

SNEZANA DJORDJEVIC¹

SQUATTING AS A MODEL OF HOUSING FOR VULNERABLE AND NEGLECTED POPULATION²

Abstract

The main topic of the paper is squatting as a model of housing. It has appeared and developed in times of great housing availability for vulnerable populations. The topic belongs to the housing policy research field and represents neglected and „forgotten“ themes, which in our neoliberal world of rising social inequities, starts again to be important. Research methods are: in view in the literature, case studies (cities like London - UK, Madrid, Barcelona – Spain, and Amsterdam - Netherlands) and comparative method with generalization (learning from these experiences) for tailoring housing policy, sensible to vulnerable population`s needs. The main research findings are that squatting put a different (rather radical) light on the „right to housing“ as a prerequisite for a decent quality of life for each person and society too.

Key words: housing policy, affordable and social housing, squatting, neoliberal city, squatting movement, just city.

1 SQUATTING – TYPE OF HOUSING AND MOVEMENT

1.1 Squatting as a form of housing

Squatting is the practice of violent occupation of vacant buildings and apartments by individuals from vulnerable, poor social groups. It was created in the 1970s during the first wave of urban movements throughout Europe and the USA and reappeared in the era of neoliberalism, which encourages social

1 Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Jove Ilića 165, 11042 Belgrade, Serbia, email: sneska152@gmail.com, ORCID iD: 0000-0001-7574-8089..

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inequality and poverty.

The main precondition for the appearance of squatting in many countries is the lack of available housing for vulnerable social groups and the government's lack of concern for the housing needs of this population. At the same time, the authorities are not upset with the practice of real estate speculations, seeing it as a regular "market game" although it has bad social consequences. These speculations often left housing empty to cause a "shortage" and raise the rents or the prices (in case of housing sale). In conditions of artificial scarcity, for poor citizens is difficult to rent and even more difficult to buy housing, and therefore in time, the number of homeless people is increasing.

The neoliberal society shifted the housing policy, as very expensive for the state, from the public to the private sector, letting citizens alone procure housing on the market. Vulnerable social groups have a lot of troubles and can procure only bad-quality housing or even become homeless. In a neoliberal world, almost all countries increased waves of homelessness. The life experiences of people in such a system indicate the cruelty of the authorities towards sensitive groups, whose needs and great troubles remain invisible and irrelevant to the authorities. The importance of this problem is indicated by the estimation that about one-seventh of the world's population are squatters, who live illegally in apartments or on land they do not own (Cattaneo, Martinez, 2014, p. 2).

When homeless people enter empty buildings and apartments, they live there for free, which establishes a specific relationship with the owner and with the authorities (state, and local authorities). This opens up a whole series of questions about the sustainability of this situation. When new tenants are accepted as a reality by the apartment owner and the authorities, squatters are usually expected to pay for the water, electricity, and gas they use to maintain the building and the apartment. This is the most optimal situation, but most frequently there is a demand that they move out. Many conflicts have arisen on this issue during attempted arrival in flats or forced eviction. In times, thanks to the solidarity of the public, have arisen social unrest, usually in situations when the police or private security guards use inappropriate force toward squatters. On this basis, the squatting movement is developing, which fights for the rights of this population, protecting them from persecution, harassment, and forced eviction, and providing them with various types of assistance (legal, political, and economic).

1.2 The squatting movement - ideology, values and goals

The squatting movement does not only advocate the squatters' right to live in vacant housing for free, but this movement is part of a global, anti-capitalist movement that challenges the values of the capitalist system in

economic, political, and social terms. First of all, it challenges capitalism as a system based on the accumulation of capital, obsessed with profit, which remains the basic motive of production and wealth as the basic social value. This movement is against a society based on the exploitation of people, which they point out, consequently most often leads to great social inequalities. This relationship of exploitation is also seen in the field of production, through the relationship between the worker and the owner of the factory, i.e. companies (capitalists), and in the field of reproduction, related to the provision of various services to people: education, health, as well as housing (the relationship between the apartment owner and the tenant).

The squatting movement is usually left-oriented, although sometimes there are right-squatting movements, but this is a sporadic case³ (Cattaneo, Martínez 2014, p. 4). In practice, the squatting movement developed more or less radical beliefs regarding the need to change the capitalist system. In the analysis of the capitalist type of relationship, it is pointed out that the apartment owner-user relationship is also shaped by the capitalist relationship of alienation of property and strong dependence on the user, and they believe, that in the case of housing, there is far more direct control than in other fields. The specificity of the housing crisis is that it is still a more complex relationship because often the sale or rental of an apartment is conditioned by several factors.

The squatting movement has a theoretical basis in Marxist thought and the socialist movement. It was first established by Proudhon with the idea of illegal disenfranchisement during the initial seizure of capital (Proudhon, 1866), as well as by Friedrich Engels, who also analyzed the housing issue within the framework of the workers' struggle for their rights (Engels, 1844, Cattaneo, Martínez 2014, p. 2). In this sense, Engels saw a solution in public, common property over residential buildings and apartments, whereby the public sector (state and local authorities) can provide citizens with affordable housing. During the first urban movements, this question was accepted and supported by several philosophers and theoreticians of social sciences, such as Henry Lefebvre, who developed a theory about the right of every person to the city and, in that context, the right to an apartment and a job (Lefebvre, 1968).

Socialist countries fully implemented this concept because buildings and apartments were dominantly in public ownership and the availability of apartments for citizens was greater. Social democratic countries in the Western world had a solid public housing stock during the welfare state. These apartments mostly were sufficient to support vulnerable social groups and not infrequently

³ An interesting example is the Casa Poud squatting movement in Rome, which uses squatting as an instrument to provide housing for vulnerable Italian citizens. The movement is against globalism, against capitalism, for a strong central state, favors the Italian nation (strong nationalism) while advocating the birth policy, and develops animosity towards foreigners by opposing the arrival of migrants in their country.

a large part of the regular population, often by providing apartments for small rents and limiting the amount of the rent in the rental process for apartments in the private sector too.

With the privatization and sale of public housing to users, the state and local authorities largely leave the field of housing policy, leaving the purchase of housing to citizens on the market (Osborn, Gaebler, 1992). In that process, vulnerable social groups suffered, because they had no money to buy apartments. With the economic crisis in neoliberal societies, due to the growth of social inequalities and the decline of the middle social class, the problems are further increased (Djordjević, 2019).

Today, representatives of the squatting movement believe that the system must undergo radical changes, but they do not reject the market and money. They point out that the biggest enemies of the normal availability of apartments as the basis of a quality, sustainable, and independent life of citizens, are speculation in finance, construction, apartments, real estate, and natural resources of all kinds. Today's crisis is based on financial speculation in housing and other real estate, as goods and activities worth investing in for the sake of profit, suppressing the needs (housing) of the poorer and more vulnerable part of the population, which includes an increasing number of citizens (Cattaneo, Martinez 2014, p. 9).

Several authors tried to systematize the rather fragmented literature on this phenomenon, with the application of a multidisciplinary analysis covering the historical, legal, social, economic, political, psychological, and ecological dimensions of the problem. Analyzes show that there is a great variety of experiences in different countries because the social circumstances are different. They consist of the degree of economic development, the range of social differences and inequalities measured by the Gini coefficient, the extent of poverty and homelessness, different social homogeneity - heterogeneity, the developed democratic culture, and the degree of participation in decision-making, as well as the quality of regulations regulating the availability of apartments and squatting. Some of these factors can vary greatly even in the same society in different cities, which affects various types of organizations and different experiences of squatters, their communities, and movements. Hence, the forms of squatting are also very different in different local environments, so it is quite a challenge for researchers to generalize the acquired experiences and knowledge (Cattaneo, Martinez 2014, p. 5).

2 SQUATTING EXPERIENCES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND CITIES

In this part, the experiences of three countries are analyzed: the UK; Spain, and the Netherlands. The UK developed rich squatting practices and a

strong squatting movement. Spain was late with this practice due to the Franco regime, but developed a strong squatting practice and the movement was very well connected with other social movements (human rights). The Netherlands has the highest quality squatting movement that is well connected with similar movements around the world and often helps them to strengthen the organization, to network, to apply various methods and instruments in the struggle to protect the rights of squatters and achieve the sustainability of the squatting movement.

2.1 United Kingdom

Great Britain during the welfare state had a solid stock of buildings and social housing - they made up 33% of the total housing stock, while the remaining 67% were privately owned. Public housing was available to the more vulnerable and poorer social groups and individuals. The state and local authorities invested in maintaining and constantly increasing this fund. Many mechanisms were implemented to maintain a sufficient number of available apartments. One of those measures is that private individuals, with permission to build, were obliged to make part of the housing stock available for people with lower incomes. The state also limited the amount of rent on apartments, which also increased the availability of apartments (Wates, 1976; Bailey, 1973).

A major change occurred in the 1980s with the introduction of neoliberal policy, which transferred the obligation to provide housing from the state (public sector) to citizens on the market (private sector). Privatization of social housing opened the possibility for a large number of tenants to buy the apartments they used to live in. Unfortunately, some of the residents who did not have the means to do so were left to the market where apartment prices and rents increased after privatization. In time, deregulation increased the range of rents, so that finally the limits were completely removed and this area was completely left to the market.

In the era of globalization and the neoliberal order, the number of unemployed in the cities is increasing, as well as the number of poorly paid people who live in increasingly poor housing conditions and under the heavy burden of high rents or high-interest rates for apartment repayments. The number of homeless people is growing and the housing problem is becoming one of the biggest existential issues for most citizens. However, the state supports investors and construction projects aimed at developing British cities as competitive on the European and world stage (world cities), ignoring the needs of citizens, especially poorer social groups. The space for the squatting movement opened again as the only possibility for a large number of people to get a roof over their heads (Wates, Wolmar, 1980).

The squatting movement in Britain was very present in two periods:

during the 1960s-1970s and in the period of the 2000s-2010s. Further in the text is presented the squatting practice and movement in London, which is an example of a well-developed movement.

2.1.1 London

In the first wave during the 1960s, Britain and London were at the center of the housing crisis because entire parts of the city were slums for poor citizens, and on the other hand, many private and public (municipal) apartments remained empty. During that period, a policy was developed to push workers and poorer citizens out of the center into quite substandard settlements on the outskirts of the city. Left-wing parties were very dissatisfied with this course of events and are organizing themselves with tenants' associations, action committees, and project groups of neighbors (local communities), looking together for the optimal ways to increase the availability of apartments for vulnerable populations (Bailey, 1973; Dee, 2014, p. 86).

In north-east, London, a series of actions to move squatters into empty flats are being launched in the boroughs of Ilford, Redbridge, and Wanstead. The government reacts immediately, evicting people without any legal document (court decision) and with the unjustified rudeness of the evicts. This further causes the anger of citizens and raises the interest of the media and the public in the problems of insufficient availability of apartments due to speculation on the market. Social unrest and protests helped evicted families to move into empty apartments again, and municipalities in London after this became much more careful with the eviction process (Wates, Wolmar, 1980; Dee, 2014, p. 87, 88).

From that moment, a large number of squatter groups were formed, created a network for the exchange of information, for the organization of joint campaigns and actions, created lists of homeless people (individuals and families) with a list of priorities for settlement, as well as a list of empty apartments. The number of squatters grew from 2,000 in 1971 to 38,000 in 1974 and reached 53,000 in 1976.

The authorities gave licenses to a small part of this population, as a kind of acknowledgment that it was necessary to provide them with apartments, and at some point they would be offered an apartment to move into. However, this did not satisfy the needs of the majority of vulnerable residents, and the practice of squatting was increasingly present.

An interesting example of squatting is in a 32-storey block of flats on the corner of Oxford Street and Tottenham Road that was built in 1966. It was empty for 8 years as the owner was thinking about what to use it for and was speculating while waiting for better prices for renting or selling it. In 1974, squatters moved into this building and guarded it from possible eviction.

In another example, we see not only the gradual squatting into empty buildings in Tolmers Square, but also in the center of London, but also the increasing public support for the squatter movement regarding some of their public actions, like the protection of Tolmers Square. not allowing its remodeling by building a business center. Many social groups in solidarity with the squatters point out together that behind these construction actions are solely the hunger for profit and speculations that do not take into account the needs of citizens and the community. The representatives of Camden municipality, on whose territory this square is located, support this squatter's action and the square has thus been preserved in its original form (Wates, 1976, Dee, 2014, p.89).

During ten years, in the 1980s, this movement grew stronger and many squats were legalized. The government accepted this form of providing an apartment for the vulnerable population because it was obvious that the government alone was incapable of solving this issue. The justification for such radical solutions lay in the fact that the number of homeless people is growing, that speculation with real estate does not stop, and the number of empty apartments continues to grow, which artificially increases demand and thus also the price of apartments and the amount of rent. In public the fact that the authorities do nothing to solve these problems, was seen as immoral government behavior. Hence, squatters are allowed to stay in that area, make it habitable, and maintain it while paying for the water and electricity they use. Squatters were most often organized into some type of residential community that carried out numerous activities such as: cleaning and rearranging living spaces, sometimes cooking together, holding meetings and deciding on important issues of life and protection against eviction, taking care of children, and organizing kindergartens, cooperation with neighbors, organizing festivals, relations with the public and the media, etc. (Longstaffe-Gowan, 2012; Dee, 2014, p. 90, 91).

Great Britain was the first European country to adopt the new public management model in the 1980s with the strengthening of the neoliberal model of government. It thereby undermined the model and instruments of the welfare state in all areas of public policy, including housing. Thus, since 2000, the housing crisis intensified and the squatting movement was reborn and strengthened as a chance for vulnerable social groups to organize themselves and secure a roof over their heads. Numerous squatter groups are being organizationally strengthened, and networked. They pointed out the shortage of available housing as a public problem, advocated various solutions, and pointed out the failings of the government. They demanded that the government should be more responsible and actively search for a solution to this existential problem (Dee, 2014, pp. 99-102).

The neoliberal authorities were ready to severely punish squatting, and squatters were arrested and sentenced to prison terms. The Criminal Justice

and the Prevention of Terrorism Bill was adopted, which treated the practice of squatting as unacceptable. Part of the propaganda was also directed against migrants to frighten the local population. Following the logic of "divide and rule", the government blames immigrants for riots, squatting, and threats to property and security (Dee, 2012; Dee, 2014, pp. 97-102).

By criminalizing squatting and arresting and persecuting the homeless people, the government has reached a dead end, because first of all, there are not enough places in prisons for these "criminals". The number of squatters is estimated at around 20,000. Furthermore, the homeless are in such a difficult situation that they have nothing to lose, and even after leaving prison, the same problem remains for them and society. Inevitably, the public had to open the question of the very sense of the existence of such a cruel government, which, instead of solving the problem, persecutes people in trouble.

In this context, squatters had to be better organized to help citizens in need. Organizations such as SQUOSH (Squatters Action for Secure Homes) and numerous other organizations across the country are networking, sharing experiences, providing information on vacant housing, and creating lists of vulnerable people and families, which have been increasing. There are numerous examples of prosperous squatting and the authorities were usually hostile to them, even in cases where the squatters took care of the flats and invested heavily in greenery and gardens by growing vegetables (for example the case of Grow Heathrow).

Due to the bad attitude of the authorities towards them, the squatters increasingly opt for an anti-capitalist approach to the authorities, believing that the solution must be a change in the type of political system. Some squatting organizations in London have been going on for years, launching numerous actions and advocating for system changes, such as Ramparts and Ratstar. Many others lasted for months and in addition to actions to protect the rights of squatters and preparation for conflicts with the authorities, they advocated different topics, such as Belgrade Road, Off Market, the Bank of Ideas, Colorama, the Cheese Factory, House of Brag and Cuts Cafe. A common theme of these squatter communities was the struggle against the neoliberal economy, which ignores the needs of the people and is driven by a blind passion to create profits for the rich, at any cost. Some groups have specific topics, so Palestine Place was especially concerned with the protection of the rights of Palestinians, etc. (Reeve, Coward, 2004; Dee, 2014, p.101).

In London, in this period as well, the old tradition of establishing squatting social centers is being renewed. At the same time now, there is a developed practice of the occupation of vacant public institutions such as schools, courts (for example in Old Street), or libraries (Friern Barnet), which remain empty, due to the gentrification practice which removes the original inhabitants from

these settlements on periphery, leaving also empty numerous public institutions.

2.2 Spain

Spain under Franco was a pro-fascist country. With the fall of that regime, it modernized, decentralized (regional state) democratized, and became a member of the European Union in 1986. In that period, it went through a phase of accelerated economic development, but also the recession that followed. This also affected the field of construction, which is driven by the desire for profit, while the needs of sensitive social groups remained invisible to the authorities. Thus, a paradox arises in the housing sector. A large fund of new, luxurious, and expensive apartments remains empty because it is impossible to sell them due to the economic crisis and the decline in the standard of living of citizens. On the other hand, a large number of poor people, live in inadequate conditions or even become homeless (Martinez, Cataneo, 2014, p. 36).

Spain is a tourist country, and it has been estimated that investing in real estate, both residential and commercial, is very profitable. This real estate construction was accompanied by intensive construction of infrastructure and usually very large and imposing public buildings (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2010; Naredo, 2011).

The constant, large influx of migrants in Spain has caused, due to competition in the labor market, the maintenance of low wages and a large presence of casual employment and precariat characterized by overtime work, with insecure work status and without adequate, or even minimum, wages.

At the same time, while the standard of citizens was maintained at a lower level, there was a constant increase in apartment prices, which meant that citizens' ability to buy an apartment was decreasing. The sale of public apartments enabled richer citizens and the middle social class to buy them, but the poorer citizens did not have the means for it. In addition, as the sale significantly reduced the number of public housing units, whose volume fell from 40% in 1960 to 10% in 2005, the poorer citizens in such a way were left without this form of support. Further construction of social housing has almost completely disappeared. It fell from 34% of the construction fund in 1973 during the welfare state, to only 4% in 2005. The authorities rarely, by issuing building permits, ask investors to include a quota of apartments for poorer citizens. This instrument, developed at the time of the welfare state requires that investors must build a solid part of the quota of newly built apartments for citizens with medium or low incomes. Although this investment would somewhat reduce the profit from investment, the benefits for society would be priceless (Leal, 2010, p. 25).

Banks gave very favorable loans for construction and these loans

were 3.3 times more favorable than for other branches of industry. However, this was not enough incentive for investors, who sold the built apartments at unreasonably high prices. Extensive construction between 1997 and 2007 in Spain provided about 7 million apartments and that construction did not keep up with the population growth, which was only 5.3 million in that period. There one can see the great greed of investors and the completely passive behavior of the state, which was not concerned about the growing gap between the power of citizens to buy an apartment and the decreasing number of adequate, available apartments on the market. At first, the construction was followed by the sale of a large part of the newly built apartments, but with the crisis, that process slowed down and stopped. Thus, since 2001, about 15% of the stock of newly built apartments, which amounts to about 3 million apartments, remained unsold and empty, and such a trend has continued (Martinez, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 40).

Furthermore, as it was said, the needs of all middle, mostly vulnerable groups, were not taken into account during construction, which led to bad consequences (Martinez, Cataneo, 2014, p. 41). In such unfavorable conditions in Spain, citizens without an apartment had to rent an apartment on the market, which was very expensive for their income. The increase in average wages in the period 1997-2007 went from 15,000 to 18,700 Euros, so buying an apartment for citizens remained a decreasingly available option. For citizens with average incomes, the time to buy an apartment (to pay off a housing loan) increased 10 times, from 14 months in 1980 to 14 years in 2005 (Martinez, Cataneo, 2014, p. 37). Also, the share of the value of the plot in the final price of the apartment is rising from 25 % (1985) to 55 % (2005). In a social sense, these processes were visible in the case of the youth population. So in Spain, for example, in 1997, 80 % of the youth population (aged 18-29) lived with their parents. For the sake of comparison, in the Netherlands that percentage is 40 %, and in Denmark 30 % (Leal, 2010, p. 25).

The bursting of the financial bubble in Spain (2008) led to the closing of factories, and companies, bankruptcy, and high unemployment. The country is in debt of up to 84% of GDP and the economic recovery required further cuts in social benefits, wages, and pensions. Many people lose their homes because they are unable to pay off their home loans. All this was accompanied by urban violence, riots, violent evictions from apartments, attacks on unwanted tenants, and squatters who refused to move out, thereby preventing eviction or extending the deadline for the demolition of buildings and the construction of new ones. Furthermore, various frauds in financial and sales contracts were recorded, which further deepened public dissatisfaction among the citizens⁴ (Martinez, Cataneo, 2014, p. 41, 42).

4 At the same time, while population struggled with existential problems without state support, Spanish state helped the banks not to fail, and according to the data of the European Commission (2012), in a period of four years (2007-2011), it provided about 8.4% of the budget (90 billion

2.2.1 Squatting movement in Madrid and Barcelona

In Spain, this situation led to the appearance of squatters in practice and the emergence of several squatter movements such as the Movement for Decent Housing and the M15 Movement. These movements opened up the topic of the political and economic background of the capitalist system and the class-based, exploitative creation of housing policy, motivated by profits for investors, hidden under the government's declarative commitment to economic developments and increasing the development capacities of cities.

Squatting movements were well received by the public and under public pressure, national authorities as well as the authorities of many cities are launching projects to provide affordable housing for the most vulnerable citizens, adapted to the needs and possibilities of society. In this way, interesting, alternative projects are created, such as housing cooperatives or self-building projects in which homeless unions and numerous NGOs that deal with these problems are actively involved and have donated funds, skills, knowledge, and strength. These alternative projects are inspired by the experience of cities from other countries such as some Dutch cities and especially Berlin. Housing cooperatives represented a chance for people to organize themselves through housing communities where all tenants are equal. This alternative way of life meant that the decision-making process on all important issues was participative, which gave the tenants back their dignity and the power to influence. Many decisions are concerned with finding solutions to problems and providing various services beyond market, and capitalist conditions, relying on agreements, solidarity, and mutual support with other squatter communities or with neighbors (Martinez, Cataneo, 2014, p. 14).

Part of the squatting movement was radical and dissatisfied with any partial actions demanding a change in the system. The second squatting movement gladly accepted the alternative - the launched programs, even though they took care of only a part of the vulnerable population. Many squatters just wanted an affordable apartment, not insisting on radical changes to the system, and wanted to be patient and wait for their chance.

2.2.2 Inclusion of human rights protection in the squatting movement

The movements in Madrid and Barcelona were "delayed" because of Franco's regime, which was overthrown in 1975, and these movements only emerged in the mid-1990s. In addition to the classic content: providing housing for the poor and sensitive, vulnerable social groups, this movement cooperated with other social movements such as movements for human rights, for the

Euros) for these purposes.

protection of women - feminist movements, for the protection of the elderly and children, with the movement for the protection of the LGBT population, with environmental movements, etc. In particular, it showed sensitivity to the position and vulnerability of the female population.

Thus, in 1996, the first women's squat, La Escalera Caracola, was created in Madrid, which worked as a social center and was evicted in 2005. In 2009, the La Enredadera squat was founded, which was also a housing and social center, followed by the establishment of more squats in Caldovegano (Caldo Vegano) in 2010, and in Koala (Koala) in 2011 and 2012. All of them had a feminist and anti-patriarchal agenda.

Barcelona had a very developed squatting activity in which female, feminist squats were founded for housing or as social centers, often in close cooperation with the equally vulnerable LGBT population. They had a developed activity of education and dissemination of criticism of male-chauvinistic behavior that is harmful to women, children, the entire community, and men as well. Not infrequently, the unacceptable macho speech of hatred and contempt towards women, who are described as sexual objects is highlighted and analyzed, and the culture of tolerance that supports this type of verbal as well as physical violence is criticized. Excessive tolerance and pacifying comments accompanying this behavior are pointed out: "he was joking", "he was drunk", "he was on drugs", etc. This was good content for left parties' political program in the elections and these parties received quite a lot of support. The aggressiveness that appears in society towards women, and occasionally appears in some of the mixed squats, is explained as a reflex of the patriarchal and authoritarian capitalist society, which needs to be fundamentally changed for these phenomena to disappear (Devi, 2012, pp. 9-34).

In this context, numerous shelters were created for women and children as victims of domestic violence. Schools for feminism were opened, and many courses were organized as well as debates and discussions on the rights of women and vulnerable sexual and other minorities. In these efforts, a network was created with artists, intellectuals, and political actors who, on that wave, created new projects to raise awareness of society around these topics. Conferences and scientific and expert gatherings were held to shed light on these problems, look at their causes, and propose solutions.

The squatting movements in Madrid and Barcelona connected with the European movements on this topic especially with the movement in Berlin which was very sensitive to these topics. Thus, congresses were held in Berlin in 2009, which gathered a large number of participants: The Congress of Anti-Sexist Practices as well as The Anarchist Congress. Many magazines were launched and the public was constantly informed about these topics. In this sense, festivals were especially important, which introduced new content

into the city community, affirming the rights of all members of minorities and vulnerable groups from a new angle.

Another important topic of cooperation between these two movements was the protection of the rights of the elderly, whose rights are also increasingly threatened. For the Spanish squatters, it was an inspiring example of the resistance of their counterparts in Berlin, when the city authorities took away a squat occupied by a group of pensioners (ages 67-97) to convert it into commercially profitable facilities. The movement was very active, demonstrations were launched and numerous groups showed solidarity with them, and the authorities, after 4 months of intense conflicts and negotiations, were forced to return the space to them for use and hand it over to them for uninterrupted long-term use (Azozomox, 2014, p. 207). There were similar examples in Madrid and Barcelona, which were also successful.

2.3 Netherlands

In the Netherlands, during the welfare state, special attention was paid to affordable housing. Namely, a large fund of public housing was built and the amount of rent was controlled, which ensured good quality and affordable housing for the citizens.

In the first wave of urban movements from 1960 to 1970 of that year, the appearance of squatting was considered morally acceptable because the culture of concern for housing security in this society implied it. The squatting movements were very strong. The public accepted and viewed squatting and alternative housing models with sympathy. At the same time, there was resistance to speculations in the real estate market and to the practice of keeping empty housing, to raise apartment prices and rents. In this sense, the Netherlands is an example of a country with an excellent organization and a sustainable squatting movement.

2.3.1 Amsterdam

The originators of squatting were poorer people, workers, migrants, and a large population of artists, intellectuals, and students, and one of the first locations for their settlement (in 1963) was on Kattenburg Island in the central district of Amsterdam (Poldervaalt, 2004, p. 111). They moved into the space that the city authorities had previously displaced to demolish the buildings and build a new settlement. The number of squatters increased greatly and despite the pressures of the city authorities (water and electricity were cut off), the squatters managed and continued to live normally. They created a strong organization and squatters community, clearly presented the problems to the public, described

the situation, and explained the solutions. They had success and the public and the media supported them. One of the problems they successfully solved was preventing a fight caused by a minority in the squat, and they removed them from the building. Then, they set clear rules about who can be a squatter and under what conditions. This meant that each squatter accepted housing standards that prohibited alcohol and opiates abuse, and the use of violence of any kind.

From 1964-1967, the neo-anarchist social movement in Provo was very active, which strongly influenced the development of a new culture of resistance and struggle for the rights of the homeless, as victims of the system. Provo later disbanded and grew into the Dutch Crackers Movement. An important activity of both movements was the publication of magazines, pamphlets, proclamations, and posters, with which they explained their goals and announced actions. A good example was the "white plan" series in which some symbolic objects were selected, painted white and performances were made around them, with an explanation of an alternative approach in their use, while affirming an alternative way of life. One of the subjects was the bicycle as a symbol of a different (ecological and healthy) way of moving through the city, as opposed to the invasion of cars, which passivize people, pollute the city, and take up a lot of space both in traffic and in the ever-increasing number of parking lots. A lot of attention was also paid to the family, then to issues of gender equality and the issue of housing. This movement had a reform and even a revolutionary character, raising public awareness of the weaknesses of the capitalist system and the need to correct it so that citizens would be better off (Pruitt, 2014, p. 113).

The next wave of squatting provided apartments in the Vetterstraat for impoverished and homeless married couples. Furthermore, squatting apartments are also provided for other groups of vulnerable citizens, such as students. The movement grew stronger and through the White House's Plan (Witte Huizenplan) it was promised that a list of empty apartments would be prepared, the doors of which would be painted white and thus become visible in the space (Duivenvoorden, 2000; Pruijt, 2014, p. 12).

The meaning of squatting was presented to the public in more detail with the explanation that it is a protest movement against the unfair distribution of wealth in society, against the model of economic development motivated solely by profit, while neglecting the care for the community and the basic citizens' needs. Since 1970, with the help of the Aktie 70 group, the movement has become massive, and interested citizens could more easily register on the waiting lists for an apartment.

2.3.2 The rich content that the movement deals with

At the national level, the Kabouter (Gnome) movement is formed, which gathers squatters, establishes the Oranje Vrijstaat settlement and advocates a cyclical economy and ecology as a socially responsible approach to production and consumption. In this neighborhood, there are recycled goods stores and Oranje health food stores, which have become very popular throughout the Netherlands.

Special attention was paid to the needs of young people, who are supported by newly established alternative youth agencies throughout the Netherlands.

Aktie 70 marked the national squatting day. An alternative agency (Realise in Harlem) is formed for all kinds of assistance, including finding housing (squatting) for homeless families or families living in poor conditions. One of the forms of assistance was the legal protection of squatters against eviction from occupied apartments. In 1971, the Dutch Supreme Court decided that people have a right to an apartment, and this right was transferred to squatters, making it impossible for apartment owners to evict squatters. Consequently, squatters could move back into the housings from which they were previously evicted (Duivenvoorden, 2000, p. 69; Pruijt, 2014, p. 114). This further encouraged the process of legalizing the status of squatters, which made this population solidly protected.

At that time, the authorities realized that they had to build more public housing for vulnerable social groups, and the Netherlands of that time, and according to many factors even today, belongs to the countries with the best housing conditions (Pruitt, 2014, 119).

Part of this movement was an anti-militaristic campaign (against wars, the enslavement of other peoples, and neo-colonialism). The movement is against the ideas of the extreme right and the model of development that is primarily motivated by profit and the enrichment of privileged groups, which was also seen in the model of construction policy that is created without insight into the needs of citizens (Pruijt, 2014, p. 118). Through protests and performances of the squatting movement, a new culture was created and many artists from various fields of art such as music, acting, painting, and sculpture affirmed themselves. Also, under their influence, developed new movements in the field of architecture, urban planning, new ideas about socially responsible production, better ways of organizing society, etc. For example, a very popular music festival (Poortgebouw) emerged in Rotterdam at that time, which affirmed rebellion against capitalism and an alternative way of life, which has survived to this day. The squatters had their bars, libraries, kindergartens, textile stores of recycled goods, and food stores, and constantly took care of the housing fund available to citizens (Breek, de Graad, 2001, p.50; Pruijt, 2014, p. 21).

2.3.3 The Squatting Struggle - Lessons Learned

In 1978, an attempt to adopt a law criminalizing the squatting movement failed, and that was due to the active advocacy of the church council to prevent such a law from being accepted, which indicates the extent of support that the Dutch squatting movement had in the public.

During the 1980s, the struggle for greater availability of housing continued, relying on a well-developed strategy and a variety of methods and instruments of struggle. A big battle was fought in the early 1970s, in the Nieuwmarkt settlement, which had to be displaced to build a highway connected to the metro line and the station. The squatters managed to prevent the demolition and save the settlement (Pruijt, 2014, p. 114, 115). On the trail of those experiences, almost a decade later (1978), the struggle for the preservation of the squatter space in Kinkerbuurt took place where the authorities wanted to evict the buildings, demolish them, and build a small park on that space. Squatters, supported by other activists, built barricades against evictions. The police brutally beat the demonstrators. After that, a debate is opened between the movement and the public about how to defend against eviction efficiently. The following year, squatters organized even stronger barricades in five houses on the canal in Keizersgracht and the city authorities prepared about 2000 policemen to break them, but the mayor, fearing human casualties, canceled that action. Subsequently, squatters were legalized, and the same principle was applied to other squatting areas, including the NRC Newspaper building, which is in a prime location, next to the Royal Palace (Pruitt, 2014, p. 119).

2.3.4 Learning from Mistakes

However, there were also failures in this struggle, from which the squatter movement learned. A good example is the failed attempt to defend the large squat The Grote Wetering (1980) when the police brought in 1000 policemen, armored vehicles, and many plainclothes officers. The squatter was evicted. Also, the unsuccessful defense of the Lucky Lwijk squat was fierce (a tram was burned in the riots), but due to the fragmentation and decentralized approach, it failed. The effectiveness of the resistance was insufficient and the squat was evicted. The squatting movement later analyzed these weaknesses and upgraded the quality of coordination in the work.

The squatters learned a lesson from these defeats and in 1984 they again organized well and far more successfully defended the Weijers building by inviting everyone who wanted to support them to come and join them. About 1,000 people entered that area and the police retreated.

The city of Amsterdam buys about 200 buildings occupied by squatters

(which were privately owned) and legalizes them as social housing and thus allows the squatters to use them, without disturbance. This housing fund is managed by a newly formed housing association that also issues licenses to squatters and makes housing contracts with them (Duivenvoorden, 2000, p. 323, Pruitt, 2004; Pruitt, 2014, p. 121).

In this context, was also raised the question of whether such a protected situation dulled the edge of criticism and struggle of the squatting movement. Many non-profit organizations contributed to the conversion of squatters into regular tenants (Breek, de Graad, 2001, p. 77).

2.3.5 Criminalization of the squatting movement in neoliberal society

In the new, neoliberal environment, the availability of apartments has been significantly reduced. As early as 1984, a new regulation criminalized squatting, in terms of moving into a building that has been empty for up to one year. This example is useful because it shows how much the capitalist regime uses every opportunity to change the "game" to its advantage. Anti-squatting movements also developed during that period. The anti-squat company de Zwerfkei is founded. It primarily protects huge business spaces from squatters and introduces anti-squat guards for that job. Often, students are also hired to be in that space, making squatting impossible. In 2010, the law tightened the conditions of criminalization and regulated that squatting in any building is a criminal act. (Pruijt, 2014, p. 122).

However, there are still spaces in the city that are suitable to be redeveloped for housing and squatter life, such as the former animal shelter next to Muiderpoort railway station or the Valreep social center which has been vacated due to planned demolition, so it is excluded electricity from it. The squatters solved the problem by bringing in wood stoves and providing themselves with a normal way of life in this space.

The Netherlands is a country where an excellent and sustainable squatting movement has been developed, which has also helped many movements in Europe and the world (especially in New York) to become organizationally stronger, to network with other organizations, to increase efficiency in the fight with the authorities and to gain trust and public support, which can ensure the sustainability of the movement for a long time.

3 THE IMPORTANCE OF ECOLOGY IN THE SQUATTING MOVEMENT

The squatting movement also dealt with environmental issues, although this connection is not visible and clear at first glance. Nevertheless, essentially all the problems of capitalist society, including the inadequate distribution of

resources, the squandering of resources and scarcity at the same time, and the ecological hazards that this leads to, become very visible to squatters. Squatters very often have to clean and arrange abandoned buildings from various types of pollution to make these spaces suitable for living. A similar situation is in the case of settlement on the outskirts (rurban squats), where land is often ecologically degraded in various ways and therefore neglected, and it also needs cleaning. The squatting movement and squatters often, fleeing from the market, as far as possible in practical circumstances, find alternative ways of production and consumption. The squatter community also fosters relations of greater closeness and empathy between people, greater solidarity, and cooperation with the affirmation of participatory decision-making on all important community issues, in which the voice of each individual is heard and respected.

Contemporary environmental problems are a constant theme of our societies. Cities have been suffering for decades from the effects of the greenhouse, from the problem of heat islands (from hot concrete and asphalt during the summer), and one of the solutions is to increase green areas (under plants) and blue areas (water, lakes, rivers, etc.) that restore the temperature balance in urban areas. (Boone, Modarress, 2006) Such conditions affect the poor population the most (Cook, Swyngedouw 2012; Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, pp. 66-169).

Hence, the squatting movements combined the anti-capitalist aspect (advocating for social justice) and the environmental aspect of the struggle. Examples of environmental activities of two cities are given here: urban squatting in New York (USA), with examples of similar activities in many European cities, and Barcelona (Spain) showing the activities of three urban squatting communities.

3.1 New York

The example of New York is interesting because it includes various types of environmental content and activities that are also present in most European cities. The experiences of German (Berlin in particular), Dutch, and Scandinavian cities are especially interesting.

New York, as a big city, has had numerous environmental problems for a long time, so any type of environmental action is very important for this city. New York's permanent problem is high pollution, which is difficult to reduce in such a large area. In the Manhattan area, the collapse of the Twin Towers during the attack in September 2001 greatly polluted the environment with polluting material from the buildings and the heavy dust created on that occasion. Furthermore, constant pollution from cars, trains, and subways affects the occurrence of respiratory and other diseases. Manhattan, as well as the

coasts of other parts of the city, are exposed to floods and blasts of strong winds (typhoons) which, due to global warming, have become more frequent and have increased their destructive power (Cole, Rajowski, Buonaito, 2010; Salmun et al. 2009).

New York had the ABC NoRio squat, founded in 1980, which affirmed cycling as a form of healthy transportation and recreation for people. This movement had many supporters. They created bicycle repair workshops, whose services were free because members of the movement worked there. They helped in the procurement of spare parts for bicycles and repairing materials and affirmed the use of bicycles for a longer period because it decreases production, saves resources, and protects the environment from additional pollution. With this squat, a real bicycle subculture developed, accompanied by art (making sculptures with bicycle motifs, paintings, then making clothes and "patches" with these motifs (shirts, sweatshirts, dresses, pants, etc. All these products were very popular (Carlson, Manning, 2010; Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 171,172).

In the last 10 years, in parts of Manhattan, numerous streets have been adapted to pedestrians or bicycles, while car traffic has either been completely excluded, or put in a regime of "slow traffic". Part of the freed space was turned into squares that were returned to the citizens for use and enjoyment.

Almost identical facilities can be found in most European cities. European cities, especially in Scandinavia (Copenhagen is an excellent example), the Netherlands (Amsterdam), and Germany (especially Berlin) pay great attention to the environmental activities of the squatting community and the entire population. Alternative modes of transport (walking and cycling) are strengthened by quality infrastructure such as wide pavements, a large network of cycle paths, a permanent green wave for cyclists, etc.

Another type was the numerous urban gardens that were created all over New York and involved thousands of citizens in the process of occupying, cultivating, and maintaining the gardens. This practice of food production in cities (urban farming) was created during World War II in many cities around the world (in New York, the War Victory Garden is a good example), and the squatting movement continued this practice.

Urban gardens are usually created by occupying empty and neglected plots of land by the owners. (Bartherl, Isendahl, 2013). The gardens were not too big and usually had dimensions of 10m X 20m. Vegetables were mainly grown on them, which were used to cook meals for the squatters as well as for the festivals and performances they organized for the neighbors or other citizens who joined them. Part of their activities were training for growing plants, exchanging experiences with other people, and purchasing seeds, fertilizers, and other materials, tools, etc.

That process also had other important aspects: strengthening the

community, creating an open and pleasant natural environment in the hectic city, a green space for privacy and dealing with plants, etc. (Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 174, 175).

The Giuliani administration tried to destroy urban farms (!), by selling municipal plots on which gardens were made, and faced fierce resistance from the squatting community and environmental organizations such as Earth Celebrations and the Sixth Street Community Centre. This attempt by the government failed and the citizens set out with even greater passion to protect green areas and to expand them further. It was in southern Manhattan, and in the southwest with the relocation of the railway, that a new green area was created with numerous parks, and green oases of which the residents are very proud.

In Berlin, in addition to urban gardening activities, there is a very developed movement of planting and cultivating gardens on the flat roofs of buildings (green roofs). Furthermore, vertical gardens, greenery on the walls, or green terraces and balconies are cultivated, which restore the thermal balance to the city and make it pleasant to live in. A special activity is socializing, training, and exchange of experience in gardening, open to everyone with special care for training children and young people, etc. (Djordjević, 2022, p. 45, 46).

3.2 Barcelona

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, has a rich experience with urban, rural, and rural squats. There are interesting examples of three rural squats. The first two, Can Pasquale and Can Masdeu, were created on the slopes of the Callserola hill near Barcelona, while Can Piella was created in a more rural and less hilly area, as a farm.

Can Pasquale is a squat formed in 1996 by a group of 12-15 people. They are committed to respecting ecological standards in construction, energy production, and all other activities. They immediately cut the wires connecting them to the classical energy system. They installed solar panels and later wind turbines to increase the sustainability of their energy system. They use solar ovens in the kitchens, solar energy for water heating and heating, carry out natural waste recycling, and avoid non-degradable materials. The members of this squat are known for many direct actions in the form of holding workshops, training, and public promotions aimed at affirming green energy, as well as holding training sessions related to installing, using and repairing installations (Cattaneo, Gavalda, 2010; Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 176).

Can Masdeu is a rural squatter community that has developed a common way of production and joint management of its affairs, fostering participatory decision-making, while fostering a high degree of self-sustainability and thus autonomy?

They cultivate the land on which they grow various crops (fruits, vegetables) and raise chickens (eggs, meat). They sell part of their surplus products on the market. On Sundays, they organize a kind of festival where they gather, have fun, and socialize with squatters from other communities, neighbors, and other citizens. They have a common kitchen, restaurant, bakery, and brewery.

This squatter community provides each individual with food, a roof over their head, then internet connection, building materials, tools for work as well as basic training for numerous jobs. The activity of all members is voluntary, but they receive an average of 300 Euros per month from the common fund, of which 45 Euros goes to housing and the rest is for some other needs of each individual (Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 177, 178).

Can Pijelja is a farm where squatters grow grain, cultivate the land (vegetables, fruit), and have a sheep farm (Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 177). Furthermore, in this squat, they developed the production and sale of beer, which is somewhat their trademark. They are characterized by a common way of life, cooperation with neighbors, organization of training for various activities they engage in, exchanging knowledge and experience in work, and participatory decision-making. They take great care of ecological standards in their work and produce and advocate organic products and ecological sustainability. They process bio-waste into compost and avoid hard-to-degrade materials (plastic, etc.). Although they criticize capitalist society, production, and the market, they have common funds from which they finance everything necessary for the normal, functional life of their community (Cattaneo, 2011; Engel, Cattaneo, 2014, p. 177, 178).

These projects affect the affirmation of a sustainable way of life while caring for a healthy environment. The importance of cooperation, voluntary work, and the prevention of any form of exploitation is particularly emphasized. Between the squats, mutual support, cooperation, help, and exchange of experiences are fostered, because they feel like members of the same movement.

In these three examples, see the practice of squatting settlements establishing their own business from which they make money, with the affirmation of ecological standards, an alternative way of life, and a certain self-sufficiency and sustainability of their communities (Pruits, 2013).

4 CONCLUSION

The squatting movement has been providing housing for a vulnerable population for decades: the homeless and people living on the edge of existence in very poor housing conditions. He moves squatters into empty housings. This method is the last chance poor people have in a neoliberal society, in which the

government has withdrawn from housing policy and left the job of providing housing to citizens and the market.

In a neoliberal society, the government despises poor citizens, does not care about the increase of the homeless (it is often pointed out that poverty is their choice), nor tries to stop or at least reduce the increase in social differences and the impoverishment of citizens due to the crises that the neoliberal type of regime necessarily brings. The government also does not correct the often criticized practice of speculation in real estate, which creates artificial demand, and raises rents and apartment prices, considering it a normal game on the market, regardless of the serious consequences for people's quality of life. The construction policy is also primarily motivated by profit, forgetting about the specific needs of the vulnerable population. All the instruments for increasing the availability of housing, which the welfare state developed and applied for the sake of the public good during the 20th century, are generally unacceptable to the neoliberal government.

The aggressiveness of the authorities about squatting, the criminalization of this practice, and the prosecution and arrest of squatters and homeless people, indicate that profit is the main motive of production and wealth is the most important value of a capitalist, neoliberal society. The government's lack of empathy and care for the well-being of citizens (especially vulnerable social groups that permanently increased, with the increase in inequality and with the crises to which the neoliberal economy necessarily leads) causes a great part of society to demand a change in the type of regime to a much more humane concept. The rich experience of the squatting movement and squatters' communities has created an alternative way of life, production, consumption, and more humane relations of cooperation and mutual respect for all people. It affirmed the participatory decision-making in the community, as an important political aspect of life, which is also undermined in neoliberal society.

The experiences of the squatting movement around the world indicate that it is a kind of war within society, and this type of conflict could in time develop into serious social and class conflicts and revolutions. Viewed in this sense, the correction of the existing political model is a reasonable proposal and a beneficial policy alternative.

The social democratic concept of housing policy gave excellent results during the 20th century. Housing became available for all citizens, which significantly raised the standard of citizens, their satisfaction, and thus the quality of life in society. Furthermore, it develops participative forms of decision-making (participatory democracy), which all over the world have proven to be very useful for social integration and the development of a healthy and content society.

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