

RUIJME UTILITIZIEREN ATE
AOUT 2013

utilising space



Brighton squat trial updates



This zine has had a few missed deadlines and one was the trial back in April of the three squatters arrested in September last year, just after squatting in residential buildings. They were the first people to plead not guilty to the new offence and we wanted to make a big deal out of it. In the end, no-one else really cared but the public gallery was packed every day as we watch the magistrates struggle to understand what the fuck was happening. The police lied as they always do but looked rather uncomfortable in their new role as property guardians.

Their amateur video interview with the wanker entrusted with keeping the building empty was cute but two squatters walked free, since there wasn't any evidence that they were living in the building. The case was then adjourned and unfortunately (also rather amazingly), the third squatter was later found guilty, the sole extra evidence against him being that a cop said he lived there!! It was really a bullshit judgement which I hope a judge will overturn. The appeal is in motion, it's been adjourned once but should happen on October 30/31.

On the Friday night, Dillinger Escape Plan are playing Concorde with Maybeshewill (who I'm listening to now as it happens) so hopefully we'll get the conviction overturned and a useful precedent set regarding how residential and living are defined legally. That would be a good start to the weekend Halloween festivities.

In other news, we was robbed!! Unfortunately the glitter assault case has been dropped. I'm pretty saddened by this news (and the defendant is too!), that would have been a great court case, awash with glitter no doubt as the prosecution tried to prove that Robert Nemeth (Weatherley lackey and wannabe architecture critic), who was glittered then carried on making his speech, actually was victim to an assault by beating.

Also the saga of Mike Weatherley getting harangued off-campus continues, with one person being charged under some section of the public order act for calling Weatherley a coward (I think they wanted to claim that he threw a rock at another lackey but there isn't any evidence for that ... because it didn't happen ... and I guess the idea of an MP getting caught out lying in a courthouse doesn't seem that smart on reflection). The other people appear to have had their charges dropped, which is great. Already the Twattaverse is awash with the tag **#MikeWeatherley-isaCoward** and it seems people are pretty outraged, which is good. The trial will be end of October (unless it gets adjourned of course! they do owe to postpone!)

MORE UPDATES on ROOFTOPRESISTANCE.SQUAT.NET

using space - an occasionally published zine about squats, social centres and alternative ways of living

All previous issues can be found online at zinelibrary.info or northern-indymedia.org/zines

Using Space One was released in November 2006. It is 24 pages with cover and contains an account of various visited social centres in Europe, with an indepth profile of the Poortgebouw in Rotterdam.

Using Space Two was produced in June 2007. It focuses on the story of a squatted street in Rotterdam. It has two articles, one in English, one in Dutch.

Using Space Three featured various short pieces taken from a range of sources. These included: thoughts about the future of squatting; a report on the progress of the now defunct maelstrom centre in Leeds; a personal history of the ELF squat in Amsterdam.

Using Space Four contained the following pieces about a visit to a squatted land project in central Amsterdam, the UK national squat meet in Bristol, social centres, a large squatting action in Sweden, Dutch national squatting day and recycled newspaper reports.

Using Space Five is a short and incomplete history of squatting in Brighton. A longer, recently updated version also available online.

Using Space Six featured 'Facing Up to Mike Weatherley's Fearsome Gauntlet,' 'A Secret History of the City,' 'The CoolTan Arts Centre,' 'Watching the value of property melt away - Squatting in the USA,' 'The Sacred Law of Private Property,' 'Informal Update on the Situation in Seattle,' 'The Story of Sabotaj' and some squat weblinks

Using Space Seven (August 2012) had a big piece in it about squatting on the Ocean Estate in London, an interview with a squatter from Seattle, an update on criminalisation and the low-down on the glittergate controversy in Brighton.

You can find all of these online, free download at [zinelibrary](http://zinelibrary.info), [northern indymedia](http://northern-indymedia.org), [mujinga](http://mujinga.wordpress.com) and cobblebooks.wordpress.com

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IN MEMORY OF DANIEL GAUNTLETT, STEPHANIE BOTTRILL, ANTONY BREEZE

With artistic squats, spaces are occupied to provide ateliers and sometimes also accommodation for artists of whatever discipline. These groups often appear to be led by one charismatic leader, as a sort of mini-dictator who runs the project. Various places were described in such terms to me. Whilst the squats are often cracked, they tend to quickly make a contract with the mayor, thus becoming legalised and thus actually not really being a squat any more. These contracts can really vary in type. Sometimes the group is supposed to create X amount of stuff to “prove” they are worthy artists, or must agree to visits from the owner to check on the place, or must apply every year for a new contract. I also met a group which had a contract which simply stated they agreed to leave when the owner planned to work on the buildings, with no other conditions attached. Obviously, the latter seems like a better option. So the devil really is in the details.

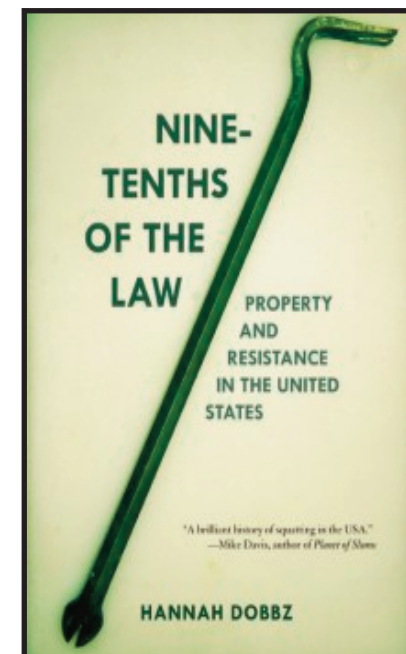


On one day, we went to visit several projects, all in one district, all on contracts, and we were told they would all be evicted within the year, for new things planned by the city. Sqekkers from places with a tradition of militant resistance to gentrification such as Berlin, New York and Barcelona asked why people would agree to leave places without a fight and we got a range of answers, some more persuasive than others.

For me it is true that it is worth fighting for spaces, of course, because anti-capitalist spaces which promote alternative culture and where we can

you wanted to track down an author who had already been mentioned, it could take a while to find the reference.

Finally, and I'm splitting hairs now really, the references to Europe in the introduction leave a bit to be desired, with some sort of continuity across the whole of Europe assumed and also a direct link drawn between the battle of the Vondelstraat in Amsterdam in 1980 and the eviction of Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen (2006-7). Saying “Copenhagen saw some of the most destructive and virulent squat-defense (sic) riots since the ones in Amsterdam” (p5) made me raise my eyebrows.



There's a lot more history out there than that, but at the same time, how much can you squeeze into one book?

I enjoyed reading *Nine Tenths of the Law* a lot and I'm sure I will refer to it again. I agree with Hannah when she says “bewilderingly, few other squatters I have met are interested in this kind of documentation” (p238).

It's fantastic that she has put so much time and effort into making this and I really hope it does inspire people to start squatting in the U\$A (and everywhere else too).

A different, shorter version of this review appears in Anarchist Studies 21:2.

excerpt from 'dangerous spaces'...

There is a peculiar sort of discourse which surrounds the issue of accountability in anarchist or otherwise "radical" circles - one that takes for granted that anarchist men should receive treatment distinct from other men. When, in the anarchist milieu, a man sexually assaults a woman, the surrounding community will often engage in a process designed to hold the man accountable for his actions; in the name of "restorative justice" or a "safer" community, with the intent of keeping the individual from doing it again.

My contempt isn't for any one of these goals, but rather for the idea that seems to regularly accompany them, being that - as opposed to non-anarchist men - anarchist men who commit sexual violence should first be approached from a standpoint of community repair. Whereas with other men, the knee-jerk reaction of many women (anarchist/radical or otherwise, but let's here focus on the former) to these offenses would likely involve something resulting in hospitalization on the man's part, anarchists are somehow given the benefit of the doubt, the opportunity to "work on their shit." That is, *after* an assault takes place (quixotically and rather disturbingly, prior to such an offense, it seems, the subject is rarely directly broached, its importance rarely emphasized).

While noble, this is also somewhat paradoxical - if anything, shouldn't men in these communities be held to a more immediate standard, given their implicit allegiance to certain ideals off the bat, and their (unfortunately, often falsely) assumed understanding and critique of capitalist patriarchy and its functions? Shouldn't men in these communities be even more detested for falsely displaying comradeship for, and then afterwards still expecting it from, the survivors of their actions?

And if the answers to those questions are yes and yes, why are they confronted more theoretically, more verbally? The simple and legitimate reply is often that such a response is what corresponds to the wishes of the woman assaulted. But this is not without its own problematic. Why would you leave his teeth intact while anyone else would eat the curb? What is it that convinces us that we should consider this less violent option in one instance but not the other?

That is to say: if his twisted understanding of anarchism (or any other radical or revolutionary politics) involves or excuses sexual assault, why does anyone owe him anything? Why then give him the benefit of the ideal?

<http://untorellipress.noblogs.org/post/2012/10/01/dangerous-spaces-violent-resistance-self-defense-and-insurrectional-struggle-against-gender/>

"i've painted myself into a corner" learning from the divide between 'artistic' and 'anarchist' squats in paris

After an intense week in Paris for the Squatting Europe Kollektive's annual conference I wanted to set down some thoughts about a rift which seems to go very deep in the squat scene there. I was already aware to some degree of this rupture through discussions with anarchist friends from France and would not by any means claim to have a complete grasp on the situation (if that is even possible); my aim here is to contribute some thoughts from an outsider perspective which would hopefully help to break down this divide, one which ultimately would seem rather destructive for the Paris squat scene (although having said that there is also a real point to be made about who is actually squatting and who is actually in the scene). Places still occupied will not be referred to by name to respect their privacy and what I am saying is intended as constructive criticism, I don't think there is necessarily a right or wrong to this, although I would own up to a definite sympathy with the anarchist position. I would hope that debate and introspection is valuable to the squatting scene. I will frame the debate then offer some thoughts on it, adding some experiences from places I have lived in or visited.

There is a large split in the Paris squat scene between openly political squats (which tend to be referred to as anarchist or autonomous) and artistic squats. However, this is not because anarchists hate art (maybe some do). This rift goes a lot deeper than that. Even if the terms anarchist and autonomous are not synonymous I will talk of anarchist squats since these are the ones I am familiar with. Anarchist squats refuse to negotiate with authorities such as the police, the local government and the state and take an antagonistic position, declaring themselves against private property. There is a strong tradition in these squats of no-one making money from the place or from the events which are always either free or *prix libre*, raising money for good causes (meaning you pay what you feel rather than a fixed price). Infoshops are also *prix libre* and also sometimes the bar (a truly mind-blowing concept for me!). Groups are run non-hierarchically, without leaders, with decisions being made collectively through consensus at weekly meetings which anyone can attend. These squats may contain artistic projects, but these would then be likely to be explicitly political and non-profit.

non-ethical jobs just to get by, since there is at the end of the day not unlimited choice, even if not paying rent means that they need to work part-time rather than full-time to get by. Although it's hard to envisage, there must be some sort of middle-ground here where people can make enough to get by within the scene without ripping people off. And i think options here need to be explored, for example people producing beer in microbreweries which then can supply the scene with cheap somewhat ethical drinks and can at the same time provide the workers co-operative producing it with a living wage. So I don't think the criticism of artists here is particularly well-aimed, yet at the same time charging people rent for profit is unforgivable in a squat.

By the way, don't think that there isn't art in anarchist squats, that's far from true. But then as mentioned earlier, it would tend to be politically related, therefore fitting to activist norms and therefore it is "okay." Of course, under scrutiny this is also problematic since certain forms of production are perhaps easier to set up in squats eg painting, drawing, graff, theatre and so on whereas other forms such as welding and large-scale sculpture need more space and expensive equipment, thus may be harder to enact.

Although I met lots of nice people in the different places we visited, I only met one artistic squatter who seemed politically aware and onit generally – she admitted that it was shit to move sometimes but also argued that land in Paris is so expensive (we heard a few times the crazy figure of 6,000 euros per square metre) that it was therefore hard to fight developers successfully since they would always find a way to evict eventually. In her group's case, they had actually won in some ways since first they were living on a contract which simply said they would leave when the plans to redevelop were complete and secondly they had persuaded the city to renovate the place sympathetically leaving a lot of the original features, whereas the first plan for renovation had been very chic and soulless.

Plus she was a welder and I can understand you wouldn't want to install large and expensive equipment in a precarious squat, no matter what your political principles. And what's worth remembering is that in following her artistic career, for better or for worse, she is living and working in an

twice or indeed an "adverse possession poster child," but these are very minor gripes and overall Dobbz pumps out a lot of information at a cracking pace.

The specific case of DeCaprio is a great story since it shows how far you can get by using the law against itself. This is reminded me of how Ron Bailey and others kicked off the squatting movement in the UK in the late 1960s, by careful reading of arcane laws such the Forcible Entry Act 1381. In helpful appendices Dobbz supplies some advice by DeCaprio and also an account of adverse possession laws state by state. In California, adverse possession can be claimed after five years of continuous possession with payment of taxes. But as the book shows, there can be unforeseen hazards, such as judges reluctant to grant possession to a lowly squatter.

Adverse possession is the act of gaining title to property by dint of continuous occupation, in spite of the owner's knowledge and can be seen as an ancient expression of the moral right to utilise someone's property if they are not putting it to good use themselves.

In the UK context, the situation is now quite complicated, but in basic terms the time frame is 12 years and the 2002 Land Registration Act has made it a lot more difficult for squatters to gain title, since after 10 years, when a claim is made, the owner must be informed as part of the process and thus is handed a last-ditch possibility to reclaim possession at any time over the following two years.

In the Californian context, DeCaprio has got as far as going to court to claim possession, with one place called Noodle House, but ironically the (left wing) judge appeared to be deadset against granting possession, ordering extensive genealogical searches (to be paid for by DeCaprio) to find anyone else with title claim. DeCaprio has now been in occupation for ten years and has paid the last five years' taxes. The attorney representing the estate of the deceased family which had previously owned the house was actually happy to transfer title to DeCaprio and was already forwarding mail for the house to him, yet the judge made the process so difficult that DeCaprio withdrew his

claim (he plans to resubmit it in future). The separate project covered in the film *Shelter* was Banana House. DeCaprio was removed from the property seven times, receiving six citations from the police which included one arrest for a "first offense misdemeanor" (he got a year's community service). It's interesting to read more details about the house having seen it in the film and it's sad to hear this particular story did not work out so well. Earlier in the book, another intriguing story revolved around rent-striking resisting the unfair policies of a land-owning family in the Hudson River Valley, New York, in the mid-1830s. The hugely rich Van Rensselaer family had sold leases to illiterate settlers which lasted for eternity on terms which the settlers came to see as amounting to "voluntary slavery" (p37). So they stopped paying rent. When the sheriff arrived, "they set a tar barrel on fire and told the collector that they would spare his life if he burned all the writs. When he did this, they made him buy a round of drinks for everyone present" (p37). The rent strike continued for years, with settlers disguised as Indians frequently attacking and embarrassing bailiffs. The Anti-Rent War was only conclusively crushed in 1860. The level of lawlessness (and tendency to wear disguises) seems quite reminiscent of the Guildford Guy Riots, which occurred at a similar time in England.

A later, equally fascinating aside concerns the case of Yolanda Ward, a young black activist murdered in 1980 in Washington, DC. The exact facts appear unclear, but a contested *Midnight Notes* article and writings by Frank Morales argue that the street robbery in which she lost her life was a cover-up for an assassination due to her work in uncovering a racist governmental housing policy to break up innercity communities by scattering families to the suburbs. This was known as 'spatial deconcentration' and certainly deserves more research (p206).

With my zinester's hat on, I was stoked to have a quotation from *Using Space* included (p211)!

With my academic hat on, I would say the referencing system overall was a bit weird, since references were footnoted to the end of the book but there was no bibliography, which meant if

all feel at home are few and far between. But I also respect people's feeling for the local situation and would say we have to pick our battles. One group wanted to leave their space (which was lovely) and simply find another one, since Paris has many empty spaces and there is a certain joy in moving and being inspired by a new place. I get that on some levels, I have left places feeling fairly happy to move on and start afresh somewhere else (I've also been completely gutted and not left without a fight). Another group were fairly okay with getting evicted since the new plans would end up with their urban garden being done out nicer (even if the same plan would also destroy another green project nearby). A third group affected by the same plan seemed fairly resigned to it, saying they would move somewhere else, which seemed weird since they were a community garden so you would imagine that the whole point would be to be in that specific place rather than to take on willingly the role of activists parachuting into a new area. It's also interesting that all these projects were really close to each other and didn't seem to be thinking as a collective force which could perhaps team up to fight eviction, even if they did occasionally organise events together.

The anarchist critique of artistic squats comes on a few different levels. One is that rooms in their "squats" (legalised squats) are sometimes rented out to artists as ateliers. Even if this is at below commercial prices, anything which means people are making profit from free spaces tends to make me feel sick. In one huge place, gangsters had taken over and appeared to be extracting a large supposed rent for utilities which in reality seemed to be going straight into their pockets. That's pretty sketchy. On the flipside, if anarchist squats are completely against profit-making, then by definition everyone else needs to be getting their funding from somewhere. I mean, in the short term at least you can live pretty much for free in the city, dumpster-diving, scrapping and stealing, and I think that's great, living off the mess that is capitalism in the same way we end up living in amazing buildings which have fallen through the cracks, but then some squatters still need to work to get by and what then is the difference between working outside your squat and working inside it for money? Artists may be an extreme case since art prices are ridiculous once you've struggled to get onto the merry-go-round of the artworld, but then I know a lot of anarchists in England and the Netherlands doing fairly

happy about that in an unqualified sense did seem rather unwise. One would hope that such an endorsement would be viewed as a tactic to aim for, which having been achieved could then be mobilised to lend support to other projects, but it seemed more like these particular art squatters were happy to isolate themselves from others and enjoy their lovely situation whilst other places were brutally evicted. What's also worth noting is that they were legalised and were not allowed to live there (and had regular inspections) and actually were paying a fairly high rent for their "squat." Higher than Dutch anti-squats for example.

An idle thought which simultaneously occurred to a few friends was that anarchist squats should pretend to be art squats, get legalised and then carry on with their anti-authoritarian activities – but of course a strategically chosen identity is easily essentialised and I suppose an antagonistic place masquerading as something else would quickly be reassigned to the bad squatter category by the state. Or maybe that's where the challenge lies. The lesson from other places such as Amsterdam is that institutionalisation is possible and there are types of institutionalisation, it's certainly not the case that legal=bad and squatted=good. Not at all. In Amsterdam some broedplaats (breeding place) projects have successfully legalised and remained radical. Others have legalised and disappeared from the scene. Others again, such as the Kalenderpanden, ticked all the boxes for being a broedplaats but were instead evicted.

Another problem (I have to mention this even if it is admittedly rather pedantic) is that the Parisian artistic squatters have stolen the webdomain intersquat.org. Intersquat events have been happening in the French speaking world since at least the 1990s. Paris anarchist squatters were linked through intersquat in those times and more recently places like Dijon, Lausanne, Geneva, Grenoble and Barcelona have been linked in various ways, including events and a beautifully produced zine called Roberta. At a certain point in the early 2000s Parisian artistic squatters appear to have switched from using the name interface to intersquat, which I find a rather unfortunate choice, since there is already a colourful history attached to that name. This pisses me right off. But that is a rather niche point I admit.

(Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment - St. Louis), Right 2 Survive (Portland, Oregon), Organize4Occupation (New York City), PUSH (People United for Sustainable Housing - Buffalo, New York), ONE DC (Washington DC), LIFFT (Low Income Families Fighting Together - Miami) and Take Back the Land (p125). Later on, housing justice groups mentioned are Occupy our Homes, Picture the Homeless, Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (Minneapolis), MORE, Vocal New York, Housing is a Human Right, Just Cause (Oakland), Foreclosure Hamlet, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, Ohio Foreclosure Blog, "and more" (p120)!

In his back cover review, Alan W. Moore says "if you're thinking of squatting - or just want to know more about legal theory of property and home ownership - this book is for you" and I would agree, but (and there's always a but) I would offer some constructive criticism as well.

This is partly because I am (like Dobbz) someone who cares passionately about squatting as a way for more people to take direct action against capitalism. Squatting is one important tactic amongst many others with which we can improve housing rights. Dobbz says in the introduction that "I hoped by researching squatters in U.S. history to establish a cultural precedent and by pinpointing the legal conditions and issues surrounding squatting (and other forms of property resistance), I might help."

This is an incredible objective to hold and I reckon this book will certainly contribute massively to the conversation about squatting which appears to be happening all over the U\$A at the moment. Different groups fighting homelessness and working on the housing crisis are teaming up to do public squats as well as private, drawing on many inspiring examples from the past and devising new methods to suit current settings. Of course, by its very nature squatting is hard to track, but the snippets of news I come across seem very encouraging. But even I, with my limited knowledge of squatting in the U\$A would quibble a few points. Firstly, I think it is always good not to generalise from specifics because what may be true in one place may not be true in another. For example, Seattle doesn't really get much of a look-in,

despite what I have heard is a squatting heritage from the 1970s onwards. Operation Homestead (in Seattle, p106) receives an honourable mention in an extended profile of Homes not Jails (in the Bay Area), although as Dobbz says it predates the other group by four years. An interview with a squatter from the Turritopsis Nutricula house in Using Space Seven reports that there were struggles in "over the African American Heritage Museum and the Coleman School and Umoja P.E.A.C.E. Center." Further, the recent squatting wave in Seattle is summed up by Dobbz as follows: "approximately thirty members of Occupy Seattle who sloppily occupied an abandoned house in December 2011 only to be embarrassingly evicted by police, who found the walls graffitied and the floors 'littered with garbage and food.'" Now I've got problems with this on a few levels. Firstly, all squatting in Seattle should not be reduced to this one eviction without caveats. Secondly, I don't think we as activist researchers should dissemble about the squat movement's strengths and weaknesses but I think there are ways to say things, and when fighting a stereotype of squatters which is often undeserved, it is difficult to get into the good/bad squatter distinction without having it used against you later. Thirdly, Dobbz's only source here is Fox News - ('Occupy Squatters Evicted' -myfoxspokane.com - Dec 24 2011). The source itself is no longer online, but I think anything related to Fox should be taken with a pinch of salt and certainly not quoted without a warning, even it is local news (and I'm pretty sure a local news feature on the eviction Power Machine would have been equally harsh). On that note, the Using Space interview with the squatter from Seattle exposes the media bias: "The Fox TV clip is the best-- he mentions bottles of 'urine' [actually vinegar, in case of tear gas or fire] and a 'pipe for smoking drugs' that none of us have ever seen, then he shows our rules but blurs out the 'no drugs or alcohol' rule!" This eviction appears to have taken place a month before the one Dobbz is discussing. Secondly, I'm not sure why New York squatters need to be referred to as the toughest or how the aforementioned Steve DeCaprio would feel about being called a "Bay Area squatting guru"

autonomous space, away from the mainstream, unlike some purists who presumably do not allow profit-making in their squat but then go off somewhere else which is probably not part of the autonomous scene to work.

Another criticism of the artistic squats would be their sometimes hierarchical organisational structure. This is understandable coming from an anarchist perspective and I totally get it, I don't want to participate in a project which replicates all the bullshit patriarchal attitudes of mainstream society. Plus I'm so used to organising non-hierarchically and by consensus that I have real problems being told what to do by anyone unless it's on terms I agree with. Of course, having said that, it is sadly the case that there are also a lot of anarchists in the scene in the places I'm aware of and most probably in Paris too, so again the anarchist position is based on a pure theoretical stance which may not be replicated in actuality.

Parisian anarchist squatters also argue that by taking contracts, artistic squatters made it more difficult for everyone else, since they have jumped happily into the good squatter/ bad squatter distinction which meant that in the eyes of the mayor they were the good squatters and should stay, whereas squatters who didn't sign a contract or were not providing a cultural service to the city (as judged by his officials) were bad squatters and therefore could be evicted without any qualms. Again I agree, although of course every context is different and I simply don't know enough to make any sweeping statements - my main point here will be that the lessons from other countries and other situations is that you have to take of the local opportunity structure if you want your project to survive.

To change tack, let's take the example of Jeudi Noir, who squat buildings in central Paris to protest against the city's housing policies and to house refugee families. The group contains members of the Socialist and Green parties (the Socialists are currently in power) and has many links to mainstream media. They are definitely another type of 'good squatters' for the state yet they still often get evicted before their media machine can kick in and it isn't really a surprise to me that anarchist squatters who openly declare war on private property and the state get evicted fast – it goes like that everywhere I think. However, at another artistic squat someone told us proudly that the mayor himself had endorsed their squat and being

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Plus most of the movies i talked about can be found on <http://video.squat.net/>, alongside a whole shitload more!

nine-tenths of the law -

hannah dobbz (ak press)

Nine-Tenths of the Law is an amazing contribution to the small but growing body of work on squatting, which spans activist and academic circles. Mike Davis is right to describe it as "a brilliant history of squatting in the USA."

It starts off with a thorough exploration of the American Indian history of land rights and tracks the various tactics by which the invading colonialists stole land and claimed title. Dobbz, who has certainly done her homework, then charts acts of resistance over the past 200 years. Moving into recent times, she analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the Urban Homesteading movement and assesses the impact of various housing justice groups, noting that Occupy, whilst important, has brought into the spotlight campaigns which in some cases have been in existence for decades already. Adverse possession is covered in some depth, with one inspiring example being Steve DeCaprio who has got very close to claiming adverse possession of a derelict property called Noodle House in the San Francisco Bay Area (after over a decade of occupation).

Dobbz then considers housing co-operatives and community land trusts as ways of taking title to property communally and closes up with some powerful arguments for a future squatting movement, allied to more general themes of housing justice.

It is inspiring to see a book like this coming from the movement. After making a zine about her participation in a squat called Power Machine in Emeryville, California (which was named after the company which had previously used the building before going bust), Dobbz then made a film called Shelter - A Squatumentary, which is an hour-long exploration of squatting in the Bay Area, featuring three projects, namely Hellarity House, a long-term crusty/punk squat, Banana House and Power Machine. After a few years of occasionally tracking media stories from all over the USA, it's heartening indeed to have my suspicions confirmed that an underground housing movement is underway, with resistance to eviction of foreclosed properties providing major impetus. Dobbz supplies an impressive list of groups which includes Land Action, Homes not Jails (Bay Area), MORE

I think it's useful always to give comparative examples from different places, in the hope that ideas can circulate and help scenes develop. I can talk from my experiences squatting in Czech Republic, the Netherlands and England. One observation worth noting is that criminalisation was achieved fairly easily in both England and Wales and the Netherlands and perhaps if there had been a more unified and coherent movement in these countries it would not have been so easy for politicians to push things through. This is of course a hugely debatable point, but perhaps if there was a move to criminalise squatting in France, this division in the Paris scene might be easily exploited.



In the case of the Czech Republic, I can offer the example of one place which has been squatted periodically since the mid-1990s. It recently got resquatted and the owner was fine with that, since he has no current plans for it and perhaps he realises a lived in buildings better than a derelict one. The squatters began various projects and then got evicted illegally by the police DESPITE having the owner's permission to be there. So now they have asked for and received some sort of paper contract which they can show to the police next time to prevent another eviction (hopefully).

he will develop the space – this especially makes sense when we remember that squatting in residential properties is now criminalised, so otherwise the owner could have gone straight to the police and got them kicked out). [This squat has since ended]

In the Netherlands, of course, there is also anti-squat (anti-kraak), provided by several multi-national companies such as Ad Hoc and Camelot. People sign a use contract as property guardians rather than renters and can live at the address subject to rather stringent conditions, such as no pets, no parties, no holidays, no access to certain parts of the building. The company holds a key and can send a representative to check on the guardian at any time. The contract is often for a limited time only and people can be kicked out with one month's notice and no new place provided. The only thing making it a good deal is the cheapness of the "rent". Artists, alongside students, make up a high proportion of these guardians since anti-squat offers the opportunity to live cheaply in large spaces, often office spaces in central locations. This is known as anti-squatting since the person living there (without the rights of a renter) prevents squatting through occupation. Perhaps many people who might end up in artistic squats in Paris would end up anti-squatting in the Netherlands? I'm not sure about this since the restrictions are pretty heavy, but as mentioned earlier in some cases the artists claiming to squat in Paris were paying more rent than anti-squatters in the Netherlands.

Another example from Rotterdam would be a factory squatted in Delfshaven, in the north west of the city. It had previously been squatted in the 1990s and then evicted and left empty for a long period of time. The main impetus to occupy it again came from one charismatic individual who had a business renting out sound equipment. He squatted the place to live there and also to store his stuff. People rented ateliers and had to contribute to repairing the place, which was in quite a bad state. The place occasionally did parties and had a weekly surprise film night ('surprise' so as to evade any licensing problems with the scarily efficient body that claims money for artists – in France that's called SACEM I believe, in England it's PRS, in the Netherlands I don't what they're called but I remember we had problems with them in our squatted social



Repression breeds resistance and there have been two great events in London recently. Open House was an attempt to stage a squatted radical housing conference and it actually worked out, it really got different groups talking and also seemed to get various things in motion like eviction resistance and solidarity between squatters and tenants. The publicity was a bit vague and i was worried it wouldn't work out but i guess you can do stuff like that in London, so fairplay (it wouldn't work in Brighton, not enough people would come). I would write more but I can't remember much right now.

Made Possible by Squatting happened just the other week and was an exhibition designed to uncover some of squatting's amazing heritage.

Aside from some rather stereotypical arty black and white fotos of windows and beds, there was an excellent popup book history of a womens centre project in Camden, a timeline on little hanging cards of squatting in London from 1900 to the present day, an interactive open source map of evicted squats in London (londonsquatsarchive.org) which i was really happy to help with and some great movies.

On the films, I'd never seen images of the Spike Surplus Project before and having just been in Berlin where there are shitloads of these self-organised freespaces (berlinfreespaces.org) it was pretty sad to see an amazing, diverse community resource under threat and later evicted and demolished. So that was a bit of a tear-jerker, especially since the Spike was the last standing part of a huge homeless mens shelter which George Orwell most likely stayed at. To my shame I never went there when I was squatting in London, although the sad truth is I never really left Hackney.





Somether films documented victories however. The story of Bonnington Square is pretty amazing. Five minutes away from the Houses of Parliament in London, the square was literally falling down in the 1970s before loads of squatters moved in. Now of course it's prime real estate but they are still there in various legalised frameworks, with an amazing garden and the cafe.

I also caught the premiere of a film made about the Library Street social centre by one of the participants. It was really good, just the sort of document of our scene that people should be making. Make more zines too!! Grrrr. Well, "should" is prescriptive, let the people do what they wanna do, but it's cool to watch a fly-on-the-wall docu about squatting and social centres and i'd love to see more stuff like that. Having live music from the back of the room made by the same people who were in the film was also great and surprisingly poignant.

I went back to MPBS for the closing gig which was also fun. It was a fitting environment to hear 52 Commercial Road. There's talk of touring the exhibition and also of making an online archive of materials which would be great, there's so much hidden history. For example people were really fired up by the Queers through the Years talk. And no wonder, I recently read some really interesting stuff about the Gay Liberation Front squats on Railton Road in the 1970s. As an

One squat which I spent a fair amount of time at over its seven year history in the industrial zone north of Rotterdam could be construed as an artistic squat (in fact the place where I stayed at in Paris reminded me of it somewhat since they both had long naked brick corridors). It could be taken as such since it provided an (unofficial) home for about ten people, who made electronic music, ran a free party sound system, made records and did graphic design. Some were on disability benefits, some worked, some were on a government grant for artists (which of course has now been cut). It was composed of office space where people lived, a huge showroom (50 metres long, 20 metres wide, windows on three sides) and a warehouse. Other people using the space included a mechanic who was building bakkbrommers (motorised ice cream carts) for competition in the World Bakkbrommer Championships (yes this is a joke, yes it was a very serious business), a theatre group, a man who made freaky installations for clubs and squat parties (think fairground bendy mirrors and trippy lights), other sound systems storing their boxes and people parking their live-in vehicles in the yard (I stayed there for two summers, it was great). Two friends even ended up building themselves an amazing four room bungalow at one end of the showroom.

What's interesting with this group is that they actually kind of fit the artistic squat description but I never conceived of them as such or had any kind of problem with the various things happening there. For example, at one point, an architects firm used one part of the warehouse as storage and offices, so there was a commercial outfit using the space, but they were hardcore recycling freaks who built really cool stuff so that seemed ok. I don't think they paid rent, I never enquired but the ethos there was not about making money from people using the space – I imagine they paid the electricity bill for that the warehouse and that was that. Some people worked in office jobs or in a flower factory to earn the cash they needed to pursue their fairly hedonistic lifestyles. I'm not sure if the place had a contract or not, they did have a fairly good relationship with the owner (the Taiwanese Government) but it doesn't really seem to matter to me ultimately whether they were on a contract or not, since a contract can mean many things (right now as I'm revising this piece, I'm sitting in a squat in Elephant & Castle in London which has been here a couple of years on a frequently adjourned agreement with the owner to leave when

with the group, would now claim that they were squatters. Regarding the UK, it's quite difficult to imagine a divide between artistic and anarchist strands of the squatting movement since the scene is so fragmented and disparate already. In London there have been instances of artist collectives squatting buildings to use as exhibition and atelier space, but an important factor here is probably the likelihood that spaces will be evicted after between three to six months, so that any debates about institutionalisation tend to be ungrounded in reality. There are however a few counter-examples such as the 491 Gallery which was evicted after more than ten years in early 2013. Another tactic to deal with short term lifespans is to embrace them, so following in the steps of occupations like Aspire (Leeds) and SPOR (Brighton), a group called Random Artists have put something like eight Temporary Autonomous Art events in London. As the name suggests, these exhibitions are time-limited, normally to a week, so all the energy can be compacted into a short time and then the building can be left before the inevitable eviction proceedings (whilst remaining occupied up until that point). This idea has spread to other cities such as Sheffield, Manchester, Bristol, Brighton and Nottingham.

The Oubliette collective squatted several high-profile buildings in London and appear to have been led by a man called Dan Simon, perhaps a charismatic leader figure (although maybe the mainstream media made him so). In a Guardian interview he states that the collective does not use the label 'squatters' and that they always attempt to negotiate with the owner. In the article he claims to have made several successful use deals but I would still argue it's pretty difficult to broker something like that in the UK context.

In fact, the transitory nature of squatted spaces in the UK means that I reckon a lot of places would be up for signing some sort of agreement with an owner (if it were possible) so as to gain some sort of stability (especially for people sitting in residential buildings - since at least in theory the new law works retroactively, although legally this is very dubious). Some places have made informal agreements of some sort, not necessarily a contract but still some sort of deal. People I know who have done

Logement – Right to Housing) claimed at a presentation that they had over the course of their existence housed 6,000 people in squats, which is a truly awesome statistic.

Ultimately, it seems theory and practice can combine to create amazing projects in Paris. It is understandable that fault lines have developed in the squat scene there, and I'm not sure what an article written in English can do to help with that other than to make some hopefully useful observations. As just mentioned, solidarity is important, especially when we bear in mind the example of how criminalisation was achieved in other countries. I guess squatting is a tactic used by many different groups and I would argue for a pragmatic support between these groups since they are all occupying space to put it to good purpose, whether that be residential, artistic, anarchist or whatever. And of course in reality these distinctions are not exclusive.

We are all in boxes ... but we don't need to be...

*Thanks to Maru, Henry and Grumpy Cat for the pix.
There's some excellent zines about this ongoing controversy, in French, which can be found at infokiosques.net eg 'Art et Subversion: Deux Poles Antagonistes?'*



centre). The strategy for staying there was not going for a contract but rather continually putting off appointments with agents of the state, a tactic perhaps explained by the fact that the leader had not grown up in the Netherlands and therefore wasn't really from the scene, thus he wasn't used to the usual methods and tactics of resistance. This may or may not have been a good thing short term, but eventually (after a year or so) the city officials finally got inside and promptly declared the building not fire safe. The upshot was that the group had to leave the squat or do thousands of euros of repairs. They left willingly, which seemed a bit perverse after so much work had gone into creating bedrooms, plumbing in toilets etc etc. Yet if they had decided to resist, I am not sure how much support they would have received from the local squat scene, since the atelier rent thing had already been quite controversial. However, perhaps this was a good strategy for the requirements of this particular group, since they then negotiated a rental agreement on a building due to be renovated in another area of the city. The group exists to this day in another place, having negotiated some sort of anti-squat arrangement quite similar to the Parisian artistic squat dynamic. But no-one, not even the people involved



London Squats Archive



Home

Add a squat

Have you seen this squat?

The London Squats Archive is an historical Wiki project to map evicted Squats in London. With your help we aim to create an open source visual tool to better understand the history of squatting culture in London.

Here are the squats we currently know about:

Type squat name

name	address
??	97 Peckham Rd London, Greater London SE15, UK
0815 plusch zentrale	?
121 Centre	72 Arlingford Road, London SW2, United Kingdom
195 Mare Street	84 Ball's Pond Rd London Borough of Hackney, N1, UK
	121 Railton Rd London, Greater London SE24 0LF, UK
	195 Mare St London, Greater London E8 3QE, UK

political causes.

This collective had been living together for seven years in total, and seemingly had fallen into the situation where they could negotiate to be given a new building when they had to move. They had started off squatting but I got different answers as to whether they had squatted the current place, where they had been living for almost three years. One person said they had squatted it, two others said they were given it.

They did have a contract, but everyone was vague on whether they were paying money or not. This sort of situation to my understanding seems somewhat in between a legalised squat and anti-squat. Overall, I think this is a good thing, since my conception of what squatting is revolves around putting space to good use. By good use I guess I mean organising or hosting anti-

capitalist activities –

which I saw the people I stayed with doing. And like I said already, I saw a lot of thematic similarities of this particular project with long-term squats in the Netherlands. It was interesting to note that on the day I arrived, the free cinema was showing THX1138, the classic dystopian sci-fi film (George Lucas' first) and then later the same month an anarchist squat I visited was also showing it. Little things like that make me think that the rift between artist and anarchist squatters, whilst there for genuine reasons, is perhaps more entrenched than it needs to be.

It seems to me that it isn't really squatting to occupy a place and then immediately negotiate a contract. I don't necessarily think that is a bad thing, I believe in diversity of tactics and I also believe empty space should be used, but such an action seems like a probably effective tool for getting a cheap atelier than anything else. Having said that, I guess a lot depends on intention since in one place in Rotterdam it did go precisely like that: we cracked this empty warehouse with office space (with absolutely no plan to sign a contract) and then a week or so later the owner came round and offered us a contract which basically said we would not trash the place, they would pay our utilities and we would allow estate agents to show clients around and leave when they asked us to. We liked this deal, especially when we heard on the grapevine that the owner was in a dispute with his brother but in the end we had to move after six months. This was a bit annoying since we were just beginning to plan our garden but also shook up the living group and we took a different warehouse fairly easily. So I guess for it depends on the specific details of the contract a lot. In any case, we didn't squat to make a deal, we squatted to find a place to live where we could have space for all our projects such as bike repair, vehicle repair, sound system storage and whatever else we felt like. I think the contract actually prohibited

commercial activities but we were never interested in using the building in that way anyway.

Also another time and with a different group, we squatted a place as a social centre with eight residential flats above it and made an informal agreement to leave when the building was to be redeveloped and when we saw the plans. This duly happened a year later and we brokered a deal which resulted in two rental flats at 100 euro a month each in exchange for leaving nicely (and the people from the other flats moved into other squats).

I can understand that groups who squat together for years and end up with the possibility of negotiating use of buildings with state actors would do that. Why not? In the Netherlands, many long-term squats are legalised and remain part of the antagonistic scene, providing vital spaces to meet and organise. In the UK, because squats invariably do not last very long, a tactic was then developed to buy places co-operatively to run as social centres. If more negotiation room had been possible, this tactic would doubtless not have been embraced. These spaces are run collectively on a non-profit basis by committed anarchists. This may seem absurd to some that people set against private property becoming landlords, but it when seen as a tactic it makes sense. It is flexible institutionalisation, which is not without its dangers, since centres then perhaps begin to assume the identity they have pretended to be, of being "good", non-troublesome activists. But my main point here is that we can learn a lot from looking around at different situations (it's too late to deal with this fully here but a recent visit to Berlin showed it to be a unique example of a place where squatting is hard but a lot of projects flourish and there is wiggle room for legalised projects to stay antagonistic).

So, moving lazily towards some sort of vague conclusions, I think one important way to combat the good squatter / bad squatter distinction is solidarity. If Jeudi Noir visited anarchist squats and supported them during evictions, perhaps that would break down some barriers. If the same happened the other way around, that would likewise be good. Jeudi Noir still doesn't seem like the enemy particularly to me, although of course I don't know the ins and outs of it all. Another similar group, DAL (Droit aux

that are from all types of backgrounds, ie tekno party people, anarchists, artists, students and so on. However, whilst signing a contract would not generally be frowned upon, there are certain things which would not wash, such as renting out rooms in a squat. In Brighton it was cool to see that when some people voluntarily left a place they had squatted as an art gallery and got paid off for doing so, other squatters were really angry and argued that they should have negotiated for time, not money.

At this point it's probably worth mentioning that another response to the transitory nature is for social centres either to become pop-up (for two weeks, like the OK cafe, or Cuts Cafe or Palestine Place or Open House) or to set up in a legal capacity, either owned or rented. Bought social centres such as 1in12 (Bradford), the Cowley Club (Brighton), Kebele (Bristol) and Sumac (Nottingham) are owned co-operatively by a collective and provide long-term spaces from which to organise and to my mind can remain antagonistic despite engaging with the demon of private property. For some, a legal space can never be truly anarchist, but perhaps it is more about pragmatic action than utopian thinking (although utopias can be planned from physical spaces). From my perspective the move to buy makes sense since long-term organisational spaces are necessary for activism. We need infrastructure. And for example at the Cowley Club, there is a strong culture of everyone being a volunteer and no-one getting paid to do anything, with the intention of showing that self-organisation can work. Gigs and other events are by suggested donation, which is not that far from the prix libre system. Bar prices are however fixed, but cheaper than a commercial venue.

In Paris, there did appear to be at least one example of this sort of project, since Lucio the (in)famous forger had bought a place where he lived upstairs and which apparently had a social centre downstairs. But I didn't go there. To return to places I actually visited in Paris, the place where I stayed appeared to have quite a lot of people living there and using the space regularly. There was a roof garden, ateliers (painting, glasswork, gaffer tape artwork), a cinema with real cinema seats, a music studio, a bar, a theatre space, a hack lab, a vehicle workshop and a really funky kitchen with lots of water tanks bubbling away. So in this office block there was quite a lot going on, with most of it seemingly DiY for example gigs and film nights were free, except for benefits raising money for