives, such as a house or an apartment. 3. A dwelling place together with the family or social unit that occupies it; a household. 4.a. An environment offering security and happiness. b. A valued place regarded as a refuge or

place of origin. 5. The place, such as a country or town, where one was born or has lived for a long period.²

The number of definitions is surprising for something that we take for granted. Apparently, there is disagreement in the definition of housing. While some theorists conceptualize it in terms of a "socio-spatial system", others describe it as an ideological construct.

Turner, a housing expert, argues that there are three universal housing needs that must be satisfied - access, shelter, and tenure. Housing must be accessible to people, institutions, modes of transportation, workplaces, etc. A home must provide some privacy as well as shelter from the climate. A home can be temporary, but there must be some individual minimum degree of tenure (Turner:1976).

Perlman (1986) has identified some classic functions of housing. Housing improves health and well-being. It is a product of social consumption and part of the economic sector. Housing is a stimulus to saving and investment and an indirect contributor to income and production. Within squatter communities, housing develops more functions. It can be a shop, factory, financial asset, and source of rental income. For some people, housing serves as an entry point into the urban economy.

Watson and Austerberry (1986 in Somerville:1992) have found that the meaning of home encompassed a variety of meanings such as "decent material conditions and standards, emotional and physical well-being, loving

² There are more definitions, but since they are minor and pertain to baseball and organizations, I have chosen to omit them.

and caring social relations, control and privacy, and simply a living/sleeping place." A home has symbolic status in its design features, amount of property and privacy, respectability, and comfort in addition to being a rather obvious symbol of wealth and prosperity.

Although this seems like a self evident and meaningless debate, it is relevant in addressing housing issues and especially homelessness. Somerville (1992) asks in the title to his article "Homelessness and the meaning of home: rooflessness or rootlessness?" Watson and Austerberry's respondents defined homelessness in equally interesting ways as "poor material conditions, lack of emotional and physical well-being, lack of social relations, control and privacy, and simply rooflessness." Symbolically, lacking a home entails lacking social status and being "invisible", unimportant, disreputable and an outcast.

Tenure variations in constructing the meaning of home have been superficial (Gurney, 1990 in Somerville:1992). Nonetheless, it is not only logical, but has been shown through some research that owner-occupiers are more attached to and invested in their homes than tenants. Owner-occupiers have more power over and within their homes. Moreover, there is a status difference that results from the greater amount of privacy that owner-occupiers have (Somerville:1992).

Given the emotional as well as physical definitions of home, it should not be a surprise that in our society a home is viewed as a necessity. Once the importance attached to the meaning of home is understood, it would be

expected and understood if individuals took pride in having their own home. That is, after all, our society's imperative and symbol of success.

Although there is some societal understanding that everyone should have a home, it is not clear that public policy follows through on that assumption and enables all people to have a home. Whereas some people seem to be more deserving of having a home of their own, others are not deemed deserving enough. Consequently, there is outrage when individuals impinge on other people's or the government's property in order to create a home of their own. Similarly, individuals who are housed by the State are subject to many constricting rules and the loss of autonomy. These individuals are treated as if they are not capable of managing their own lives and making decisions about their own homes.

One of the reasons for squatting is the need for a home. Whereas many people choose to squat with other motives, they are also searching for a home. Despite the apparent difference between squatting and being homeless, it still seems as if there is confusion. "I've told some friends [that I squat] and they think I'm going to become a bum. No, those people live in the street. They're homeless. I have a home. I live in a building." (Alexandri) Since it is a common misperception that squatters are homeless, they are subject to the same degrading and disempowering stereotypes as homeless people. Additionally, since for many squatters, homelessness is the only alternative, the economic and social situation with respect to housing needs to be examined.

Homelessness

There is little difference between those who become homeless and those who remain housed. The process usually begins with a destabilizing situation. The possible destabilizing factors may be physical abuse, eviction, illness, unsafe building conditions, and gentrification. Additional research has identified three different paths to homelessness. Many families become homeless as a result of one crisis. Slow deterioration is another path to homelessness. These families seek emergency housing when they are no longer able to stay with family and friends. Some people requesting emergency shelter never had stable housing of their own. These families lived with family and friends in the past despite the crowded conditions. This group fits the stereotype of young mothers, who never lived independently, but had switched from their personal support system to the welfare system (Weitzman, Knickman, & Shinn:1990)

The assumptions about homelessness and homeless people are that they were lazy or incompetent at maintaining a home of their own. Individuals are judged and blamed for not being able to afford a home. When there is media attention to homelessness, it is usually a personal story. The focus is on the personal tragedy of the individual, not on the housing market. There is no acknowledgment that many people who are somewhat financially stable can easily be at risk and that there are a variety of ways that people become homeless. "The homeless' are more accurately described as 'the evicted'

since people do not simply fall out of the housing market - they are usually pushed" (Smith:1992:91).

Contrary to the popular assumption that homeless people are destitute and unemployed (and unemployable), over a quarter of the homeless population does work. Their incomes are not enough to pay the ever increasing rents. A structural understanding of homelessness is that due to a decline in low-cost rental options in addition to a minimal and, often inadequate, living wage there is a discrepancy between the availability of affordable low-cost housing and the number of people with sufficient income (Ringheim:1993:618).

Homelessness is considered a transient condition. Because it is often caused by trauma and personal crises, public policy assumes that it can be remedied with emergency measures. None of these emphasize the structural problems of serious and dramatic decreases in the housing stock. There is a lack of appropriately sized and available units (Adams:1986).

The decrease in available housing stock for low-income people is due to increases in rent, disinvestment and poor maintenance of buildings in poor, particularly urban, neighborhoods, and demolition.³ Because there is no specific stock reserved for low-income renters, some of whom may not need to be subsidized, those seeking low-cost housing are competing with others who may have a broader range within which they can afford to rent. Concurrently,

³ Although there are a variety of reasons for demolition, a common one is to make room for a special event, like the Olympics, or public venue like San Francisco's Moscone Center and Yerba Buena Garden.

there has been a noticeable increase in the demand for low-cost housing. It has been attributed to declines in renters' incomes and a growth in the size of low-income renter populations (Ringheim:1993, Adams:1986).

The demographic makeup of the homeless population has shifted significantly in the last several decades. Although there have been homeless women since Colonial times, the prevalent assumption has been that the homeless population is comprised of middle aged white alcoholic men living on Skid Row, the poor, decrepit parts of cities, often in the central business districts, where missions and single resident occupancy (SRO) hotels abounded (Rossi:1989). This stereotype came about in the 1950s and no longer describes the homeless populations.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the "new homelessness" developed due to growing poverty. The bleak economic situation blurred the distinctions between poor and homeless people. The employment structure changed in the 1970s. Between 1969 and 1989, manufacturing employment dropped 3% while service sector jobs grew by 93%. The replacement of high wage manufacturing jobs with low wage service employment and a stationary minimum wage contributed to decline in real wages in the 1980s (Morales & Bonilla:1993:6). These structural changes adversely affected all types of people in all the regions of the country. Nevertheless, racial differences in impact were evident. African-Americans were laid off or displaced at a much higher rate than Whites (Hamermesh, 1987 in Morales & Bonilla:1993).

³ This research is not alone in equating the families with women and children.

Although men of color had been only a small proportion of the homeless population previously, the number of minority men rose disproportionately. The shifts in urban labor markets, most especially the shift from a manufacturing economy to one based on service and information, and cuts in public sector employment have affected African-American men very deeply (Hopper:1990). People of color, especially African-Americans, have been consistently over-represented in the homeless population. The current homeless population is younger, more mobile, and has a greater ethnic/racial diversity than in the past (Caton:1990, Rossi:1989).

The wealth gap has increased. While families in the top fifth of the income distribution enjoyed an average annual growth of 17%, those in the lowest fifth experienced a decline in real income (Burtless, 1991 in Morales & Bonilla:1993:7). In 1982, unemployment was at a post-war high of 10.7% and the average person's annual income had been reduced by \$1000 (Palmer & Sawhill, 1984 in Belcher & Singer:1988:45). A simultaneous suburbanization of service-oriented and goods producing industries occurred, thereby making it even more difficult for poor people in the urban centers to find employment (Morales & Bonilla:1993).

As the size of the work force has decreased because of business mergers and corporate takeovers, business interests have increasingly gained control over wage rates. Many corporations have left the United States in search of Third World nations with even lower wage rates (Belcher & Singer:1988). The increase in poverty has resulted in higher unemployment,

many involuntary part-time workers, and the inability of minimum wage workers to earn subsistence wages. The federal government did not help alleviate the concerns of those affected by this situation. Instead, there was a 55% decline of social expenditures in the 1980s (Morales & Bonilla:1993:8).

The economic situation in the 1980s changed the housing market drastically. Instead of fulfilling the American Dream of home ownership in the suburbs, more individuals and families required public shelters. Between 1984 and 1988, the number of homeless shelters increased 190%. In the last two decades, there was a 25% decrease in the number of low-income households and a 20% decline in low-rent units and federal housing subsidies have decreased by 75%; the waiting list for these subsidies is three to five years. San Francisco lost 9,000 of its cheapest housing units to demolition or conversions in the 1980s (Conway:1990:119-121).

This structural explanation of homelessness is politically manipulated in many ways. Neo-conservatives use these statistics to explain the breakdown of traditional family values and the inadequacies of individuals. Neo-liberals blame the lack of a free market in rental housing for these problems. Less state interference would enable a truly competitive market which could meet the housing needs of most people. Finally, those with a more socialist orientation would argue that we need more state interference in order to meet the needs of individual households. All of these approaches are inadequate for a number of reasons. Conservatives do not address the lack of available housing. Liberals purposely ignore the poor housing conditions resulting from

the dominance of a free market in owner-occupied housing. Social approaches do not delve deeply into the causes of state and market failure to provide housing (Somerville:1992).

A major flaw in most attempts to deal with homelessness is in the initial defining stage. Since the definition of homelessness tends to be purely structural, the many people who double-up or live in substandard conditions are not counted because they have a roof over their heads even if it is not their own (Somerville:1992). Those who are considered homeless are the most vulnerable poor people who have run out of options, places to stay, and have exhausted their support networks, assuming these existed in the first place (Ringheim:1993). A complete definition of homelessness must take into account the structural and ideological meanings of home in addition to locating it within the wider contexts of the housing system and poverty.

In a conservative political climate, such as the Reagan-Bush years, funding for affordable housing and adequate social services was dramatically cut. This was a time of federal cutbacks, increasing property taxes, and fiscal crises in both local and state governments. In 1981, 2.5 million people, over 1% of the population, were displaced due to gentrification, undermaintenance, eviction, arson, rent increases, mortgage foreclosures, property tax delinquency, speculation in land and buildings, conversions to higher income housing, demolition, "planned shrinkage", and historic preservation. The country experienced "shelter problems". There was an inadequate amount of affordable housing for low-income people who were generally racial

minorities, female headed households, large households, elderly people, public assistance recipients, and others suffering from institutional discrimination (Hartman:1983:17-25). These structural factors greatly affect the size and makeup of our current homeless population and have been an incentive to squatting.

Housing policy perpetuates ideas about family norms. Because no housing is designed for single people (including single-parent families), it is assumed that all people should live in traditional family units. A very small amount of the housing stock consists of appropriately sized dwellings for single people. The loss of many single resident occupancy (SRO) hotels from rapidly gentrifying central cities further limit possible options. This totally disregards the growing population of adult single people which, in some places, is almost equivalent to the number of families. Single people often require low-cost housing because they do not have other sources of support; local authorities, like the British housing councils, may refuse to help people under the age of thirty. Thus, in 1976, there were 10,000 single people squatting in London (Morton:1976). In the US, in 1980, more than a quarter of the total rental units banned children under 18. In many cases women with children had no other options. So in addition to fact that women are the largest growing poverty class, they are also more likely to be inadequately housed (Welch:1984:122).

The conservative estimates of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of MIT/Harvard state that one out of every five Americans is "inadequately"

housed.⁴ The underhoused population consists of people who are not in shelters or on the street, but are living in uncertain, unstable, and overcrowded conditions. It was estimated that in 1988, over 3 million families were doubling up (Kozol in Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989). These people are the "hidden homeless"; there is virtually no way to truly find out how many people are vulnerable to losing their housing again. Another segment of the underhoused population is the large group of people living in substandard conditions, buildings with fire hazards or on the verge of collapse. Since many poor people live in neighborhoods which have been abandoned as "inner city ghettos" or are in the process of reinvestment, the buildings are not receiving regular maintenance. Finally, there are people at risk of losing their housing because they are currently paying more than half of their incomes for rent (Kozol in Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989).

For most people, going to a homeless shelter is a last resort. Shelters are disempowering institutions which treat their residents as children. Since they are not well-funded, on the assumption that homeless people are not deserving, shelters do not provide any help in finding permanent shelter or in finding a stable source of income. Shelters often request people to abide by certain rules or even to sign a behavioral contract (Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989). The basic assumption is that the people who have wound up in the shelter system did so because they did not have the necessary life skills, including maintaining a steady income. Within shelters, people are deprived of privacy

⁴ Some researchers believe that it is actually one out of four.

and the right to make basic decisions about such things as daily schedules and food.

Often the only training that shelters provide is in "life skills". Individuals are left on their own to find housing. The best hope for housing is federally subsidized public housing. Although, this is in some sense a home of their own, it does come with a number of rules and regulations. In some cases, the housing contract stipulates that law enforcement officials can enter the home

at any time without a search permit.⁵ At other times, tenants can expect visits from housing personnel and social workers. This surveillance is necessary to evaluate the tenants and regulate the use of the space. Even out of the shelter system, poor people are still subject to control and surveillance (Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989).

Public housing is more susceptible to financial administrative, and physical breakdown for two reasons. Either because it is more highly centralized, and organized on much larger scales than housing built and managed by private corporations. Or because they are imposed on lower income people who have fewer choices and suffer more directly from mismatches of the supply and their priorities (Turner:1976:98).

As Turner (1976) explains, public housing has inherent problems that contribute to it being an unpleasant environment to live in. Common complaints about public housing is that it poorly maintained and impersonal. The authorities in charge do not act according to the best interests of the tenants. Individuals have no control over the type of housing they will live in. It's design, construction, and amenities are all decided by the system as is the type of management and level of maintenance.⁶

I guarantee you that a squat after two years is nicer than a lot of the low-income apartments you can rent. I've been in a bunch of low-income apartments and they're falling down. You pay a lot of money for them and get shitty service from your scumlord. You pay somebody to do something and they do not do it. New York is going to start a minimum \$400 rent. Which means that people who have been in apartments for ten or fifteen years

⁵ This is a fairly recent innovation. It is meant to curtail drug trafficking and other illegal activity by allowing the police to enter all homes at any time.

⁶ For a more complete discussion of public housing, see Tolchin, forthcoming.

and are paying \$150, more or less, all of the sudden will be jacked up to \$400 a month. [This is a problem] for older people who do not have any source of income and for poor people who can not afford it. (Alexandri)

Connection Between Homelessness and Squatting

Before people can empower themselves, they need to recognize their problems in the context of larger societal struggles. This would be a difficult task, were it not so emphatically immediate. Although housing is a public issue, it is personalized and individualized through its commodification in the capitalist housing system. It is expected that all people must obtain their housing through their own means. Moreover, many people themselves do not realize that there may be a structural/external reason for their hardships.

Mills' conception of the sociological imagination bridges that gap. The sociological imagination enables the link between "personal troubles of the milieu" and "public issues of the social structure" (Mills:1959:8). Personal troubles are private matters occurring within the immediate range of the individual. Likewise, it is assumed that their resolution should occur in this milieu. Public issues transcend the personal experience and involve some common value. The need for housing is a very publicly held belief. Although pride in one's home is acceptable and well understand, transcending capitalist norms to obtain housing is not.

The sociological imagination is crucial for activism because people need to understand that not only are their problems individual, but that they may be publicly, structurally caused. With this understanding, public action is

possible. Squatters must have some conceptualization that there is a national housing crisis and that the occupation of abandoned buildings can alleviate this problem for the individual and serve as a form of political protest to draw attention to the larger issue.

Autonomy and Control in Housing

Housing policy assumes that people are helpless and inert consumers and ignores their ability and their yearnings to shape their own environment. We are paying today for confusing paternalistic authoritarianism with socialism and social responsibility (Ward:1985:10).

What I am advocating is a radical change of relations between people and government in which government ceases to persist in doing what it does badly and uneconomically -- building and managing houses - and concentrates on what it has the authority to do: ensure equitable access to resources which local communities and people can provide for themselves (Ward in Welch:1984:123).

Many of the attempts to deal with this housing situation have resulted in expansion of the shelter system and the construction of housing projects for low-income people. The costs of these measures are far greater than equivalent attempts made in the informal sector on a local level. Housing projects often suffer from premature deterioration due to poor maintenance and vandalism (Turner:1976, Ward:1985). None of the people involved in managing these projects have any investment in them. The people who live there only do so because they lack other economically viable possibilities.

Although we live in a very bureaucratized and centralized society, there are individuals who create their own realities in very different ways. It can be argued that these individuals were not able to "make it" in the larger society,

however, I would argue that people who live in squats or shantytowns are not drop-outs who couldn't survive in the system. These individuals take a very active role in maintaining their housing situation. Even more interestingly, because this is happening on the margins of society, they are not receiving any support in their attempts. Nonetheless, these communities survive.

Shantytowns are assumed to be products of the poverty seen in the Third World. It is assumed that wealthy capitalist nations, like the US, would not have such poverty. Actually, there are shantytowns in American cities. They are created by homeless people who have been through the shelter system and seen its effects. The shantytown can, in some cases, provide better care and services for the homeless people who live there and in the neighborhood. It is one of the strategies of dealing with homelessness in a city where housing for poor people is not a priority (Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989).

Three human needs - food, clothing, and shelter - are so fundamental that our life cannot continue without them. ... But because people have a natural urge to feed, clothe and house themselves and their families, they have a tendency to despise the official provision, to circumvent it if possible, and certainly to improve upon it. They actually prefer the results of their own initiative, the alternative or the improvised, even though it may be inferior to that which is officially provided (Ward:1985:19).

In the case of shantytowns or squats, what may seem inferior with regard to the types of materials used or the stability of the edifice, may actually be superior in fulfilling other social needs. Individuals receive more support in their adapted environments and they may be able to engage in positive activities which are not monetarily valued in society. Although the majority of

people probably do not yearn to live in publicly constructed housing "projects", that is what the housing authorities build. Ward (1985) and Turner (1976) both argue that what the housing people really want is cheaper to build and maintain and is in the long run, more adaptable to changing individual needs. Because squatters are not constrained by market considerations such as resale potential, they construct or repair their homes in more uninhibited and self-determined ways.

Ward (1985) explains adaptability in housing from a different perspective. Based on our life cycles, we have different needs for housing. Young and relatively unsettled single people require a small amount of space. A "pad" would need to be instantly attainable and quitable. Individuals who want to start families or already have children need homes with more rooms and preferably an outdoor recreational area. The family home must serve more purposes and meet more needs in the production and reproduction of a growing household. Older people, whose children are grown, may want to scale down their housing to something in between the other two options. Society needs to find a way to meet the changing housing demands of people as they enter different life stages.

John Turner (1976) created his three Laws of Housing based on research he did throughout the world. When researching squatting in Latin America in the 1960s, he realized that more land is settled by squatters than the private and commercial sectors combined. At the time, the squatting population was experiencing an annual growth of 10% and doubling every

five years. The squatter communities he observed were highly organized. Unlike the slums occupied by transient poor, squatter communities have the capability of developing into suburbs. These individuals were often working class families attempting to integrate their families and communities in the city in need of land and technical assistance. Turner (1970) hypothesized that squatting resulted from urbanization, industrialization, and wage levels. He realized that housing structures must be adaptable and flexible, low-income housing projects will not meet people's needs if they are not close to their workplaces or accessible forms of transportation. Because individual housing needs are so complex, it is impossible for a centralized bureaucracy to adapt to the necessary variability.

1. When people have no control over, nor responsibility for, key decisions in the housing process, dwelling environments may become a barrier to personal fulfillment and a burden on the economy.

2. The important thing about housing is not what it is, but what it does in people's lives.

3. Deficiencies and imperfections in your housing are infinitely more tolerable if they are your responsibility than if they are somebody else's. (Turner:1976:165)

Turner (1976) argues that the construction and maintenance of adequate housing, at affordable prices, depends on the investment of resources that households control. The willingness of people to invest their time, energy, initiative and resources depends on the satisfaction they expect as a result. Housing decisions must be made locally to meet the needs of the people. They are the only people who actually know and can decide what is needed

and the best way to go about getting it. Squatters have been known to rehabilitate structures for a fraction of the amount the government would pay. The cost is lowered because labor is not paid for and many of the building products may be recycled (Kearns:1981).

In order to create housing that will meet the needs of the people who use it, Turner (1976:102) has developed three principles. The principle of "self-government in housing" states that the supply and demand of the housing market can only be properly matched once housing is controlled by the households and local institutions most directly affected. People will invest their resources into this housing when they know for certain that it was designed and created with their needs in mind. The principle of "appropriate technologies for housing" relies on the knowledge that the centrally built and administered housing is often done in ignorance of local conditions. Large public housing projects are eyesores and economically inefficient in addition to being socially and environmentally destructive. Finally, the principle of "planning for housing through limits" states that housing should not be planned or constructed in a standardized way that inhibits initiative. Ideally, people will know what their limits are whether in material resources or the availability of land and be able to use their own initiative to meet their needs (Turner:1976).

When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contribution to the design, construction or management of their housing, both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have no control over, nor responsibility for key

decisions in the housing process, on the other hand, dwelling environments may instead become a burden on the economy (Turner in Ward:1985:64).

Locally produced, self-governing housing is more cost effective because local labor and technologies are used. It is more useful and serviceable in proportion to the amount of resources invested in it. Assuming that an adequate amount of resources was invested, these homes are more aesthetically satisfying and culturally meaningful to their inhabitants (Turner:1976). Perlman (1986) notes that after a period of time, self-built and controlled dwellings become preferable to public housing by most standards. Government funded construction tends to deteriorate rapidly because of cost-cutting during construction, chronic lack of maintenance, and vandalism.

This analysis should not be limited to new construction and housing that is now being planned. Older cities have great resources in their buildings. If these buildings were properly maintained and managed, the current housing shortage might not have occurred. However, given the fact that there has been poor maintenance and abandonment in the recent past, these buildings need to be reclaimed. It would require using the principle of appropriate technologies for housing. For people in urban environments, it is neither feasible nor appropriate to begin construction when there are so many usable buildings.

Self-help group theories have resulted from this empowerment model and the proliferation of these types of movements. Self-help groups are social movements comprised of intentional communities providing alternatives to

human service agencies. They function on premises of mutuality and reciprocity. The members must work together and alone to overcome their problems. One resulting benefit, besides overcoming the problem, is the personal, and sometimes, political empowerment of the members. Like many intentional communities, self-help groups are considered to have strong norms, well-articulated behavioral codes, and some centralized authority in order to create and foster a strong commitment to reproducing the group. Often the basis of bonding is the "disgraceful" condition or upsetting life situation of the members. There are two kinds of self-help groups. One type wants to change their behavior or status to conform to societal norms. The other aims to change societal norms to include their particular behavior (Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989).

As I eventually learned, the economy of their own forms of self-help was based on the capacity and freedom of the individuals and small groups to make their own decisions, more than on their own capacity to do manual work. (Turner in Ward:1985:65)

The principle of self-help in housing is not that all people must build their own homes according to their needs and resources. What is important is who controls the housing process and makes all the decisions (Turner:1976). Local control in the housing process is a necessary part of changing urban policy and creating an environment in which more individuals are happy and satisfied with their homes. Squatters are individuals who want their own homes and the power and authority to control what happens to them.

Although for some it may be a status symbol, that is less of an imperative than actually having a home and control over it.

Hans Harms (Ward:1985), a Marxist historian, comments on the self-help approaches to housing that have occurred with regularity throughout history, inevitably at a time of crisis in capitalism. The following is his perspective on its disadvantages.

1. Self-help housing provides possibilities (a) to lower the level of circulation of capital in housing; (b) to increase the amount of unpaid labor in society; (c) to devalorize labor power and to lower pressure for wage increases by excluding housing costs from wages.

2. It reduces the need for public subsidies to housing, since the reproduction of labor is done by the efforts and costs of labor itself.

3. It is economically expansionary for consumption demands.

4. Ideologically it incorporates people into the mentality of the petty bourgeoisie to own and speculate with housing.

5. It isolates people from each other; it can individualize discontent and preempts collective actions and solidarity. (Harms in Ward:1985:66)

While this Marxist critique may be valid for individuals who squat for ideological reasons, it is less relevant for the people who want to remain active members of society and need a house in order to be able to function. A critique of the capitalist system may not be an inherent part of their reason for squatting. In that case, it may not present a problem to be considered "petty bourgeoisie". This critique does not address the social components of self-help groups. The emphasis on communities and reciprocity is entirely lost.

Ward (1985) points out that in the former communist countries, Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, home ownership was actually

encouraged. Personal investment in housing was desirable because it reduced the amount of disposable income that could be used to purchase scarce commodities and reduce the state's housing responsibility.

Autonomy in housing is a difficult, but worthwhile approach to addressing homelessness. However, it can not be done in a system that consistently values the individual over the community. It is very difficult to overcome homelessness without help from other people. Groups working together to build homes for all the members, whether or not the resulting housing is co-operative, have a greater chance of success of having a home that will meet their needs. Nevertheless, they do need governmental support in the forms of land or buildings, subsidization, and some technical assistance.

Structural Capitalist Economic and Social Changes

The most recent industrial urban era has been called modernity or the time of Fordism (after the industrial innovations of Henry Ford). The era has also been called Keynesian, because of the "social contract" of the State with its citizens and the creation of welfare systems. There has been a major transformation within capitalism since WWII and the contemporary era is considered either postindustrial or Post-Fordist. Post-Fordism is characterized by the deindustrialization of large-scale, vertically integrated, assembly line, mass production industries. In their stead, there has been the reindustrialization of small and middle sized firms specializing in either crafts-based or technologically facilitated production of goods and services. This restructuring of the labor process and the organization of production has dynamically affected the urban form. Cities are now characterized by geographically uneven development (Soja:1992).

New urban forms have emerged from the many international economic and social restructuring processes. Cities have experienced both decentralization, with the growth of suburbs and the departure of manufacturing interests, and recentralization, with the emerging focus on an international-information network. These global cities are incomparable to the cities of the past because of their international scope; both capital and labor markets are international. Cities are the sites of world trade, international financial investment, and the financial management of industrial production and producer services (Soja:1992, Zukin:1980).

The evolution of the world city has affected local planning processes within the city as the demands of the global information intensive networks have begun to play a role in shaping the city to meet their needs. Many cities have a large amount of international investment. New York and Los Angeles are two examples of US cities with many of the prime properties either wholly or partially owned by foreign interests. Cities once containing working class neighborhoods and factories are recreated as global administrative centers with gentrified historic districts housing the new urban professionals (Jeziarski:1991).

Urban internationalization has increased immigration into these cities and there is a large foreign born population with lower skill and wage levels. Unfortunately, Los Angeles has not been able to integrate these immigrants into its housing market so there are 600,000 people -Latino working poor - currently living in substandard and overcrowded housing (Soja:1992).

Sociospatial patterns have changed significantly since World War II. The pre-industrial arrangement was one of social strata coexisting within the same space. Spatial segregation was not necessary to reproduce status and maintain social distinction. Within industrial spaces, spatial differentiation was marked by the occupancy of different social groups across the city in their own neighborhoods; economic and cultural barriers were effective in maintaining the distinctness of space. In the last 50 years, the central city has physically and socially deteriorated. Middle class suburbanization and flight from central cities has resulted in extreme differentiation of social classes with the

autonomy of suburban governments and their ability to exclude lower-income groups. Social classes now occupy physically and socially distinct areas within the city (Mollenkopf and Castells:1991).

The outcome of these urbanizing processes and industrial changes is increased economic and social polarization within the global city. The enclosure, surveillance, confinement, and differentiation of certain neighborhoods results in the labeling and exploitation of those populations. Spatial differentiation allows urban problems like poverty and decay to be ignored by white middle class professionals who can avoid the inner cities in their pursuits of business and leisure (Jeziarski:1991).

Deindustrialization is linked with the structural shift to low paying service oriented jobs. It was hoped that reindustrialization would reduce this trend towards increasing poverty. Instead it aggravated both poverty and income inequalities. Cities no longer house the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, now there are mostly white middle class managers and professionals, the working poor, and a predominantly immigrant and/or minority "underclass" with separate areas of location and differential power (Soja:1994). This "underclass" is in direct competition with the professional, managerial class for space in the central city. As low-cost housing is being actively eliminated, poor people are driven away.

Economic Changes

The urban economy is no longer based on manufacturing and industry. Instead, the service sector is now rapidly expanding while manufacturing interests have either left the city or, in some cases, the country. The services of the central city are financial, educational, distributional, and professional (Adams:1986). Post-Fordism, postindustrialism, and flexible accumulation all refer to the shift from industrial systems to a service oriented consumption based economy. Temporary labor forces, subcontracting, deregulation, globally coordinated information and financial technologies, and flexible, mobile capital are all characteristic of the changes that result from high technological growth and incredible poverty zones within the same geographic space (Jeziarski:1991, Zukin:1980).

Central cities have experienced a growth in "informal economies" and non-traditional households. Within the informal economy is sweatshop manufacturing, residential renovation, "off the books" and "under the table" child care, book keeping, and unlicensed taxis (Mollenkopf and Castells:1991). The new household types in central cities are smaller with smaller disposable incomes. There has been an increase in the number of childless couples, young single people living independently, elderly and divorced people living alone, and single-parent families.

From 1970 to 1980, the proportion of all rental units in the central cities of the United States that were occupied by traditional two-parent families declined dramatically, from 47% to 29%, apparently because inflation and federal tax policies made homeownership irresistible to those who could afford it. At the same time, the proportion of the central city rental stock occupied by female-headed households rose from 16% to 23%, and the

proportion occupied by singles rose from 23% to 40%. The median income of the central city renters dropped during the 1970s from 60% of the income of homeowners in 1970 to only 50% in 1980 (US Bureau of the Census, 1982 in Adams:1986:531).

In order to adjust to new economic needs, urban redevelopment has necessitated the demolition of low-rent housing in order to replace it with offices, retail complexes, and luxury high-rise apartments. This process is called gentrification; it is the restoration and upgrading of deteriorated urban property by the middle classes. Gentrification is considered "innovative" and "trend-setting"; it can "transform a moribund and aging infrastructure into a vibrant postindustrial form" (Wilson:1993). Actually, the outcome of gentrification is the displacement of lower-income people and the erosion of the supply of low-cost housing. Many older buildings in central cities have been withdrawn from the housing markets while they await demolition or renovation. Disequilibrium occurs because large numbers of low-cost units have disappeared from the housing market at the same time that there has been increased demand for these units by nontraditional households (Adams: 1986).

Conflicts within Capitalism

Even prior to the changes in the form of capitalism in our society, there were inherent contradictions within capitalism with relation to housing. Because a large number of people will never be able to afford a decent, adequate, and affordable home at the market prices, capitalism will never be

able to resolve the conflict between the housing market and the labor market. In order for people to be able to afford such housing, their incomes would have to significantly increase. However, this would result in a decline in profits. The final outcome would be reduced investment and production; the labor market would eventually collapse because with no unemployment or low-wage jobs, the working class would lose its subordinate position (Stone in Abu-Lughod:1991).

If many people continue to have low-incomes and are not able to participate in the housing market, it will collapse. In urban neighborhoods with many abandoned and deteriorating buildings, the housing market has already collapsed. Housing prices would have to be driven down, to negligible amounts in some cases, if the labor market was maintained at status quo, but housing problems were solved. This result is problematic as well, because property values would plummet, private investment in property would cease, and the mortgage system would collapse once its payments were stopped (Stone in Abu-Lughod:1991).

Shelter poverty is this more than a social problem incidental to the basic functioning of the economic system. *It will not be eliminated simply through growth in the capitalist economy or modest government assistance.* Rather, it must be recognized as *an inherent contradiction between some of the most basic institutions of capitalism - a contradiction which the system cannot resolve without bringing about the demise of capitalism itself* (Stone in Abu-Lughod:1991:241).

In order to prevent this collapse of capitalism, two types of programs have been initiated. Low-interest loans finance the upper working-class to

encourage home ownership. Simultaneously, subsidized public housing was constructed for the very poor people. More recently, the government started the Section 8 program which subsidizes rents by making up the difference between the amount that people can afford to pay and market prices (Stone in Abu-Lughod:1991). When these programs work effectively, a large number of the working poor are still in need of adequate housing. Since these programs do not work well an even larger percentage of poor people are inadequately housed.

Changes in cities

Traditional approaches to the studies of cities have focuses on the Chicago School's organic model. The economic market shaped the city and determined its change and growth. The focus of cities was industrial and private ownership of land was assumed; the entire theoretical structure was based upon capitalism (Abu-Lughod:1991).

Criticism of the Chicago School was that it did not acknowledge the differential power relations within the economic system. The value of land began to be seen as reflecting social and cultural preferences. One of the more radical ideas to appear at this time was that human values and preferences had more of an effect on cities than the previous organic model suggested. Urban environments could not be compared to ecological ones because of the enormous impact of human values. The allocation of space is no longer thought to be a product of the economic market. Contemporary

urban theory relies on the relationship between political and economic power in order to understand the use of space (Zukin:1980).

In the last century, there have been major changes in the economic market for land and housing which have in some ways invalidated capitalist market assumptions. The changes have been zoning laws, which regulate the uses of privately owned land, government construction of public housing, interest and tax benefits subsidizing home ownership, urban renewal and redevelopment programs, and high government investment in items of collective construction. Cities have become more regulated in the interest of people as opposed to industry (Abu-Lughod:1991).

The change directly affecting the housing market was the government's provision of housing for poor people and the subsidization of housing for higher-income buyers. As a result, poor populations were concentrated in the "inner cities", poorer, older neighborhoods within cities. Although a distinction between higher and lower income housing was already in place, when the occupants of these housing projects began to be predominantly "minorities", the discrepancy grew; the different types of housing were not situated in proximity to each other. The higher-income subsidization of buyers encouraged single-family home ownership and construction. Given the lack of land within cities, the "urban sprawl" with its attendant suburbs developed to adequately house the subsidized home owners. Despite the increased incentives of home ownership, including tax breaks, certain groups like poor families, female-headed households, minorities, and immigrants were

ineligible for subsidization. Only the white American middle-class "families" benefited from this incentive for upward mobility (Abu-Lughod:1991).

Alternatives to the Chicago School of urban theory have recently focused on urban processes. Capitalist accumulation, the organization of socialized consumption, and the reproduction of the social order have had distinctive effects on urban structure. The result is a continual state of urban crisis. In the 1960s, the terms referred to poverty, racial discrimination, unemployment, and conflict. The urban crisis of the 1970s refers to the crisis of key urban services, characterized by some form of socialized management and state intervention, such as housing, transportation, welfare, health, and education. This crisis occurred in the context of fiscal mismanagement of cities and the growing gap between resources and the demands placed on them. The response to this situation is considered an urban crisis. Urban conflicts and the organization of urban movements in response to the crisis of socialized consumption further complicate the meaning of this phenomenon. This crisis exists in the present day as an extension of the effects of structural and economic trends in the urban setting (Castells:1976). "In short, in Castells' explanation, the state is committed to a degree of intervention whose economic and political costs it cannot afford" (Zukin:1980:586). In providing certain benefits and services, the government increases its role despite its inability to pay for these services because of the limitations placed on it by big businesses and state employees on social expenditures.

American cities have gone through the processes of metropolitanization, the concentration of people and activities in an area at an accelerated pace or the formation of industrial centers, suburbanization, selective decentralization and the resulting spatial sprawl that is differentiated on the basis of race and class, and the social-political fragmentation that comes with spatial segregation and differentiation. "The US urban development pattern individualizes and commodifies profitable consumption, while simultaneously deteriorating non-profitable socialized consumption" (Castells:1976:9). This fragmentation is a barrier not only to access, but to organization. Poor people are ghettoized in areas with increasingly deteriorating public services, while those with enough wealth, income, property, and social standing can leave. It is not surprising that in the era of flexible capitalist accumulation with its resulting growth in poverty, gentrification, and displacement, new strategies of flexible residential adaptation have developed.

Although cities will undoubtedly remain interested in the ruling class, despite the urban crisis, political conflict and urban social movements have been and continue to be instrumental in the formation and evolution of the urban existence. Mollenkopf and Castells (1991) utilize their concept of the Dual City to examine the changes that have occurred in New York. This is an analytical tool incorporating notions of differentiation, stratification, contradiction, and conflict into urban analysis. Dualism refers to the effect of spatial segregation, cultural diversity, the disparity between capital and labor,

and the declining industrial sector and growing service sector on the city. The city is characterized by its international-information professional business class and the many subordinate, disorganized, isolated masses.

Despite the economic boom of the 1980s with the median household income rising by 20%, there has been an increased inequality among New Yorkers. With many middle class white families leaving the city for the suburbs and the constant arrival of new immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, more than a quarter of the population is foreign born.

The city's growing prosperity during the 1980s coincided with the increasing inequality of among its residents. Income inequality increased substantially between 1977 and 1986. The higher the income of a stratum, the faster its income grew during that period. Thus, the ratio of the income earned by the top 10 percent to that earned by the bottom 20 percent has increased from 5.7 in 1977 to 7.6 in 1986. Furthermore, the real income of the bottom 10 percent actually decreased by 10.9 percent, while the real income of the next lowest decile declined by 6.6 percent. As a result, poverty rates have increased during the decade, from about 19 percent to about 23 percent of New York's population. Indeed, there is a process of social polarization, not just inequality: the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer in absolute terms (Mollenkopf and Castells:1991:400).

New York society is comprised of disparate groups with differing needs. Fragmented economics increasingly segregate the city. The upper class which directly benefits from this prosperity is a well-defined social group with its own cultural trends and common economic interests. There is a large new labor pool of clerical workers who are predominantly women and hold lower-paid jobs. Self-employed and salaried low-skilled workers provide consumer services. Labor unions have experienced a revival as a result of the

expansion of municipal, educational, and health care services. A large segment of the population is economically deteriorating; female-headed households and others dependent on welfare occupy much of it (Mollenkopf and Castells:1991, Zukin:1980).

The growth of temporary and part-time employment in addition to the general deskilling of labor is another trend of the economic restructuring processes. It is a symbol of the increased flexibility within the labor market with its movement towards the production of goods and services. Often, as in The Netherlands which has the highest proportion of part-time workers in the EEC, women occupy a large percentage of this group (Soja:1992).

Because of the economic and social fragmentation and diversity that individuals experience, minority groups cannot form stable alliances. The city is run by its white, professional, managerial, and predominantly male group while the diverse ethnic minorities occupy its peripheries. This core has been able to organize for its own interests and has shaped social dynamics within the city.

David Harvey (1976 in Walton & Salces:1979), a leading urban theorist, argues that space is always socially defined. In a city where it is a scarce resource, it is distributed through economic-political competition and conflict between urban populations.

Those who have power to command and produce space possess a vital instrumentality for the reproduction and enhancement of their own power. They can create material space, the representation of space, and spaces of representation (Harvey in Jezierski:1991:122).

The State is the critical intervening force in this battle between capital and labor. This conflict, in terms of housing, is shaped by the appropriation by capital of profit through its indirect appropriation of rent.

Despite periodic outbursts, like the urban riots of the 1960s, the dual city exists in the Post-Fordist era as a postindustrial site of conflict between capital and labor and the core and periphery. Manuel Castells' (1976) describes this new frontier as the "Wild City". It "is thus becomingly increasingly filled with violent edges, colliding turfs, and interpenetrating spaces" (Soja:1994). The inaccessibility of the housing market for low-income individuals perpetuates the struggles of an already economically challenged class. The depletion of affordable housing from the market encourages individuals to find alternate means of housing themselves.

Inner cities and the Urban Frontier

The corporate search for profit in conjunction with the state is partially responsible for the "damaged" centers of cities. Inner cities have, for the most part, been deserted by businesses. Manufacturing interests fled the centers of cities in search of cheap land and low-cost labor outside. Now multinational corporations are leaving the country for the same reasons. With the desertion of industries, unemployment, decaying social services, and fiscal hardships are plaguing those once prosperous and industrial neighborhoods (Abu-Lughod:1991).

In order to change the squalid conditions found in the centers of cities, it has been thought that the cities need to be lived in by the proper middle class. Poor people, often people of color, are assumed to not be able to create positive healthy environments, nor are those types of environments deemed, by public policy, to be necessary for them.

Following decades of disinvestment capped by the urban uprisings of the 1960s and the destruction wrought by urban renewal, the economics of inner urban redevelopment were propitious, and Americans were encouraged in the 1970s to rediscover the city. The frontier iconography stood ready to rationalize, even glorify, this abrupt reversal in cultural geography. Insofar as the declining postwar city was already seen by the white suburban middle class as an "urban wilderness" or "urban jungle," the naturalization of urban history did not prove particularly troublesome. As one respected academic proposed, unwittingly replicating [Frederic Jackson]Turner's vision (to not a murmur of dissent), gentrifying neighborhoods should be seen as combining a "civil class" and an "uncivil class," and such neighborhoods might be classified "by the extent to which civil or uncivil behavior dominates." The class based and race based normative politics of the frontier ideology could not be clearer.

Insofar as gentrification obliterates working class communities, displaces poor households, and converts whole neighborhoods into bourgeois enclaves, the frontier ideology rationalizes social differentiation and exclusion as natural and inevitable. ... Disparaged in words, the working class is banished in practice to the urban edges or even deeper into the wilderness. The substance and consequence of the frontier imagery is to tame the wild city (Smith:1992:74-75).

The myth of the last frontier, the inner city, encourages gentrification. As current residents are ignored in policy decisions affecting their neighborhoods, plans are made to uplift and revitalize the areas. The myth of the frontier serves to exoticize the neighborhood and mythify the protests and social conflicts occurring because of these changes. Leah is not a squatter, but has

been involved in the community. The following is her description of New York's Frontier on the LES.

I got interested in squatting out of my involvement in LES-style anarcho-punk stuff, and out of a love for the neighborhood. I worked at Blackout Books, a volunteer-run anarchist bookstore started in the fall of 1994, from when it started to maybe March in 1995, when I was doing too much student anti-COA [Contract On America] organizing to have time anymore. Working at Blackout it was impossible not to know what was up with the squatting situation because Blackout was such a hangout and organization space for squatters. Living in the neighborhood, it's impossible to ignore the division between yuppies and rich hipster and street people and squatters. It's impossible to ignore the gentrification. It's pretty much all over now; it is virtually impossible to find cheap rent in the LES. The developers have gotten real close to winning, because if you are working poor now you cannot live in Manhattan. But when I first moved to New York, I had this sense of the LES as a refuge, of this little wild garden in a corner of the city that wasn't filled with rich people, where there was a community, of people helping each other and creating stuff and doing political organizing. When I moved out of the dorm and onto 2nd street and B, I would get so enraged because I could see that getting commodified. Month by month, I could see the process of neighborhood businesses getting bought out by yuppies, of more jocks from Jersey in Nirvana hats coming down every weekend, of stepped up cop harassment—cops pushing people panhandling out because it was scaring away tourists who wanted to come down and drink overpriced coffee. Like Seth Tobocman, a cartoonist for WW3 'zine who's done a lot of work about the neighborhood says, it really is a war in the neighborhood. As I worked at Blackout and got to know people who squatted, I saw it as a real solution to the problem of a gentrifying neighborhood. No rent, creating community with the people you live with taking over and fixing up abandoned buildings the city is letting rot until they can remodel and sell it for a profit. I saw squatters, more than anything, as who were fighting to keep intact the neighborhood (Leah Lil).

Leah's account is one of seeing the effects of gentrification on a daily basis. The dominant assumption has been that in order to construct a better

neighborhood, particularly one with an industrial or poor past, it would be better to raze it and start over. Old neighborhoods are identified with poverty, decay, and grime; there is very little public emphasis on rehabilitation. Instead, the current neighborhood should be cleared and redeveloped. Redevelopment, particularly in regard to low-cost housing, inevitably means the construction of large scale housing - apartment building complexes. New neighborhoods are affluent and focused on consumption; they are cleaner, younger, and better. This approach tends to ignore the presence of the people currently living in the neighborhood. Their opinions are not asked for when such decisions are being made (Ward:1985, Zukin:1980).

This type of urban "renewal" (gentrification) was rationalized because there was a housing shortage after WWII, the cities were filled with "slums" and low-income, minority neighborhoods. Real estate developers needed to be subsidized before investing in the centers of American cities. The 1929 Regional Plan for the Lower East Side, sponsored by the Rockefeller family, was created to plan this reinvestment and new occupancy of the neighborhood.

Each replacement will mean the disappearance of many of the old tenants and the coming in of other people who can afford the higher rentals required by modern construction on high priced land. Thus in time economic forces alone will bring about a change in the character of much of the East Side population (New York Regional Plan, Smith:1992:90).

There were attempts at gentrification throughout New York, and particularly in the Lower East Side, in the late 1920s and 1930s, it was not successful because of the Great Depression and WWII.

The postwar period, characterized by mass migration to the suburbs, was a time of large scale abandonment and disinvestment. Demolition and the public warehousing of housing units increased the economic decline of inner city neighborhoods like the Lower East Side (Smith:1992). Concurrently, the Urban Redevelopment Law of 1949 authorized local authorities to condemn the "blighted land" near the downtown districts, helped the cities clear the land of its old and blighted structures, and allowed government authorities to purchase large parcels of land in prime locations (near the downtown centers) at inflated market value prices (Abu-Lughod:1991).

Although the renewal program recognized that poor people would be displaced and required that relocation housing be provided, it did not provide for the construction of low-cost housing nor for rent subsidies for displaced persons. While the old locations were rebuilt into more profitable uses, poor people found themselves even more crowded into the low-rent, non-gentrified areas. The end result was that the poor people living in those "blighted areas" were not helped. No housing was built for them. However, the speculators, real estate investors and redevelopers, and middle class gentrifiers all benefited substantially (Abu-Lughod:1991).

Anthony Downs, a HUD consultant, devised a plan for urban renewal which has had enormous effects on city management. After the urban riots of the late 1960s, President Johnson convened the Kerner Commission (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) to develop national strategies for the prevention of such uprisings. Downs authored the last two chapters and a book entitled *Opening Up the Suburbs* in which he presented his solutions. Both solutions focus on middle class dominance of both suburbs and urban areas. The "enrichment choice" would enhance and increase educational, welfare, and employment opportunities in order to raise the socio-economic status of more people of color, specifically African-Americans and Latinos, into the middle class. His more immediate strategy, the "integration choice" directly affected housing. In order to prevent such urban riots, poor people need to be dispersed into higher quality housing projects outside the city. Once the neighborhoods had been sufficiently deconcentrated, new neighborhoods appealing to middle class individuals would have to be created. Downs advocated the disinvestment, reinvestment, and gentrification that "coincidentally" occurred in the 1970s. Shortly after his book was published, New York City began a program of "planned shrinkage" in which municipal services like housing development would be reduced and demolition of deteriorated buildings in poor neighborhoods would increase (van Kleunen:1994).

Disinvestment and Reinvestment

Contemporary urban processes are disinvestment, reinvestment, and gentrification. Disinvestment has been evident in the number of buildings in tax arrears and the number of abandoned buildings. Urban renewal, on the other hand, is reinvestment. This return to capital and increased investment in previously abandoned or neglected areas results in gentrification. Disinvestment is a rational process in which owners, landlords, bankers, local and national governments make informed decisions about the sustained economic abandonment of neighborhoods that are typically older and dominated by large tenement and other multiple rental housing unit stock. Concern for the ensuing consequences such as deteriorated housing conditions, hazards to the health of residents, loss of housing stock, increased homelessness, and the ghettoization of crime is minimal, at best (Smith, Duncan, Reid:1994)

The government has replaced the private landlord for many people. Although this was initially an emergency measure, it is now a fact (Ward:1985). In most cities, this has been the response to the increasing problem of abandonment. The owners of sound buildings are abandoning their buildings. Many have stopped paying their taxes and have even evicted their tenants. When vandalism or arson destroys the values, these owners collect insurance and often relinquish, or are forced to, their property rights to the city (Abu-Lughod:1991).⁷

⁷ In order to collect their insurance more quickly, many building owners will hire someone to set the building on fire.

When inner-city housing is no longer a financially attractive outlet for capitalist investment, abandonment is a rational decision based on a cost-benefit analysis. This analysis determines that given the location of the property and that the building through rental income has most likely paid for itself, it would be more profitable to sell the property since maintenance would only prove more costly. However, since this occurs in those "blighted" poor and minority neighborhoods, there is a scarcity of buyers. Owners begin by not maintaining the buildings and stopping their payment of taxes. Eventually, enough violations will accumulate and the buildings will be declared unsafe. Once it cannot be legally rented out, it will simply be left alone, empty and waiting for squatters.⁸ Owners eventually recoup their investments and gain some profit. If their buildings are somehow destroyed, they collect insurance money. If the city takes the property over and either fixes it or pays to demolish it, the owner is entitled to a tax benefit (Abu-Lughod:1991).

Disinvestment creates an exploitable rent gap, the difference between the actual capitalized ground rent and the potential ground rent of that location under a better use given that the neighborhood and value of that location has appreciated. This abandonment and deterioration is an inherent part of the gentrification and reinvestment process. It serves to clear the area of its residents and lower the value of the land so that it can be rehabilitated for higher income residents. Reinvestment takes several forms of recapitalization. Private developers could rehabilitate the current housing stock or invest in

⁸ Owners are not legally obligated to remove their abandoned buildings.

new construction or it could involve public reinvestment in the infrastructure. Reinvestment could also take the form of speculation or warehousing, the accumulation by owners of vacant apartments in buildings intended for future gentrification (Smith, Duncan, Reid:1994).

This cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment provides another reason for the increase in homelessness in the 1980s. Affordable housing was physically removed from the market through abandonment, warehousing, and arson. Federal policy did not in any way alleviate these stresses. At a time when economic restructuring served to increase the number of poor people, the government ceased constructing new housing projects. The only available program, Section 8, redistributed the housing, subsidizing people, not providing for new construction (Abu-Lughod:1991).

Possible solutions

Urban theorists, like Castells, see urban social movements as the catalysts for change. These movements respond to the postindustrial, service and finance based economies and the increasingly complex and divided class societies in which there are continued separations between the private and public spheres. The movements grow out of the urban crises over renewal and housing shortages. Unfortunately, these movements are hampered by their localism (Fainstein:1985).

No single solution can change the situation. There is an urban crisis and one of its affects is that housing, which has always been a commodity, has

become virtually inaccessible to certain populations. According to Marx, the death of capitalism would be spurred on by three factors. Capital and state power would be centralized. The majority of workers would be proletarianized and increasingly pauperized and the distribution system would not be able to meet the needs of all the people. It is conceivable that capitalism is in its death throes and the housing crisis is a strong symbol of it.

Nonetheless, capitalism still has a firm grip on this society. Until there is a mass-based feasible alternative to the capitalist housing system, cities must focus on their stocks of public housing. These buildings need to be invested in for the benefit of their current residents. Rehabilitation programs must meet the needs of residents. Single occupancy rooms must be preserved. Housing units need to be downsized to accommodate the growing population of nontraditional renters. In some cities, apartments in which individual bedrooms are combined with shared bathrooms and kitchens have been successful in providing housing for single people (Adams:1986).

Instead of demolishing old buildings to replace them with modern projects, the government should allow tenants to take some control over their housing. Demolition of old buildings is costly in two ways. First, an enormous amount of initial public investment was necessary for the construction of the buildings; removal of the buildings is a loss of this public property. Secondly, the physical removal of buildings is an expensive process. Governments and financial institutions must support these people. Self-management should be made more accessible through fair tax and assessment schemes and the

availability of small loans (Futurist:1985). The transfer of aging government owned buildings to their tenants is the single best method of maintaining them. The tenants can then control and make decisions about the types of repairs and renovations (Ward:1985).

Merton's Strain Theory and the Theory of Adaptation

The media, police and, the State portray squatters as derelicts and vagrants who invade and destroy other people's property. The most commonly promoted view of squatting is one of deviance. Squatting is not recognized as something done in conjunction with an organized community, but as the isolated actions of a few misguided individuals. In order to examine the roots of this view, I intend to use Merton's theory of adaptation with his strain theory.

Definition

Merton's analysis of society entails two structures, cultural and social, which in their interaction comprise the social system. The cultural system defines the goals, purposes, and interests for the members of society. It does not recognize social stratification of differences within society. The social system defines "normative means". Through it, we are told how we can acceptably and legitimately attain these goals (Messner:1988). The end result is:

a collectively [that is] is well organized when social structural relationships enable members of that collectively to

realize the culturally approved goals via the normatively prescribed means. When social structure and cultural structure exhibit such a harmonious inter-relationship, satisfactions accrue to the individuals as a normal consequence of conformity to cultural mandates (Messner:1988:37).

Merton (1957) defines our society as one "which places a high premium on economic affluence and social ascent for all its members. However, because these culturally defined goals are not accessible to all people and will be incapable of achieving these goals through legitimate means, some form of deviance is likely to result from the frustration and anger that people experience. Strain theory is the idea that due to the discrepancies between the cultural aspirations and the realistic impediments to their realization individuals will begin to feel anger and frustration. People may even begin to feel anomie, a sense of meaninglessness and normlessness, because they are not able to fulfill their cultural requirements and expectations. Thus, individuals experiencing anomie would in some way seek to restore their sense of faith in society and regain a sense of stability in relation to their role in society.

In order to decrease this sense of disassociation with society, individuals will find some way to adapt to their situation. This adaptation may result in reintegration into societal standards or complete renunciation. "Deviant" behavior may result (Mitchell:1984). All deviant behavior is defined as the product of restricted motivations and opportunities. Merton does not believe that deviant behavior is the result of human nature or some form of

inappropriate socialization, but instead because of structural factors (Messner:1988).

Merton identifies five modes of individual adaptation to societal strain. His main example of this type of strain is the societal emphasis on success and wealth. He hypothesizes that there are societal expectations which not all individuals are able to realize even though societal goals and aspirations are meant to transcend class lines. This is the societal myth within which we're socialized. Actually, Merton does not fully acknowledge the extent of structural stratification and societal dominance by the elite such that the realization of these goals is limited to the elite.

Strain results in innovation, ritualism, retreatism, or rebellion. The type of individual adaptation determines that individual's role in the maintenance of a functioning society (Merton:1957). Conformists accept both the institutionalized goals and the accepted means in realizing these predominantly economic expectations. Innovators, on the other hand, have also accepted the goals. However, acknowledging that their situations prevent them from utilizing the accepted societal means, they find alternate, often illegitimate, means. This behavior stems from both the cultural pressure and the structural limitations imposed upon them. Ritualism results from the rejection of the norms without rejection of the means. Essentially, the individual lowers her expectations. The least common form of adaptation is retreatism. Individuals with this type of adaptation tend to be resigned to their situation. They have abandoned both the goals and the means and have

withdrawn from society. Finally, there are individuals who rebel from the social structure and its goals. This full renunciation of the previously accepted values occurs at the same time that a new myth is created. Although rebels drop out of the system and create their own structures, there are limitations to their potential for independence from the original structure within this new society.

Adaptations of Strain Theory for Housing

Merton's conceptualization of strain theory is completely focused on the assumption that people are in search of material wealth. Yet, it is clear that there are societal expectations about housing and equally apparent that given the economic structure of society, not all people can afford a home of their own. Upon examining income data for American families and the cost data for adequate housing, Stone (Abu-Lughod:1991) concluded that a large number of American families would never earn enough for a standard adequate dwelling unit at the market prices asked for those dwellings.

Thus, it is highly likely and possible that some people feel forced to squat because they lack an alternative. These people are denied their chance of fulfilling expectations and becoming conformists. They can become retreatists and completely abandon their search for a home and possibly wind up living on the streets or in homeless shelters. However, even if they choose to take an opportunity and create a home of their own outside of the system, they may still participate in the system or they may drop out entirely. Squatting

does not entail non-participation in the production and reproduction of social norms.

Merton's analysis does not address individuals who do not want security and economic stability. Mitchell (1984) attempts to incorporate creativity and self-expression as motivating factors within strain theory. Each of the traditional types of adaptation are applicable to this reconfiguration. The ritualist may ignore her need for a creative outlet in order to fulfill conventional standards. The innovator may choose to find a forum for self-expression outside of specified societal roles and relationships. The retreatist rejects all hope of finding outlets for her self-expression within conventional roles, while the rebel advocates a complete reevaluation and restructuring of perceptions in favor of new roles in which it is possible to find such outlets. I find this to be relevant when examining the reasoning behind individuals who choose to squat for personal non-economic reasons. This applies to those who choose to squat due to ideological and political reasons because those may include dropping out of this society and striving to create a community based on different ideals, or in Merton's terms, different myths.

For this project, it has been necessary to adapt strain theory and the theory of adaptation to housing. Both Merton's focus on wealth and economic security and Mitchell's reinterpretation to adjust for creativity and self-expression make assumptions that basic necessities are basic. Neither approach emphasizes housing or food because they assume that those

societal goals are attainable by all. Given the economic situation in this country, suitable and affordable housing is not accessible to all people.

How Squatting Fits into the Theory of Adaptation

Kearns (1981) describes squatting as a non-conformist strategy to obtaining housing. The sequence of squatting is as follows: motivation and decision making, search and selection, entry and possession, occupation and renovation, and demise.

The squatting process begins with a squatter's recognition of self as a deprived, alienated individual within an inequitable, discriminatory housing system; gradually there develops an awareness of the potentials of squatting as a viable, alternative form of housing; next comes direct contact with squatters and the squatting system; the subsequent formal act of squatting stems from the difficult decision to assume an activist role in counteracting social injustices by circumventing the established system; last there is active participation in a squatting action and the attendant adoption of an extra-legal lifestyle (Kearns:1981:137).

Kearns (1981) views squatting as a "non conforming" type of deviance as opposed to destructive "aberrance" because the decision to squat is a "constructive" form of rule breaking. Squatting allows people without traditional means of access to attain the societally expected goals. According to Merton, innovation is a normal response to such a situation (Clinard, 1972 in Kearns:1981:138).

However, I see squatting embodying rebellion as well as innovation as a possible adaptation to the housing crisis. Although it can be argued that retreatism applies, I do not find it relevant because urban squatters are not

merely withdrawing from society. Squatting can be accompanied by a rejection of cultural goals and institutional means, however, in their stead, a new way of life is often created. That seems evident from both the squatting organizations that have arisen and the social recruitment networks that exist.

For some people, they squat because of a need. I have friends who do not have jobs, who are very poor, who need a place to live. I, if I wanted to, could live with my mom. It's a matter of me needing to get out of here and me doing something I believe in. I know that's why I squat. I know other people who squat because they need a place to live. I'm squatting because I need a place to live, but also because of my beliefs. Some people squat solely because they need a place to live, some do both.
(Alexandri)

Innovators are the individuals who choose squatting as the means to adapt to their lack of housing. These individuals fully accept the societal notion that a home is necessary. Additionally, they know that in order to participate in other socially accepted activities, such as paid employment, it is necessary to have a home.⁹ All squatters can be described as innovators because in a sense they are fulfilling this societal dictum. Because not all squatters choose to maintain that home in order to produce and reproduce their labor within a capitalist framework, some squatters are rebels as well.

The individuals who choose to squat for ideological, political and personal reasons, that may or may not be economic, are rebels. These individuals may have access to homes, but choose to not participate in the

⁹ Resumes and job applications all require some sort of mailing address. While it is possible to have a post office box, people are encouraged to have and maintain homes for personal, social reproduction.

capitalist housing system. These people are called drop-outs and no credit is given to them for creating new social systems.

Oversights of Strain Theory

Merton's approach to explaining adaptation to the constraints of society is to label it deviant. Individuals are not validated in their chosen rejection of a societal system which does not meet their needs. Merton's role is to identify this deviance and explain its causes in an attempt to fix the problem because his ultimate goal is a smoothly functioning society in which all people are conformists because only under those conditions would all cultural goals be accepted and institutional means used. Social norms must be upheld to create a way for the cultural and structural systems to interact without disjuncture.

At the time Merton was creating this theory, it was uncommon to describe deviance as resulting from structural factors and not blaming it on individual characteristics. However, when dealing with squatting and other types of organization which may not be legitimated by the State, it is necessary to examine the role of personal empowerment and participation in social organizations or networks.

Strain theory has been criticized for not adequately dealing with individuals who commit deviant acts and are from relatively privileged positions. Furthermore, there is no way to account for the deviance of individuals who are not seeking to augment their material success

(Mitchell:1984). Although this theory can and does explain how some people who need housing would decide to take advantage of a situation and squat an abandoned building, there is no explanation of why they might feel some sense of empowerment from it. This would not be seen as an empowering choice. This theory cannot explain why middle class individuals with more choices about housing may choose to squat on the basis of their belief systems. It does not allow for an explanation of why individuals would choose to join networks and organizations of similarly minded people.

Merton identifies an approach to explaining behavior that is deviant without focusing on the individual, but he does not describe the causes of social strain. Strain theory defines the specific circumstances that may cause one individual to adapt in an innovative or rebellious manner. In order to understand squatting from this perspective, it is necessary to examine recent urban changes that have significantly affected housing and fostered squatting.

Social Movement Theory

The act of taking over an abandoned building is not necessarily intended as a protest of the housing system. Although squatting on an individual level is an affront to the capitalist housing market, as an isolated incident, it does not threaten the current system. However, when squatting is done on a larger, more public scale, it necessarily poses a challenge to the status quo.

The appeal of squatting was that it offered no alternative, no view of a better world that had to legitimize and defend itself. No one spoke for anyone. "We won't leave" was not a demand, but an announcement. No consensus, no compromise, no discussion. Anyone could step into this noncommittal atmosphere and do their thing. You were living amid the remnants and ruins of an order that had become alien in one fell swoop.

No one thought in strategies or principles. Abstract theoretical terms were taboo. The ideas were not words, but things: steel plating, bricks, actions. "They" were thought of in terms of interiors to dismantle, destroyable riot vans, council outposts and whatever else came along. The question was *How?* And never *Why?* "We've already started to live the good way, and let their laws disturb us as little as possible. And we fight against injustice. And *that* they do not like!

There was an expressionlessness about it all that worked well with the neighbors. There was no need to tell the world what it was all about for you. The silence concealed no secret; there were no spokespeople, simply because there was nothing to state. There was only a flyer for the neighbors containing some hard info about the property speculator and an invitation to come by for a cup of coffee (Adilkno:1990:37-38).

Then, there was a movement. As Adilkno (1990) explains, squatting in abandoned housing has been happening unnoticed for years. In itself it was neither extraordinary, nor a specific challenge to the system. However, media

exploitation of squatting changed the focus from independent squatting to a movement of squatters. Innovators continued their lives while rebels publicized their cause in an attempt to recruit and politicize others.

Most explanations of the current housing crisis emphasize the structural issues without addressing the agency of the people involved.¹⁰ There has been an uneven amount of recapitalization and reinvestment in areas of sustained disinvestment and deterioration; local and state politics have excluded low-income populations. These low-income populations are seen as unable to meaningfully participate in politics because they are passive observers of the broad structural forces at work within their own neighborhoods (Wilson:1993).

In Wilson's (1993) research on urban renewal and community growth in an inner city neighborhood in Indianapolis, he discovered two disparate visions of community growth. The expectations of gentrifiers - local governments, banks, realtors, and opponents of low income housing were to upgrade neighborhoods, for unspecified populations, in order to improve general living conditions. The residents of these communities assumed that reinvestment meant the neighborhoods would be upgraded for them. Housing and the physical infrastructure would be improved. Parks and open spaces would be created or rehabilitated and abandoned buildings would be either removed or renovated. For the residents, reinvestment into the neighborhood

¹⁰ The discourse about homelessness, however, has focused solely on individuals in blaming people for their situations. There is no clear conceptualization linking homelessness and the housing crisis.

included providing housing for the displaced and changing the cultural and social character of the area.

Residents of low-income neighborhoods are active participants in the creation of their own future. Squatting is just one component of the housing struggle of the people most affected by these urban processes. These expectations that their situations will improve lead to a collective consciousness that might motivate political action.

The poor and working class have little power over space but are capable of constructing "place," where they can create identity and meaning. Their priority is the pursuit of use values such as homes and communities, which creates a more intense attachment to place and turf and affects how poor and working class people organize politically (Jeziarski:1991).

Although not all squatters organize themselves into social movements, there are definitely squatter movements in existence. They are often visible through the community spaces that they create and their conflicts with the State. Using Merton's typology, innovators would not necessarily be members of the movements because they are participating in the creation of societal goals. Despite their non-traditional means, they are still upholding society. Rebels, on the other hand, would most certainly be members of social movements because they are actively creating new societal myths, goals, means, and values.

Theoretical Approaches to Social Movements

A social movement is "a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist change, extending beyond a local community or single event" (Heberle in Saltman:1978:8). This can be a social group with a shared sense of identity and solidarity or it can be an agency with strong ideologies, strategies, and a high level of organization. Collective behaviorists, like Turner and Killian, view social movements as seeking social change and personal transformation. Changes in personal behavior will eventually result in societal change (Saltman:1978). Traditional collective behavior theory emphasizes the spontaneity and amorphousness of social movements. Within the sociological approach, movements are described based on their purposes and the types of social action that they espouse. Organized and collective action will bring about widespread change. Traditional approaches envision movements as arising from social strain and having a non-institutional orientation (Saltman:1978, Hannigan:1985).

Resource mobilization theory identifies social movements as extensions of institutionalized actions. This theory is predominantly interested in movements seeking to gain access to the political sphere or reform the structure of society. Movements occur in a system defined by political realignment and elite fragmentation; they depend on the openness of the political system. These movements are characterized by "rational actions oriented toward clearly defined fixed goals with centralized organizational control over resources and clearly demarcated outcomes that can be evaluated in terms of tangible gains" (Jenkins, 1983 in Hannigan:1985:438).

The political process approach identifies political opportunities and their importance in the shaping of a social movement. Jenkins & Klandermans (1995) define social movements as sustained series of interactions between the State and interacting groups. Social protest is the form of collective action which social movements utilize in order to alter public policies, representative systems, and the relations between individual citizens and the State.

Social movements have been theorized on the basis of breakdown, solidarity, structural, and resource mobilization models. Breakdown theories focus on collective action resulting from social disintegration and economic crisis; action is seen as a pathological condition within a rational socio-economic world. Solidarity approaches investigate the structural reasons that create shared interests and experiences; personal belief systems are the impetus to social action, but there is no clear and specific explanation of the transition from social conditions to collective action. Structural theories explain organization in terms of structural conditions such as social, economic, and institutional constraints, but why it occurs is not examined. Finally, resource mobilization offers an economic perspective dealing with opportunities and resources but it doesn't examine the reasons for collective action nor its orientation (Melucci:1989).

While it is important to know that parts of the squatters movement espouse revolutionary change with the use of violent measures, it cannot be assumed that all the members of the movement have reached consensus on its ideology.

Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place (Melucci:1989:34).

Although there does need to be a sense a solidarity and collective identity, collective identity involves "formulating cognitive frameworks involving goals, means, and environment of action, activating relationships among the actors who communicate, negotiate, and make decisions, and emotional investments allowing the actors to recognize themselves in each other" (Melucci:1989:35). Melucci theorizes that within social movements, it is likely that not all the members have agreed on the ideology of the movement. Furthermore, he recognizes that people may join movements for different reasons. Collective action is not homogenous. It involves the negotiation of environment, goals of the action, and the means. Therefore, social movements will encompass both solidarity/consensus and aggregation/conflict.

Collective action is rather the product of purposeful orientations developed with a field of opportunities and constraints. Individuals acting collectively construct their action by defining in cognitive terms these possibilities and limits, while at the same time interacting with others in order to "organize" (i.e.) to make sense of) their common behavior (Melucci:1989:25).

New Social Movement theory developed in the 1960s as a result of the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches at explaining the many social movements of that time. This theory is linked with post-Fordist political

economics because both address the transformation of Western capitalism in the last half of this century. The lack of a homogenous unified working class with a collective identity undermines the Marxist assumption that the working class will lead the revolution. Instead, New Social Movement theorists assume that the revolution will be led by a coalition of groups including sectors of the working class. New Social Movements link the struggle over culture, ideology, the creation of communities and collective identities with an analysis of the State. Culture and identity is considered equal to politics and economics in this analysis (Epstein:1990).

New Social Movement theory is concerned with new forms of social control within the "security state". The security state is the "welfare state". It provides essential benefits to much of the population. However, because it encourages this dependence it can also impede dissidence and revolt. Social control is no longer limited to political and economic arenas, but is extended to formerly relatively autonomous zones like culture and community. Protests can center around the attacks on identity and dissolution of communities that occur due to these constraints (Epstein:1990). These movements have a shared vision of utopia and aspirations toward collective action despite their limited and often defensive goals.

New Social Movement theory is best adapted to understanding ... neighborhood groups, organizations of racial and ethnic minorities, or specific groups such as tenants or welfare recipients [that] are likely to be mainly concerned with the specific issues of immediate concern to their constituencies... (Epstein:1990:47)

With this definition, it is easy to see that the defense of neighborhoods against gentrification constitutes a New Social Movement. The battle for the Lower East Side, and other traditionally poor neighborhoods, is a response to Post-Fordist economic and structural changes. It is a community based movement fighting for its own challenged identity. Although fighting gentrification is one the intents of the squatter movement, that is not the ultimate goal. Fighting gentrification does nothing to illuminate the housing crisis nor to provide autonomous housing for people.

The French School model, typified in the work of Manuel Castells and Alain Touraine, is based on a social system in which there are new forms of conflict and change. The movement it describes is anti-institutional and results from structural contradictions. Actors are not irrational nor dominated by a restless excitement. Instead, the movement actors are rational and inspired by a sense of purpose or morality. Unlike the resource mobilization model, it is not contingent upon goals and external conditions, but is based on grassroots action. The reasons for collective action are neither based in solidarity and the charismatic qualities of the leader (traditional approach), nor in selective incentives, instead "participants *jointly* struggle to create a new identity and a new vision of the future" (Hannigan:1985:442). The French School puts great emphasis on the transformation of a sense of solidarity or a sense of injustice to collective action through a critique of social structures. Participants in social movements are striving to build their future (Hannigan:1985).

Castells' urban emphasis in his work has spawned a specific theory of urban social movements. These are "collective actions aimed at the transformation of the social interests and values embedded in the forms and functions of the historically given city" and "able to produce qualitative changes in urban meaning against dominant class interests" (Castells:1983 in Fainstein:1985:559). Membership is based in the working class and the movements' symbolism tends to be territorial and cultural. The movement's demands focus on the State in defense of identity and community institutions. It is common for the movements to address better housing and public services or territorial self-management. (Fainstein:1985).

Castells and Touraine have been criticized for inadequately dealing with social movement organizations. They almost ignore organizations in favor of analyzing movements more holistically. Organizations are seen as negatively co-opting and contaminating struggles (Hannigan:1985). Since organizations have the added responsibility of maintaining their own existence, they present a greater possibility of negotiating with the State and creating unfavorable compromises. Challenging groups must retain their autonomy and distinctive identities and while specifically defining objectives and programs of action.

According to Castells, urban social movements must enact change at three levels in order to be successful - collective consumption must be improved, an autonomous community culture must be created, and there must be political self-management. Social movements should be judged upon their

creation of new definitions and the collective actions undertaken on the basis of these new ideas (Hannigan:1985).

It can be argued that people squat because they have made rational choices to do so, rational choice theory emphasizes "individual profit-maximizing" behavior. The need for housing is not part of profit maximization; it is a vital necessity. Although, those who squat do need to make a "rational choice" about their housing situation and a cost-benefit analysis might encourage the takeover of abandoned buildings, this theoretical approach maintains a specific notion of rationality that ignores context. Its focus on reward systems as motivational factors can not be extended towards an analysis of the housing crisis (Ferree:1992).

Networks vs. Organizations

Much social movement theory concentrates on movement organizations, agencies serving important functions in recruiting members, negotiating with officials, providing leadership, and organizing movement protests. Although there are examples of organizations within the squatting movement in both London and Philadelphia, there have been squatting movements in Europe and the US from which no organizations emerged. In other instances, the organization emerged after the movement began. For that reason, it is important to address the importance of networks in the creation, mobilization, and perpetuation of the squatter movement.

Networks facilitate recruitment, mobilization, participation, and even the creation of community. They can be used to inform individuals of planned community action and to provide support for participation and increase the costs of non-participation (Fernandez & McAdam:1989). People centrally involved in movements receive more support for their participation.

In the 1980s, collective action came to be based on 'movement areas'. These take the form of a multiplicity of groups that are dispersed, fragmented, and submerged in everyday life, and which act as cultural laboratories. They require individual investments in the experimentation and practice of new cultural models, forms of relationships, and alternative perceptions and meanings of the world. The various groups comprising these networks mobilize only periodically in response to specific issues. The submerged networks function as a system of exchanges, in which individuals and information circulate. Memberships are multiple and involvement is limited and temporary; personal involvement is a condition for participation. The latent movement areas create new cultural codes and enable individuals to put them into practice. When small groups emerge in order to visibly confront the political authorities on specific issues, they indicate to the rest of society the existence of a systemic problem and the possibility of meaningful alternatives (Melucci:1989:60).

Multi-organizational fields are not solely supportive. The alliance system is complemented by a conflict system. Alliance systems provide resources and create political opportunities. Conflict systems drain the network or organization of its resources and restrict its opportunities. The strength of these systems influences the strength of the network (Klandermans:1989). The violence of the government in dealing with squatters in New York in 1995 may cause an increase in the squatters' support networks and mobilization potential. Likewise, it could be argued the

despite some state repression in Amsterdam, the general acceptance of squatting eventually diminished the prominence of that movement.

Recruitment

Movements could not exist without members. Although some theoretical approaches emphasize structural conditions that create solidarity, there is no real analysis of how people get involved even if they realize that their problems might be alleviated by protesting social structures. Movements must have some form of recruitment network and to communicate with their mobilization potential. They need to locate the people who would be amenable to the specific cause. Within that group, not all people will want to participate, but some will have manifest political potential. Thus, there is the chance that if these individuals are targeted for recruitment, they would be

willing to engage in “unconventional” forms of political behavior.¹¹ Interestingly enough, the mobilization potential is not necessarily the group of people who would most benefit from the changes the movement advocates (Klandermans & Oegema:1987).

Networks and organizations do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, the concept of the multi-organizational field is useful in explaining the two levels on which networks and particularly organizations are connected within a community setting. At the organizational level, the leadership and staff of organizations have ties to other people in similar positions. Individually, networks are created through the multiple affiliations of the members. Consequently, movements can emerge from the networks created by other organizations and movements (Fernandez & McAdam:1989). The protest that occurred on E13th St. in June 1995 was not comprised solely of squatters. Instead, many community members and individuals interested in fighting gentrification and supporting squatting participated (Leah Lil).

To answer your question—squatting is different in different cities. A lot of homeless people do it independent of any ‘movement’, just to survive. It differs a lot from city to city. The way so many punks get into in NYC is because so many runaway kids end up here. A lot of runaways are punk or metal kids, or at least used to be before nirvanafication [sic]—that was the way you rebelled if you were white and middle class. Even if you’re not, if you run away you find a big punk runaway culture. You get into punk because the shows are cheap and there’s this culture already in place and the people who are your new family are into it. There’s a tendency in North American punk, at least, called anarchocore, or anarchopunk. Bands like crass and chaos UK in

¹¹ Unconventional does not only refer to actually squatting; it can refer to protest that does not solely address the political sphere.

the early eighties started writing hard-core music with anarchist political lyrics—taking ‘fuck society’ one step further and trying to build a movement, give a direction to the rage, or something. Squatting ties into a lot of anarchist thought in emphasizing making your own solutions, not relying on the government, private property is not sacred, housing and taking care of people is. Anyway, street/gutterpunk get into squatting cause they need a place to stay, as well as a community, some sense of home. They get into the politics behind squatting in part through anarchocore a lot’ also through chaos punk—a tendency inside punk that’s all “fuck society, no rules, do what you feel like” individual rebellion style. (which often has a lot of fucked sexist and racist dynamics to it—it’s the white male rebel archetype, Jimmy Dean in spikes and a mohawk.) But not all squatters, even within ‘organized squatting’ are punks. Please please please understand this—a lot of squatters are of color, not interested in punk at all et cetera. There’s a group called the Underground Railroad Movement in NYC. I heard about a while back—all black and Latina/o squatters, which have real different concerns and a lot of deep differences with the LES punk squatters (Leah Lil).

Leah Lil gives examples from the New York squatting scene of the different types of networks through which squatters can be recruited. Once specific grievances have been identified and it is established that change can be mediated through participation in some organized movement, recruitment can occur through the media, direct mail, organizations, and friendship networks. The future squatters in Philadelphia in the early 1980s responded to a flyer about housing and joined ACORN, a grassroots community activism organization, in order to learn how to squat. Homes Not Jails holds workshops to teach people the basics of squatting. It has been shown that friendship ties are very important in the mobilization effort (Klandermans & Oegema:1987). Recruitment networks signify the formation of coalitions and the linkage of movement organizations or networks to existing formal and informal networks. Since mobilization results from the perceived costs and

benefits of participation, for people without homes, knowing squatters is probably the most effective and common way to begin squatting.

Because network recruitment plays such a strong role in the creation of squatter communities, the created neighborhoods and collectives tend to be homogenous. It is conceivable that this selectivity might lead to exclusion (Kinghan:1974). This dimension could also be a factor in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes about squatters (i.e. all squatters are white, male, middle class drop outs of capitalist society).

Participation

Most models of activism and protest find the motive to participate within the individual. Relative deprivation models assume that mobilization results from the individual realization that "one's membership group is in a disadvantageous position, relative to some other group" (Gurnery & Tierney, 1982 in Fernandez & McAdam: 1989:316). It is dangerous and often untrue to infer potential movement participation from the characteristics of participants. According to Klandermans & Oegema (1987) participation in social movements requires four steps on the individual level. Individuals must be part of the mobilization potential, referring to the members of society who can be mobilized, and they must be targeted by the mobilization attempts. Once that has occurred, they need to be motivated to participate and overcome whatever barriers might exist.

Membership in informal networks is not sufficient, individuals require more collective and social incentives in order to participate in collective action. Instead, a number of studies have reported that it is not psychological susceptibility that results in mobilization, but contact with some sort of recruitment agent. Thus, they would argue that simply needing a home would not result in squatting. However, knowing about other squatters either through the media or through personal contact would increase the likelihood of squatting (Fernandez & McAdam:1989).

Activism

Activism within the squatter movement reflects the many networks and organizations from which the movement has recruited. In some cases, activism focused on the housing crisis reflects a general liberal or even anarchistic perspective. After 1980, the Amsterdam squatting movement evolved into a general radical force. Squatters were active in the women's movement, the anti-nuclear and peace movements, the environmental movement, and the struggle against apartheid. This did not defuse the protest of gentrification, increasing tourism, urban speculation, and the closing of factories (Soja:1992).

In the New York squatting scene, particularly the one based in the Lower East Side, the multi-organizational field includes groups with a variety of interests.

There's a lot of activism. There was just a benefit for medical marijuana. We're currently active in community board meetings. ABC No Rio is going before community board right now. The community board is supposed to represent the community. In reality, they represent the politicians who pick them to be on the board. ... Another thing we're doing a lot of activism around now is the community gardens on the Lower East Side. There's been a plan to auction off every single garden, lot, empty space in between Delancy St. And 14th St.. in between Avenue A and D. It's maybe 20 gardens. Some have been there 20 years. We're trying to stop the community gardens from being taken away. We've had a number of rallies at Gracie mansion on Guiliani and his administration. (Alexandri).

In Merton's typology, the squatters who protest and are actively involved in the movement are rebels. In working for the creation of a new reality with new social goals and means, these activists would also be likely to protest other forms social control and poor conditions. Therefore, it is plausible that squatters would be involved in the environmental and health care movements in addition to their battles for autonomy in housing and self-management within the community.

What kind of social movement is urban squatting?

I have chosen to study squatting from a social movement perspective because of the impact that organized squatting can have on the current housing system. Organized squatting movements in London, Amsterdam, and Berlin have held negotiations with their local governments and have even been able to effect some changes. The current situation in New York has the possibility to be precedent setting. On another level, because individualized squatting needs to be unobtrusive, at least initially, it is difficult to study. I am

certain that by only being able to study organized squatters and squatter networks there are many squatters and types of squatters I have omitted. Although it is certainly simpler to define squatting as a certain type of movement, that would be ignoring the variety and complexity of reasons behind individuals' actions. Thus, I will describe the different types of social movement perspectives in which squatting fits based on means, goals, and participants.

The French School Model can be applied to squatting most easily. The definition of anti-institutional is not limited to revolutionary movements. Instead, both revolutionary and reformist strains can coexist within the same movement (Hannigan:1985). Within the squatting movement, both strains can be identified. Some squatters are solely searching for a home. Their protests can illuminate specific housing problems. Their ideal outcome might be the creation of more low-cost housing. This strain might even be better understood as a New Social Movement. However, the revolutionary sectors of the squatting movement can at the same time be demanding structural changes in the distribution of housing and advocating the end of capitalism (Hannigan:1985). Castells' idea of movements emerging out of specifically urban crises, especially having to do with housing distribution and accessibility and autonomy in housing, describes squatter movements better than the other approaches. Unfortunately, this model does not explain the process of recruitment and mobilization.

The squatter movement has been identified as a self-help, protest, and anarchist or opposition movement. While these three categories do exist, I think that the squatter movement embodies more perspectives.

Tromp (1981 in Priemus:1983) distinguishes three kinds of squatters: 1) squatters who practice squatting as *'self-help'* (a variant is formed by squatters who find living accommodations for others); 2) squatters who squat out of *protest*, so as to expose the housing shortage, vacancy, speculation and/or housebuilding policy; 3) squatters who squat out of *opposition* to the authorities, capitalism, society. This last category is sometimes depicted as a new form of 'autonomy' or 'anarchism', but the inconsistent thing about this category is that its members often accept the benefits of the welfare state, but will have nothing to do with its burdens.

I define the squatter movement as a housing/protest movement because it is not simply a protest movement. In protesting the state's bureaucracy, its ineffectiveness, and inaccessibility to low-income people, the movement's claims and goals are intimately tied to housing. The struggle is against the constraints of the capitalist housing system. I agree with Tromp that squatting can be a self help movement. However, that is distinct from the utopian aspect of squatter communities in which intentional communities are created. Finally, I think it is relevant that there is a single element to the movement which includes both young and old people without families who are living on their own and have little income. Because squatters are neither monolithic nor homogenous, all squatting situations entail different motivational reasons. Thus, squatter movements personify either some or all of these different approaches. Innovative squatters are more likely to participate in housing/protest and self-help movements. Rebellious squatters

do the same, but are also more likely to protest the system and create intentional communities. Single people could be either, but in many cases they have been rebels.

Housing/Protest movement

Squatting can easily and logically be seen as a housing movement. For the most part, this is self-interested activism because the protesters have personally suffered the abuses and inadequacies of the housing system. Its immediate and ultimate goals concern the amount of, type, and control over the available housing. In Amsterdam, squatters protested the housing shortage and problems in the distribution of housing. Squatters claimed that they could distribute housing more efficiently than the system (Priemus:1983).

In San Francisco, an incident about the use of federally owned land sparked much protest from the housing activist community. The larger multi-organizational field was mobilized; squatters anti-homelessness advocates, and other advocates of low-cost housing protested the city's decision about the use of the Presidio, one of the oldest military bases in the country, by taking it over. In 1994, the base had been shut down and the City of San Francisco was negotiating with the federal government about future uses of the land. Apparently, the city had not been considering creating low cost housing on that land even though the current wait for Section 8, federally funded, subsidized, low-income housing, was two to three years.

I had great problems paying the rent. I had been paying a third of my income, but I lost my job and then all my income went in rent. I stopped paying and I was evicted. It was a really shitty life style. It didn't satisfy my requirements. Paying a tolerable rent meant having just no space. [Squatting] offered me increased facilities. One could spend a certain time not working full-time for money. I had been wanting to run a food co-op and I was able to do this because I squatted. I do not have to pay rent, it's a bind. I'd be stupid to do anything else than squat. It suits my needs. It's shown me how inefficient municipal councils are and also made me think about the principles of ownership - they're a load of rubbish (John, Kinghan:1977:58).

These protests are about the difficulties of low-income people in the housing market and with the housing bureaucracy. These individuals have organized in order to make the system more accessible and to provide for their own housing needs. Not all of them seek intentional communities. Some of them may not even want to do their own building repairs, nonetheless, all these people want housing to be more accessible and affordable at a time when the housing stock is diminished and the homeless population is increasing. Thus far the only federal and local responses to this crisis have been either repressive, such as the institution of anti-loitering and panhandling laws, or intended to institutionalize, such as the construction of new shelters and prisons. In Post-Fordist society urban municipalities can not effectively provide the various required social services like housing and health care. Instead, city spaces are divided, people are polarized, and only the professional, managerial core's needs are adequately addressed.

Self-help/autonomy movement

Shantytowns and squatting networks are self-help groups. Both are attempts to provide housing, at the minimum cost, to a community that is not receiving those services elsewhere. "There's a community feeling when you squat generally and here especially. And of course you do not have a landlord. I do not want someone living off the money I give them for rent; it's unearned income" (Terry, Kinghan:1977:59). Squatting is a social movement because it can entail changing the situation of individuals who do not have autonomy and control within their housing situation. As social movements both shantytowns and squatting publicize the lack of adequate housing creating a democratic challenge from the grassroots level. These groups strive to change the societal situation through example and activism. Nonetheless, they are not conforming to societal notions of individuality and private property. Neither of these types of groups is advocating homelessness or trying to include it in societal norms.

The inherent dilemma of self-help groups is that the lessening of demand on the system allows the government/system to continue ignoring the groups (Rivlin & Imbimbo:1989:725). Because people find alternate means of obtaining housing, like squatting, cities are not emphatic enough about building and providing low-cost housing. The housing crisis remains one that is individualized and solvable without structural changes. The gap between the classes will widen even more when poor people receive make-shift, self-help services, while wealthy individuals can afford to seek out professionals. This aspect has also been highly touted by social conservatives who feel that

self-help groups are positive additions to the system because they are not drains on society. Conservatives would applaud the individual focus of squatting without concentrating on the community aspects.

With respect to social services and social movements, squatters are definitely a self-help group. However, even though some squatters do choose to create intentional communities, that is not the goal of many other squatters. The intentional communities that I've encountered are based on cooperative, communal, and even vaguely anarchistic principles. Therefore, it is unlikely that the intentional communities resulting from squatting have very strong norms and behavioral codes and it is even more unlikely that a charismatic leader or other centralized authority would be present to bond the group.

Search for intentional communities

Not all squats become community centers or even communal environments. However, most squats start as a communal endeavor. The people taking over the building need to work together to clear, clean, and repair it. Often squatters start by all living in one room. When the building has been further renovated, individuals can claim their own spaces and work on them individually while working communally on public portions of the building. Sometimes, squatters will renovate spaces for people who can not do it themselves. The process of choosing, taking over, and repairing a building creates community.

Squatting enables the creation of intentional communities. The ability to create an environment which meets individual needs and can change as the individuals within it change, allows the growth and establishment of vital communities. This response to the sameness found in institutionally controlled and planned housing (and life) is the opportunity to learn necessary skills for self-sufficiency and to create lives which are not bound by rules, regulations, and capitalist constraints (Ingham:1980). The struggle is about the reproduction of people for this society. Squatting challenges the private reproduction of the "right" kind of people to publicly produce within society.

The argument for housing co-operatives is that it is a mode of tenure which changes the situation of dependency to one of independence, that is one which, combines private enterprise and mutual aid in a unique form of social ownership which puts a premium on personal responsibility and individual initiative. (Ward:1985:89)

Communities can be created around a variety of ideas and processes. Squatting can free people from mundane responsibilities. Since the cost of housing is at least a quarter of an average person's income (and up to half of a poor person's income), relinquishing that responsibility allows people to give up unsatisfying jobs and pursue more personally satisfying endeavors. Some squats may be organized around anarchist principles in which people try to create alternatives to society.

Given the hours invested in squatter-council discussions, physical repair work, and constant efforts to avoid forceful eviction by police, the occupation of houses becomes "a real full-time job". The idea is to live better with less, to arrange satisfying work-and-

living conditions, rather than to overcompensate one's "Frustr" [frustration] through consumption. Collective action becomes a key weapon against social isolation (Mushben:1983:130).

In this new classless society, people are not obliged to participate in the alienating, exploitative, bureaucratic culture. Squats may form a larger community in which people help each other with repairs, sharing skills and tools. Representative democracy and joint decision making power transforms the relationships people have with their homes and immediate environments (Osborn:1980). Women have said that they felt empowered by squatting because they learned new skills, challenged gender roles, and became more independent (Moan:1980). In Lambeth, a borough of London, a lesbian ghetto emerged as an intentional community for six years between 1971-1977. This community became the lesbian-feminist social and political organizing center of the area. Most of the women who joined this community did so because of a need for housing, the desire to live in an area with heightened political potential with other lesbians, or the will to squat (Ettorre:1978, Pollard:1976).

Single people's movement

The distinction councils make between single people and families is inhuman. Single people have as much right to somewhere to live and they do not have the compensation of family life. The housing situation is absolutely scandalous (respondent, Kinghan:1977:56).

As mentioned earlier, housing is not built to accommodate non-traditional living; flexible housing at a low price is not an option within an institutionally designed setting. Single people are not prioritized in housing

policy, which really means traditional heterosexual family policy, because there is a normative assumption that people should live in traditional families or that since their financial responsibilities are less than those with families, single people can afford to pay more. It is difficult to estimate how many single person households are necessary because the indicators of this demand are the number of single person households and that depends on the availability of adequate housing. However, the number of single working people has been steadily increasing since the 1960s (Kinghan:1977).

Squatting allows people who are more economically vulnerable, both young and old, to create their own environments. These environments can meet their needs of flexibility or stability at an affordable price. Many squatters in Amsterdam have been students studying at the two major universities. These people often do not meet the specific neighborhood residency requirement nor can they afford free market prices.

Youth oriented movements tend to be "depoliticized" because many individuals have been alienated from established political systems and actively distrust political organizations. These individuals have grown up in societies in crises. They have suffered through poor housing and education systems. Their chosen life-styles are threatening to the existing culture. They are often a class of "pro-anarchy/no future" individuals. This was especially true of European youth living with the threat of increased nuclear technology (Mushaben:1983).

Some squatters do hold radical views of the political system. Some may wish to overthrow it, others to create an alternative within. Two processes seem to be occurring. One is that, of people affected by the housing shortage, those with less adherence to belief in the inviolability of property rights will be more likely to squat. Secondly, squatters may, as a result of their experiences, be exposed to a new set of radicalizing influences. Social movements tend to be led by an articulate minority who develop political aspirations more radical than those of their rank and file. This is true of squatters. Our study has shown that there are political radicals in housing need and also that housing need can, under certain circumstances, be a radicalizing force (Kinghan:1977:80-81).

These movements all describe varieties of squatter motivations and situations. The underlying themes have to do with the rejection of capitalist modes of housing provision in favor of local, communal, self-help groups. Squatters seek to regain solidarity, sensitivity, dignity, and autonomy from institutions which have control over daily life. The squatting movement may be led by a vocal and political minority guiding it towards a more "alternative" or fringe life style. However, it is also possible that the members of the movement are the politicized and vocal squatters. I think that there are many people who squat without participating in the movement. Due to the social and economic constraints that many people face, squatting is a rational choice.

REAL LIFE

Who are squatters?

Despite their image as storm-trooping anarchists, the squatters actually comprise at least four distinct groups: 1) urban-political elements, working with city planners, architects, social workers, and tenant organizations; 2) self proclaimed supporters of the Punk, "Sponti" and Anarcho-Scenes; 3) individuals attracted out of "existential necessity", including 1500-3000 drug addicts, runaways, and homeless; 4) political trend-followers, sympathizers, students, apprentices, and intellectual part-timers (Giesecke, 1981 in Mushaben:1983).

There are many different types of squatters with equally unique motivational reasons. Any individual in need of a home can be a squatter. Nonetheless, social movement theory has shown that people are more likely to squat if they are recruited. That could entail participation within the same multi-organizational field or learning about squatting organizations through the media. Although many squatters are working class or formerly homeless, others come from middle class backgrounds. Squatting appeals to people who cannot find affordable and accessible housing. Some people may only earn enough to survive if they do not have to pay rent. Others choose to drop out of the capitalist system of production.

The general view taken here, based on survey findings, is that squatting is largely a response to the shortage of adequate, reasonably-priced accommodation available to particular social groups. Squatting is not, of course, an inevitable response: there have been periods of housing shortage without squatting. But the three squatting outbreaks [in the UK] this century have all coincided with periods when access to housing was particularly difficult. The 'housing problem' is the crucial background to current squatting (Kingham:1977:75).

The decision to squat is one made to improve the standard of living. Squatters will often work to improve the condition of their squats. Some are supportive members of the system and as innovators they work towards assimilating into society. These individuals have chosen to minimize some of their expenditures on housing in order to survive in the urban setting. Squatting entails communal living to some extent and the high level of organization and cooperation within the squats occurs because people need to work together to repair and maintain their homes (Perlman:1986).

Demographics

Though most squatters are working and lower class, all types of people squat and variations exist depending on the particular scene or community. Nonetheless, the vast majority of squatters are in some way economically or socially disadvantaged; they are struggling to find adequate housing. Within socialized housing systems, squatters are usually disadvantaged by their economic rank, age, or marital status. Thus, it is often difficult for these people be considered eligible for subsidized housing (Kearns:1981).

Kinghan (1977) surveyed 192 squats and attempted to interview one member of each household. The success rate of the sample was 83% because 32 people either refused to be interviewed or were not contacted. The sample is not representative because some large blocks of squats were omitted as were other squats which weren't properly authorized or registered. Proportionately, unequal numbers of squats were contacted in each

neighborhood. Kinghan found that prior to squatting, people had many difficulties obtaining adequate and affordable accommodation. For childless individuals, finding housing was even more difficult because there was a scarcity of low-cost housing and the housing organizations were not helpful. Both families and childless people needed better options for temporary housing and an increased stock of permanent housing.

In the US, a common misperception of squatters is that they are all young white middle class drop outs. By describing squatters in this manner, it is easier to ridicule them and ignore the statements they are making. Kearns (1981) found that most squatters were single, male, and between the ages of 20 and 35. Similarly, Kinghan found that while the majority of squatters in his sample were young and white, a large amount were over the age of forty and there were many families. Three quarters of the respondents were concentrated in the 20-29 age group; these individuals formed the majority of large adult households and the smaller childless households. 10% of the respondents were over 40 and more likely to live alone. Most of the squatters were male and over a quarter were 'colored' (according to the interviewer's assessment). Although many of the squatters were English, there were ethnic minorities such as West Indians, Bangladeshis, and Irish. Nearly all of the people of color squatted in families, though there were a number of single West Indian men (Kinghan:1977).

Welch's (1984) research on squatters in the ACORN squatting movement throughout the US in the early 1980s revealed that the majority of

squatters were women, particularly African-American. Most of these women were the single heads of households. For them, squatting offered the solution to the housing problem that neither shelters nor public housing could meet. Their homes could be large enough for families without having to exorbitant prices. Squats provided physical security not possible if living on the streets. Additionally, these women could raise their children without fear that the child welfare authorities would remove them to more "appropriate" homes.

There are a lot of families [who squat]. I, for a while, lived on the same floor as a mother and her three year old daughter. My friends just had their first child. They live on 7th St. They might be in their thirties, but they're fairly young. I have a friend who has three kids and she's in her fifties. It's all around. I wouldn't say I know any senior citizens who squat, but give it a couple of years and you'll be seeing some senior citizens. The movement in America is not that old. It's maybe, at most, 15 years when the homesteading program was started in New York. Both men and women [squat]. Cass-wise? It's kind of a cliché to say low-working class [people are the ones who squat] (Alexandri).

Kinghan (1977) found that two-fifths of the households contained children. Of those, half were two parent families (two parents with child(ren) under age 15). One-third of these squats were one parent families (all except one were female headed) and the remainder were larger households (two families or one family plus other adults). Of the childless households, single people, adults aged 16-59, comprised between one third and two thirds of the households. Under a quarter of the childless households included two people. Between a fifth and less than half of the childless households were large households (three or more persons over the age of 16). Some of the households described themselves as "communes". Although all squats have

some degree of communal living because they are self-managed, the "communes" included people with a special commitments to the group beyond simply living together.

The stereotype of squatters and homeless people is similar. Both groups are considered lazy and unemployable. However, in reality, quite a few members of both groups do hold down steady employment. Unfortunately, their low-incomes often prevent them from being able to afford any type of housing.

A lot of squatters work. Jobs, believe it or not. I was doing renovation for a while with a squatter, Steve. He employed me. He employs a number of squatters. There's an old school that's a community center on the first floor and basement. There are art studios upstairs. They employ a lot of squatters in the basement because they have an old coal burner and they need people to shovel coal. A lot of people do construction. A lot work at temp agencies. A lot of college students squat. (Alexandri).

In Kinghan's study, more than 20% of the men were unemployed at the time of the interview and squatters' incomes were generally low. Part of the reason for the high rates of unemployment, even accounting for unemployment in Inner London, was that some of the squatters chose to engage in activities which were important to them, but not economically supportable. For some squatters, repairing and protecting their squats took up the majority of their time. Others were learning skills and crafts or engaged in long term projects like writing books or music (Kinghan:1977).

Divisions among squatters

As within all types of communities, even utopian communities, there are internal divisions. I expected to find these divisions based on identity. When I asked Shawnee Alexandri about these divisions, he mentioned that the white anarchist squatters in the Lower East Side did not maintain close ties with the immigrant families of squatters in the Bronx.

They are a lot less radical [in the Bronx]. There are just different beliefs. We're friendly, but not that closely tied together. I wouldn't say there are no immigrants in the Manhattan squatting scene. There are a lot, but they're not solely immigrants. In the Bronx, the majority are immigrants. As the New York Times has classified us, in Manhattan, there are white young artist types. That is not necessarily true either.

Unfortunately, the squatting scene that I'm involved with, the Manhattan one, is mostly dominated by whites. The Underground Railroad has done a good job in countering this. It's going into shelters in Harlem and getting people to squat in Harlem. Now most of these people are black. If that program succeeds, that would be a big boost. [Squatting] really shouldn't have anything to do with race (Alexandri).

Leah Lil had more to say about the identities and divisions within the Lower East Side squat scene.

[There are] a lot of white punks, and it's male dominated, but there's exceptions to this rule, big ones. Class is mixed. Yeah, a lot of the squatpunk come from middle class families, but they're not all spoiled brats who are just trying to live wild—a lot of them come from fucked-up, abusive families and leaving meant survival for them. There are a lot of exceptions to the white, male punk rules. There are a lot of women, a lot of strong women in the scene. A lot of artists and radicals. And, no shit, but not everyone's white. There is a good number of squatters of color. As for queer stuff, there's a bunch of queer squatters, too, but a lot of people aren't out. There's supposedly this group of squat dykes called the NY hags (there's a SF chapter, too) but I never met any of them, or anyone who knew about them.

There is strong denial and resistance to talking about race, class, gender or sexuality in the squat scene. There's an ethic of individualism that I think people feel makes questions of raced/gender/sexuality/class irrelevant. It's a typical punk argument—you know "who you are as a person is so much more important than your race." i.e., Hey, we're not racist—anyone can be a white boy if they try hard enough! I felt freed by it for a while, but I couldn't put my south asianness, queerness, or feminist womanness out to pasture forever. I got hit with a lot of racism, sexism and homophobia when I came out about these things, on the one hand, and a sense that I was betraying the wonderful community by making a fuss—that I was just oversensitive and crazy when I felt isolated and erased by people's supposed 'humanism.' That's why I am no longer involved in punk or much white anarchist stuff (Leah Lil).

I have not been able to find information specifically on African-American or Asian-American squats. That does not mean that they do not exist. Because the movement's image is so white, punk, and anarchist, there is no acknowledgment of the squatters who do not fit that stereotype. Similarly, although it is known that African-American single mothers were very active in the ACORN squatting movement, the stereotype of the drop-out, anarchist squatter has not changed.

There is literature about women feeling excluded from the male dominated squatting scene (Jackson:1987). When separatist women's organizations emerged from the women's movement in the 1970s, there were women's squats as well. Squats have been the sites of many European women's services - shelters, centers, bookstores, printing presses, art spaces, communal child care. Because women as a whole are relatively economically disadvantaged and there are a large and growing number of homeless, poor, and single parenting women, it should not be surprising that many women

would need to squat for economic reasons. Through squatting women learn traditionally male skills like plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work. Some women believed that through squatting, they were not only protesting the housing situation, but also the lack of funding and space for women; a number of women joined all women's squats (Lazier:1987, Connexions:1981).

Because local and state governments cater to the needs of wealthier and more respectable people, they have also been known to foster divisions between the squatters. Often, only certain squats are legalized despite their participation in a larger squatting community (Jackson:1987, De Soto:1992). In London, the government initially only negotiated with squatter families (Kearns:1981). In Amsterdam, the government bought squatted buildings from private owners in order to legalize the squats. At some point, the maneuver was changed and squatters were pitted against other people in need of housing when the government bought a squatted building and gave it to other people (Draaisma & van Hoogstraten:1983). These divisions can fracture the movement, diffuse its message, and precipitate the loss of community support.

What are the different reasons for squatting?

Historic conditions? Causes? Effects? Just yell: "No one has a house and that was really mean!" Through a small forgetfulness in the law, unused spaces were there for the using, without the owner being able to take up the law against the anonymous users. It was fortunate, too, that owners and city planners, through their naive belief in property rights and authority,

let their houses sit endlessly vacant, even when plenty had already been squatted (Adilkno: 1990:35).

Most people squat out of an economic necessity. There are individuals who squat in protest of the housing system. Others may search for specific communities based on anti-capitalist ideas. All squatters are looking for something that is not available to them through the current system. In some cases, they seek housing. Other times, they are in search of a more holistic anti-capitalist or anti-cultural experience.

Economic necessity

In Kinghan's study, prior to squatting many people had lived with parents and in furnished privately-rented accommodations. Some had stayed at hostels, bed and breakfasts, or prisons. While a third of the squatters were new to London and 17% left their last home because of personal reasons, the majority decided to squat in order to improve their housing situation - dilapidated and overcrowded dwellings. Many of the young squatters felt that landlords were providing inadequate and poorly maintained houses for very high prices. Many had difficulties negotiating through the housing bureaucracy. For some squatters, it had to do with rigid regulations; others had difficulty with the language. The vast majority of the respondents chose to squat because they could not find adequate and affordable housing (Kinghan:1977).

Since housing materially structures daily life, a Marxist conceptualization of the housing crisis would focus on state intervention into

the housing sector directly through controls of standards, building codes, and zoning regulations and indirectly through regulation of tenure categories. The state maintains a contractual situation between landlords, banks, and tenants. Although there are many capitalist interests and sites of conflict, the major struggle is between capital and labor over the provision of housing. Although class is an important factor, housing struggles are not solely class struggles. Tenure and type of housing occupancy have different meanings within classes and further perpetuate the specific class relations (Clarke & Ginsburg:1976).

The state's intervention in housing, particularly with the provision of public housing, serves to fragment social classes. Since local housing authorities cannot meet the needs of all people, their prioritization results in the creation of a class without access to housing resources. The people most affected are young, "deviant", transient, elderly, those with large families, and those traditionally without access to resources, particularly foreign-born or discriminated against groups.

The Marxist analysis of the housing crisis and the response that squatting poses to it is inadequate for a number of reasons. Although the account deals with power differentials, it does not adequately address the reasons for the current economic and housing shortage. It's focus is on capitalist forms of production, not on the recent trends within capitalism that greatly affect housing. Like other Marxist critiques, it tends to be overly economic without emphasis on the agency of the participants in this struggle.

Similarly, urban renewal policies ignore the residents of the center cities. Instead cities are urban frontiers with the current residents being treated as the uncivilized inhabitants who need to be overcome and removed. The forces of reinvestment and gentrification are quickly making inroads into poor neighborhoods. Smith (1992) extends his parallel to Turner's theory of expansionism and the urban frontier to point out the role of illegal squatters in the settlement of the "rugged" frontier. Squatting is the future of reclaiming cities for their current ignored and impoverished residents. Unlike pioneering during the Colonial era, urban squatting will be the reclamation of space by the current inhabitants. Violence is a possibility in this reclamation because peoples' homes and communities are now treated as economic frontiers awaiting expansion.

Chosen way of life

Disaffection with the State and disillusionment with the political process at a time of deteriorating economic conditions and increased social polarization has altered peoples' attitudes about participation within the system. There has been an emphasis on self-realization and autonomy (Mushaben:1983). Many of the individuals in Kinghan's study wanted to create their own environments. Public housing allowed no room for freedom from regulations and economic constraints and a sense of shared responsibility in the environment (Kinghan:1977). An "alternative" scene developed in which people can be depoliticized, decentralized, and post-

materialist. The members of this culture have dropped out of the political establishment and the society it creates. It is possible to live in squats, shop in alternative, cooperative shops, and have no contact with the "outside" (Richter, 1979 in Mushaben:1983).

Assuming that the decision to squat is invalid because it is a chosen way or one necessitated by wants instead of needs ignores the reality of capitalist and consumerist constraints on middle class individuals. Squats can be middle class because there are squatters with middle class occupations or backgrounds. The struggle for home ownership is a middle class struggle and squatting can be fulfilling an individualistic need to control property. Yet, it can also be seen as transforming class relations. Control over one's housing should not be a benefit of the rich, all people deserve that autonomy and squatting can help provide it. Osborn (1980) envisions squatting as a process of using whatever skills people have and learning from each other in order to survive and maintain the community.

Many of the squatters in Kinghan's study who lived in "communes" or coops did not originally intend to find these communities. Initially, they were looking for housing and through their involvement in the self-help aspect of squatting, they decided to join intentional communities. Of the squatters who wanted to live communally, the majority was disproportionately drawn from young people in full-time education or doing graduate work. However, 60% of that population had tried to find housing some other way before they squatted (Kinghan:1977). Even for young people inclined towards communal living and

without family responsibilities, the decision to squat and ignore societal regulations about property rights only came about after other "legitimate" attempts to find housing.

Empowerment

Squatting can result in personal empowerment because it entails making many decisions that much of society never makes. "Unchallengeable" norms about private property and ability to engage in home repair are challenged in the creation of alternative living arrangements which are not institutionally managed and planned (Moan:1980, Osborn:1980, Ingham:1980).

I could renovate your house. I learned a lot of skills like that. I've learned that you do not need a nine to five job to survive. You do not need to go to college. You do not need everything that society tells you need to survive. You do not need to take a shower everyday to survive everyday. There are lots of other ways of living, that I would prefer to live as opposed to what people believe today (Alexandri).

Self-help is useful for more than just material survival. It is a grassroots based challenge to domination and dependency. Individuals are empowered to break out of the "ghetto attitude" of defeat, alienation, and hopelessness (Katz & Mayer:1985). Communal living can teach people about active participation in their environment. Most citizens are not taught to question the system and try to create alternatives (Kinghan:1974). Through taking control and responsibility for housing, people learn to empower themselves in other parts of their lives. Squatters often stop participating in the career-track job market

because they may realize that it is not fulfilling for them. People find that they do not need to be mass consumers so they stop participating in the consumption based aspects of society. Their first-hand experience with squatting politicizes people about the housing crisis and the functioning of the capitalist system (Gimson, Lwin, & Wates:1976).

Goals

Some squatters want to create alternative communities in which all property norms are challenged. Squatters in West Berlin defined themselves as anti-cultural, they rejected the societal norms of living in a patriarchal nuclear family. Thus, in attempting to construct a different culture, they were battling legal, political, and economic norms supported by the state, political parties, and traditional families (De Soto:1992). In these alternative, anti-cultural communities, it would be possible to live without earning a large income. Businesses could be cooperatively managed and people could pursue their individual interests. Others want to reform the housing market and end the housing crisis. One squatter goal has been to establish a pool of low-cost housing that would never become part of the general housing market. This creation of permanent low-cost housing for low-income people would alleviate some of the problems of poverty.

I could see myself squatting in ten years. It's what I believe. It's a big concern, always the threat of eviction. You're less likely to bring stuff there, valuables. If they start a homesteading program that actually worked and they followed through with it.

There would be no homeless people left in New York. You can conceivably take care of a homeless problem (Alexandri).

Kinghan (1977) found that individuals with children eventually hoped to find subsidized public housing. The majority of the squatters, including those with children, intended to continue squatting. Many people did not believe that public housing was a better alternative. Childless squatters realized that because of their low-prioritization, they would not be able to obtain public housing. Many felt that they would only want to move into better conditions and would not live in substandard public housing.

The immediate goal of squatting is to provide housing. To survive in the long run, squats adapt to the needs of their occupants. The squats that do not survive are evicted, harassed by authorities, not respected or supported by the neighbors, and often have either social or political internal conflict (Kearns:1981). Therefore, squats need to coexist internally and externally. If they do not provide any value or positive aspects within themselves or to the larger neighborhood, they will not survive. Many of the legitimized squats in London eventually became successful housing co-ops (Ward:1993). The Tetterode, one of the oldest "experimental" communities in Amsterdam, evolved from a space with large communal areas into smaller "family-type" units (Ward:1994: 9 December). In another part of Amsterdam, the Graan Silo community was forming. The abandoned wharf area has become a thriving community with art spaces, living areas, and even a restaurant. In 1994, the neighborhood association considered evicting the squatters and building

public housing for over 400 people on that site. If the Silo community survives, it will have to adapt itself into a new form.

Squatting and the State

For people who do not participate within the "alternative" multi-organizational field in which the squatter movement exists, the only time that squatting becomes part of public discourse is during confrontations with the State. Squatting rarely receives media attention otherwise. There is no acknowledgment of the community formation and empowerment that occurs. When it is publicized, squatting is often misrepresented as individuals trespassing on private property and ruining it. Many people, especially middle and upper class suburbanites, do not even know of its existence.¹² As a result, there are not many legal routes for squatters. The conflict over squatting results in a situation that can be summed up as the rights of homeless people to be housed and the rights of both public and private property owners to control their property, and if need be, leave it empty or demolish it (Cant:1979). Although in some cases, the laws have proved amenable to squatting, in the majority of situations, the State and its laws have defended private property at the expense of the right of people to be well housed. Even countries like The Netherlands, which initially reacted positively

¹² Once I explain to people what exactly urban squatting is, a surprising number know someone who squats or has squatted.

to squatters, long term policy solutions have focused on eliminating squatting through criminalization, not through vast reform of the housing system.

Using Castell's model of an urban movement, Cant (1979) analyzed the development of a political movement based on empty properties in the private sector. He found that despite the growth of the squatting movement, the rights of private landlords to maintain empty properties were not seriously challenged. Cant found that private landlords tended to keep their properties empty for longer periods of time than public housing authorities. Even though a large percentage of squatters in London occupied private property, an organized and articulate movement emerged protesting empty public property. Because private landlords often resorted to force in secretly and illegally evicting squatters, an organized movement protesting private landlords never developed and squatting on public property was considered more visible and safe. Squatters have been more likely to take over public property. Once on public property, squatters could make some argument for their right to stay based on the idea that the state should be responsible for the provision of housing.

Squatters exhibit a clear preference for government - owned rather than private residences, for several reasons. Eviction from publicly held buildings must be routed through the bureaucratic maze, taking months or years. Secondly, government authorities have a delicate image to protect, encouraging prudent action. Conversely, private owners often use illegal, forcible means of eviction (Kearns:1980:22).

Legal Action

There are no clear and adequate legal routes of action on behalf of squatters. Squatters are usually prosecuted on charges of trespass. However, that same law has also been used to defend squatters in the name of maintaining the peace. In Britain trespass was a civil offense, not a criminal activity, and squatters were able to take advantage of this loophole. Since the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, squatting has been criminalized there as well.

The Act creates an offense [which is] primarily the failure to obey an interim possession order. A squatter commits the offense if he or she is on premises as a trespasser and fails to leave the premises within 24 hours of the serving of an interim possession order or returns to the premises within one year. The offense has a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment.

The new offense will be committed after the owner of the property has obtained an 'interim possession order'. Home Office Ministers have promised that alleged squatters will be given notice that an application for such an order has been made and that they can make written representations. However, they have no right to be present at a hearing at which they can present their case and contest the landlord's evidence before an order is granted. Once the order has been made, they will then be forced to leave their accommodation at very short notice on pain of committing an imprisonable offense (Penal Lexicon Home Page: Appendix).

According to Paul Kangas, a squatter and law student in San Francisco, tenancy can be established after five days of residency in an abandoned building. After those five days, landlords must follow eviction processes which can take six months to a year (Welch:1984). In Amsterdam, once squatters have created "domestic peace" through the addition of a bed,

table, and chair, police and landlords must follow the eviction process through the legal system.

The lawyers representing the squatters in the E13th St. squat are arguing their case under the adverse possession clause which states that if the landlord knows that the building is occupied and actively helps the individuals using that property for ten years, the occupiers have a right to claim the property. This clause has been used in other places. In London, adverse possession was used when squatters argued that the city had helped them by providing them with utilities. The city's defense was that utilities must legally be provided to all people regardless of the legality of their tenure.

New York State codified the concept into law. The law provides that those who openly and hostilely [sic] possess land for ten years can petition for title. The philosophy is that if the true owner neglects his duties as owner for ten years, then the title should vest in another to prevent abandonment of ownership responsibilities.

The twist is that you must claim ownership, and should not acknowledge that title belongs to another. In actuality, it is impossible to know what the state of mind was of the possessor after time passes, so usually outward signs of ownership - improvements, control of the site, suffice to show claim of title and ownership (Bukowski: Appendix).

In the 1970s, there were proposals to legalize squatting through an Adverse Possession law. Instead, a Homesteading Act was created in 1974; the new program was limited and because of income restrictions soon became inaccessible to low-income households. The situation in Baltimore has been used as an example of this. The city allowed individuals to purchase dilapidated buildings at the cost of \$1, providing that they promised to repair

the premises and live there. Shortly after its initiation, the benefactors of the program were all middle class gentrifiers. On the other hand, adverse possession could institutionalize a process through which individual squatters could obtain titles to property directly from the government (Welch:1984, Kearns:1984).

There used to be a law in New York that stated if you could prove residence in a building for thirty days or more, then the city has to give you due process. They have to go through the court system. Any landlord, when they want to evict you, has to go through due process. That law no longer exists for the city. It has been ruled that the city, being the biggest landlord of all, does not have to go through due process to evict people from their buildings (Alexandri).

The other legal route for both squatters and owners is the Forced Entry and Detainer law (FED). It can be used when landlords dispute the claims made by adverse possessors. FED was primarily developed to protect peace and secondarily to protect property. FED laws only protect those who are in physical possession of the property. Originally, FED would not have allowed the owner to remove squatters because of the disruption to the peace that might entail. In cases of squatting, FED only applied to buildings that had been forcibly entered. Squatters have been able to claim possession because they have occupied abandoned buildings, changed the locks, and informed landlords of their decision to stay. Simply entering the building was not enough to constitute legal action (Dashwood, Davies, & Trice:1971).

In the US, FED statutes supply only civil remedies to the problem. Their advantage over British law was that the owner was allowed the right to

restitution. There have been inconsistent rulings in a variety of American courts. Some have stated that owners can remove squatters, while others have disagreed. There is no clear distinction in either country between the squatter trespasser who can be ejected and the squatter occupier who is protected by FED (Nogues:1978). FED provides for protection of the peace because it is clear the evictions often cause more disruption than occupations. Thus, there is no solid legal reason to evict squatters.

Violence

Mushaben (1983) argues that the violence apparent in many of the movements of the 1970s and 1980s has been unique to the time. Violence has been especially evident in the European youth movements such as the anti-nuclear, ecology, and urban squatter movements. Violent confrontations between citizens and the State are relatively new to collective protest.

First, common to all is the perceived need for radical opposition to fundamental premises dominating their respective socio-economic establishments. Secondly, the fusion of the dissident movements is grounded in common political learning experiences, positive and negative, which have subsequently been adapted to suit other protest needs (Mushaben:1983:125).

The youth movements were comprised of alienated, disaffected individuals socialized in societies with high unemployment, economic recessions, poor educational systems, widespread mistrust of the State and its institutions, and other pressing economic and social problems. Although violent tactics are rejected by most peace activists within other activist

movements, there is a passive acceptance of violence against people because of the State's perceived willingness to resort to violent measures against protesters (Mushaben:1983).

Violence was a large part of West Berlin's squatter movement between 1980 and 1984 (Jackson:1987). An article in the November 26, 1990 issue of *Time* reported yet another battle between squatters and authorities. The united Germany was experiencing rising unemployment and an increase in violence. The rising rates of violence in eastern Germany have been attributed to the collapse of local authority. 3,000 police officers equipped with bulldozers, armored personnel carriers, clubs, and tear gas crushed trenches and barricades created by squatters. There were 160 injuries, 90 of them police officers and the coalition government collapsed. Interestingly enough, many of the arrested participants were not native Berliners. They had come from Italy, France, The Netherlands, and western Germany in order to "pursue a radical political agenda" in this special city (Battle:1990).

Police brutality has often changed peaceful protests into large scale riots. During evictions, police often use unnecessary violence and tear gas to remove squatters from buildings. This description of the eviction of the E13th St. squats last summer effectively proves this point.

Stanley [Cohen, the lawyer] had not been able to get the injunction, despite what we would find out later—that the whole eviction was illegal, no order was ever authorized. More people got scared and trickled off. There were hundreds of cops. I was terrified, but would have felt like a traitor leaving. The cops started gradually pushing up to the middle of the block, in front of the squats. This is very important:- the news media, which had been

there all along, was forced off the scene by cops, getting clubbed in some cases. People had camera lenses broken. Finally it was fifty of us in a human chain that didn't even stay in front of all the squats. They brought the tank in—dragged off neighbor's cars, ran over shit just for the hell of it. They gave us a warning, mostly just stood there smirking and taunting us for a while. It was clear that we were going to lose. Finally, they ripped our hands away from each others, and the rope, and dragged us away to wagons. From inside, we could hear them using a chainsaw and blowtorch to get into welded shut doors. I could see out the crack in the wagon's doors that they had gotten into the garden between two squats and were cutting into tress and bushes, trashing shit just for the hell of it. Afterwards, they deliberately did stuff to ruin the building. They chopped holes in the roof, damaged the drainage system, so even if people get to move back in—which actually is possible—they'll have to undo so much damage....(Leah Lil)

Both Shawnee Alexandri and Leah Lil were at the eviction of the squatters at E13th St. in New York in June 1995. They reported seeing police officers carrying semi-automatic machine guns and searching people unnecessarily. The use of a tank in the streets of New York is an example of the excessive force.

Squatters in New York aren't violent really. If you call throwing a pie in someone's face as violent? What would you do if people came with loaded machine guns and kicked you out of your house where you'd been living for ten years? There's a point. They're not random. The squatters aren't causing the violence in New York (Alexandri).

The extent of violence has been a reason for diminished public support for squatting. Many Amsterdammers felt that the movement was too violent. The clearance of a large squat in October 1982 resulted in three days of violence and millions of guilders worth of damage (Holiday Inn:1984) However, it seems as if squatters only resort to violence when their homes are threatened with violence.

Squatting in Western Europe

Squatting has been a much more visible force throughout Europe than it has in the United States. The movements are older and have been more positively received by both citizens and authorities. The fact that these nations - The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, West Germany (and the united Germany), and Denmark - are all more explicitly socialist and have created large systems of subsidized housing may explain some of these differences. Nonetheless, in all these instances, squatting resulted from poor building and renewal policies and gentrification. Although the governmental response to squatting has differed, the structural reasons for squatting are very similar in each country and to the United States. European squatter movements are more explicitly utopian and anarchist than ones found in the US. These movements fit into all the social movement categories that I've described for housing.

Amsterdam

In Amsterdam, the squatter movement gained international prominence for its activism during the 1980 coronation of Queen Beatrix. A visible radical force has existed in the city for decades. In the mid-1960s, Amsterdammers were incorporating socialist ideals into their everyday lives. The city was greatly affected by the anarchist and environmentalist principles which

mobilized social movements all over Europe. The "White Bikes Plan", in which publicly provided and maintained bicycles would be freely available throughout the city, is an example of an experiment made by a society which provides socialized, public housing. Amsterdam has the highest percentage, 80%, of public housing of any major capitalist city. In that city, there has not been a real shortage of housing. Adequate housing is not available for all people, thus, a major squatters movement developed to maintain Amsterdam as a place in which young and poor people can live affordably (Soja:1992).

The housing system in The Netherlands is socialized. All people are eligible for housing, but they must meet certain residency requirements in their neighborhoods and submit to a waiting list. In the system's attempt to help disadvantaged groups, immigrants and large families, young people and singles are ignored; many of the squatters in Amsterdam have been students and other people new to the city. Squatters claim and Draaisma & van Hoogstraten (1983) agree that their method of housing distribution is more equitable and efficient; the squatter movement has helped tens of thousands of people find housing without the intervention of the state. However, Priemus (1983) found that the squatter distribution system was more comparable to the "free market" than the socialized housing system; it gave precedence to young people, Dutch nationals, single persons, and cases with little priority.

The housing shortage resulted from WWII. In the 1950s and 1960s, building developments were constructed throughout the country and urban renewal programs began in the 1970s. At the same time, there were

increased demands for housing within the city because of the influx of young, single people, and foreign workers (Anderiesen:1981). Starting in 1969, the highly regulated system of public housing management began to diminish. The government aimed to replace the socialized system with the free market; rents and housing speculation increased dramatically. Housing was withdrawn from the municipal distribution system and the equitable system of accommodation declined. Despite the growth of the physical housing stock, there was a housing shortage. New buildings were not intended for the growing number of people requiring subsidized housing (Draaisma & van Hoogstraten:1983).

In the late 1960s squatters began taking over buildings in Amsterdam. There were 700 squats with 5,000 inhabitants in 1976. By 1983, the number had almost doubled (Raad van Kerken, 1978 and Van der Raad, 1982 in Priemus:1983:417). The squatters took possession of buildings - living accommodations as well as large and small business premises - scheduled for demolition as part of the urban renewal program. Yet, the movement was not a cohesive unit; there were no rules, regulations, organized bodies, or internal hierarchies responsible for leadership (Priemus:1983). Nonetheless, an alternative squatter society emerged. There were squatter groups, bars, newspapers, and national and local meetings (Draaisma & van Hoogstraten: 1983, Anderiesen:1981). Draaisma & van Hoogstraten (1983) characterize squatting as a diverse and autonomous social movement through which members of society seek direction in obtaining living places, workplaces,

youth centers, and socializing places. Squatters took over privately owned vacant buildings to protest the speculation on the real estate market at a time when 60,000 people were on the waiting list for housing.

Priemus (1983) identified the squatter movement in Amsterdam as an urban social movement. The movement portrayed squatters as victims of the housing shortage. They would eventually take over abandoned dilapidated buildings and after the investment of much money, convert the premises into a space fit for habitation. Instead of contributing to the decrease in affordable housing stock, squatters actually increased the number of buildings through their rehabilitation. Their presence revitalized neighborhoods by reclaiming abandoned buildings and providing fewer targets for arson. The movement pressured the government to improve housing distribution, build houses that suited people's needs better, and end housing speculation.

In 1971, settled squatters were guaranteed legal "right to peaceful occupancy" by the Dutch High Court and enjoyed widespread support among the general population (Mushaben:1983). The number of evictions decreased, but police were still engaged in preventing takeovers. A complicated and detailed system evolved in which squatters had to prove that the buildings had been abandoned for certain periods of time before they could occupy them. Private land owners were encouraged to sell their squatted buildings to the government so that the squats could be legalized. Although by 1994 the amount of community support for squatters had waned because of the violence associated with the movement, squatters still enjoy a

visible presence in Amsterdam. The alternative community exists and much of it has been legalized. I frequented squatter bars, restaurants, and grocery stores. Despite the number of evictions I witnessed, living in legalized squats and being a squatter is very normal in Amsterdam.

London

The first British squatting movement emerged after WWII. The Vigilantes were 40,000 ex-servicemen and their families who occupied vacation homes in the English coastal resorts. During the war, 208,000 houses were destroyed, 250,000 were made uninhabitable, and over 250,000 were seriously damaged. Because the housing stock was not maintained throughout the war, afterwards, there were not enough homes for the growing population; at least one and a half million people needed homes. The Vigilantes received popular support and many people were able to obtain new homes before the government began prosecuting them. These squatters had a sense of moral justification because they had just returned from the war and needed homes (Kinghan:1977, Math  y:1984, Franklin:1984:20).

By the second wave of the squatting movement, it had become clear that poverty and housing problems were not residual from the war. A "direct action" squatting campaign started. Its goal was to avoid protracted negotiation with authorities while providing housing and exposing the housing problem (Franklin:1984). In 1972-1975, squatting began to be legitimized and regulated by the state, however, only families were supported. The

government negotiated with the family squatting associations, but not with other squatters (Kearns:1981, Kinghan:1974). Local housing councils agreed to allow the various squatting associations to use short-life properties, buildings awaiting demolition or renovation. No rent was to be paid, but the squatter associations would maintain the properties and be responsible for vacating them when necessary. Squatting families had to register with local authorities (Kinghan:1977). Squatting was incorporated into the system as a cost-effective way of providing temporary housing. The government did find ways of discouraging squatting. In addition to violent evictions, squatters names were taken off waiting lists for housing. Evicted squatters had no recourse from homelessness because they were no longer eligible for public housing (Franklin:1984).

Eventually other squatters became disillusioned and refused to cooperate with the authorities. Young and single squatters began to squat government owned buildings without authorization. These young and childless people suffered from the same problems as families, but without the same level of prioritization; housing associations were under no obligation to help these individuals (Adams:1986). In the mid 1970s, as homelessness increased, the legitimate family squatting associations began to develop long waiting lists and more people squatted unofficially. When the supply and availability of short-life housing diminished, squatters - families, singles, and those seeking "alternative" communities - began to squat in the permanent housing stock. By mid 1976, there were 48,000 unlicensed squatters in the

permanent housing stock as opposed to 5,000 licensed squatters in short-life housing. Because squatting was not criminalized in Britain, the movement had greater leeway in accomplishing its goal of providing housing. Owners deprived of property had to pay high legal fees and go through lengthy civil proceedings in order to get their properties back. It was estimated that between 1969 and 1980 there had been 250,000 squatters in the country. After the passage of the Criminal Trespass Act of 1977 and the creation of more licensed tenures, the number of licensed squatters grew once again (Franklin:1984, Gimson, Lwin, & Wates:1976, Kinghan:1974).

Despite the long history of British squatting, in 1994 the government passed the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. Suddenly, trespassing became a criminal offense (Appendix). No similar law had been made about using empty buildings and property to provide housing for people who needed it. Instead of making squatting unnecessary, the government simply made it illegal. In that year, there were 40,000 squatters and of the abandoned housing, 15% was owned by the Ministry of Defense, 4.6% was privately owned, and 1.9% was controlled by local housing authorities (Ward:1994: 11 March).

Berlin

Squatting movements occurred in both East and West Berlin while the Berlin Wall was intact. After the Wall was torn down, the two movements merged to some extent. Despite tensions due to cultural differences between

the Ossies, East Germans, and Wessies, West Germans. East Berlin had many of the same problems as the other older cities; the housing infrastructure was old and dilapidated. Under the socialist state, it was not possible to buy, sell, or rent housing. Instead, all dwellings were distributed through communal organizations which were responsible for reconstruction, repairs, and maintenance. The socialized housing redistributive system did not function effectively because of state budget restrictions and long waiting lists. Because these administrative centers were constantly short of money and could not afford the expenses of renovating older buildings, a "strategy of vacancy" - abandonment - was begun. (De Soto: 1992).

Unlike squatting in other places, squatters in East Berlin were not in search of an alternative culture. The movement was not specifically based on protest of the housing system. Instead, squatters in East Berlin were individually motivated to solve their own housing problems and focused on single-unit dwellings. Throughout the decade prior to reunification, squatters were able to take over the many older buildings left unattended by the housing system and renovate them with their own labor and money. In the transitional period before reunification, a time of increased contact with the west, squatters began building communities and networks by settling individual apartments within squatted blocks of houses. In April 1990, there were seventy documented cases of occupied housing blocks (De Soto:1992:11). The movement had become more politicized in its attempts to prevent further decline within the housing infrastructure.

The system's adaptation to squatting was to place constraints on it and impede it. Squatters were able to receive contracts either allowing use of the building for a limited time or for an unlimited time and with the possibility of reimbursement for repairs. However, in order to obtain such a contract, squatters needed membership within the socialist youth organization. Those who had not registered themselves with the local police were often fined as well. Finally, the housing organizations were able to maintain their lists of vacant housing through their confiscation of squatter's self-collected lists (De Soto:1992).

The housing shortage in West Berlin was also extreme. The city had never fully recovered from the war. By the late 1970s, there were over 800 empty apartment buildings, 1500-2000 people without leases, and 40,000 "urgently in need". Between 1979 and 1981, there were 248 occupied buildings and 727 "registered squatters" in 30-40 core buildings (Mushaben:1983:131). The squatter movement gained prominence when youth, alternative, and community based action groups coalesced to protest massive housing developments, real estate and tax shelter syndicating firms, and the weakening of national rent controls and subsidies by the government. The movement experienced broad public support, politicization, and media attention when police evictions turned into riots and street fights (Katz & Mayer:1985).

West Berlin had been a magnet for "discontented youth" for decades. Its liberal government and image as an advanced, open, and decadent city

supported a large "alternative scene". West Berlin's squatters were mainly politicized students who had become involved in protest movements. Its bourgeois areas were separated from the more dilapidated neighborhoods occupied by foreign workers and youth; this was, in Castells' sense, a dual city. The urban movement developed within a large multi-organizational field. Squatters considered themselves a part of the peace and anti-nuclear movements. Unlike the squatters in the East, the movement in the West was not solely about housing, but about the creation of an alternative society (Katz & Mayer:1985, De Soto:1992).

The squatters wanted their buildings legalized. Their proposals were for public ownership of squatted houses, legalized self-management, long term leases on the buildings, and an institutionalized mediating party between the squatted houses and the state. While squatters and their supporters were attempting to activate these plans, the head of Internal Security ordered the police to continue evicting people from buildings. The state did not wish to encourage this autonomy in housing because of its negative opinion of the squatters; their "integrative capacity" was too low. Instead, evictions turned into week-long riots and the city created special squads of "peace officers" known for their size, fierceness, and four foot long clubs. The legalization movement dissolved (Katz & Mayer:1985, Coulson:1988).

Throughout the transitional period and after unification, squatting was evident in both halves of the city. The effect of reunification was that the western government and policies dominated while everything eastern was

neglected. Thus, the housing policies and approaches to dealing with squatting were remarkably similar to those that had occurred in West Berlin prior to unification. The authorities continued evicting squatters and seizing control over vacant and occupied buildings. The squatters had a common enemy. Both groups had tendencies towards active resistance, a desire to create and strengthen solidarity against official housing policies, and to increase the size of the squatters community (De Soto:1992).

Copenhagen

Denmark is a nation with only 5 million citizens and homelessness. After 1966, the government relaxed rent controls and removed restrictions on landlords. A squatting movement emerged from the environmental and housing movements when rents dramatically rose and the police gained the right to evict residents at the owner's request. Although there have been squats in other parts of the country, Christiania is the most famous (Gimson:1980).

Christiania, one of the largest and oldest squats in the world, is right in the center of Copenhagen. Prior to 1971, it was a naval base. After the military abandoned the site, squatters took over the 54 acres and 175 buildings and declared it a "free town". Christiania is free from the laws of Denmark, NATO, and the EEC. Inside the town, there are many small businesses, cultural groups, a post office, kindergarten, clinic, communal bath house, and grocery store. Christiania maintains its own sewage system.

Additional dwellings¹³ have been built, from recycled supplies, to accommodate the 1,000 regular residents and their many visitors. The town is ruled without leaders through community meetings. The rules of the town are: no violence, no hard drugs, no cars. Visitors are advised not to take pictures of the main street. Christiania has managed to maintain its autonomy despite initial public disapproval of the liberal community. In 1995, after the government realized that it could not evict the many residents, Christiania was legalized. This is the alternative, anti-cultural community that many squatters seek to create (Gimson:1980, Walsh:1995).

Squatting in the US

Although squatting in the US has not been as visible as it has in Western Europe because of the strongly capitalist housing system and societal norms privileging the private ownership of property, there is a distinctly American history of squatting. The welfare programs of the United States may in large part be a cause of squatting through their lack of provision of adequate housing. Nonetheless, they may also be the reason why there has not been a large squatting movement. Social services are controlling and foster dependency. People no longer believe that they are capable of providing for themselves and they are certainly not given the opportunity to try (Armillas:1970).

¹³ When I visited Christiania, I noticed that many of the residents earn their living by selling marijuana, hashish, and drug accessories. Despite the legal local endeavors, the town is a haven for drop outs and anarchists. In the town, there many different housing arrangements, I especially noticed the house of gay men.

Two types of American squatters identified by Peterson (1986) are those who illegally invade land or buildings out of dire necessity and those who claim squatters rights. Despite the rigidity of the property system, the US encourages a romanticization of the "pioneer" spirit; the history of squatting during the settlement of the American West is a precedent for contemporary squatters. Peterson found that those who claimed squatters rights were wealthier individuals who could afford the court costs. He claims that squatters rights allow the rich to further increase their landholdings. Although this may be true with the squatting of land, it is not true for the occupation of buildings in urban areas. Urban squatters are not wealthy people who can afford legal fees. Instead, many of the public, activist urban squatters want tenant ownership and self-management.

History: settlers and pioneers

The settlers of the Colonial and Early Republic period were squatters; they were occupying land that belonged to others. Squatting was a common way of obtaining land throughout the early years of this nation. In 1807, the President was empowered by Congress to use the army to remove squatters from publicly held lands. After 1815, squatting on public lands was universal because many of the settlers could not afford to purchase land at market prices. Squatting began to be institutionalized with the Permanent Prospective, Pre-emption Act of 1841 which enabled squatters to purchase up to 160 acres of

public land at the minimum price providing they could prove occupancy and improvement to the land (Bender:1980).

The Bonus Expeditionary Force of 1932 started one of the largest squats in US history. Over 20,000 unemployed veterans of WWI suffering during the Great Depression squatted vacant buildings and on federal land in Washington, DC in demand of Congressional payment. The BEF had its own newspaper, collective cooking and childcare, and adequate sanitary facilities. President Hoover responded the same way that authorities currently do; four cavalry troops, four infantry companies, a machine gun squadron, and six tanks in the charge of General Douglas MacArthur and Major Dwight Eisenhower removed the squatters with tear gas and set their encampment on fire (Zinn:1980). Throughout the Great Depression, "Hoovervilles", communities set up by individuals affected by the economic crisis, were visible in most towns and cities. Within these squatter communities, high levels of organization and mutual aid developed to protect and safeguard the inhabitants (Welch:1992).

Welch (1984) argues that squatting in the US is part of other shelter and housing rights activism. It is not a long term action because American squatters seek to become legal owners or tenants. Squatting is used to deal with displacement, but Welch argues, squats in the US rarely last longer than a year. Although that may be true of some American squatting movements, I would argue that it does not apply to all squatting activity. 1990s squatters have been influenced by European squatter ideals; they espouse an anarchist and anti-capitalist perspective. The 13th St. case proves that some squats have been

around for at least 10 years and that although they want to become the owners, the squatters do not wish to participate in the capitalist system, nor do they want their buildings to leave the pool of low-cost housing stock. Two types of squatting emerge from these disparate accounts. One is more innovative while the other is a more rebellious adaptation to societal strain.

Recent housing policies

Despite community opposition, the urban renewal programs of the Great Society ended the neighborhood movements. Local programs were no longer federally funded. Instead, federal tax-raised funds were distributed to state and local governments. Local authorities and reformist federal agencies lost control over the social welfare expenditures and redistribution of services (Castells:1976).

Throughout the late 1960s many squats emerged in protest of the urban renewal programs. The squatters had been displaced by the urban renewal and institutional expansion programs. They challenged both public and private land owners about their rights to evict and displace low-income tenants (Welch:1992).

In 1975, a national homesteading act was passed. Instead of developing low-cost housing options, the act was intended to redevelop neighborhoods. It neither gave tenants titles to the buildings while subsidizing repairs nor did it allow tenant self-management of government owned buildings. The act succeeded in crushing and co-opting the movement (Welch:1984).

Philadelphia: Innovation

Like the other cities mentioned, Philadelphia lost 17,400 dwellings through demolition in the 1970s. Since most of the destroyed buildings were in low-income neighborhoods, rental units were almost nonexistent in those areas. Public housing was rapidly deteriorating and 10% of the 23,000 units were left vacant despite the 14,000 people on the housing wait list. At the same time, Philadelphia's population had gained more nontraditional households and grown progressively older and poorer (Adams:1986:542).

Philadelphia had a homesteading program, but it mostly served middle class people because they were seen as more likely to be able to rehabilitate the properties than the poor people who were waiting for housing. This Gift Property program did not affect low-income residents at all. In 1977, there were 40,000 abandoned buildings in Philadelphia, most were federally owned. Milton Street, a neighborhood activist, started the first squatting movement in the city. His "Walk-In Urban Homesteading Program" housed 200 squatters into federally owned single family houses. Neighbors of the squatters were generally supportive because squatted houses reduced crime and arson of abandoned buildings. They felt that squatters improved the neighborhood by repairing rundown, uncared for houses. Because city officials could do nothing about the lack of adequate housing, after a year and a half they began supporting Street's program. Half the squatters received titles to their homes at

nominal costs, 50 were able to purchase their homes, and 25 negotiated tenant agreements (Borgos:1984:10, Welch:1992).

ACORN

ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, is a grass roots community organization established in the 1970s by welfare mothers in Arkansas. In the 1990s, ACORN has a membership of 75,000 African-Americans, Latinos, and Whites in over 500 neighborhood chapters. This direct action organization is involved in many activities like financial reform, voter registration, neighborhood safety, community reinvestment, and the improvement of housing. Its homesteading programs in Philadelphia, Detroit, Brooklyn, Chicago, Phoenix, St. Louis, and Little Rock have turned over vacant homes to low-income residents. ACORN has won the passage of a national homesteading bill and forced HUD to reform its policies and procedures to facilitate the purchase of its properties by moderate and low-income people (ACORN:1996).

Organization

ACORN established its offices in Philadelphia in 1977 and initially tried to reform the Gift Property program. When that campaign failed, ACORN began a squatting campaign to force the city to better utilize the current homesteading program. In order to recruit interested individuals, ACORN posted flyers asking "Need a House?" ACORN did not have houses, but explained to people that

the city did and that through organizing they could use the city's homesteading program for low-income people. SQUAT - Squatters United for Action Today - was formed. The individuals selected houses they wanted to squat and researched each house in City Hall to determine the ownership and status. ACORN required future squatters to "doorknock". Squatters were to talk to all their future neighbors about their plans to move in, ask the neighbors for information about the house and its owner, and request that they sign a petition supporting the squatters action (Welch:1984, Borgos:1984).

Squatting in Philadelphia was predominantly a housing/protest and self-help movement. ACORN was not the only squatters association in Philadelphia. The Puerto Rican Alliance and the Kensington Joint Action Committee had already begun by settling 125 squatters. Together the three groups challenged the city to act. The city agreed to transfer 200 vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed houses monthly to the homesteading program. After a year of pressure and negotiation, Philadelphia passed an ordinance granting legal status to families occupying abandoned housing. The statute allowed individuals to move into houses designated as public nuisances because of abandonment and tax-delinquency and enter into an "improvement contract" with the city. While the occupant made all the necessary repairs to the building, the city would try to gain the house's title. If the city was not able to gain the title, it promised to pay the squatter for all the repairs and labor time. The ordinance was not widely accepted or upheld. After six months it was concluded that the program was not working. Although 3,000 people applied

for improvement contracts, only 32 actually succeeded in signing them. ACORN almost began the squatting campaign again, but the city agreed to process applications within 2 months, provide and make accessible a list of available houses, and provide renovation grants of \$1,000 to \$4,000 (Welch:1992).

Philadelphia Model

ACORN developed the Philadelphia model of homesteading and soon expanded it to other cities. In Detroit, federally owned houses were in better condition than the ones owned by the city. This gave the program a chance to challenge the federal government and make squatting a national movement. The movement expanded to Pittsburgh, Lansing, St. Louis, Boston, Tulsa, Atlanta, Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas, Columbus, Phoenix, Jacksonville, and Columbia (SC).

ACORN conceived of homesteading as a housing program, not a property rehabilitation program. To that end, it would have to be a large scale effort. Although it was necessary to make a political point, housing people was the priority. The model required that only low and moderate income families would be eligible. Instead of focusing on the middle class recipients of most homesteading program, ACORN felt that eligibility should be based on need. Homesteaders were to be granted sufficient time to repair their homes to meet housing codes. They would receive title to the house. All major and dangerous housing code violations were to be repaired within a year and two additional years were granted to finish the renovation. Because there are structural

repairs requiring specialists, homesteaders were to be granted financial assistance for the rehabilitation. ACORN demanded a monthly quota of houses appropriate to the city's size to be made accessible by the city. Finally, authorities were to be more aggressive in foreclosing and confiscating houses (Borgos:1984). Squatters in each city signed a contract stating that they knew that squatting was illegal and they were members of ACORN, but had to find their own houses and materials. The model was adapted in each city to meet local own needs.

ACORN's national squatters campaign received media attention when it erected Tent City on the Ellipse. 200 squatters from 10 different cities lived a few hundred yards from the back porch of the White House in June 1982. ACORN held a press conference, a rally, attended Congressional hearings, and marched on HUD to initiate reform of the federal homesteading program. Although HUD was not supportive, Congress eventually passed legislation reshaping the federal homesteading program using the guidelines created by ACORN (Borgos:1984). ACORN squatters challenged notions of paternalism and dependency. In proving that housing rights are more vital than property rights, the squatters proved that low-income people could succeed. Low-income people could renovate and maintain their own homes.

Since the early 1980s, ACORN squatting has not reached media attention. Nonetheless, ACORN still exists as do many of the urban homesteading programs. Squatters enrolled in these programs are not criminalized or even deviant (except that poor people are considered deviant)

because they are homesteaders. Instead, these squatters are perpetuating societal ideals about homeownership and the benefits of private property.

ACORN type squatting probably still exists in Philadelphia. However, now there is a different type of squatting in evidence. Although the contemporary Philadelphia squatter is not exactly like the one in New York's Lower East Side, the community is similar. Both have been influenced by anarchism and squatter movements in Europe.

New York: Rebellion

As an old city, New York has a long history of squatting and homesteading. In order to create Central Park, many squatters were cleared out of the area. Concurrently, there has been a rich history of urban renewal and displacement. "Slum" neighborhoods were cleared to create the area around Times Square. Although there have been many neighborhood revitalization and homesteading programs, they have not been successful in meeting the housing needs of the population. Within New York, there are a variety of squatters and different approaches. In this section after a brief history of housing movements in the city, I will focus on the Lower East Side. That area is in the most danger from gentrification. Thus, it is the site of a huge battle between community members, urban planners, speculators, and gentrifiers.

Homesteading/squatting history

In the 1970s, there was a thriving self-help, community and tenant based, movement in New York that had grown out of the Civil Rights and Welfare Rights movements. All over New York, there were neighborhood movements advocating more local control and autonomy over housing. "Operation Move-In" was one of the early demands for tenant self-management. Adopt-a-Building in the Lower East Side (Loisaida) was involved in tenant organizing and organized "sweat-equity" based urban homesteading and community based economic development. In East Harlem, The Renigades, a former street gang, worked on a sweat equity urban homesteading program. Los Sures and The People's Firehouse operated out of Brooklyn to encourage tenant organization and squatting (Katz & Mayer:1985).

Between 1970 and 1980 over 312,000 housing units were destroyed by the City of New York. Approximately 10,000 buildings were seized for non-payment of taxes; 4,500 of these buildings were occupied by 100,000 tenants. New York's policy was to turn these *in rem*¹⁴ buildings over to a completely unprepared HPD for management. The city's goal was to return these buildings to the private market so that they could resume contributing to the city's treasury through their taxes. To that end, expenditures were minimized while tax, rent, and sales revenues were to be increased as much as possible (Katz & Mayer:1985:25).

In neighborhoods where the housing market was still active and speculation was a possibility, HPD tried to sell off the buildings. Gentrification

¹⁴ *In rem* is a legalese term for the buildings confiscated due to non payment of taxes.

occurred at the expense of neighborhoods like the Lower East Side and its community. In other neighborhoods where there was no housing market HPD allowed tenant and community ownership (Katz & Mayer:1985). It was a time of experimentation with autonomy in housing.

“Operation Move-In” was the first major squat in New York. This alternative to urban renewal on the Upper West Side protested the displacement of 112,670 African-American, Puerto Rican, and White lower and moderate income tenants from the area. Within six months of the first squatters, a single female parent and her family, having moved in 200 squatter families occupied 38 buildings in an area of 30 square blocks. Operation Move-In resulted in the creation of a community with its own vegetable market, food cooperative, coffeehouse, and community newspaper. The city responded by evicting many families, ripping out plumbing, smashing toilet bowls, and sealing off the entrances to vacant dwellings. Because the squatters had won the support of the media and general population, the city offered to build 160 units of public housing in exchange for the demolition of a 40 unit building. The squatters were divided by this offer. Many believed that the city would renege and wanted to continue occupying the apartments they had already settled. Twenty years later, the public housing had not yet been built (Welch:1992:327).

Community organizations were either incorporated into the city’s housing system or dissolved because they could not provide the services and support for which the deteriorating infrastructure was meant. There had been no intention on the part of HPD to allow tenants to control more than one building

or to have any access to policy and budget decisions. The homesteading sweat equity programs lost their grassroots nature as they fell under the authority of a housing bureaucracy attempting to alleviate its fiscal and organizational problems. The neighborhood housing movement had been institutionalized at the expense of low-income tenants. Homesteading programs became another avenue of gentrification allowing professionals to inexpensively rehabilitate their homes (Welch:1984, Katz & Mayer:1985).

In the 1980s, New York experienced renewed squatting. Non-payment of taxes, on the part of owners, brought another 12,444 properties with 38,910 occupied units under HPD ownership. HPD attempted to either sell off the buildings or allow some tenant self-management. In order to qualify for the self-management programs, buildings had to be at least 50% occupied. In many cases, the city did not maintain the buildings and even more of them deteriorated or were not eligible for homesteading programs (Welch:1992:328).

In Manhattan, there are say around 20 buildings. A few are empty right now because of the 13th St. evictions - 2 of the 5 are empty. One that I know of in Brooklyn and I would say maybe 15, that I know of, in the Bronx. The Bronx squatting scene is not really closely, only one building there is closely tied to the Manhattan squatting scene. That's because the Bronx squatting scene is a lot more immigrant based and a lot less radical. They try and go through the system to gain possession of the buildings. In my opinion, that doesn't really work. Right now 13th St. is in a legal battle which might actually gain possession. In all honesty that might set a precedent. They are a lot less radical [in the Bronx]. There are just different beliefs. We're friendly, but not that closely tied together. Maybe 500 squatters in New York. Families, everything. I wouldn't say there are no immigrants in the Manhattan squatting scene. There are a lot, but they're not solely immigrants. In the Bronx, the majority are immigrants. As the New

York Times has classified us, in Manhattan, there are white young artist types. That is not necessarily true either.

Unfortunately, the squatting scene that I'm involved with, the Manhattan one, is mostly dominated by whites. The Underground Railroad has done a good job in countering this. It's going into shelters, in Harlem, and getting them to squat in Harlem. Now most of these people are black. If that program succeeds, that would be a big boost. [Squatting] really shouldn't have anything to do with race. (Alexandri).

As Shawnee Alexandri explains, there is definitely a squatting movement in New York right now. It is quite likely that the movement in New York will only continue to grow since there is an outreach program, a varied community depending on the neighborhood, and so many abandoned buildings. The amount of media attention that has been focused on squatting, largely because of police violence and the E13th St. court case, will only supplement the current recruitment network.

Lower East Side

The LES has been a poor, working class, and immigrant neighborhood for centuries. The typical pattern of settlement was that the newest group of immigrants would move into areas left vacant by the second generation of the last group that had lived there. This process had been repeating itself for decades. Within the last 50 years, the pattern stopped. The immigrants living in the LES had no place else to go. Although the neighborhood is rapidly gentrifying, there are many older residents, Puerto Ricans, Asians, homeless people on the streets or in the parks, poor people living in public housing, and squatters in the abandoned buildings.

Gentrification

According to Neil Smith (1992), the Lower East Side (LES) of New York is a classic example of gentrification and the myth of the urban frontier. Following intense disinvestment in the area, the Lower East Side experienced some initial reinvestment between 1977-1979. Gentrification spread throughout the area despite the depressed housing market and national recession. By 1985, only the city owned buildings in the neighborhood were unaffected by this economic reversal.

The Lower East Side has been subdivided into two parts by economic revitalization. The "East Village" is the rapidly gentrifying western half of the neighborhood. Like the West Village and Greenwich Village, it is a different locale from Loisaida, the eastern part of the Lower East Side. Loisaida is the name of the largely Puerto Rican and still deteriorating area.

Gentrification portends class conquest of the new city. Urban pioneers seek to scrub the city clean of its working class geography and history. By remaking the geography of the city they rewrite its social history as a justification for its future. Slum tenements become historic brownstones, and exterior facades are sandblasted to reveal a future past (Smith:1992:89).

Gentrification is enforced by the city's policy towards homeless and "street" people and by the drug policy. Homeless people are routinely evicted from parks like Union Square and Tompkins Square and the police are cracking down on drug dealing in the LES (Smith:1992).

The history of large scale abandonment in the area means that New York City owns over 200 properties in the Lower East Side. All of these had been confiscated from their owners after years of nonpayment of property taxes (Smith:1992). The Department of Housing Preservation and Development, HPD, administers these properties. In 1981, HPD started facilitating and encouraging gentrification in the Lower East Side. Although its renovation proposals were widely protested within the community, HPD sold vacant lots and abandoned properties to private developers. The Joint Planning Council, a coalition group of over thirty LES housing and community organizations, demanded that abandoned buildings within the LES should be renovated for the use of the current residents of the neighborhood. Instead, they were presented with the city's "cross-subsidy" plan in which lots and buildings would be sold to developers who receiving public subsidies because of their agreement to market 20% of the new housing units to low-income tenants (Smith:1992).

Systematic evictions resulting from increased gentrifying efforts have resulted in mass displacement. In 1991, there were 70,000 homeless people in New York, one percent of the total population. The city does not recognize the connection between homelessness and neighborhood recapitalization.

Squatting on the Lower East Side

Squatting has occurred on the LES for the last several decades. In the 1960s and 1970s many artists, musicians, hippies, and drop outs took over

vacant buildings for short periods of time. Concurrently, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, active in Loisaida's Latino community, organized some occupations in the same area. Since then there have been different waves of squatting in the LES. In the 1990s, many squats have a diverse membership and the different waves are no longer very distinct. Nonetheless, differences between the groups remain (van Kleunen:1994). The different periods of squatting in the LES exhibit different social movement tendencies and goals.

Ethnic residents

Many of the squatters of the 1970s had no intention of staying in the abandoned or vacant buildings, however, when it became commonly known that urban renewal programs were not intended for the current residents, they decided to squat. Many of those buildings were occupied by recent immigrants. The squats on 4th St. are still occupied by the families of the initial Puerto Rican squatters. The city's homesteading program fostered a connection between homesteaders and squatters because it often would not grant titles and funding until *de facto* ownership was already established (van Kleunen:1994).

This movement can be characterized as a housing/protest and self-help movement. The squatters were innovators seeking to create their lives in this country. They were willing to live in abandoned buildings and repair them because there were no other options.

Radical squats

The next wave of squatting started in the early 1980s in response to a growth in the homeless population and accelerated gentrification. This group of squatters was more White than the previous generation. Nevertheless, the squatters were extremely heterogeneous, as they are currently. The squatters began community direct action campaigns to challenge the displacement of low-income people. In addition to being a housing/protest and self-help movement, the squatters of the 1980s were also interested in creating alternatives to capitalist society and living in intentional communities. By this time, the LES squatting community had a number of non-traditional households due to the numbers of elderly, minorities, artists, and students in the neighborhood. Surprisingly, the radical presence did not conflict with the more liberal housing groups because there were enough vacant buildings for all. These squatters were active participants in the riots of Tompkins Square Park. In their battle against gentrification, they supported the homeless in the park and offered their squats as homes to the evicted. They were aware of the report of the Kerner Commission and believed that the city was actively trying to eliminate the population of the Lower East Side in order to create a different neighborhood with all-American middle class values (van Kleunen:1994, Organizer:1994).

When the Homesteaders moved to these buildings in 1983 the properties needed much work because they had been abandoned for over five years, since 1978, and had become a neighborhood blight. ... The Homesteaders were welcomed by the

East 13th Street Block Association and Community Board 3. ... Relying on the positive support of the Neighborhood and Community Board, the Coalition commenced seeking funding and architectural help for renovation. They intentionally took title to the property by calling themselves "Homesteaders."

In 1985 David Boyle and the other original residents formed a not-for-profit corporation "Outstanding Renewal Enterprises, Inc." to seek grants for renovations. His address is listed as 539 East 13th Street. Three of the other incorporators were also living on site at 539 East 13th Street. In early 1985, separate house tenants' associations incorporated in each building, issued rules, and required monthly maintenance sums and mandatory weekly community work-shifts from each member of the building. Newly-homeless people from the Lower East Side were invited to join the homestead community. Some early Coalition members moved on and gave their places to new residents. As time passed, many of the original residents left, some to start new homesteads elsewhere on the Lower East Side, leaving the completion of the rehab work and their apartments to new residents. At no time were the properties vacant, and residents or members had to pay monthly charges into the common fund and contribute a minimum of 8 hours weekly in work on their buildings' common areas. In addition, all Coalition members performed their own work on their apartments, sometimes working as much as forty hours per week in renovation, beyond whatever wage-earning jobs they had.

Gradually, the original Homesteaders invested and improved the property. The roof for 541 was completely replaced, preserving the building from complete ruin from exposure to the elements, and saving the City thousands of dollars for demolition. Walls were completely rebuilt, and portions of the parapets replaced. With adequate funding and recognition the Homesteaders would renovate and preserve the original 19th century details of the buildings, (by contrast the LESHD [Lower East Side Housing Development] project will simply destroy the buildings' interiors, replacing them with anonymous sheet rock boxes) both interior and exterior, re-install central heating, and provide housing for low-income families. Without the intervention of the East 13th Street Homesteaders, the four buildings 537, 539, 541, and 545 East 13th St. would have fallen down or have been slated for demolition long ago. Rather than create dangerous conditions, they have ameliorated the conditions on their properties as they found them more than ten years ago (Bukowski:Appendix).

After the 1987 unveiling of the "cross-subsidy" plan, squatters and liberal housing organizations,¹⁵ like the Joint Planning Council (JPC) and Community Board 3 (CB3), had little common ground. They were no longer able to cooperate and coexist. The clashes between squatters and the conservative community board members like Antonio Pagan, director of the LES Coalition for Housing Development, have only increased in recent years. In 1994, Pagan and other conservatives introduced a new housing plan giving JPC control over 30 buildings to be redeveloped with corporate tax money brokered through his organization. Included in these 30 buildings were at least 8 squats (van Kleunen:1994).

The LES squatters' goals are to defend the squats and the housing of local residents from the state and gentrifying forces. To that end, there is an eviction watch within the neighborhood. Currently at Blackout Books, a collective anarchist info-shop, the eviction watch network attempts to notify residents and squatters of city government (and other) plans to evict squats. This eviction watch has the potential to evolve into a "community defense" network protecting all residents, local businesses, shantytowns, park residents, and community gardens from eviction and displacement. People involved in this network are engaged in a system of mutual support. Mass turnout at the evictions of squats have increased the chances that the police

¹⁵ These were the institutionalized and coopted groups which had emerged from the neighborhood movements. They were liberal forces attempting to represent the community, but often accused of selling out to capitalist and government interests.

can be turned away and people returned to their homes (van Kleunen:1994, Organizer:1994).

In the last few years, the LES squats have increased their diversity. Former immigrants and anarchist punks may squat in the same spaces. Additionally, local tenants and homeless people have become squatters. Because so many groups and types of people all live together in this endangered neighborhood, some social and cultural bridges have been created and strengthened over time. Nonetheless, the different groups are not integrated. Whereas radical/anarchist squatters may be disheartened by their inability to obtain total mobilization of the LES population, the other residents of the Lower East Side sometimes judge the squatters by outward appearances and their radical forms of activism (van Kleunen:1994).

I no longer believe that squatting, alone, can end gentrification. I think that squatters have never built strong enough bridges to the poor and working class Puerto Rican and Latin people of the neighborhood. Loesidas have been doing political organizing and anti-gentrification stuff for years, but there are still divisions between the two movements. Some squatters—some kinds of squatters, like some punk kids—by their presence, help promote this idea of the neighborhood as a hip place to live. They have made this Latino/a neighborhood a 'safe', yet hip, place for well-off college kids and yuppies to move to. Puerto Rican and Latino people had built a community of resistance over a period of decades when the punks came in and did this. Squatting's individualist ethic never allowed a real fight against racism, and a pan-racial movement to be built (Leah Lil).

E13th St.

Squatting recently gained media attention in New York when an eviction resulted in a riot. The case involves the squats on 13th St. between Avenues

A and B. Both Alexandri and Bukowski (Appendix) explain the circumstances in great detail.

On 13th street, the homesteaders claimed title by calling themselves "homesteaders" which is another way of claiming the land. Obviously they invested heavily in the properties, controlled them, secured them, and behaved in all ways as owners of the property over the years. A complication in the 13th Street case is that we are claiming title against the City. Normally one cannot claim title to land held by a municipality, unless the land is held in a proprietary capacity. Our argument is that the City has at all times held the property as a landlord and speculator.

Since the law provides that the homesteaders can claim title, the City's exaggerated response that the homesteaders are nothing but criminals is grotesque. No one broke and entered the buildings, they were abandoned. The laws of New York State provide for title under these circumstances-as long as we prove our case (Bukowski:Appendix).

The squats were scheduled for eviction when the city planned to use that space for the construction of low and middle income housing, a common tactic trying to divide the community by pitting squatters against other people in need of housing. Forty-one new apartments are scheduled to be created by the LESCHD. Of them, 12 will go to homeless families and the rest are slated for the low-cost housing market. The city planned an eviction on the grounds that the buildings were in "imminent danger to the safety and life of the occupants" (Vacate Order:1995). When the squatters filed a suit against the city, Judge Wilk of the New York Supreme Court, ordered the buildings inspected and ruled that they were habitable. He then ruled that the city could not evict the homesteaders and that the city prepare a plan to repair the buildings. Wilk wrote that for more than 10 years prior to the squatters moving in, the city "demonstrated no interest in preserving this housing stock" and had

“knowingly permitted it to deteriorate and to become a magnet for drug traffic, to the detriment of the surrounding neighborhood”. The city appealed Wilk’s decision and, in a great show of unnecessary violence, proceeded with the eviction. The 13th St. squatters are still awaiting their trial (Axel-Lute:1995, Ferguson:1995:1, Kneisel:1995).

The outcome of this case has the possibility of setting a precedent for granting squatters legal rights. If the court rules in their favor, the squats will be returned to their residents for the last decade. At least ten other squats in New York would also be able to gain ownership of their buildings. The squatters’ goal of creating a stable self-managed stock of low-cost housing for low-income people could become a reality.

CONCLUSION

Squatting poses a direct threat to the Establishment, as it raises many questions about its ability to cope with the current housing crisis. Why are there so many empty houses? Why are so many people homeless? Why is it that sound houses have to be destroyed for redevelopments which often house less people than the original buildings, and often in less satisfactory environmental conditions? Why is the cost of housing as a component of the average household expenditure steadily rising? Why is it that certain sections of society, particularly young single people are not catered for? (Gimson, Lwin & Wates:1976:213).

Because squatting poses such an enormous threat to the system of private property ownership, local and federal authorities have taken great pains to either crush or co-opt it. Since any individual can squat once she realizes that squatting will provide immediate shelter - solving her problem, making a political statement about the housing system, and having the potential to create an alternative environment outside the boundaries of society - the force of squatting can not be stopped. Although recruitment agents are necessary to mobilize people, it is possible that individuals will make the rational choice to seize abandoned buildings and create homes with no outside impetus. Because this squatting population is independent of prominent movements and tends to squat in secret, I have not been able to fully examine it.

Squatting occurs during housing crises when housing policies are inadequate and exclusive, buildings are dilapidated, and communities have

been disinvested in. Structural reasons are necessary for squatting. People choosing to squat live in dire circumstances. Squatting is a choice, but for many the only other option is the street.

I argue that Merton's typology of adaptation to societal strain explains some of the variation in squatter communities, motivations, and tactics. Used in combinations with an analysis of squatting as several types of urban social movements, it is possible to gain a richer understanding of squatting than that proliferated by the media and authorities. Squatter-innovators participate in the system and meet their housing needs in alternative ways. These individuals would most likely choose not to squat, if there were other economically feasible options. This type of squatting occurred in East Berlin, New York, and Philadelphia. Squatter-rebels have been prominent in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, West Berlin, and New York's Lower East Side second squatter generation. These squatters built communities based on anti-societal and anti-cultural goals. Many have tried and few succeeded in creating a separate stock of low-cost housing which would never participate in the housing market.

In most cases, squatter-innovators were co-opted into the system. Since their demands have been less radical, it was easier for the system to reform enough to be able to incorporate them. It has been easier for the innovators to become institutionalize because organizations willing to negotiate with housing authorities emerged from the squatter movements.

Squatter-rebels tend to not be integrated into the housing system. They bear the brunt of state authorized violence and police brutality. Major riots have occurred during the evictions of rebel squatters. However, despite pressure from housing authorities and society to conform, many rebels have been successful in the creation of alternative ways of living. Christiania is a great example of the squatter-rebels' success. It survived for twenty years as an independent entity following only its own laws. Now that it has been legalized, it will be interesting to see how it changes.

Squatting may justifiably be regarded as a type of "creative social action," embracing resistance and participation in a single process of 'reconstructing unjust social realities.' Squatters resisted, and subsequently rejected, bureaucratic abuse and discrimination in the housing system, devising alternative, innovative strategies for attaining their goal of shelter (Kearns:1981:148).

Whether or not squatters are co-opted and institutionalized, all squatters have had an impact on the developments of housing policies. Innovators have been able to enact reforms and change policies. Rebels have physically made room for their ways of living and communities in often hostile environments. Both types of squatting have implications for public policy, the housing system, activism, and personal empowerment through autonomously controlled housing.

Urban squatting is a salient issue because there is the possibility that it could become legalized. Although squatters have great hopes for the communities and programs that could be created once squatting is decriminalized, it seems unlikely that great changes in the structure of cities

and capitalist economy would occur. The greater fear is that once squatters gain legal rights, as participants in the system they risk being co-opted. Ownership of private property will not end.

Squatting cannot solve problems of neighborhood disinvestment and reinvestment. It cannot unite all oppressed people into a large movement to overthrow the governments. Squatting is an option, a way of adapting to and publicizing the housing problem. It is not a solution to the problem. As with all self-help groups, there is a danger that authorities will continue to ignore the larger structural problems because the individual housing needs are being met. They will see this as an easy solution. Low-income people have been exploited by authorities enough. They can not significantly impact the structural problems. That is the role of the government.

Squatting is a positive liberalizing force because the movement is itself an alternative to the current system, but it can also spawn ideas about other alternatives. It creates room for more autonomous decision making and control over individual lives. On a small scale squatting can empower individuals and provide immediate shelter. Through squatting, older abandoned buildings are be brought back into the housing stock and communities are be created. Given the current housing situation, squatting is a reasonable and understandable choice to make. It would not surprise me if more people started squatting.

APPENDIX

Shawnee Alexandri

interview: 11/24/95 at his mother's home in NJ.

Age: 18

Squatting in England used to be legal and they just passed a bill, just two years ago, that caused squatting to be illegal. That caused a lot of squats to be evicted. In Europe, they have whole blocks that are squats. You do not see that in America. It's totally different than in the United States. In Europe, if you open a squat that doesn't have water or electricity, it's considered a bad building. In America, if you find either of those two things, it's considered incredible.

Q: How did you get interested in squatting?

I graduated high school eight months ago. I started school at the school of visual arts in photography and I started squatting at the same time. I had been involved in squatting maybe two years before. Maybe since tenth grade because I was involved in punk rock and I was really into it. I started to go to a club, a venue, called ABC No Rio. It was an all volunteer run arts collective which has punk show on the weekend and art shows almost every month. It's just run by people. It also does the New York chapter of Food Not Bombs. I then started volunteering there. ABC is closely related to the squats. Now ABC is actually a squat. The upstairs of ABC, 156 Rivington, has been squatted for the past year. ABC had always paid the rent for the downstairs. They're in the process of trying to evict it in the courts right now. I personally think that ABC will stay there. The current trend in New York is taking on a little more than they can handle, the government. I think.

I started hanging out. A big misnomer about squatting is like if you go to Tompkins Square Park and you see a lot of kids with mohawks and punk rock and everything. People call them squatters and a lot of them do squat. A lot of them also are nomadic. A lot of them travel from city to city. They live outside.

They go where it's warm. That's not really squatting. That's closely related, but that's not squatting. People say - oh, squatters, that's dirty kids in the park". I do not look like that and I squat. I could show you a hundred people who you'd walk past and you'd think they were college students, business people, any thing. Clean-cut. Lots of squats have water and electricity.

For three years in my high school I was taking a television course and I wanted to go into the broadcast industry. Then I realized around the end of my senior year that I didn't want to live a 9 to 5 job or have to deal with corporations and big business which I do not really agree with. I am really opposed to idea of having to pay rent when you get very little in return. I am opposed to a lot of things. I am opposed to money which is another reason why I am opposed to paying rent in general or the money system that we have. A number of reasons why I chose to squat because I am in disagreement with a lot that is going on now.

Q: How did you start actually squatting?

For about six months before I graduated, I had been looking around trying, I was with a group for a while that was trying, to start to open another building. In lower Manhattan, there are very few buildings left. With gentrification happening, a lot of old properties have been renovated. It's hard to find a building that isn't totally demolished. You could go uptown. in Harlem, every other building is squattable.

In fact, we started a program called the Underground Railroad which goes into shelters and brings people out. It gets people involved in squatting. It's been pretty successful.

So I was looking for a building on the Lower East Side and I couldn't find one to open myself. I'm friends with a lot of people at a squat called the 5th St. squat because it's on 5th St. That was one of my first choices. I was going to move in there. I had a chance to move into ABC No Rio. The attitudes at some places made me choose where I actually ended up. I ended up at a squat in Williamsburg, Brooklyn which is the only one in Williamsburg. I am not sure in Brooklyn. I know there are a bunch in the Bronx. It was a relatively

new building. It had been open maybe three months when I moved in. I helped out. I did a lot of work before I actually moved in so people got to know me. There were only three people living there at the time. Now there are seven. It's a three story building.

I chose that over ABC No Rio, I said, because of attitudes. I chose that over 5th St. Because 5th St. Has an abandoned building attached to it. Which is actually good. One side they have a lot . On one side they have an abandoned building where the roof has collapsed. We tried. We went in. We cleaned it a little. There was really an insurmountable amount of work. The entire middle was in the basement. We decided that wasn't going to work. That wasn't really what we wanted to do. In case of an eviction, which 5th St. has had scares of, the police often use the next door roof to gain entrance. You can not do that on 5th St. That was very attractive about 5th St. It's much less of a worry to get evicted, but at the same time in the past in New York, on 8th St., Maybe 6 or 7 years ago, there was a building that they were doing the same thing to. They were knocking down the adjacent building and they backed a bulldozer into the 8th St. Spot. "oh, we have to tear it down. It's not safe anymore." They tried to do that to umbrella house, which is another squat. Umbrella house has a history of fighting the police very well so that didn't happen. I didn't want to deal with something like that at 5th St. So I just moved in at Brooklyn.

Q: What kinds of buildings are squatted?

Usually tenements [are squatted], what I'm in is an ex- bakery. A three floor ex-bakery. It's not zoned for residential.

Q: How do you go about opening a building?

There used to be a law in New York that stated if you could prove residence in a building for thirty days or more, then the city has to give you due process. They have to go through the court system. Any landlord, when they want to evict you, has to go through due process. That law no longer exists for the city. it has been ruled that the city, being the biggest landlord of all, does not have to go through due process to evict people from their buildings. In the

past, you'd find a building you think you might want to go into. You'd go into it at night, check it out, see how safe it is, see what's good and bad about it. Then you move a little stuff in it - some tools and some shovels - stuff to clean it up. You go in through the back door or through a back way and keep a low profile for maybe the first couple of months. Don't put a front door on it. While you're doing that, start sending yourself mail so that you write letters to yourself at this address. You put up a mailbox. In New York, if you have a cool mailperson, they'll give you mail as long as the address is on it. Once you have a couple of months worth of mail that proves you've been living there. That's what they call say proof. Then you put a front door on and become a little more obvious. You try to be friendly with your neighbors. Being friendly with your neighbors is important. Being good with your neighbors is a good thing. Sometimes you need a crowbar or bolt cutters to get your way in or pry a window to get your way in. It's not that hard. We now have electricity. We do not have legal electricity. A lot of squats go into the manhole and hook up their own electricity. Not everyone can do this. There may be 4 or 5 people in the New York squatting scene who know how to do it. Sometimes they charge and sometimes they do not. That's not a problem. Water is another story. You almost always have to do it legally which can cost around \$3000. When the city disconnects the water, they sometimes pull the pipes out of the road. Which is really ridiculous. When you want to get the water on, you have to get them to go down there and put the pipes back in. It costs you a lot of money. We're waiting to get legal electricity. What you used to be able to do in Manhattan and you can still do in Brooklyn because it's not prime real estate, is that you can go to Con Ed - they do not work together - the government and Con Ed, they should, but they do not, and go there and fill out a lease. You can go to a stationery store and buy a lease. You fill it out with landlord, you know, South First St. Tenants Association, or some bullshit. They hook you up and you pay for your electricity. Right now we're getting it illegally. It's a limited amount of electricity, but it's enough for now. We're going to have to get it legal before winter. At 7th St., police have come to the door and opened

the door and said, "OK, let's see your lease." You show the police a fake lease, they do not know shit. They leave. That's happened. That's what you do to get electricity and water.

Q: Can you describe your squatting scene? How big is it? What kinds of people are in it?

In Manhattan, there are say around 20 buildings. A few are empty right now because of the 13th St. evictions 2 of the 5 are empty. One that I know of in Brooklyn and I would say maybe 15, that I know of, in the Bronx. The Bronx squatting scene is not really closely, only one building there is closely tied to the Manhattan squatting scene. That's because the Bronx squatting scene is a lot more immigrant based and a lot less radical. They try and go through the system to gain possession of the buildings. In my opinion, that doesn't really work. Right now 13th St. is in a legal battle which might actually gain possession. In all honesty that might set a precedent. They are a lot less radical [in the Bronx]. There are just different beliefs. We're friendly, but not that closely tied together. Maybe 500 squatters in New York. Families, everything. I wouldn't say there are no immigrants in the Manhattan squatting scene. There are a lot, but their not solely immigrants. In the Bronx, the majority are immigrants. As the New York Times has classified us, in Manhattan, there are white young artist types. That is not necessarily true either.

Unfortunately, the squatting scene that I'm involved with, the Manhattan one, is mostly dominated by whites. The Underground Railroad has done a good job in countering this. It's going into shelters, in Harlem, and getting them to squat in Harlem. Now most of these people are black. If that program succeeds, that would be a big boost. It really shouldn't have anything to do with race.

There are a lot of families [who squat]. I, for a while, lived on the same floor as a mother and her three year old daughter. My friends just had their first child. They live on 7th St. They might be in their thirties, but their fairly young. I have a friend who has three kids and she's in her fifties. It's all around. I

wouldn't say I know any senior citizens who squat, but give it a couple of years and you'll be seeing some senior citizens. The movement in America is not that old. It's maybe, at most, 15 years when the homesteading program was started in New York. Both men and women [squat].

C-wise? It's kind of a cliché to say low-working class [people are the ones who squat]. I'm from a middle-class family myself, however, we weren't middle class. We weren't middle class, in fact. For a while we were, then we weren't. Now we are. I wouldn't say we were lower class, but I wouldn't say we were middle class. I do not know.

For some people, they squat because of a need. I have friends who do not have jobs, who are very poor, who need a place to live. I, if I wanted to, could live with my mom. It's a matter of me needing to get out of here and me doing something I believe in. I know that's why I squat. I know other people who squat because they need a place to live. I'm squatting because I need a place to live, but also because of my beliefs. Some people squat solely because they need a place to live, some do both.

Bulletspace is a squat in lower Manhattan that has been around for about 10 years. Bullet was the type of heroin sold on that block maybe 10 years ago and that's how they got that name. It's maybe got 14 members now. It's a small building. It's a screen printing shop on the first floor. It has art shows every so often. It's got a meeting area. It has a backyard. There are 3 kids who live there and 2 cats and one dog. That's one of the better known places just because it's like a community center. ABC No Rio is a community center and art space. Umbrella house has also been around for 10 years as a squat. They're all tax exempt because they're all community spaces. They can get grants to further improve the buildings. They all have water and electricity legally. ABC even has a boiler. That's because ABC was never abandoned. It's been occupied by artists for 15 years. HPD, the city, basically broke the boiler one winter. There was a long suit, about 5 years ago, about that. The squatters, then, fixed the boiler. It's working. It's one of the two squats in New York that have boilers. Most other people use electric heaters.

A lot of buildings have hot water because you can get an electric, propane heater. Propane is not recommended. In New York, it is illegal to have propane within a hundred feet of a residential area. You're not allowed to use it for cooking or heating.

Q: are the factions within the squatting community?

Factions within the squatting community? I think a couple days ago there was a flyer posted for a meeting for women who felt left out of the squatting scene because they felt it was dominated by men. Certain places, they have their politically correct groups. That was one reason I didn't move into ABC No Rio. Most everything is mixed together. It's not really all separated into groups.

Q: What are the different kinds of activism within the community?

There's a lot of activism. There was just a benefit for medical marijuana. We're currently active in community board meetings. ABC No Rio is going before community board right now. The community board is supposed to represent the community. In reality, they represent the politicians who pick them to be on the board. There's an hour to speak. So each person gets 2 minutes. You have 30 people who say ABC No Rio is good, do not get rid of it. Then the community board will vote to get rid of it. So at maybe three or four of those meetings, we've started going to those meetings to disrupt them and just to end them because I think the community board should be disbanded. I do not think there's a reason to go to those meetings other than to have a good time. So the other day, a friend of mine, he actually pulled a cake out of a box and threw it at the chairman of the community board's face. He was arrested. He got harassment with a layer cake on his ticket. That's what was the funniest thing. We do stuff like that. At this community board meeting, they were having a vote to stop funding. The community board has no power. They are only an advisory board. So what they say is sometimes listened to, sometimes not. In the case of ABC No Rio, the politicians would say "see the community is unhappy with this. They do not want them there. They want

them kicked out." Tompkins square park was closed for 18 months and there was a fence put around the park. The community board voted no.

Another thing we're doing a lot of activism around now is the community gardens on the Lower East Side. There's been a plan to auction off every single garden, lot, empty space in between Delancy St. And 14th St. in between Avenue A and D. It's maybe 20 gardens. Some have been there 20 years. We're trying to stop the community gardens from being taken away. We've had a number of rallies at Gracie mansion on Guilliani and his administration. They are probably one of the worst things to ever hit New York. There's a lot more.

Q: Can you tell me about E13th St.?

13th St. was started in 1984. There are five buildings included on this block. There's sixth, but that building is practically untouchable because it was started in the New York homesteading program. It's about fifteen years old. It has former actual residents of the building from when they paid rent. That building was out of the picture. The five buildings are 535, 537, 539, 541, and 545. There's a lot between 541 and 545, a garden. [Between Avenues] A and B. Last summer they were alerted they were going to be evicted in a very short amount of time. At which point they filed a suit against the city for ownership of the buildings under the clause of adverse possession, which states, if you're in control and possession of somebody else's property for ten years or more and they've known about it and actually helped you, then you can not be evicted. It's legally yours. So they had been there for eleven years and the city has given water permits to pay for water and electricity. They've given them all the permits. Yes, [they were legally paying for the water]. One of the buildings, 545, was the last one to be seriously squatted and they were getting their electricity from 539. They were only getting 40 amps, which is nothing. Even though they were getting it from somewhere else, the other place they were getting it from was paying for it. So, they filed a suit with a lawyer, Stanley Cohen, who is doing pro bono work. He and Jackie Bukowski - another radical lawyer, she's ABC No Rio's lawyer - filed a suit. There's restraining

order on any city officials from trying to evict the buildings. The city has a loophole in cases like this, called an automatic stay. When they saw that they were getting beaten in court, because they were, Judge Wills made references to the city as being opportunistic liars. Their witnesses weren't as credible as the squatters' witnesses. The city then filed a vacate order. The city had gone into these buildings and had basically passed them on inspection—a fire inspection -on the fire code. Then the city, all of the sudden, says these buildings are unsafe and we need to vacate them. They filed a vacate order for two buildings and the first floor of a third. The first floor of that building is a bicycle shop. They evicted a bicycle shop. They then brought that to the judge. The judge said, "you've got to be crazy. The squatters have proved that they do stuff better than the city. I'm going to throw these papers away." The city appealed it and went to the appellate division, which is the next court up. The appellate decided not to vote on this until September. This was in may. Until then, the city has an automatic stay. This gives the city the right to evict buildings even though the vacate order never went through. So, it's a total loophole.

It was a weekend and they do not evict people on weekends just because they would have to pay overtime. On Monday morning, we figured there would be an eviction. They usually come around six in the morning, maybe earlier, and close off the streets so people can not get there to stop anything. They evict the buildings. That Sunday night it was pouring. There might have been three hundred people on the street and barricades. The buildings were welded shut with the residents welded inside. We welded the doors shut. We put barricades all over 13th St. The fire escapes had bikes welded all over them. The police like to come in through an upstairs window with the fire department. Everything was doused in gasoline. We ended up not lighting anything on fire. I believe that was a mistake. The police had been there all night. Around ten in the morning, they finally came and arrested people - protesters in the street. They forced their way into every building on the street to make sure people weren't hiding in the buildings. They pushed a

super down his fire escape stairs. They brought a tank with them. It's a tank without a turret. You could mount a machine gun on it, but they didn't. It's a Korean war tank. They own two of them. This one, it's name is, "Anytime, Baby". They brought a tank in. They attached a chain from the tank to and overturned car, there was an abandoned car that we overturned, and they pulled it off. That's what the tank was for. They had machine guns. They were using machine guns in their little raid. They had snipers on the roof. They had three helicopters and tear gas on the corner building of 13th and Avenue B. Eventually, they had a way into the building through the roof and through the front door. They had big chop saws and they just cut their way in. These are big saws. They cut through the doors, basically. The broke into every apartment and arrested people. They kicked them out. About 31 people were arrested. We all went to court. Stanley Cohen represented us all. All the charges got dropped. We were charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest - which was not walking yourself to the paddy wagon - something about government administration, like stopping the government from working, but all those charges eventually got dropped. They weren't dropped, they were ACD, which is adjournment considering dismissal. In six months, they go off your record. You do not get anything - no community service, no fine. The two buildings are still empty with 24 hour guards on them because on two occasions we sort of surprised. The Saturday after the eviction, it was a weekend that it happened - the Monday was a holiday, and then on Tuesday morning they were evicted. The Saturday after there was a group called a nomadic festival which was leaving from New York. It was just a group of people who were going to travel across the country. The had fire shows, dancers, musicians, all sorts of people, just artists. Like a freak circus, you could call it. They were in New York that weekend. We all met at Bulletspace. There was a mask making party. We all made masks. We were going to have a march. At the beginning, the march was changed to march to 13th St. We left with about a hundred people from Bulletspace. The police were behind the police barricades and they were freaking out. People were immediately

picking up the police barricades and throwing them all over the place. They called it code one, which if you're in New York, if you're in the middle of arresting somebody, stop and come running. It's the highest code. Which is quite an honor. The three cops there call [for] backup and within five minutes, there were a hundred and fifty cops. They started macing people. Our lawyer got maced. I forgot one thing we made at Bulletspace. We made a tank out of cardboard. We wheeled it down to 13th St. It was made of cardboard. The police overturned it on some men in wheelchairs. We had some people in wheelchairs. The police overturned it on them. A police barricade was thrown into a police car window. It didn't break it, but he [the guy who did it] was maced, arrested, and beat. He had some stitches in his head. My friend, Amanda, was riding her bike with us. The cops just came and pulled her off her bike. She was in the daily news, I think, being pulled off her bicycle. They charged her with rioting. In court, they said she picked up a police barricade. On her bike? They said that she wasn't on her bike. Then they showed the daily news picture of her being ripped off her bicycle. It was pretty good. They said at the end that two cops got hurt because of flying rocks and bottles, but one of the cops cut his hand when he went to turn over the tank. There were metal studs in the frame and he cut his hands on one of those. The other cop who was hurt, when he was chasing the guy who threw the police barricade, one cop jumped over a police barricade and started running after him, another one tried and tripped over the police barricade and fell flat on his chin. He got some stitches. So the newspaper got it wrong. The eviction was big news. It was the front page of the New York times. It was the lead story in every paper. This was only a few days later. As soon as it happened, the media got there. There was a speak out in Tompkins square park. The media was there. They all had information about this.

Aother reason the guards are there now is that on July 4th, some people reentered the buildings. 541, the one next to 539. People went into 541 and, I was at 539 for a 4th of July party, we were all partying. 539? Only the first floor was vacated. We were all there having a party. We knew something was

going on next door. Of course, we didn't have anything to do with it. We knew the cops were trying to come in so we barricaded that door. We waited the evening. The cops came because people were throwing m80s off the roof, it's a firecracker - a quarter stick of dynamite, I believe. This whole bunch of riot cops formed. I was looking out the mail slot of 539. The cops took position in front of the building. All of the sudden, these m80s drop from all corners. They were held off for four hours by people in 541. All the barricades on the windows were kicked out. All the motion sensors were thrown away. The lights on the roof were thrown away. The cops had put those on to make sure nobody went in. 533, the building on the left of the squats, was entered by the cops. There were people on the roof of that building having a 4th of July party, rent paying normal people. The cops went up there and beat the shit out of them, crossed roofs onto 541 and went in there. They found nobody. Well, there was nobody in the building. So then, the police went into the bicycle shop. They had put a roll-gate in front of the bicycle shop and broke through the wall in 539. There was a temporary restraining order on it to prevent any police from entering. The broke through the wall, entered the building, and when they came to the top floor, we were all having a 4th of July party watching the cops. They walked in the door and arrested Jerry Wade. He's been an activist maybe 20 years. He goes back to the yippies, politically active hippies. He might have an arrest record of 150 times arrested, a couple of convictions. Generally, it's for activist stuff, stupid stuff. He's got a knack for getting arrested. They walk in and he starts laughing at them. They arrest him. Then they're looking at thirty of us dancing and having a good time. Cops come in with full riot gear. They go into the bathroom which borders 541 and they break a hole through cinder block. It was a window that had been cinder blocked. They break a hole through it into 541 and say, "this is how they got in." They bring the cops in and look at all of us. They say, "Do you remember him being on the roof of 541 tonight?" They look at each other and say, "Yeah, him." They arrested five people totally at random. I know for a fact that most of the people on the roof next door were not arrested, maybe one or two

of them were. People who were drunk and sleeping downstairs in 539 were arrested. They arrested 5 people at random. Nobody was actually trying to squat. It was just trying to take the building back as a direct action. The people who were in 545 and 541 had to move out. Some were in 539, some were in other buildings, some were with relatives for a while, they all found places to live, but not permanently. The next day we hear on the news, they say the names of three people who got arrested and say they are being charged with attempted murder for dropping a cinder block off the roof at a police officer. When anything fell off the roof, the cops were at the other ends of the roof. They were nowhere near the building and cinder blocks didn't fall. When the buildings got evicted, they put up a construction bridge which is scaffolding in case anything falls off the building. They say they do that so that in case anything falls off, it won't kill any people downstairs or on the sidewalk. However, the real reason for having a construction bridge is so that they can gut/renovate it. They can go in and gut the whole building, except for the actual structure. They throw it out the windows and it goes into the construction bridge. From there it's thrown into a dumpster. That's the real reason behind the construction bridges. Once we get to the arraignment, we hear that the DA laughed at the police and didn't charge anyone with attempted murder. The worst was murder, in their own home!

Q: What do you think of violence in the squatting movement?

Squatters in New York aren't violent really. If you call throwing a pie in some one's face as violent? What would you do if people came with loaded machine guns and kicked you out of your house where you'd been living for ten years? There's a point. They're not random. The squatters aren't causing the violence in New York.

Q: Generally, who owns the buildings in New York?

It's a general rule to squat city owned buildings. When you have a private landlord, they hire private thugs and they beat you up. A housemate of mine, now, had originally opened another building in Brooklyn, called Bedford

house. He had lived there 2 years. They were eventually kicked out. It's a lot easier to get kicked out when it's privately owned.

Q: Can you talk about connections with squatters in other places?

I personally am not. I haven't been involved too long. My friend Steve has been squatting for years. He knows squatters from all over the world. He's from England and he's been squatting in America for ten years. There really is not a tight connection between us and any other city, in all honesty. The closest connection is Blackout Books which is an anarchist, anti-authoritarian, info shop bookstore. They're very closely related with the squatting scene. It's an all volunteer run collective. It keeps better contact with other towns through literature basically. We have some connections in San Francisco because of Keith McHenry and Food Not Bombs. Other than that, I'm not too aware of other connections.

Q: Can you talk more about the Underground Railroad?

O squatters are going into shelters, giving slide shows of squats, and telling people what it's about. Telling people that they do not have to live in the filthy conditions that the New York shelter system is. It does nothing to get rid of homelessness. I've never asked how they walk into a shelter and do it. It's a mixed group of people. I remember one time there was a group of white squatters who went into a shelter. They were showing a groups of predominantly black people about squatting. They didn't seem really interested. Then they show a bunch of slides of black squatters. All of the sudden, people got more interested and much more involved.

Are there other programs to organize squatting?

Not really. Maybe there should be.

Q: Can you talk the presence of people with HIV/AIDS in the squatting scene?

I'm sure there is. I personally do not know any squatters that have HIV. There was a squat that was evicted a while back called Glass House. It was in an old glass works on Avenue D. Their excuse for kicking out the squat was to

make a facility for people living with AIDS. It still is empty two years later. People with AIDS who squat? I do not know any myself. The glass facility was supposed to be housing. That's another reason we try and support the needle exchange when we can. They wanted to cut funding for the needle exchange. We agree with the needle exchange, but there are too many drugs here. Why should people from NJ and Connecticut be able to come here and get needles. The Lower East Side has insight. It has some solutions to some problems. We should be proud we have that. We shouldn't get rid of it because people do drugs. There will be drugs here whether or not we have a needle exchange. I can walk down Avenue D with a uniformed officer and be offered cocaine. It's the biggest cocaine spot in Manhattan. I can walk down on Avenue B and Clinton St., that 's the biggest heroin spot. All right in the same neighborhood. There are going to be drugs. People are being paid off. It's obvious who's dealing and they do not get arrested.

Q: Drugs in the squatter scene?

There are some. In the newer squats, considered the punk rock squats, have people who do drugs. Marijuana is used quite frequently in a lot of squats. It's a rule in many squats to try to stay away from hard drugs and keep people with heavy drug problems out because it usually causes a problem.

Q: How do people within squats live together?

When a building is first opened, it's kind of a communal way of life. You have to move into one room first and keep that room warm. Once it gets to the stage of an apartment building, it could be an apartment building or it could be less than that. You could have an apartment. You could have a door that you could lock. You can do whatever as long as it doesn't harm the building. If you arrange it [there are communal arrangements].

Q: How do people support themselves?

lot of squatters work. Jobs, believe it or not. I was doing renovation for a while with a squatter, Steve. He employed me. He employs a number of squatters. There's an old school that's a community center on the first floor and basement. There are art studios upstairs. They employ a lot of squatters

in the basement because they have an old coal burner and they need people to shovel coal. A lot of people do construction. A lot work at temp agencies. A lot of college students squat.

Q: Do you find that people confuse you with street kids?

Yeah, I've told some friends and they think I'm going to become a bum. No, those people live in the street. They're homeless. I have a home. I live in a building. I dumpster dive. Lots of squatters dumpster dive. There's a bakery in Tribeca called the Tribeca Oven that every night throws away five garbage bags of day old bread. Why wouldn't anyone do that? It's really stupid. Very easy to eat for free. It really is.

Q: What are your ideological beliefs?

I volunteer at anarchist book shop. I do not know if I consider myself an anarchist, though. In theory, my ideas are rather radical. In reality, I do not think those ideas of mine could actually work in this society. I think it's gone way too far to ever go back. My basic theory is to just cope the best you can and that's what I'm trying to do. It's like, money is one of the roots of all evil. Close to it, I think.

Q: have you learned from squatting?

I could renovate your house. I learned a lot of skills like that. I've learned that you do not need a nine to five job to survive. You do not need to go to college. You do not need everything that society tells you need to survive. You do not need to take a shower everyday to survive everyday. There are lots of other ways of living, that I would prefer to live as opposed to what people believe today.

Q: you expect to continue squatting?

I could see myself squatting in ten years. It's what I believe. It's a big concern, always the threat of eviction. You're less likely to bring stuff there, valuables. At the same time, if 13th St. pans out in a good way. It should. It just got a favorable decision in its pre-trial hearing - they had enough evidence to take it to a trial. If that pans out, I could name five or six buildings that have a legitimate ten year claim. It's probably more than that. Umbrella house,

Bulletspace, 5th St., 7th St., there are three other buildings on 7th St., Serenity, 10th St., all five buildings on 13th St., and the sixth building on 13th St., that makes fifteen buildings that have a ten year claim. If those four buildings, that are on the lawsuit, get recognized as legal tenants, there's a good chance that ten other buildings could file suits against the city. There's no way the city is going to handle ten separate suits by ten different buildings for ownership.

Q: What happens once they get legalized?

They own the building. They would have to pay taxes. At the same time, in all likelihood, a lot of these buildings I just do not see paying taxes. That's a step you take care of when you get to it.

Q: Are these houses maintained by the people who live there? Are they in good shape?

Yeah, some of the ones that have been there longer are. Some of the ones are nicer than this apartment you're in, believe it or not. I just hope that this [E13th St.] does pan out because that'll prove that squatting can lead to permanent housing, which would be good. If they start a homesteading program that actually worked and they followed through with it. There would be no homeless people left in New York. You can conceivable take care of a homeless problem. A lot of the homeless people in New York belong in a mental institution and have been let out for lack of funding or lack of room. A lot are drug users. This is a totally other problem. They add to the housing problem, but it's a totally other problem. You couldn't solve their problems by giving them a house. It couldn't take care of the entire homeless situation, but it could take care of a large chunk. I guarantee you that a squat after two years is nicer than a lot of the low income apartments you can rent. I've been in a bunch of low-income apartments and they're falling down. You pay a lot of money for them and get shitty service from your scumlord. You pay somebody to do something and they do not do it. New York is going to start a minimum \$400 rent. Which mean that people who have been in apartments for ten or fifteen years and are paying \$150 more or less all of the sudden will be jacked

up to \$400 a month for older people who do not have any source of income, for poor people who can not afford it.

There's a big scene in [New York] and it's gotten a lot of attention because of 13th St. I hear Detroit has a big squatting scene. I hear it's practically legal in Detroit. Philadelphia has a big squatting scene. California doesn't really. San Francisco, liberal San Francisco, they got one of the craziest mayors I've ever heard of anywhere. California doesn't have a large squatting scene, but they have a large street population because it's always warm. Minneapolis, there's a lot of squatting. I'm sure you have the kind of squatting in Maine where you just find a plot of land and build a house and in more backwoods areas. I'm sure every big city has a squatting scene.

PENAL LEXICON HOME PAGE

SQUATTERS, TRAVELERS, RAVERS, PROTESTERS AND THE CRIMINAL LAW

Part V of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 creates a series of new criminal offenses. These could potentially have the effect of criminalising a large number of people, including homeless persons squatting in empty properties; travellers living in caravans on land other than authorised official sites; those organising or attending 'raves'; and people participating in a wide range of demonstrations or public protests. Most of the new offenses are imprisonable, while others are punishable with a fine.

The Penal Affairs Consortium considers that it is inappropriate to subject to criminal penalties those involved in the wide range of activities covered by these new offenses. We are particularly concerned that the availability of prison sentences in some cases, and the likelihood in other cases of imprisonment for failure to pay fines, will lead to the use of prison for activities which do not deserve to be criminalised. This will increase the strains on the prison system at a time when the pressure of numbers is already severe and steadily increasing. In our view, this is a misuse of the penal system. We hope that the police, prosecutors and the courts will apply the new laws with discretion and restraint, to avoid the inappropriately harsh treatment of people who in our view should not be processed through our police stations, courts and prison cells.

We consider these provisions in more detail below.

SQUATTERS

The Act creates an offense of failure to obey an interim possession order. A squatter commits the offense if he or she is on premises as a trespasser and fails to leave the premises within 24 hours of the serving of an interim possession order or returns to the premises within one year. The offense has a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment.

The creation of a criminal offense of failure to obey an interim possession order is a wholly inappropriate use of the criminal law. Surveys have shown that the vast majority of squats are empty properties, rarely owned by private individuals, which have been occupied by people who cannot find or afford anywhere else to live and have no practical alternative. A survey in 1991 by the Advisory Service for Squatters of 2,213 squats found that only two were owned by private individuals. 1,640 were owned by local authorities, 365 by housing associations, 145 by commercial owners, 53 by government and public bodies, four by church bodies, and in four cases ownership was disputed.

The new offense will be committed after the owner of the property has obtained an 'interim possession order'. Home Office Ministers have promised that alleged squatters will be given notice that an application for such an order has been made and that they can make written representations. However, they have no right to be present at a hearing at which they can present their case and contest the landlord's evidence before an order is granted. Once the order has been made, they will then be forced to leave their accommodation at very short notice on pain of committing an imprisonable offense.

Although in theory it would be possible to achieve reinstatement by applying subsequently for the order to be set aside, a full hearing of the matter will be possible only after the occupiers have left the property. They will be forced to leave first, and only then will they be entitled to a hearing at which they can argue that they should never have been asked to leave in the first place.

24 hours is a wholly unreasonable period in which to require people to gather their possessions, leave their home and find somewhere else to live, making them liable to prosecution and criminal penalties if they do not do so. Sudden eviction is a distressing and shocking experience: in the case of the estimated one-third of squats which house families with children, the distress will be even greater. If people squat to solve their homelessness problem, they are unlikely to have enough money for a deposit on private accommodation. If they are evicted, especially at 24 hours' notice, they will have to live on the streets, find somewhere else to squat or, if eligible, apply to the local authority for housing with a resulting insecure stay in cramped bed and breakfast accommodation.

The procedure is almost certain to be used in some cases against legitimate occupiers who are in fact entitled to be there. There is a real prospect of unscrupulous landlords misusing this procedure to evict tenants or others with a right to occupy. Even a legitimate occupier would still have to leave his or her home within 24 hours of the making of an interim possession order or be arrested. After the upheaval of sudden eviction and the distress of having to find somewhere else to stay, many will be unable or unwilling to start a complicated legal action against their former landlord in order to achieve reinstatement.

The legislation is unnecessary. In the rare case where a residential occupier has been displaced from his or her home by squatters, or has a freehold or leasehold interest in the property and requires it to live in, they can speedily evict squatters (who are subject to criminal penalties if they do not leave) using procedures provided by the Criminal Law Act 1977. Other cases cannot reasonably be said to be so urgent as to justify a procedure which will render people homeless and make them liable to criminal penalties before they have any opportunity to state their case to a court. For those other than residential occupiers, existing civil procedures can result in possession within one month (in cases of urgency under expedited proceedings the period can be

substantially less than one week), while giving both parties a chance to argue their case before requiring the occupier to leave the premises.

The 1994 Act exempts residential occupiers, or people acting on their behalf, from legal provisions penalising the use of violence to secure immediate entry into premises when someone on the premises is opposed to their entry. It will become legal for any person to 'use or threaten violence for the purpose of securing entry' to premises provided they have a signed and witnessed statement from the owner that a tenancy agreement has been signed for the property or that the owner or a tenant have been displaced from their residence. There have been instances of local authorities forging such statements for the purposes of swift eviction under the 1977 Criminal Law Act. This practice could increase (particularly where private landlords are involved), with the added threat of violent eviction, under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.

People squat because they are homeless. Rather than criminalising squatters, the better approach would be to enact measures to deal with homelessness, which is the root of the problem. Organisations concerned with homeless people argue that this should be done through measures such as increased housebuilding and renovation of publicly owned property; the encouragement of more licensing of disused and neglected property; an expansion of self-build schemes; and the restoration of housing benefit and income support to 16 and 17 year olds and students, so that they are not forced by poverty to squat or live on the streets.

Police spokespersons have been far from enthusiastic about their role in these procedures. Mike Bennett, Chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, has commented:

'I can foresee police involved in the forcible eviction from premises and those premises remaining empty, boarded up and people saying: "was it necessary?" I can see the problem of making criminals of people who are desperate to get their lives back in balance, someone who has been made redundant, someone who squats in premises, who pays for gas, electricity and water - along comes a policeman and evicts them. That's not what I joined the police for and I do not think a lot of people did.'

Where a conviction for failure to obey an interim possession order is followed by a prison sentence or by imprisonment for fine default, the Prison Service too will be placed in an inappropriate role - that of detaining in penal custody homeless people or social casualties who have fallen foul of the law through seeking somewhere for themselves and their children to live.

CONCLUSION

In the view of the Penal Affairs Consortium, the provisions of Part V of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 involve an inappropriate use of the

criminal law and the penal system. The criminal law should not be used to harass the homeless, social casualties or those with unconventional lifestyles. It has been argued that these provisions are likely to contravene a series of Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights governing rights relating to discrimination, privacy, family life, the peaceful enjoyment of possessions, the cultural rights of minorities, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

We therefore favour the repeal of Part V of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. In the meantime the Act gives local authorities, the police and other agencies wide discretion in its application. Some local authorities and police forces have drawn up guidelines and procedures designed to apply the law in as fair and humane a fashion as possible, and we commend this approach. In applying the new laws, the police, local authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts should use their discretion to ensure that squatters and travelers are not evicted from empty properties or unoccupied land unless there is some other suitable place for them to go; that peaceful protesters and ravers are not subjected to unnecessary and inappropriate criminal prosecution; and that those prosecuted for the new offenses are not added to the growing number of minor offenders held in overstretched and overcrowded prisons.

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ADVERSE POSSESSION

Adverse possession is a simple legal concept that dates back to the code of Hammurabi. Under ancient laws if a person left his land for three years and another cultivated it, the land belonged to the new person who cultivated the land. The concept endured through the Romans and to merry old England which codified it into law around 1000 AD. We incorporated the British Common Law as colonies. You can see in a new land that adverse possession was a good way to insure settlement and progress. It also evenly distributed the land, preventing the land from being gathered into a few hands at the top. New York State codified the concept into law. The law provides that those who openly and hostilely [sic] possess land for ten years can petition for title. The philosophy is that if the true owner neglects his duties as owner for ten years, then the title should vest in another to prevent abandonment of ownership responsibilities. The twist is that you must claim ownership, and should not acknowledge that title belongs to another. In actuality, it is impossible to know what the state of mind was of the possessor after time passes, so usually outward signs of ownership- improvements, control of the site, suffice to show claim of title and ownership.

On 13th street, the homesteaders claimed title by calling themselves "homesteaders" which is another way of claiming the land. Obviously they invested heavily in the properties, controlled them, secured them, and behaved in all ways as owners of the property over the years. A complication in the 13th Street case is that we are claiming title against the City. Normally one cannot claim title to land held by a municipality, unless the land is held in a proprietary capacity. Our argument is that the City has at all times held the property as a landlord and speculator.

Since the law provides that the homesteaders can claim title, the City's exaggerated response that the homesteaders are nothing but criminals is grotesque. No one broke and entered the buildings, they were abandoned. The

laws of New York State provide for title under these circumstances-as long as we prove our case.

Normally this type of case occurs in the suburbs. Someone builds their garage on someone else's land either intentionally or otherwise. After ten years someone discovers the mistake, so they petition the court for title-and usually get it. no one dream of screaming "criminal", and bring out the tank in that situation.

The reason the City is behaving in such a completely fascistic manner is that they are scared shitless. They have mismanaged the property of the people of the City for years, blamed high rents on the greedy landlords, when in actuality it is the City's stupidity which is to blame.

Now a group of people have actually called their bluff, and claimed title for property that they abandoned twenty years ago. If we actually win title in the Court of Appeals, the City is afraid they will not be able to hold land in trust for years so local politicians have some juice with local contractors when development money appears.

The City of New York under its Department of Housing Development and Preservation (HPD) currently admits to holding more than 2000 buildings vacant, comprising some 17,000 dwelling units vacant for decades, while bureaucrats dither over how to spend available funding. Meanwhile, families sleep on plastic chairs in city offices.

I know this because I am an attorney representing some 66 adults and ten children who sought a different housing solution rather than wait for a government hand out. They are Homesteaders on East 13th Street in buildings abandoned by the City in 1978. (East 13th Street Homesteader's Coalition et al v. Deborah Wright, Commissioner of New York City Department of Housing, Development, and Preservation et al. Although my clients have been on site for over 10 years, and have enjoyed broad base community support and repeatedly requested assistance in the form of loans to repair the buildings the City has declined to answer their requests for assistance.

Now the City wants to use government funds to throw the Homesteader's out without notice and gut rehab the buildings at tremendous cost and give these apartments to what they term "the deserving poor." - Those who have quietly waited on a list for a low cost apartment. Only 13 of the newly renovated apartments will go to what is termed "homeless" - but my clients, all low income persons with less than \$13,000 yearly income, will become homeless.

This scenario exemplifies what big government does to poor people seeking to help themselves. Rather than encourage this type of resourceful American spirit it is crushed. Perhaps under a more enlightened and pro-citizen city government, the East 13th St. Homesteaders' Coalition and the example they set would be used as a model for harnessing the tremendous energies and untapped human potential laying fallow today in our nation's inner-city neighborhoods. It requires but little creative thinking to imagine any number of scenarios whereby the Homesteaders' Coalition and the spirit they embody could be embraced by the City and put to good use.

Background Summary Of the Properties

When the Homesteaders moved to these buildings in 1983 the properties needed much work because they had been abandoned for over five years, since 1978, and had become a neighborhood blight. They were rat-infested, with rotting interiors and severely damaged floors and walls. Everything of value had been stripped away by looters -- copper pipes, radiators, toilets, kitchen appliances, ornamental stone work, even the marble treads from the staircase. One building, 541 East 13th St., lacked a roof; 545 was a crack den, and in 1984 the building at 539 East 13th St. was a murder site. Most of the buildings, prior to the homesteaders taking control in 1984, were used by drug sellers and users as crack dens and shooting galleries, with ready access to the infamous drug traffic of Avenue B and the surrounding neighborhood.

The Homesteaders were welcomed by the East 13th Street Block Association and Community Board 3. Contemporaneous letters of support from

the Borough President, The Community Board, the East 13th Street Block Association, and the Upper Lower East Side Neighborhood Association attest to their beneficial effect on the neighborhood and express support for their efforts. They intentionally took title to the property by calling themselves "Homesteaders." Contrary to the City's contention, Homesteading is a term older than, and with broader meaning, than the crabbed meaning attributed HPD's Urban Homesteader's Program.

Relying on the positive support of the Neighborhood and Community Board, the Coalition commenced seeking funding and architectural help for renovation. In 1984, other organizations were invited to help renovate the buildings and to submit applications through the community board for funding. The Hispanic Busdrivers Association and the Nirval group were two of those organizations. Marissa applied to the Community Board and at David Boyle's request, did not list Mr. Boyle as a resident.

In early 1985, separate house tenants' associations incorporated in each building, issued rules, and required monthly maintenance sums and mandatory weekly community work-shifts from each member of the building. Newly-homeless people from the Lower East Side were invited to join the homestead community. Some early Coalition members moved on and gave their places to new residents. As time passed, many of the original residents left, some to start new homesteads elsewhere on the Lower East Side, leaving the completion of the rehab work and their apartments to new residents. At no time were the properties vacant, and residents or members had to pay monthly charges into the common fund and contribute a minimum of 8 hours weekly in work on their buildings' common areas. In addition, all Coalition members performed their own work on their apartments, sometimes working as much as forty hours per week in renovation, beyond whatever wage-earning jobs they had.

In 1985 David Boyle and the other original residents formed a not-for-profit corporation "Outstanding Renewal Enterprises, Inc." to seek grants for renovations. His address is listed as 539 East 13th Street. Three of the other incorporators were also living on site at 539 East 13th Street. Gradually, the

original Homesteaders invested and improved the property. The roof for 541 was completely replaced, preserving the building from complete ruin from exposure to the elements, and saving the City thousands of dollars for demolition. Walls were completely rebuilt, and portions of the parapets replaced. With adequate funding and recognition the Homesteaders would renovate and preserve the original 19th century details of the buildings, (by contrast the LESCHD project will simply destroy the buildings interiors, replacing them with anonymous sheet rock boxes) both interior and exterior, re-install central heating, and provide housing for low-income families. Without the intervention of the East 13th Street Homesteaders, the four buildings 537, 539, 541, and 545 East 13th St. would have fallen down or have been slated for demolition long ago. Rather than create dangerous conditions, they have ameliorated the conditions on their properties as they found them more than ten years ago.

The "deserving" poor are every person who needs a home, not just people who put their name on a list for a lottery at 200-to-one odds while the city holds properties vacant. These particular deserving poor people have given their lives and hearts and resources to the renovation of the buildings. They relied on the early support of the Community Board for encouragement in their activities. Over \$500,000.00 of sweat equity--labor, money and materials--has gone into the buildings, in order to give themselves and others safe, affordable homes and a community to be proud of. They exemplify the generous resourceful American spirit that national government seeks to revive. If the City is worried about a free-for-all in building takeovers, let it set up an efficient mechanism for the timely turnover of properties. Perhaps under a more enlightened and pro-citizen city government, the East 13th St. Homesteaders' Coalition and the example they set would be used as a model for harnessing the tremendous energies and untapped human potential laying fallow today in our nation's inner-city neighborhoods. It requires but little creative thinking to imagine any number of scenarios whereby the Homesteaders' Coalition and the spirit they embody could be embraced by the City and put to good use.

Unfortunately, the "heart of HPD's mission" seems at this time to be a policy that holds some 2000 abandoned buildings and 17,000 dwelling units vacant for decades, while bureaucrats dither over how to spend available funding. Meanwhile, families sleep on plastic chairs in city offices.

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Leah lil

1. Are you a squatter? If not, then what is your involvement?

No, I'm not. I actually spent a year living in one of the apartment buildings on the Lower East Side that had been bought up, renovated and had the rent jacked up extremely high in the early eighties by the Lower East Side Housing Development Corporation, the real estate operation owned by Antonio Pagan, neighborhood city council representative and pro-gentrification asshole, the man who was behind the eviction of 13th street and so many other squats. I moved in before I knew what was going on because it worked out that I was gonna be paying \$320, which was an amazing deal for living in Manhattan. My involvement I could get very poetic about, but suffice it to say that I lived in the neighborhood and was really angry over the gentrification and attempts to push poor people out that were and are going on. I was arrested at the 13th St. eviction, and was involved in the two attempts to retake the squats last summer.

2. How did you first get interested in squatting? What about it appeals to you?

I got interested in squatting out of my involvement in LES-style anarchopunk stuff, and out of a love for the neighborhood. I worked at Blackout Books, a volunteer-run anarchist bookstore started in the fall of 1994, from when it started to maybe March in 1995, when I was doing too much student anti-COA organizing to have time anymore. Working at Blackout it was impossible not to know what was up with the squatting situation because Blackout was such a hangout and organization space for squatters. Living in the neighborhood, it's impossible to ignore the division between yuppies and rich hipster and street people and squatters. It's impossible to ignore the gentrification. It's pretty much all over now; it is virtually impossible to find cheap rent in the LES. The developers have gotten real close to winning, because if you are working poor now you cannot live in Manhattan. But when I first moved to New York, I had this sense of the LES as a refuge, of this little

wild garden in a corner of the city that wasn't filled with rich people, where there was a community, of people helping each other and creating stuff and doing political organizing. When I moved out of the dorm and onto 2nd street and B, I would get so enraged because I could see that getting commodified. Month by month, I could see the process of neighborhood businesses getting bought out by yuppies, of more jocks from Jersey in Nirvana hats coming down every weekend, of stepped up cop harassment—cops pushing people panhandling out because it was scaring away tourists who wanted to come down and drink overpriced coffee. Like Seth Tobocman, a cartoonist for WW3 zine who's done a lot of work about the neighborhood says, it really is a war in the neighborhood. As I worked at Blackout and got to know people who squatted, I saw it as a real solution to the problem of a gentrifying neighborhood. No rent, creating community with the people you live with taking over and fixing up abandoned buildings the city is letting rot until they can remodel and sell it for a profit. I saw squatters, more than anything, as who were fighting to keep intact the neighborhood.

3. What happened last spring? How did you come to be at E13th St.? What did you see there?

Last spring was a big surprise to me. Until the night of the eviction, I had no conception that an eviction would occur. I'd been aware of the 13th St. Squatters' suit all fall and was excited because it really looked like they'd win. The eviction order came out of nowhere, for me. In reality, the city and the cops knew how dangerous it would be if 13th street won. Squatting would be legal. The turning of the LES into a rich neighborhood would have been dealt a huge blow. And poor, radical, angry people would still be living in the core of NYC.

I came to be at 13th street because I went up to see some friends of mine, on the spur of the moment, and the person whose house we were at got a call from eviction watch, a phone tree network that calls supporters when a squat is threatened with eviction. We all decided to go down and support the blockade. When we got down there, the block was filled., It was maybe 2, 3 in

the morning. There were about 300 people there. I was scared. People were walking around saying "yeah this is gonna be another Tompkins square riot!" Which scared me, because people got the shit beat out of them at Tompkins and there is no way to win a riot against the cops. The best you can hope for is surviving or scaring them off. Barricades were being set up. People were chain smoking. We could see lines of police from far off. At first, they hadn't sealed the block—we could go to the house of one of my friends to make calls and get food and leave our stuff, and that was a few blocks away. Barricades were constructed - out of wood, garbage. At first the mood was frantic—we thought the cops were coming through any moment. That didn't happen, and people started tricking away. A lot of people had been there all night and needed to go to work or get sleep. By 7, tons of people were trickling away—they figured we'd stood the cops off. Around 100 people stayed. We were all waiting for 9 am, when the courts open and Stanley Cohen, the squatters' lawyer, could try and file an injunction against the eviction.

The cops had sealed off the block maybe around 6 am. We were gassed at one point. We could see snipers holding assault rifles on the roofs. The media was in and were getting it all down, which made me hopeful. The other thing that made me hopeful was the drumming. Since the barricades went up, people had been metal jamming on the barricades. Maybe its just me, but it felt like the heartbeat of the standoff. Like as long as we kept drumming, we could not lose, we had some kind of power. I drummed for two hours straight, at least. It was the first time I'd ever drummed, and it was intense for me. I drummed out so much rage at the cops, so much of the pain and frustration I was feeling, and so was everyone else there. Nine o'clock came, and nothing happened. Stanley [Cohen, the lawyer] had not been able to get the injunction, despite what we would find out later—that the whole eviction was illegal, no order was ever authorized. More people got scared and trickled off. There were hundreds of cops. I was terrified, but would have felt like a traitor leaving. The cops started gradually pushing up to the middle of the block, in front of the squats. This is very important: the news media,

which had been there all along, was forced off the scene by cops, getting clubbed in some cases. People had camera lenses broken. Finally it was fifty of us in a human chain that didn't even stay in front of all the squats. They brought the tank in—dragged off neighbor's cars, ran over shit just for the hell of it. They gave us a warning, mostly just stood there smirking and taunting us for a while. It was clear that we were going to lose. Finally, they ripped our hands away from each others, and the rope, and ragged us away to wagons. From inside, we could hear them using a chainsaw and blowtorch to get into welded shut doors. I could see out the crack in the wagon's doors that they had gotten into the garden between two squats and were cutting into trees and bushes, trashing shit just for the hell of it. Afterwards, they deliberately did stuff to ruin the building. They chopped holes in the roof, damaged the drainage system, so even if people get to move back in—which actually is possible—they'll have to undo so much damage....

4. From what you have seen, how would you describe the New York squatter scene/community?

5. How does the community break up along lines of class, race, gender, or sexuality?

These are pretty much the same question for me. A lot of white punks, and it's male dominated, but there's exceptions to this rule, big ones. Class is mixed. Yeah, a lot of the squatpunk come from middle class families, but they're not all spoiled brats who are just trying to live wild—a lot of them come from fucked-up, abusive families and leaving meant survival for them. There are a lot of exceptions to the white, male punk rules. There are a lot of women, a lot of strong women in the scene. A lot of artists and radicals. And, no shit, but not everyone's white. There is a good number of squatters of color. As for queer stuff, there's a bunch of queer squatters, too, but a lot of people aren't out. There's supposedly this group of squat dykes called the NY hags (there's a SF chapter, too) but I never met any of them, or anyone who knew about them.

There is strong denial and resistance to talking about race, class, gender or sexuality in the squat scene. There's an ethic of individualism that I think people feel makes questions of raced/gender/sexuality/class irrelevant. It's a typical punk argument—you know "who you are as a person is so much more important than your race." I.e., Hey, we're not racist—anyone can be a white boy if they try hard enough! I felt freed by it for a while, but I couldn't put my south asianness, queerness, or feminist woman-ness out to pasture forever. I got hit with a lot of racism, sexism and homophobia when I came out about these things, on the one hand, and a sense that I was betraying the wonderful community by making a fuss—that I was just oversensitive and crazy when I felt isolated and erased by people's supposed 'humanism.' That's why I am no longer involved in punk or much white anarchist stuff. That and the fact that I no longer believe that squatting, alone, can end gentrification. I think that squatters have never built strong enough bridges to the poor and working class Puerto Rican and Latin people of the neighborhood.

Loesidas have been doing political organizing and anti-gentrification stuff for years, but there are still divisions between the two movements. Some squatters—some kinds of squatters, like some punk kids—by their presence, help promote this idea of the neighborhood as a hip place to live. They have made this Latino/a neighborhood a 'safe', yet hip, place for well-off college kids and yuppies to move to. Puerto Rican and Latino people had built a community of resistance over a period of decades when the punks came in and did this. Squatting's individualist ethic never allowed a real fight against racism, and a pan-racial movement to be built.

6. Are there networks among squatters that are specifically based upon these identities? How do they work? What are some conflicts within/between them?

Not that I know of. There's an informal thing going with some female squatters, a friendship network, but nothing more organized or focused. There's very little all-woman organizing, and no organizing of nonwhite or

queer squatters that I know of. Where there is, it's queer and female punk organizing, with stuff like riot grrrl and rpines magazine [sic]—and all of that is very disconnected from squatting. It's a radical thing, not a squat thing.

7. Do you know of any specifically women's, queer, etc.... Squats? What is their history - how long have they been around? Why did they start? What is their role in the squatting scene?

There was an attempt at making an all-woman squat a few years ago, which didn't succeed—I do not know anything beyond that—and me and my then-lover, Joe Scott, tried to star a queer squat this summer, which failed mostly cause Joe turned into an abusive asshole and alienated everyone and was forced to leave town.

There's one thing that I do not understand entirely that's why I am writing this thesis after all. I've been thinking of squatting as a movement for housing and against gentrification. What I do not get is how people are getting into it through the punk scene?

To answer your question—squatting is different in different cities. A lot of homeless people do it independent of any 'movement', just to survive. It differs a lot from city to city. The way so many punks get into in NYC is because so many runaways kids end up here. A lot of runaways are punk or metal kids, or at least used to be before nirvanafication—that was the way you rebelled if you were white and middle class. Even if you're not, if you run away you find a big punk runaway culture. You get into punk because the shows are cheap and there's this culture already in place and the people who are your new family are into it. There's a tendency in north American punk, at least, called anarchocore, or anarchopunk. Bands like Crass and Chaos UK in the early eighties started writing hard-core music with anarchist political lyrics—taking 'fuck society' one step further and trying to build a movement, give a direction to the rage, or something. Squatting ties into a lot of anarchist thought in emphasizing making your own solutions, not relying on the government, private property is not sacred, housing and taking care of people

is. Anyway, street/gutterpunk get into squatting cause they need a place to stay, as well as a community, some sense of home. They get into the politics behind squatting in part through anarchocore a lot' also through chaos punk—a tendency inside punk that's all "fuck society, no rules, do what you feel like" individual rebellion style, (which often has a lot of fucked sexist and racist dynamics to it—it's the white male rebel archetype, Jimmy Dean in spikes and a mohawk.) But not all squatters, even within 'organized squatting' are punks. Please please please understand this—a lot of squatters are of color, not interested in punk at all et cetera. There's a group called the Underground Railroad Movement in NYC I heard about a while back—all black and Latin/o squatters, which have real different concerns and a lot of deep differences with the LES punk squatters.

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