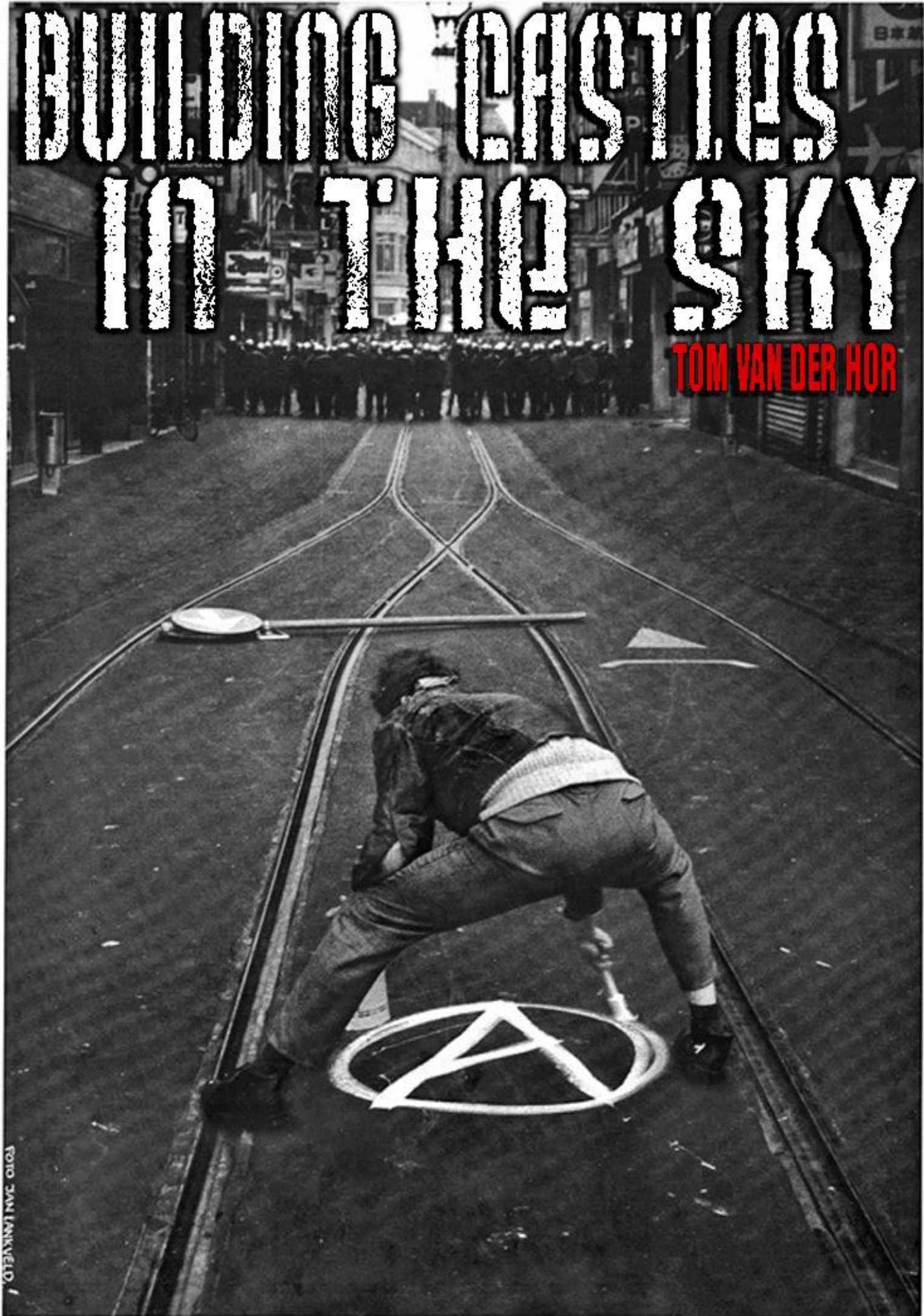


BUILDING CASTLES IN THE SKY

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Official title page

Building Castles in the Sky:
An ethnography of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam and
the criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands

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Thesis

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*They say
Stones are not arguments
And
Hit with sticks
Bombard with wrecking balls
Poison with chemicals
Ruin with atoms
Murder with prisons*

*They are right
Stones are not arguments
Stones are simply
Hesitating attempts
To express ourselves
In the only language
That THEY understand*

We have a lot more to say!

(Anonymous, quoted in Duivenvoorden 2000: 175)

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PREFACE

This thesis presents a critical reflection on the process of criminalization, attempting to put some color back into the black and white depiction of a cultural practice that only very recently became criminalized. It is not a critical reflection of a still image, describing a finished process with complete historic awareness. This is a description of recent events and describes a process in motion. One of the major shortcomings to such a study must therefore be a lacking of this historic awareness, the inability to fully understand or describe present events. On the other hand, being inside the immediacy of that process does expose you to the tension and energy inherently connected to the human experience, and it exactly that experience that I have tried to describe here; the phenomenology of everyday life. Of course, this study primarily focuses on squatting and its recent criminalization. However, the study itself originates out of a strong personal belief that reactionary and repressive laws or responses, of which I believe the criminalization of squatting is a prime example, blind us to the more progressive solutions. With this study I wish to invite the reader to remain critical, and to open up to the possibility of such progressive solutions. Because in the end, the only evil mind we must truly fear, is the narrow mind.

First, I would like to thank my parents Joop and Gina who always supported me throughout my entire studies, both financially and emotionally. Raising me must have been quite the task, as I am sure the readers will understand after reading this thesis. In trying to avoid coming off as corny, I simply wish to thank you for your unconditional support, love and understanding. Secondly, I want to thank my thesis coach Thaddeus Müller for helping me in the right direction, yet also giving me the space to figure things out on my own. I also wish to thank Tom de Leeuw, the second reader. It only seems right that my mentor during the first year of Criminology is also the person that evaluates my final examination paper as a student of Criminology at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. And last, but certainly not least, I would sincerely like to thank all the squatters from the Rotterdam scene who invited me into their home, shared with me their thoughts and emotions, provided me with valuable information and documents and were kind enough to trust me. I truly enjoyed the serious talks, the less serious talks, the accidental meetings in the city, your interests in my progress, and in some cases the lasting friendships that evolved out of this study. I can only hope that this thesis does justice to the stories that you shared with me. And I can only hope that you will be allowed to remain the kings and queens of your castles.

'Do not worry if you have built your castles in the air. They are where they should be. Now put the foundations under them'

Henry David Thoreau

INTRODUCTION

The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws (Ayn Rand)

On the first of June 2010, the Senate voted in favor of proposition law number 31 560: *Wet Kraken en Leegstand*, more commonly known as the anti-squatting bill¹. The vote effectively ended almost 40 years of legal protection for squatting in the Netherlands. I travelled to The Hague that first of June hoping to witness this historic event. Here, I shared the public grandstand with a dozen of squatters who looked as if they were awaiting their death sentence, which in a way they were, be it more of a cultural death sentence. Like them, I too was caught off guard by the speed in which the voting took place. Within a matter of seconds the votes were counted and within a matter of seconds, the anti-squatting bill was passed. One squatter was unable to contain his emotions and started yelling 'you can't evict ideals, squatting will continue!' As a consequence of his actions he was 'escorted' out by police officers on the scene. 'The right of ownership is NOT the greatest good, the right to have a roof over your head is!' the young man yelled when he was escorted out. Another police officer looked at me and asked me if I were interested in leaving the same way too. I politely declined. Other squatters quietly sat there, floating around in a world of disbelief. I could literally read the disbelief off their faces. Their fate had been decided upon in a matter of seconds, and just a few minutes later the Senate resumed their daily agenda. In the eyes of the squatters, they moved on like nothing important had just happened. No big deal, it's all in a day's work. But for the squatters, this was a big deal. They came in hoping their democratically appointed representatives would be reasonable. But this decision had been a long time coming, and nor the counter-arguments of the squatters and their good intentions were ever going to change that. I sat there on the public grandstand thinking what a strange feeling it must be to come into this place a law-abiding citizen, only to leave with the label 'criminal' branded to your forehead, still hot and burning. The words of the removed squatter echoed through my mind; 'squatting will continue'. I believed him, because from his point of view and the point of view of many other squatters, it just became impossible to live their lives without breaking the law.

LOOKING BACK TO GO FORWARD

Of course the criminalization of the act of squatting did not appear out of thin air. The history of squatting in the Netherlands is one of a constant interplay between tightening control imposed from the top-down by the authorities (but certainly not only by the authorities) and the squatters trying to navigate themselves through this tightening net of social control, pushing and transgressing the boundaries of the 'normal' consensual culture. Similar to what the above *vignette* tries to clarify, the quote or mini-manifest that I introduced on page 4 suggests that there exists a conflict between the two groups who both have a different perception on the meaning of the urban environment. More importantly, it suggests that social circumstances which can create injustice and inequality allow for the transgression of the cultural boundaries, 'a breaking of restraints, an illicit realization of immediacy, a reassertion of identity and ontology' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 72). Indeed, when the authorities continue to repress and criminalize practices of everyday life, some might find it

¹ This law was a joint initiative by the Dutch political parties CDA, VVD en ChristenUnie. The law can be read in full via <http://tenhoopen.old.cda.nl/anti-kraakwet.aspx?language=en-us>

impossible to live their lives without breaking these laws, transgressing them in a hesitating attempt to express themselves.

Although this conflict over and a constant redefinition of urban space has been going on for quite some time, a complete historic overview is not central to this study. Rather, this study departs from that point in time where the anti-squatting bill got passed by the House of Representatives on October 15, 2009. This bill lays at the very foundation of this study. A short historic overview of *this* particular bill is therefore necessary. As we will see, the criminalization of squatting did not appear out of thin air.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ANTI-SQUATTING BILL

On October 8th 2003 members of the Dutch Parliament Ten Hoopen, Aptroot, Van den Brink, Slob and Van der Vlies combined their efforts and presented the government with a proposition to change the law so that the squatting of empty office buildings would no longer be possible². On July 6th 2004, the Secretary of Economic Affairs Van Gennip responded in written form, claiming that already existing laws offered enough instruments to prevent the squatting of empty office buildings³. Still, the secretary acknowledged that there was in fact a problem on this area. After a big fire that took place in a squatted building during a house party claiming the life of one victim and injuring six others, member Ten Hoopen decided to repeat his request to change the law with respect to squatting. Piet Heijn Donner, who was Minister of the Justice Department at the time, responded by saying that this incident did not raise enough cause to change the law⁴. On January 31st 2006 members of Parliament Herman and Veenendaal presented the government with yet another proposition, now requesting a total ban on squatting⁵. This time, the House of Representatives passed the motion, but due to the fact that in that same year the government toppled, the law never saw the light of day (Van Gemert et al. 2009).

During a debate in the House of Representatives on November 2nd 2007, a majority seemed to be in favor of the criminalization of the act of squatting. One reason for this was the negative attention media was devoting to squatting at the time as a consequence of a handful of incidents in Amsterdam. Forced evictions of several squats undertaken by the police resulted in a violent confrontation between the riot police and several squatters. Also, the police claimed to have found booby traps in the evicted squats, a claim that squatters in turn have always denied to be true. During an eviction of a squat in Amsterdam in May of 2008, the police claimed to have found weapons in the squatted building. These incidents became the direct motivation for the initiators to propose a complete ban on the act of squatting. According to them, squatters were becoming increasingly violent and organized. This led to proposition law *Wet Kraken en Leegstand*, initiated by Jan ten Hoopen (CDA), Arie Slob (ChristenUnie) and Brigitte van de Burg (VVD)⁶ in August 2008. The critiques were fierce and people were openly questioning the negative image of the more violent and organized squatter, amongst them the *Raad van State* (Council of State) that established that the anti-squatting bill was founded on assumptions and offered no valid data to support these assumptions⁷. In *Advocatenblad*, a journal for Dutch lawyers, two lawyers claimed that the current

² See proposal Tweede Kamer 03/04, 29 200 XIII, nr 6

³ See proposal Tweede Kamer 03/04, 29 200 XIII, nr 53

⁴ See proposal Tweede Kamer 04/05, 574

⁵ See proposal Tweede Kamer 05/06 30 300 XI, nr. 86

⁶ See proposal Tweede Kamer 07/08, 31 560 nr. 2

⁷ See RvS W03.08.0380/I, TK 2008-2009, 31 560, nr. 4

situation offers enough legal instruments to deal with squatting and that criminalization would only mean that squatters will no longer be deterred by that golden one-year-rule (Van der Linden and Redert 2009). Also, head of the police in Amsterdam, Leen Schaap, expected no positive outcome of such a law⁸. On the 26th of August 2008, the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) stated on their website that they were not behind this law⁹ (Van Gemert et al. 2009). Disregarding all these critiques, the House of Representatives finally passed the anti-squatting bill on October 15, 2009. This date marked the start of many protests by squatters and sympathizers alike. For me, it marked the moment that I decided to devote my master thesis to this subject. After all, it's not every day that a student of Criminology gets the chance to write a thesis on a subject that is this current. I also saw this opportunity as the last chance to conduct an ethnographic research amongst those who squat, before the law catches up with them and they will stop, get arrested, or as many squatter say, will move underground. At that time I already knew a fair amount of squatters in the city of Rotterdam and the idea that they were facing the criminal label struck me as unnecessary since the VNG already made it clear that they were not supporting this law (Van Gemert et al. 2009). In need for some enlightenment I started to dig into the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill. I quickly became aware of the moral tone of the document, but also by the unsubstantiated use of stereotypes, used to add weight to the argument that squatting was indeed an act worth criminalizing. The document speaks of a hardening tendency within the squatters' scene, where squatters are becoming more organized and are willing to use weapons against the police. Furthermore, the document claims squatting is a form of vigilantism where squatters allow themselves to fight vacancy of buildings completely on their own terms, disrespecting property rights as they go¹⁰. Also, the document blames squatters for the fact that many buildings are in state of decay, portraying squatters as a virus that infects healthy property by squatting it. These were just few of the many allegations made against squatters that I found in the document, but it went further. Members of the political parties that initiated the law (VVD, CDA and ChristenUnie) went public with their grievances against squatters. VVD politician Jeannette Baljeu publicly stated that 'the squatting of a house which is the property of a citizen is in our opinion a criminal offence and it is high time that the citizen is protected instead of those who violate the law'. One has to realize the complexity of squatting, to which I will pay more attention to in the forthcoming chapters. For now it is important to realize that at the time of this statement, squatters were actually protected by the law if they squatted a building that had been empty for over a year and no plans were made by the owner to take his or her property back into use again. In fact, if a squat goes 'by the book' then the squatter deserves protection from the police against angry owners. Therefore, the claim that all squatters are violating the law and that they are downright criminals struck me as populist slander. Or when we translate such statements to more sociologically accepted terminology, it very well fits the image of the moral entrepreneurs introduced by Howard Becker (ibid. 1963), crusading to create a steady foundation for moral laws by making squatters into folk devils (Cohen 1972).

⁸ See Het Parool 15-05-2009

⁹ See <http://www.vng.nl/eCache/DEF/79/940.html> for a full report on the subject matter

¹⁰ See proposal Tweede Kamer 07/08, 31 560 nr. 3

But why do the political authorities¹¹ feel the need to criminalize squatting at exactly this moment in time? After all, squatting has been around for decades, so it can hardly be labeled a new phenomenon. Also, the Association of Dutch Municipalities made clear in an early stage that they were not behind this law, claiming that squatting was not a big problem in their cities. They were not the only ones who criticized the law; police forces nationwide were and still are not happy with the fact that they will have to reserve extra man power to evict these criminalized squats. The chief of police in Amsterdam clarified this in the documentary *Kraken, waarom niet?* (Squatting, why not?)¹², though adding that the police is merely an executive agency that will obey orders from above even when they do not fully agree with them. These are just a few examples of organizations that openly criticized the bill, not the mention the critique of the Dutch Council of Churches who claimed in the tabloid paper *De Pers* of June 1st 2010 that the CDA and the ChristenUnie, both parties founded on Christian ethics and values, were 'neglecting their Christian task' to ensure people a roof over their head and stated that 'squatters too deserve the support of God'. However, these critiques did not impress the initiators of the anti-squatting bill who stood behind their claim that modern-day squatters live by the code of the streets, something the initiators of the bill find unacceptable in a democratic, constitutional society. To them, squatting is an act worth criminalizing.

These recent developments seem out of proportion when you realize that both enemy and friend agree on the fact that squat-scene is merely a shell of what it used to be. The violent confrontations that took place in the early 1980's between squatters and the riot police are far behind us and despite of what the initiators of the bill might say, a comparison through time supports the claim that the squatting is accompanied by far less violence than it used to be and that there are also far less serious confrontations between squatters and the authorities (Van Gemert et al. 2009). This suggests that there are bigger processes at play behind the criminalization of squatting. These are processes are worth studying from both a societal as well as a criminological perspective.

RELEVANCE TO SOCIETY

As I have already explained, the idea for this study surfaced when the House of Representatives passed the anti-squatting bill on October 15, 2009. But to what phenomenon is this bill referring to? Ask any Dutch person in the street about squatting, and surely he or she will tell you that squatting is breaking in to a vacant building that is not yours with the intention of living in it. A more sociological accepted definition describes squatting as 'living in – or using otherwise – a dwelling without the consent of the owner' and states that 'squatters take buildings with the intention of relatively (> 1 year) long-term use' (Pruijt 2004: 35). To better understand the meaning of squatting and the squatter we have to pause for a moment and translate these terms back into Dutch. In the Netherlands, squatting is known as *kraken*, a term that can be translated as cracking or breaking (as in breaking open a safe). Consequently, the person who squats a buildings is called a *kraker*, referring to that person that breaks open and enters the building he or she wishes to squat without consent

¹¹ When I speak of the political authorities in this thesis, I am referring to those political parties who are in favor for criminalization of squatting and who voted in favor for the anti-squatting bill. This is important to know since there were also parties against this bill. For an overview of the advocates and opponents of the bill, see appendix 1.

¹² This documentary can be seen online via www.stoorzender.tv/Kraakverbod/Kraken_waarom_niet.html

of the owner. From this point of view, it already becomes clear why squatting has always had a negative connotation for many people. After all, the person who breaks into a building that is not his or her property is seen (much like the robber who cracks open the safe) as an ordinary thief. More importantly, for many it is a direct attack on the sanctity of home-life, reminding them that even the house will not be able to offer full protection from the outside world. It is therefore not difficult to imagine that squatting has always been an act that created a conflict. After all, a society that holds as one of its most important values property rights will readily condemn those who for whatever reason disrespect this absolute right. Squatters are of course not oblivious to these sentiments and they are all too aware of the fact that squatting represents an activity that differs extremely from the more conventional notions of 'legality and morality' (Ferrell 1996: 101). All of this makes it easy for people to accept the stereotypes associated with squatters. These stereotypes of the lazy squatter who is unwilling to work for a living almost always rely on reducing the decision to squat to a consideration of available opportunities, thus implying that squatting results from a lack of control which quite effectively denies the expressive nature of the act (Young 2007). Such prejudices are fired up by media reports that inform us about squatters who resist eviction from the very buildings that are not even theirs to begin with. Of course, squatters are not simply the receivers of a stereotypical label. Through their own acts and behavior they are also responsible for the social construction of such stereotypical images. Yet, it is through the interaction of such stereotypes and the fear people have of squatters that they come to be imagined as 'filthy, parasitic, out of cultural bounds' (Ferrell 2004: 177). Such filthy and parasitic acts are seen by both the political authorities and some segments of society as an illness that threatens the health of the social body. Squatting thus becomes typified as a disease that threatens the healthy urban environment, making criminalization of the act of squatting the most effective medicine to prevent the 'squatter-virus' from infecting other healthy parts of the social body. The political authorities and more in particular, the initiators of the bill, thus come to see themselves, as Henri Lefebvre has argued, 'the doctors of space' (ibid. 1991: 99), healing society through the criminalization of unwanted acts and by imposing more intense forms of social control (Hayward 2004). By doing so, squatters are banished from the 'idealized urban community, setting them in conflict with community values and concerns' (Ferrell 1996: 143), which in turn can evoke an emotional response on the side of the squatters. As we will see, these values are connected to the defining trait of the late modern society; a culture defined by consumption.

The fact that the initiators behind the anti-squatting bill hold squatters responsible for the decay of buildings and claim that squatting leads to the devaluation of a neighborhood's value (that is, monetary value), can in my opinion be described as the result of this culture of consumption. Better yet, a society driven by hyper-consumption where consuming to satisfy our own personal needs alone is not enough, but consumption is also driven by the need to obtain a certain level of status tends to value people on their ability to consume (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). As a result, cities have turned into out-door malls 'organized around seductive areas for high-end consumption' (Ferrell, Hayward, Morrison and Presdee 2004: 168). In such cities the right to use space becomes confined to consumers. But as with everything that is new, eventually these once so eagerly acquired goods lose their appeal and have to be discarded to make way for the new 'new and improved', or in the words of that urban scrounger:

After all, a society defined by acquisition, a city caught up in the endless manufacture of need and want – a city of consumers – must always follow the next desire as it leads to the next new commodity (Ferrell 2005: 168).

By the same token houses become more and more marketed as consumer commodities, advertising status, lifestyles and affluent living to attract the middle- and upper-class. Loft-living, penthouses, pimped-up monumental buildings or living in converted factories. The heartbeat of the late modern city is defined by the constant, repetitive sound of demolition and construction going on 24/7. The city is being remade into a consumable good; our homes have become a part of our lifestyle by which we define our social status. Focused on a perfect place to live, sanitized from everything that gives us an uneasy feeling, we all rush to Home-Depot, tune in to Extreme Home Makeover or MTV Cribs, get subscriptions to whatever magazine that can tell us how we should decorate our homes according to the latest trend and look for the perfect place to live. And just like those commodities we buy in stores, we get rid of our old homes and offices', put them out on the side of the street where they sadly await either demolition or renovation so they can be sold with profit to those who can afford it. It is not that these buildings are unusable, but rather that 'they cannot be used *profitable*' (Smith 1996: 64). For landlords or larger housing corporations, it can thus become profitable to neglect or even destroy their property (ibid.). And on this valuable urban space reclaimed and 'saved' by modernist city-planners new luxurious apartment blocks rise up, attuned to the needs of the modern, deserving city dweller (Hayward 2004).

Now of course, it is a bit farfetched to describe empty houses as the discarded commodities of a society driven by hyper-consumption, comparing it to our old goods we put out on the curb, waiting for the garbage-men to pick them up. I am of course well aware of the fact that an empty house is not merely the result of an owner upgrading in order to keep up with the latest trend and that neglected property cannot always be seen as the result of profit-driven slumlords. However, it is hard to deny the fact that late-modern cities are becoming increasingly intolerant to places that do not look new, fresh, clean, and that are not yet sanitized from the run-down looking buildings and the unfortunate souls inhabiting them. What we witness is an aggressive reclamation of those spaces that do not fulfill the function they are supposed to fulfill, spaces that do not do as they are told (Papastergiadis 2002). This sanitized and homogenized vision of the urban space, the rationalization of this space, often tends to collide with the realities of the urban space, with life as it is experienced and lived out by those inhabiting this reality (Ferrell, Hayward, Morrison and Presdee, 2004). In this context, squats represent the ruins of the city. Tim Edensor has already pointed out that 'ruins are largely understood ... as offensive to the character and aesthetics of the city' (Ibid. 2002; quoted in Hudson and Shaw 2010: 4). My assumption is that this stigma of the old, run-down and filthy looking building that does not fulfill its original function is projected on those who live there; immigrants, parts of the working class and in the case of this particular study, the squatters. They indeed are imagined to be 'filthy, parasitic, out of cultural bounds' (Ferrell, 2004: 177). And the only reaction the authorities seem to have is the creation of more laws that can claim back these lost urban spaces into the realms of their socially controlled 'accepted' and 'functional' areas.

As we have already seen, the recent criminalization of the act of squatting is the result of the net of social control that was spread out over squatters' decades ago and which the authorities have finally managed to seal off, tagging it with the official criminal label. The fact that they just recently managed to fully criminalize the act of squatting can tell us a lot about the authorities ever growing willingness to 'impose more intense forms of social control' on society, revealing an ever growing culture of control (Hayward 2004: 166; Garland 2001). It is my belief that these intense forms of social control are meant to advance a larger agenda aimed at rationalizing and sanitizing the urban environment of unwanted behavior such as squatting (but certainly not only squatting), taking these wasted spaces back into the realms of the city of consumption in order to keep 'specific spaces

to their specificity' (Papastergiadis 2002: 45). Mike Presdee beautifully described this development as 'the creeping criminalization of everyday life' (Presdee 2000: 159) which leads to the 'habitualisation and homogenization of everyday life and the disappearance of space' (Boyarsky 2002). This can help us understand the conflict between the authorities and their sanitized view of everyday life and the shared culture of squatting and their lived experience of life in the city.

The stereotypical depiction by the initiators of the anti-squatting bill of squatters hooks on to some of the shared public anxieties about the threats to the ideal-type urban environment, making it very hard to deny that the authorities deliberately try to polarize squatters from the rest of society through initiating the all too familiar language of the moral panic (Ferrell 1996; Cohen 1973). It seems that the initiators of the anti-squatting bill or *the moral entrepreneurs* carefully constructed squatting as a crime and in order to sustain this claim attempted to engineer a moral panic around the act of squatting in order to advance their own ideologically justified agenda (Ferrel 1996: 159; Lefebvre 2003). And indeed, the response of some segments of society shows that our late modern society is very easily scared by even the slightest threat of violence, real or imagined, and is very easily annoyed with those who get for free what they themselves are paying for. Described as the process of *Othering*, Ferrel, Hayward and Young explain:

Chief of these are the sense of moral indignation where those cast as Others are castigated for cheating at the rules of reward and evading the sacrifices which the virtuous citizens perceive as the nature of responsibility and duty (e.g., living on the dole, having housing freely provided, being single dependent mothers etc). This is particularly exacerbated where such deviants are seen as directly causing problems for the virtuous (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008; 23).

Squatting is thus seen as cheating, a way of evading the sacrifices that the virtuous citizens have to make on a daily basis. Such behavior is worth condemning, and it is even worth criminalizing. The virtuous citizens who play by the rules, who make the sacrifices, come to define squatting as a dangerous disease that threatens the dominant values of their healthy urban environment, values derived from the activity of consumption (Hayward 2004). Let us read the following post on the online forum <http://forum.fok.nl>. Here, an anti-squatters topic named *squatters and other left-winged scum* is launched where people can vent their opinion on squatting. One of them writes:

These kinds of people would make nice practice targets for the Riot Police. In my opinion they should: punish that scum as hard as possible. Stealing other people's property, because no one is living there. BUY YOUR OWN HOUSE FUCKING JUNKIE or just stay under that bridge 🤔🤔🤔🤔 Yesterday or the day before there was something on the radio about squatters in Amsterdam. Squatters squatted a house for the second time in one week. De owner said he was rebuilding, the squatters thought that to be lies 😊 They are not allowed to think anything, that jobless scum who call themselves "artists" 🤔🤔 Like that's a job 😊.!!! Rolling colors on a canvas with a paintbrush, BOEHOEHOE 😊 Seriously. If it's up to me they can deport them to Schiermeeuwnoog (wrongly spelled island off the coast of the Netherlands named Schiermonnikoog, TH) and float them off. Useless people who costs us citizens too much money 🤔

This statement can be read as an expression of extremely sensationalized outrage aimed against those who squat. It also readily accepts the same stereotypical and stigmatized images that the anti-squatting bill propagates under the rubric of a rational response to the immoral behavior of squatters who violate societies 'highest principles, ethics and values' (Young 2007: 141).

But it also helps us to understand better the late modern times we are living in, where people are defined and accepted through their ability to consume, the idea that you can only deserve a place to live if you have the money to provide for it. In the end, you can only be truly healthy if you can consume and those who cannot or wish to do otherwise are often seen as a threat to these dominant values. The field of cultural criminology argues that this is the result of the rise of unchecked global capitalism in a late modern society (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008). This late modern society finds it hard to recognize the underlying social causes that can lead to the act of squatting and the continuation of squatting. In short, reducing the complex social phenomenon of squatting to a simple cost-benefit analysis completely denies the heterogeneity and diversity of the people and their motivations within this shared culture of squatting. It denies the *expressive* character of squatting, an act that defies the dominant structure of our late modern society. It is an act that expresses a certain resistance against the natural order of things, an act not simply motivated by the availability of opportunities and a lack of (spatial) control, but an attempt to take back control over one's own destiny (Hayward 2004). Squatting can therefore be seen as an act of cultural resistance, because the very *act* of squatting calls into question the way in which society is organized. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of this shared culture, defined by its resistance against the dominant cultural structures is necessary in order to break through the one-sided process of criminalization and to look past the simple stereotypes that the initiators of the bill propagate and that segments of society come to hold as true. This study offers a correction to these stereotypes, staged against the urban stage of the late modern city.

This study will therefore focus on the conflict between the moral entrepreneurs that designed the anti-squatting bill and the use of the familiar language of the moral panic in order to justify criminalization, and the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam in which squatting can be seen as an act of cultural resistance. As we will see, both the political authorities as well as the squatters themselves are involved in the creation of the social construction of squatting, participating in an ongoing process in which both the authorities and the squatters react to one another (Ferrell 1996). This process can only be understood when placed upon the stage on which the conflict plays out. Crowned by Jeff Ferrell as the 'city of consumers' (Ferrell 2005: 168), this urban environment is important in order to understand some of the important reactions that condemn squatting. As we will see, such reactions do not only come from the political authorities, but can also be witnessed from within society. Bottom-up reactions like the more rational market-based reaction known as vacant property management and 'anti-squatting'. The latter fits seamlessly within the aim of the moral entrepreneurs and their anti-squatting bill since it is my belief that the anti-squat is also a form of social control; anti-squat is a perfect example of 'commodified control' (Garland 2001).

RELEVANCE TO CRIMINOLOGY

Except for the study conducted by Dutch criminologist from the free university of Amsterdam (Van Gemert et al. 2009) and a couple of lost student like myself who were in the process of writing their master thesis, squatting is a subject relatively untouched by the field of criminology. This surprises me, especially when you realize that we are talking about actions and behavior that apparently violate the cultural norms of the dominant culture or society, either the formally enacted rules such as the law, or the dominant social norms of society. What we are talking about is behavior that was already labeled by many as deviant and was very recently awarded with the official label of criminal

behavior. Is this not the kind of behavior criminologists are supposed to be interested in? Are these not those important processes that are at play within our society, processes where power inequality ruptures through the surface, those processes that criminology should critically examine? We are talking about the criminalization of an act that has become part of Dutch history with its roots reaching all the way back to the early 1960's. We are talking about a culture that is shared by an extremely diverse group of people (that is, a heterogeneous group of people) who now face the choice of giving up their lifestyle and their place to live or to live on as criminals. Therefore, the criminalization of squatting should not be allowed to go unnoticed by the field of criminology.

There is however one field that has always taken an interest in squatting. Scholars from the field of sociology have entered the debate on the criminalization of squatting. These scholars theorize squatting as an urban social movement known as the squatters' movement, a movement that struggles over issues such as urban decay, neighborhood revitalization and the erosion of the welfare-state (Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler and Mayer 2005). Their valuable insights enable us to understand better the motivations behind the act of squatting. Furthermore, they have never neglected their task to participate in the public debate on squatting in the Netherlands, offering their intellectual critiques against those who far too readily stereotyped squatters as criminals (see Pruijt 2003, 2004; Uitermark 2004). As I will show in the forthcoming chapters, the field of sociology also recognizes the cultural function of squatting. Justus Uitermark for instance points out that squatting is both a reaction to urban injustices as well as a form of self-management and 'the cultivation of an alternative lifestyle' (Uitermark 2004: 237; Duivenvoorden 2000). From this point of view it becomes understandable why many squatters see the criminalization of squatting as a form of cultural criminalization. This is supported by the claim that cultures are 'differently ranked and stand in opposition to one another, in relations of domination and subordination, along the scale of 'cultural power'' (Hall and Jefferson 1993: 11). Such power inequalities can help us to understand better the process by which squatting has been criminalized. Bare in mind though that this criminal label is not passively accepted by squatters and although we can recognize such vast power inequalities, squatters do resist the label, pointing towards the interplay of reactions between these different groups in the process of criminalization (Ferrell 1996).

This study can therefore be described as a critique of power and its consequences, in a humble attempt to account for the void that mainstream criminology allowed to exist when it comes to squatting in the Netherlands. By doing so, I wish to advance my belief that squatting is not an act that evokes purely negative values, but that squatting in many cases can stabilize ones identity and promotes the possibility of different ways of being in the city (Papastergiadis 2002). By describing squatting in Rotterdam as a *shared culture*, I wish to account for the great diversity and heterogeneity of the research population. Housing subcultures from Punk to Tekno, from Speedfreaks to the members of the artistic community, squatting is a culture shared by a wide variety of social groups or subcultures. Yet despite the many differences that exist between them, they have at least one thing in common; the act of squatting. Whereas the initiators of the anti-squatting bill claim that the act of squatting is purely *instrumental*, I have come to believe that the act is in its nature *expressive*. For this reason I wish to theorize the act of squatting as an act of *cultural resistance*. Whether the act of squatting originates from a deep dissatisfaction with the way in which the world functions or simply from the desperate need for a roof over your head, the act of squatting is a perfect example of how individuals can renegotiate and transgress the rigid cultural boundaries and dominant norms of society. It shatters the taken-for-granted way in which our late modern society is build up, and resists it. Squatters ask a similar question Gaston Bachelard asked in

his famous *Poetics of Space*, only with a transgressive twist to it; 'Why not begin with the house?' (ibid. 1969; quoted in Boyarsky 2002: 82)

Furthermore, squatting is an act that almost always takes place within the boundaries of the city and can therefore be defined as an *urban phenomenon* (Ferrell 2006). This also explains why the urban environment itself is important in understanding these processes. Talking about cultural resistance and transgression also clarifies the need for exploring the way in which the political authorities have employed symbolic and stylistic strategies of their own in their quest for the criminalization of squatting (Ferrell and Sanders 1995) in order to reestablish (spatial) control over the squats or these wasted spaces. Therefore it is my belief that the shared culture of squatting and its subsequent criminalization should be studied through a cultural criminological lens, because:

If, as someone once suggested, law is the mailed fist of the ruling class, then those hammered down by that fist, those criminalized and made out-laws, carry with them at least the seeds of progressive opposition, offering at minimum a broken mirror in which to reflect and critique power and its consequences (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 21).

This is precisely what cultural criminology is all about; it explores the 'collective behavior organized around imagery, style and symbolic meaning, and that categorized by legal and political authorities as criminal' (Ferrell and Sanders 1995: 3; see also Ferrell, Hayward, Morrison and Presdee 2004; Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). I will talk about the field of cultural criminology in more detail in the chapters on methodology and theory. For now, it is important to remember that cultural criminology sees all human behavior as meaningful human behavior. That is, behavior that communicates more than a simple act of deviance; cultural criminology stresses that human behavior communicates cultural meaning (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2009). This study is an attempt to reveal that cultural meaning, or the phenomenology of the everyday life.

The ultimate goal of this study is to offer you, the reader, a more nuanced understanding of people who squat. It is therefore necessary to critically reflect on the stereotypes used in the anti-squatting bill, because such one-sided views can only communicate stereotypes into society. Therefore, this study addresses a variety of dimensions set within the urban environment in order to offer such a 'fresh' insight: the language used in the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and important affiliated documents, the urban phenomenon of squatting as an act of cultural resistance and some of the most important reactions expressed against criminalization. The collected data is presented along the lines of a critical analysis of both the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and important affiliated documents, and the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam. In the end this ethnography of squatting and its criminalization 'investigates the interplay of cultural innovation and institutionalized intolerance, and the politics of culture and crime'¹³ (Ferrell 1996: 16). Furthermore, the criminalization should not be seen as an isolated incident, rather it should be described for what it is, that 'creeping criminalization of everyday life' (Presdee 2000: 159) Mike Presdee talked about. Through interviews, (participatory) observations, qualitative content analysis, but also through individual city walks and photographic material, I hope to be able to offer you this fresh insight important to come to a more nuanced understanding of the shared culture of squatting and the official reactions against it. It poses a counterweight to that 'democratically-sanctioned myth' that all squatters are criminals (Prujt 2004: 701).

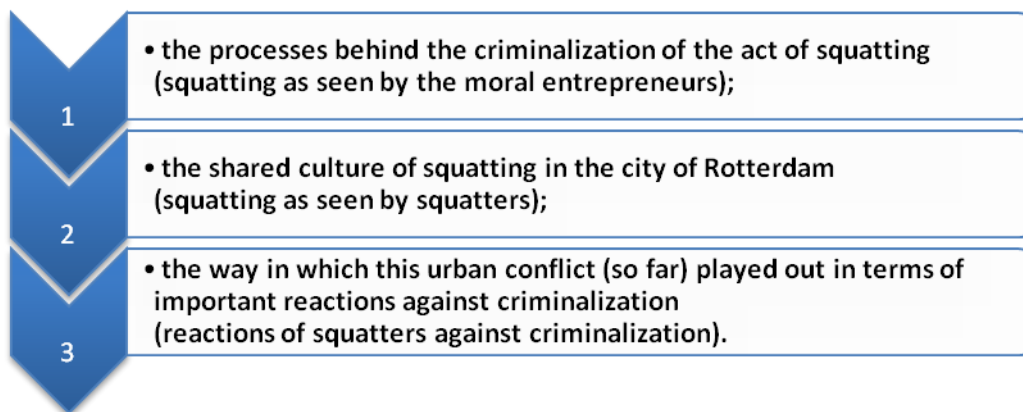
¹³ I am indebted to Jeff Ferrell for the extremely valuable insights I got from reading his work, in particular his study of the urban underground of graffiti in *Crimes of Style; Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality* (1996)

EXPECTATIONS TO THE MAIN QUESTION

To summarize, this study shines a critical light on some of the most current developments surrounding the issue of squatting in the Netherlands, a situation where ‘the tension between sanitized official life of the city and the gritty realities of its under-life’ surfaces (Ferrell et al, 2004: 5). It is my belief that the criminalization of squatting intentionally reduces the complex social phenomenon of squatting to a causal problem and thereby labels all squatters as parasites that endanger the health of the urban environment. Furthermore, it is my belief that the criminalization of squatting ignores the reality of squatting by stereotyping it as a threat to property rights. By only focusing on the loss of revenues for the owner the political authorities are ignoring underlying social problems and thereby seem to value most the values that flow directly from the activity of consumption (Hayward 2004). I will test this hypothesis through an explorative and descriptive study of the interplay between the cultural process of criminalization and the shared culture of squatting as an act of cultural resistance.

Seeing squatting as an urban phenomenon, the stage against which this conflict plays out is the urban environment of the city of Rotterdam. However, a total picture will not be provided here. The discussed dimension will offer you at most an intellectual snapshot that looks at the situation from a different perspective. It is meant to offer that fresh insight that might help you to take that bigger picture for yourself. Also, by placing this conflict upon the urban stage I hope that it will become clear that such conflicts over the meaning of the urban environment are not limited to the act of squatting, but can concern all city-dwellers. I wish to offer this insight by answering the following definition of the problem, or main question:

How can we describe:



From the main question a number of important research questions can be subtracted. These research questions can all be placed within one or more of the dimensions that help us understand better the situation we are currently finding ourselves in. These dimensions are all linked together since both parties are part of an ongoing process of redefinition (of space). Set against the duality of the late modern city, we can therefore distill the three dimensions important to this study: 1) the seemingly rational logics of the anti-squatting bill, 2) the shared culture of squatting as a critical reflection on criminalization and 3) the important ways in which squatters in Rotterdam (and nationwide) have tried to fight off the criminal label. From these dimensions flow a number of important research questions:

- How can we describe authorities will to construct squatting as a criminal offence?
- What are the most important methods used by the authorities in order to sustain the criminalization of squatting?
- How can we describe the shared culture of squatting?
- What are the most important elements of the shared culture of squatting?
- How do these elements help us to critically reflect on that what is being claimed by the initiators of the anti-squatting bill?
- How can we describe some of the reactions of squatters (Rotterdam) against the criminal label, as witnessed up till now?
- How can we describe this ongoing process of redefinition when set against the duality of the late modern city?

The results of this study will be embedded within theories which I will present in a theoretical and conceptual framework in chapter 2. The research questions will be presented and answered through a critical reflection on the anti-squatting bill, provided by the ethnography of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam. These current events will be staged against some of the late modern city's defining traits. Chapters 3 will provide an ethnographic content analysis on the seemingly rational logics of the anti-squatting bill. Chapter 4 digs into the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam through ethnography and will serve as a critical reflection on the recent criminalization of squatting, revealing the expressive nature of squatting. Chapter 5 focuses on some of the important reactions of Rotterdam squatters against criminalization. In the final conclusion I will offer a broad consideration of the most important findings. These findings will be described along the theoretical lines that were set out in the theoretical framework. By doing so, I will be able to formulate an answer to the definition of the problem.

In the next chapter, I will first clarify the methods I used for the collection of the data. I will begin to discuss in more detail the role of cultural criminologists and their commitment to the public debate, and the way in which I have tried to meet these demands. Furthermore, this study will also have its shortcomings. These shortcomings are discussed in the next chapter on the mission and methodology. I will therefore conclude with some suggestions for future research on this subject.

1

MISSION AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Before there was a squatters' movement, before there were even squatters, there were people who squatted buildings (Owens 2009: 54)

Within the field of criminology, the researcher has the important task to provide reliable and precise knowledge on criminality, on the criminals or deviants who commit crimes, but also on the possible reactions on crime and criminality (Van Swaaningen 2005). But in more recent years, the role of the criminologist has become the subject of many scholarly debates. The contemporary field of criminology is criticized for its apparent orthodoxy and its devotion to conventional survey methods compiled into neat and clean cross-tabulations (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008; see also Hayward 2004; Ferrell and Sanders 1995, Ferrell 2006; Young 2007). These criminological scholars are not only arguing for criminological studies that are also able to account for that 'messy uncertainty of people and their problems' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 159), but also stress the importance for the field of criminology to meddle in the public debate on issues concerning crime and criminality. They claim that it is criminology's public purpose to contribute to a better politics of crime and the regulation of crime (Loader and Sparks 2010). These arguments combine the critical with the public or in the case of this particular study it combines cultural criminology and public criminology. It is my belief that by positioning myself within the field of cultural criminology, I will be able to avoid the more conventional criminological wisdom and study the shared culture of squatting and its subsequent criminalization in more progressive terms, diving in the messy uncertainty of the everyday lives of squatters in the city of Rotterdam and meddling in the public debate over the criminalization of the act of squatting. This is not only the most desirable point of departure for this study; it is also the only one possible since squatters themselves are also fed up with being reduced to statistical entities¹⁴:

... squatters are absolutely not a homogeneous group and in general there exist little ties or similarities between one squatter and another. You can also imagine that squatters do not like to be pigeonholed [stereotyped, TH] to begin with, and what is the problem with studies like anthropology and **criminology**, is that you have to generalize in order to support frameworks or theories. The majority of squatters do not like this (08-04-2010).

It becomes apparent that if I wish to study the shared culture of squatting (in the city of Rotterdam) and the criminalization of squatting in general, it is important to critically analyze the stereotypes and generalization used to demonize squatters and by doing so, staying as far away from the 'canons of received wisdom' as possible (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 160). The field of cultural criminology offers the methods necessary to allow for such a critical study. I will now focus on those methods important to cultural criminology and in particular, those methods used for this study.

¹⁴ See <http://www.kraak-forum.nl/viewtopic.php?f=25&t=6972&p=117153&hilit=portret#p117153>

CULTURAL CRIMINOLOGY

Let's start by saying that cultural criminology is inherently connected to public criminology. Described by Jeff Ferrell as 'a loose federation of outlaw intellectual critiques', cultural criminology strives to keep itself open to fresh insights from individuals both from inside and outside the field of criminology (Ferrell 2007: 99; Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). It is exactly this attitude that connects cultural criminology to public criminology and its focus to contribute its knowledge to the public debate (De Haan 2008).

Within this cultural criminological study, public criminology is employed to reach out to that part of the non-academic public. This has everything to do with the fact that the idea for this thesis sprung from the public debate surrounding the criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands and the fact that I already had personal ties to a group of squatters in the city of Rotterdam. One might claim that this is a blow to the objectivity and validity of this thesis, claiming that this empathy will blind me from the more negative features of squatting (Hirschi 1973), but I strongly disagree with this point of view. I will explain this in more detail in the upcoming paragraphs. For now, it is important to realize that being emphatic simply means that one has to open him or herself up emotionally, mentally and experientially to the world of those he or she wishes to understand (Goode 1975). Furthermore, laws such as the anti-squatting bill that are based on extreme stereotypes and unsubstantiated claims do not do any justice to the heterogeneity and diversity that often exists within different cultures. By exploring the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam, I hope to at least reveal this diversity and to differentiate the one-sided stereotype offered by the political authorities, thereby providing the reader with a wider and more nuanced perception of the shared culture of squatting and its subsequent criminalization. My own opinion aside, it should be noted that this thesis is not meant as a squatters manifesto. Offering you, the reader, a more nuanced understanding of the shared culture of squatting does not mean to propagate the act of squatting. I am simply offering you my vision from a cultural criminological perspective, which should by no means be interpreted as a claim to an absolute truth. I do hope to provide you with the necessary information to frame a more nuanced opinion. Whatever that opinion will be is up for you to decide.

What I do hope to offer you, is a fresh insight; the insight that the criminalization of squatting cannot be and should not be disconnected from the reality of our late modern society. This is a society where extremely diverse social problems are being reduced to rationalized cost-benefit analysis. In long run this can only create more tensions, and a more intense 'struggle between the forces of rationalization and those of existential possibility and lived experience' of which I believe the criminalization of squatting is a primary example (Ferrell et al. 2004: 5). Revealing this struggle through an exploration and description of the shared culture of squatting and a critical analysis of the anti-squatting bill is the principal goal of this study. This is another reason why I am jumping on this cultural criminological train, because it allows me to stop and take a look at methods and insights from other fields of research, and to take them back with me on board, collecting a wide variety of data. These are insights from the field of urban sociology, human ecology, philosophy, humanity studies, urban geography, but also through the use of imagery. Furthermore, cultural criminology's attention to (sub)-cultures and lifestyles is essential to this study of the shared culture of squatting. It all blends in this field of research and its multi- and interdisciplinary approach to crime and crime control (Siegel, Van Gemert and Bovenkerk 2008).

Cultural criminology is also meant to confront conventional criminology with its own shortcomings (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 99). This critique is also extremely relevant to this particular study, since it is my belief that conventional criminology or orthodox criminology does not provide me with the tools to critically describe the criminalization of the act of squatting. Of course, I do need some methods to help me achieve these goals. According to cultural criminology, in a fluid world always in flux we need methods that are attuned to this fluidity and ever changing circumstances. This is why cultural criminologists prefer to use ethnographic and qualitative research methods for their studies (ibid.).

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

I had to laugh when I read somewhere that stealing ideas from one person is plagiarism, but to steal ideas from many is research¹⁵. An important notion for those who claim that they wish to take part in the public criminological debate considering that we are using the knowledge and wisdom that is public, for everyone to see yet for no one to own. Maybe we should therefore consider ourselves as criminological Robin Hoods, stealing the knowledge and wisdom from those few only to give it back to the public. Of course, this study will rely on the ideas that came before me, research already done and that has proven its value to society. These ideas will function as the foundations on which to build a critical study that represents my vision on the criminalization of squatting. But we need those foundations.

Generally speaking there are two types of research methods one can use. These methods are more commonly known as the quantitative and qualitative research methods. Reduced to their most basic form, qualitative research methods are used when we are interested in the quantity or amount (numerical) of a certain phenomenon, while qualitative research methods are used to describe the quality or the characteristics that can help us understand better a certain phenomenon (Bijleveld 2005). Quantitative research methods can therefore not help us to understand the emotions and desires that are at the foundation of a phenomenon. In other words, qualitative research will help you to find out how many squats there are, how many squatters are white, how many squatters are between the age of 20 and 30 and so on, but it will not help you to understand the feelings and emotions that has led a person to start squatting and continue to squat.

For this reason I have decided to use for this research qualitative research methods. The motivation for this came from witnessing the reaction of squatters when they realized that squatting would be criminalized. This reaction was highly emotional, unlike the seemingly rational decision to criminalize squatting. As Mike Presdee has argued, such rationalized state imposed laws does not seem to provoke in those who are affected by it compliant rationality, rather they often seem to respond with heightened emotionality (Presdee 2000). In order to understand such reactions, it is important to gain access to these extremely heterogeneous groups in order to witness the ways in which people experience their own world and the world around them. The data that flows from such ethnographic studies can be described and illuminated through the appliance of relevant theories and/or help to create new ones. The power to understand meaningful human behavior and the reason why one group of people sees an act as deviant while another group of people sees it as

¹⁵ Playwright Wilson Mizner once said that '[When you take stuff from one writer it's plagiarism; but when you take it from many writers, it's research.](http://thinkexist.com/quotations/plagiarism/)' See <http://thinkexist.com/quotations/plagiarism/>

normal or simply necessary behavior therefore lies within quantitative research methods. This is cultural criminology's main goal, to gain a better understanding or a *criminological verstehen* of the actions and motivations of those who transgress (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008).

Of course there are certain limitations to qualitative research methods. It is often said that qualitative research bares a lot of resemblance to investigative journalism. From this point of view it is not that difficult to understand why my aunts and uncles have been asking me for the past five birthdays if I want to become just like Peter R. de Vries¹⁶. Researchers who use such methods are sometimes criticized for approaching crime or deviance in a sensationalist manner. However, others have argued that, as long as the researcher remains aware of the limits to his or her data, qualitative research can actually shine its light on the 'dark figure of crime' (Noaks and Wincup 2004: 12). Another problem qualitative research can encounter has to do with the external validity of the data. This means that the data only reflects or represents the research population but cannot be used to describe those outside of our research population (Bijleveld 2005).

Such critiques do not have to be a constraint for this study. Although this study combines more than one research method, the focus is on understanding individuals who squat in the city of Rotterdam. It is *them* who describe *their* world to me. It is because of the wide variety of statements and insights offered by them that I can make certain internally valid statements supported by a number of theories. This might seem to be a very subjective way of doing research. After all, it only tells us something about those individuals who were willing to participate in this particular research. But it is my belief that the wide variety of gathered data will still allow me to reach valuable conclusions. And when we realize that the anti-squatting bill generalizes squatters, placing them all under the common divider of criminals than the description of a small heterogeneous group of squatters in the city of Rotterdam becomes all the more valuable. After all, if there is already so much diversity to be seen amongst fifteen squatters in one single city, imagine the diverse crowd of people you will encounter when looking at the entire country. Of course, adopting such subjective categories and realities will have its consequences and will yield certain pay-offs, but this also goes for those objective categories and realities that social scientists often present as true but are not shared by the very participants they are suppose to represent (Goode 1975).

As I did already mentioned briefly, this study combines more than one qualitative research method. By combining more than one method, I hope to raise the validity of this study. Validity refers to the question if the chosen research methods actually measure what they are supposed to measure. Connected to the validity of the qualitative method is the reliability, which asks itself the question when the research is repeated if we will still come to the same conclusions. The reliability is thus concerned with measuring correctly. But if we do not measure what we were supposed to measure, but we still measure correctly, than the results are still reliable (Bijleveld 2005). Although this particular study is not meant to make statements about the entire shared culture of squatting, I believe that by making use of different methods, I can raise the validity of this study. This is known as triangulation. The idea behind triangulation, besides raising the validity, is that deploying different methods can uncover similar results. This is also known as '*method triangulation*' (Noaks and Wincup 2004: 8). This study relies on the triangulation of:

¹⁶ Peter R. de Vries is a Dutch crime reporter who uses investigative journalism to 'uncover' mysteries behind crimes and criminals, but also mistakes made by the Courts or public prosecutors. He presents his findings in a television show. For more information see <http://www.peterrdevries.nl/>

1. An ethnographic content analysis of the anti-squatting bill and claims made by the initiators in the different media platforms (television, newspaper and internet).
2. (Participatory) observations.
3. Open interviews with squatters in the city of Rotterdam.

For further complementation I also looked at the different internet-sites such as www.indymedia.nl and www.kraak-forum.nl, although this should be regarded as illustrative material since these are open internet-sites and we therefore cannot assume that this will hold critical or secret information. There are for instance internet-sites used by squatters for which you need a subscription and this subscription you can only get on invitation by someone who is already a member. I did however made use of different reactions posted to online articles on squatting in order to get an idea of the stereotypical image held by 'the rest' of society on squatting and squatters. Also, valuable information was obtained from my subscription to an email-list in which possible actions against the anti-squatting bill were discussed. It should be noted that this information was used with great care and respect to those who provided me with this valuable information.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE BILL

Content analysis is a well-known research method within the field of sociology and criminology. Originally, content analysis was characterized by a positivistic approach and the focus has been on the manifest content and surface meaning of a given text and not, or to a lesser degree on those deeper layers of meaning (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006). In other words, this method was mainly used for quantitative research measuring static content categories within a text, like the 'quantitative summaries of textual word frequency or source type' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 188). Although such a method can be very useful when analyzing the amount of coverage or the frequency of words used in the media, it cannot grasp those cultural dynamics important to help us read between the lines (ibid. 2008).

The interpretative approach does however put the cultural or social meaning first, focusing on those meanings the authors and the audiences attribute to the text (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006). This approach stand extremely close to the ethnographic tradition within the social sciences and has begun to influence, as we will see, much of the field of cultural criminology as well (ibid. 2006; Ferrell 1999). David Altheide developed this method known as *ethnographic content analysis*, a method that analyses texts or documents from the point of view that they communicate meaning (ibid. 1987; 1996). Ethnographic content analysis therefore fits seamlessly within cultural criminology, because it is a method that is sensitive to the subtleties of meaning and is open to the orientations of others; it is about understanding the text and its meaning as a cultural process (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). For example, in his research on urban graffiti writers Jeff Ferrell combined in-depth ethnographic observations with a content analysis of campaigns launched against graffiti writers by the criminal justice agencies and the media, showing how these different parties to the conflict readjusted and reconstructed the meaning of the other party (Ferrell 1996). This is why I have chosen to use ethnographic content analysis for the qualitative analysis of the bill and related claims made by the initiators in the different media. If it is true that this research method can offer us an insight into the world and line of thought of the initiators of the anti-squatting bill (Smeulers 2008), then this method should enable us to understand better the social meaning that the anti-squatting bill and the

claims made by the initiators in different media platforms communicates to us. No matter how ignorant this law may seem to me or other opponents, it still points out meaningful human behavior. And to go back to that fresh insight I wish to offer you, the reader, an ethnographic content analysis is a necessary method to realize that the criminalization of squatting cannot be disconnected from the reality of our late modern society.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD WORK

The field work for this particular study originated out of a personal wish to conduct an ethnographic study. Ethnography allows me to study a small group of people and how they 'interpret and socially construct their world' (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006: 154). Although ethnographers pride themselves on their ability to keep a healthy distance from 'the governance of guidebooks and bureaucratic regulation' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 178), the methods used most in ethnographic research are unstructured interviews, content analysis of documents (as outlined above) and observations, mostly participant observations (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006). In combining open interviews with informal discussion, (participant) observations with simply wandering through the city, I hoped to catch at least a glimpse of what the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam was all about. Of course, the fact that I was right in the moment of criminalization did not allow me to confine my wandering or observations to the city of Rotterdam. It also took me to the city of The Hague a couple of times, where I moved between the Senate and their discussion about (and ultimately also their decision to) the criminalization of squatting and the squatters that were demonstrating against the anti-squatting bill. This literally threw me back and forth between the rational discussions that took place in the Senate and the emotional response and outrage of squatters who were facing the criminal label. All of this shattered the possibility of any preconceived idea of how the study was to be shaped and to where it would all lead. Of course I started out with a vague idea of what I wanted to do. But in all honesty, the idea for this thesis did not originate out of some rational decision to describe from a distance what the criminalization of squatting would mean for squatters; it was fueled by my own concern over the criminalization of a culture that I had come to know and respect. Therefore, it was not so much the research question that guided the data-collection, but it was much more the data-collection that ended up guiding the research question. Within research, this approach is more commonly known as *grounded theory*:

... the strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigations of relatively uncharted water, or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation ... (Stern 1995: 29)

Gaining such a fresh perspective in a familiar situation fits very well within the concept of public criminology and my own wish to offer you, the reader, that fresh insight.

This point of departure made me feel very well at home within cultural criminology's take on ethnographic research. Already well aware of some of the preconceived images and stereotypes of squatters, whether overly negative or overly positive, I felt the need to let them talk to me on their terms. As Ferrell, Hayward and Young have argued, 'progress is measured not by the efficient accumulation of data, but by the abandonment of professional efficiency to the rhythms of others' temporal worlds' (ibid. 2008: 178). I fully agree with this statement and I have tried my best to keep the beat of those rhythms, accumulating data as it came to me through deploying those methods

that I have outlined above. I will now explore these methods more thoroughly, although I have to be honest here; this 'abandonment of professional efficiency' took me some time to realize (ibid. 2008: 178).

UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The goal of an interview is to collect information or data from statements made by the individual or individuals that are being interviewed for the purpose of answering the definition of a problem that was formulated in advance. There are various ways of conducting an interview, namely the informal interview, the open interview, the semi-structured interview and the structured interview (Baarda et al. 1996). In qualitative research, methods of collecting data that allows the researcher flexibility are of the utmost importance. Interviews that allow such flexibility or a certain dynamic between interviewer and interviewee are therefore preferred in qualitative research (ibid. 1996).

The idea was to combine open interviews with semi-structured interviews (see appendix 2 for the original topic list). This meant that I would start with an informal conversation stating my intentions and then let the respondent talk freely. Afterwards, the idea was to meet again for a semi-structured interview. This worked out for some of the respondents but for many, this proved to be an obstacle and they felt very reluctant to be interviewed. For this reason I kind of intentionally started to 'forget' my topic-list and started to rely more on the method of the unstructured interview. This led to the most interesting interviews, where respondents started to talk more freely. I believe this had also much to do with the fact that many of the interviews took place in squats. To bring 'structure' into this natural environment often disturbed the possibility of an open conversation. I was of course interested in certain demographics, but I learned to retrieve this information following the 'natural' course of the interview. Leaving both the questions and the possible answers to the questions open, I was able to retrieve interesting, diverse and therefore valuable information. Some unstructured interviews also took the form of in-depth interviews, in which it was possible to discuss certain personal and emotional aspects connected to squatting (Baarda et al. 1996).

But like I already stated, it took me some time to abandon some of that professional efficiency. Of course, I myself had to grow as an interviewer. I had to try out what type of interview technique blended in with the natural environment. But before I could start with interviews, I had to find people willing to participate in the study. This too proved to be a learning process. For instance, when I first started looking for respondents I posted a request on the *kraak-forum* (www.kraak-forum.nl), explaining the outlines of the study. For those 'seasoned ethnographers' this is probably perceived as one of the most naïve ways of creating attention for any study, and I soon enough learned this for myself as well. The first question I got back was about my intentions with the material. What would happen to the interviews? Was I planning on airing them on the radio? More question and remarks followed soon enough. One squatter remarked that he would rather study my thesis than let me study squatters from a criminological perspective. He furthermore added that, if I wanted to gain a deeper social and cultural understanding of the shared culture of squatting, I might consider squatting something myself. Something that at the moment seemed inconceivable to me, but I later actually wanted to do, as observation without participating of course. What is interesting about the reactions I got was that they proved to be very critical towards the idea of an interview. In other words, they had no intention of letting me study them as if they were some kind of savages. Squatters have often been portrayed by the media in a stereotypical and negative fashion, motivating many squatters to turn their backs on the media. I found out that this also had a lot to do

with the fact that there were already so many requests on the forum from 'students' like me requesting squatters to participate in interviews, questionnaires and even photo-sessions. However, in my replies on these critical questions and remarks I tried to remain explanatory and understanding. I sometimes got the impression that some were also testing me out. For instance, after a lot of explaining, the critical squatter who asked me about my intentions stated that he or she thought my point of departure was pretty 'kosher' and that my intentions were in fact 'well-considered'¹⁷. Something I took as compliment considering that many of my fellow students started to respond with irritation after a few critical remarks, or simply gave up. I did get some valuable replies that ended up in extremely valuable face-to-face conversations. But in the end I realized that if I wanted to meet a more diverse group of squatters and gain that deeper social and cultural understanding, I had to become a bit more inventive. Therefore, I started to rely more on the snowball-method, asking those squatters I already interviewed if they knew other squatters in the city of Rotterdam who might be interested in participating in the study. Also, I decided to use my own contacts and started to rely on those squatters that I had already met even before I ever thought about this study. Thirdly, walking around the city proved to be an extremely valuable way to contact new respondents. I will come back to this method in more detail later. In the end, I interviewed 15 squatters in the city of Rotterdam. Not all ended up being mentioned or quoted in this study. I talked to twice as more squatters in informal conversations during the different events I frequented. A data-matrix presenting the information I gathered from the interviews can be found in appendix 3. In the end, the unstructured interviews allowed for more open and natural conversations, bringing extremely diverse and valuable data to life. With some squatters it allowed me to get to know them on a more personal level and vice versa, leading to deeper contacts and other interesting meetings. In all these conversations I always made people aware of my intentions as a researcher.

OBSERVATIONS

Observation is an extremely valuable method to gain a deeper understanding of the social world of an individual or group under study. Observation as a method can be roughly divided into two categories; the participant and non-participant observation. Participant observation typically involves for the researcher to become part of the group that he or she want to study, getting to know their culture from within and observing their behavior. The idea behind this type of observation is that access to the social world of the actors helps us to gain that deeper cultural understanding of the personal and social situations of the actors (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006). In other words, it allows the observer to see and experience the world through the actor's eyes. Pioneered by the Chicago School in the 1920's and made 'famous' by Howard Becker's study in the sociology of deviance in *Outsiders* (ibid. 1963), participant observation opens up the door to those groups whose behavior is said to be irrational and paradoxical to those people outside of the group (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006). In other words, we have to become *insiders* to understand those groups we label as *outsiders*. Non-participatory observation on the other hand means that the observer intentionally stays outside of the group, observing them from the outside so that the observer can focus better on how the group interacts with the environment. However, it is said that even in this situation the observer can still influence or disturb the natural situation he or she is supposed to study (King and Wincup 2007).

¹⁷ See <http://www.kraak-forum.nl/viewtopic.php?f=36&t=6985> for the full discussion

It is often said that there is a dangerous problem to participant observation, described as the danger of 'going native'. The deeper the researcher has 'submerged' him or herself in the group or research population, the bigger the risk becomes that the researchers' ethics are no longer influenced by him or herself, but instead become influenced by the group in which the researcher is submerged (Zaitch 2002). A researcher can prevent this by always being frank about his or her research (ibid.). Also, some suggest that even if the researcher 'goes native', it is still hard to deny the invaluable insights the research will provide into 'the sub-cultural codes and behavior' (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006: 285). Cultural criminologists therefore do not only think of such methods as essential to criminological research, but also see it as a critique on orthodox research and their failure to gain such valuable insights (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 178; see also McLaughlin and Muncie 2006: 285). Still, there should be a certain balance. In my case, if I would have taken the advice to squat for myself and live there for myself, it would have become virtually impossible to keep from going completely native, because then the criminalization of squatting would move beyond my moral opposition against it and would directly threaten me as a person living in a squat. Therefore, it is important to balance the role as an insider with the role of the outsider, collecting data but at the same time being able to critically reflect on it (Elias 1956).

I mainly took the role of participant observer, but let me first focus on those few non-participant observations I made. These observations took place in The Hague during a debate on the anti-squatting bill and the final vote on this bill, both held in the Senate. Especially during the vote, I was able to witness the emotional response of a squatter when the Senate voted in favor of the bill. It also allowed me to observe the initiators, who were completely unmoved by this reaction. But let's get back to the role of participant observer and the reason why I choose to use this method. Firstly, because there were situations in which it was impossible to be a non-participant observer. Many of the interviews or informal conversations were inside squats, which allowed me to observe the inside of the squat itself. This was extremely valuable to me, since it is my belief that the squat is part of that human ecology (Parks et al. 1967) where the cultural meaning and symbolism of the act is expressed. Other situations also did not allow me to 'non-participate'. I went to parties in squats, saw art exhibitions in squats, shared beers and dinners with squatters in their back yards, talked with squatters during demonstrations, helped out a squatter in his give-away store, helped move a squatter from one squat to another due to an eviction notice, went to the squatters meeting point (KSU) several times, visited a meeting organized by squatters in Rotterdam where squatters from all over Rotterdam debated on the future of squatting and so on. By the way, this debate did not even allow me to observe from the outside since the organizer of the meeting insisted on a short introduction round and you guessed it, yours truly was the first one to go. Of course, this allowed me to talk openly about my research, saving me from 'going native' debate-style. I can imagine that some of these acts of participant observation seem pointless. But if one realizes how freely people can talk during parties, how emotion can burst out of someone during demonstrations, the motivations one might have for setting up a give-away store, the emotions and stress behind having to move on short term notice, the desperate people that come to the squatters meeting hour in the hope to find a house or the different opinions on how to fight the bill that flow freely around the room during heated debates, well, then you might come to realize that these participant-observations can be called a lot of things, but never pointless.

In short, much of the data that I have come to value the most flows directly from these participant observations. Or to deviate for a second from the politically correct talk, this data flows directly from my human engagement with the squatters. Of course, there were some difficulties I

had to deal with during some observations, especially during the non-participant observation. A good example of this was a confrontation between me and the police in The Hague. After visiting the first debate held in the Senate, I was talking to some squatters outside of the Senate. After a few minutes a police officer came up to us and told us that it would be wise for us to disperse because they got a call in over the radio that the riot police intended to remove or arrest anyone who was associated with the small group of squatters demonstrating in the park close to Central Station. Since I had no intention of making new friends, I decided to take the officers' advice that was friendly enough to give us the 'heads-up'. Later that day I was observing the manifestation that took place in the park. It was interesting to witness how more and more police was gathering around this group of maybe forty squatters strong. However, surrendering myself to the role of distant observer made me completely oblivious to the riot van that stopped right in front of me. The backdoors of the van opened up and it didn't took the riot police long to realize that my being there had in fact to something do with the spectacle that took place in the park. One officer approached me and asked me if he could read what I was writing down. Thanking him for his interest, I declined and decided to move my business elsewhere. This made me realize that even when I was using the method of non-participant observation it still proved extremely difficult to remain completely on the side-lines. It also made me realize that I would have to think twice about ever pursuing a career as an undercover-cop.

WALKING THE CITY: FLÂNEURIE

The idea of walking around the city came after reading Jeff Ferrell's *Tearing Down the Streets: Adventures in Urban Anarchy* (ibid. 2001). Here, Ferrell underlines the importance of walking which he describes as 'a form of anarchist practice and urban revolt' and an 'engagement with the spatial politics of the everyday' (ibid. 243). Of course, this practice turned method originates from those idle strollers known as *flâneurs* who navigated the streets of Paris to wherever those streets might take them, enabling them to observe and critique in complete anonymity¹⁸ (Hayward 2004; see also Baudelaire 1964; Collier 1985).

This approach, the spatial practice of walking the city also made me realize that there was an interesting link between this practice and the urban phenomenon of squatting. The Rotterdam Squatters Guide suggest to those in search for a place to squat to take their time walking or biking through the city in order to get a better sense of the empty buildings in the city; what is empty? Where is it? Does it suit your needs? Such a practice demands a certain engagement with the cities environment, critically observing the buildings one comes across. For me it was also an eye-opener. Hearing politicians claiming time after time that the problem of abandoned buildings is far less than squatters would like us to believe, it became harder and harder to believe them after walking the streets myself seeing building after building abandoned. A reality hard to swallow even for me since I have been on the waiting list for an apartment in Rotterdam myself as well for the last five years.

Apart from the fact that walking the city streets proved extremely valuable to me for getting more attuned to both the problems as well as the diversity of the city, it also had some advantages that were more directly connected to other methods. Walking the streets, I looked for buildings that looked like squats. Not so much because they were run down, but the lock used by many squatters is often the same, a lock recommended in the Rotterdam Squatters Guide. I knocked on doors, slipped

¹⁸ For a more detailed and extremely interesting account of the Parisien flâneur one might consider reading Edmund White's *The Flâneur: A Stroll Through the Paradoxes of Paris*, Bloomsbury USA.

letters through the mail box and simply walked in shops that looked like squatters' initiatives to me. This method paid off too, at least five of the squatters included in this study I met through simply walking the streets.

Of course, like with the previous methods I ran into some problems with this one too. For instance, some might take it as a serious insult when you mistake their house for a squat. Also, while looking through the windows of an empty building, the neighbor might mistake you for a squatter looking for a place to live. He then might just get the urge to tell you to 'piss off'. Furthermore, making pictures of streets, empty houses or climbing over fences to check out the back might seem very out of the ordinary to those people who just happen to pass you by and catch you in the act. Still, I cannot deny the value of this method for my research. It also made me realize that it was in fact the closest I could possibly get to Michel de Certeau's description of the "official" city, that perspective from the ground level, the lived experience' (Ferrell et al. 2001: 5); extremely valuable knowledge indeed.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the above I have tried to discuss the limitations to the methods I have used in this study. These are of course not the only limitations. The fact that this study is conducted through thick cultural criminological lenses will be judged by some critics as trying to paint an overly romantic image of squatting. As such critics will also point out; cultural criminology cannot be seen as a fully unified theory, although cultural criminologist will not take such a remark as a critique since they take pride in keeping the field of cultural criminology loose and open (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). I have explained that I tried my best to gather information from more than one single source in order to raise the validity of this study. I believe that I have succeeded in this. However, this study is also reflects my vision and ultimately represents my explanation of the shared culture of squatting and its subsequent criminalization. I also have to recognize one of my own major shortcomings. I have tried my best to combine a wide variety of data and present it in a flowing story. Although this does create the advantage of being able to present the data as if I were telling a story, the distinction between my opinion and the opinion of others sometimes seems to blur too much. I have tried my best to correct these errors, but in the end, one cannot escape to make choices that come with their own limitations.

VALIDITY

Although I have tried my best to collect the data from a diverse population, it is still a relatively small group of people. Of course, going to social gatherings helped me to get at least a part of that bigger picture. Still, we have to realize that the ethnographic research took place in the city of Rotterdam. There are squatters in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Den Haag, Breda and many other cities spread across the country. Squatter make up an extremely heterogeneous population. Of course there are some general characteristics that we can ascribe to squatters that we also recognize in the existing literature on squatting. Squatters are more often than not white, middle-class and relatively well-educated (Duivenvoorden 2000), something that is also true for this particular research population. In short, this study is a very small island in relatively uncharted waters. On this island I can make some interesting remarks on the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam, but making assumptions based on this study to explain other situations or to draw broad generalization is

impossible. I do not however see this as a major shortcoming. First and foremost because this was irrelevant to this particular study, since my aim was to understand the motivations and emotions involved in the act of squatting of the actors; a *criminological verstehen* of squatting in Rotterdam (Ferrell and Sanders 1995; Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008) serving as a critical reflection on criminalization and a reflection (not an explanation!) on late modern society. Another reason is the fact that the diversity in such a small group already serves as a critique on the stereotypical and overly negative image of squatters put forward in the anti-squatting bill. And in the end, qualitative research usually does not aim for that broad coverage, but for an in-depth understanding that strengthens the internal validity of the study.

PROVOKING A DISCUSSION

Follow the path of the unsafe, independent thinker. Expose your ideas to the dangers of controversy. Speak your mind and fear less the label of 'crackpot' than the stigma of conformity. And on issues that seem important to you, stand up and be counted at any cost (Chauncey Depew)

I will be short, since I still have to get a grade for this thesis. Important is not so much my opinion on the whole subject matter, shoot the messenger for all I care. But realize this; the moment government starts criminalizing acts that define certain (sub)-cultures and the field of criminology allows it to go virtually undetected by its radar, then it is time to start worrying about the field itself and where it stands at this very moment. There might be a chance that I am slightly over-reacting, I have been known to do so. But I believe that this is extremely important. To repeat myself, is this not the kind of behaviour criminologists are supposed to be interested in? Are these not those important processes that are at play within our society, processes reveal to us the power inequality, processes that criminologists should critically examine? I say let's not become a field that only likes to play with numbers and stare endlessly at computer screens, instead let's go outside and play with humans. From this point of view it is funny to realize that some criminologists study youngsters who are preoccupied with life in the virtual reality of online gaming communities, while at the same time some criminologists themselves are becoming more and more preoccupied with their own virtual realities of data-feeding spreadsheets into their computers.

FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

During the course of this study, it became more and more apparent that the diversity of the squatter extends well beyond those individuals that I met during the course of my research. By this I am referring to the fact that many squatters started to point out to me that there were also many families down on their luck, homeless people, (illegal) immigrants and workers from Eastern-European countries squatting in the Netherlands. This proves even more how diverse the population of squatters in the Netherlands really is. I did try to devote some attention to these groups of outsiders, but this information came to me through the accounts of those squatters that were a part of this study. Therefore, this information is secondary information and did not flow directly from my own association with these groups or individuals. It might therefore be all the more interesting to include these 'outsiders' in a ethnographic study to gain an ever deeper insight in the diversity of squatting in the Netherlands and the fact that squatting does in fact function as a social safety net for those unfortunate groups or individuals who are balancing on the edge of society.

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the aim or 'mission' and the methods used to gather the data necessary to complete that 'mission'. I have explained in depth why I decided to depart from the field of cultural criminology and my wish to contribute to a criminology that engages in the public debate on crime and reactions to crime. I have explained that this study is an ethnographic study, combining methods like unstructured interviews with participatory and non-participatory observations and ethnographic content analysis, also known as '*method triangulation*' (Noaks and Wincup 2004: 8). Another method that I added to the study and on that has proved its relevance was the spatial practice of walking, which offered me a deeper and more nuanced insight in the urban practice of squatting and the urban environment in which it takes place.

Like all studies, there are limitations to this study as well. I have made a selection of research methods that I believed would benefit this particular research the most. Every researcher will have to make choices about what to study and what to leave out or what methods to use and which methods not to use. In the end, I believe the balance tips well in favor of this study, offering a fresh insight into the shared culture of squatting of the city of Rotterdam and the politics of criminalization, allowing me to formulate a solid answer to the definition of the problem as formulated in the introduction to this thesis.

How I wish to apply these methods and what theories I have selected to help me interpret the collected data is something that I will discuss in the upcoming chapter on the theoretical framework.

2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Central to this chapter is the construction of the theoretical framework. As I have explained in the introduction to this thesis, the political authorities in favor of criminalization of the act of squatting have put forward a number of reasons to support their cause. Apart from their major objections to squatting, claiming that squatting is a violation of property rights, vigilantism and the claim that squatters are becoming more violent and organized, they raise another important objection. This objection is best described as the ‘death of ideals’ narrative. Within this narrative, it is argued that squatters no longer squat empty building in order to address issues concerning housing shortage or building vacancy, but that the modern-day squatter is simply looking for a cheap place to live. Squatting is thus seen as a relatively easy way to find a cheap place with a lot of space on so-called ‘A-locations’ in the inner-city¹⁹.

Let us then, for the sake of this argument, follow the rationale of this ‘death of ideals’ narrative. This narrative reveals a squatter who is simply looking for an easy and effective way to meet his or her personal demands of finding the cheapest house to live on the best possible location. From this point of view, squatters are described as calculative individuals, abusing the available opportunity of vacant buildings by squatting them, using ‘calculative strategies aimed at utility maximization’ (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 66). The decision to squat is thereby effectively reduced to a simple cost-benefit analysis; it becomes a rational choice. One might therefore argue a theoretical framework constructed around the issue of squatting should at least include the rational choice perspective, more commonly known as Rational Choice Theory. Indeed, one might argue that, but it is my belief that it is in fact this rational choice perspective that has led to the demonization of squatters. Therefore, departing from this perspective means accepting the stereotypical image of squatters, thereby denying the human meaning and creativity that is also a part of deviant behavior (Hayward 2004). As I have already pointed out in the introduction, creativity can be understood as an answer to the urban injustices and structural inequalities that those in search for housing encounter and struggle with, *and* as an expression of an alternative lifestyle and the wish for self-management (Uitermark 2004). Rational Choice Theory would simply block out these important notions, labeling squatting simply as an act that plays out along ‘a linear sequence of rational decision-making’ (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008: 113). But, as I will show in the upcoming chapters, squatting is rarely an unambiguous act and it is rarely rational. Most importantly, departing from a perspective that carries with it prejudice and such stereotypical images, diametrically opposes the essence of *verstehen* (Eski 2009). In order to provide a more nuanced understanding, it is essential to develop such a ‘*criminological verstehen*’ of the shared culture of squatting (Ferrell and Sanders 1995: 313). However, the fact that the political authorities portray squatters as having lost their ideals leads us to an interesting assumption. It shows that the political authorities in fact have their own ‘ideologically justified political conception of space’ and of how squatting fits in that space or in this case, doesn’t fit (Lefebvre 2003: 78). As I will explain now, it is exactly this conflicting perception of space that ultimately led to the criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands.

The data for this study is collected through an ethnographic study of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam and the criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, the motivation for combining ethnographic field work with ethnographic content analysis originates from the belief that both squatting and the criminalization of squatting

¹⁹ See proposal Tweede Kamer 07/08, 31 560 nr. 3

can be studied best as cultural phenomena, or acts of meaningful human behavior. I have also explained that the latter does not imply that behavior is therefore acceptable or safe from criticism. On the contrary, this study explores the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam, in order to gain a deeper cultural understanding of the nature of squatting. This exploration will allow me to reflect on and critically examine the criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands. The data I collected through the ethnography of the shared culture of squatting will be mirrored against the data collected through the ethnographic content analysis of the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and other relevant documents. Such a dual analysis is in my eyes capable of showing that squatters and the political authorities are involved in an ongoing conflict of spatial control and spatial transgression. This conflict between the political authorities and the squatters can be described as 'a conflict over the meaning and symbolic control of urban space' (Ferrell 2006: 254), revealing the importance of the urban environment as the stage on which this conflict plays out. It becomes apparent that squatters as well as the political authorities are looking for effective ways to remake the city and its meaning to meet their own politics and experiences (Ferrell 2006). From this assumption a theoretical framework will be constructed; a framework that is meant to support the dual analysis or the mirroring of the collected data. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the theoretical framework will be presented along similar lines.

I will now continue to explain in depth the theories important to the theoretical framework and ultimately, to this study. I will start by discussing some of the key notions of cultural criminology that are important to this study. After having discussed the foundation of this study, I will gradually build a sound theoretical framework by discussing some of the more concrete perspectives. These perspectives are borrowed from urban sociology and urban/human geography, but are also anthropological and philosophical perspectives. This will allow for a broad critical and cultural criminological framework that will ultimately allow me to understand some of the most important cultural dynamics that are at play. It should however not be seen as a fully unified theory. As I will now continue to describe, cultural criminology offers a point of departure to this study, enabling me to use, as Mike Presdee described it, 'the 'evidence' of everyday existence ...' (ibid. 2000: 15).

CULTURAL CRIMINOLOGY

As I have already briefly explained in the introduction to this thesis, this particular study, concerned with the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam and the criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands is heavily influenced by the cultural criminological perspective. I feel supported in this decision by another study on squatting in the city of Amsterdam, of which the results were recently published by the free university of Amsterdam. In this study it is argued that one cannot understand squatting apart from the context in which the act is performed, which is the context of culture. For this reason the researchers used a perspective that argues that deviant or criminal behavior and the reaction it provokes tells us a lot about society as a whole (Gemert et al. 2009), a perspective many scholars believe to be important to cultural criminology (see van Swaaningen 2008).

But how can we best describe this cultural criminological perspective? What is cultural criminology? Keith Hayward and Jock Young ask, and conveniently answer a similar question:

Let us start with a question: what is this phenomenon called ‘cultural criminology’? Above all else, it is the placing of crime and its control in the context of culture; that is, viewing both crime and the agencies of control as cultural products - as creative constructs. As such they must be read in terms of the meanings they carry. Furthermore, cultural criminology seeks to highlight the interaction between these two elements: the relationship and the interaction between constructions upwards and constructions downwards. Its focus is always upon the continuous generation of meaning around interaction; rules created, rules broken, a constant interplay of moral entrepreneurship, moral innovation and transgression (Hayward and Young 2005: 259).

Designed to resonate the emerging new world that cultural criminologists have described as the world of late modernity or ‘liquid modernity’²⁰, a world over-flooded by feelings of ontological insecurity giving rise to insecurity of both status and economic position (Young 2007), cultural criminology tries to illuminate ‘the relationship between culture and crime, and the broader relationship between criminology and contemporary social and cultural life’ (Ferrell and Sanders 1995: 18). This is the cultural criminology that has its roots in and builds upon (symbolic) interactionist, postmodern, critical and feminist theories, and ethnographic research methods as first introduced by Robert E. Park and the Chicago School (ibid. 1995). Before we continue it should be noted that cultural criminology was never intended to be a fully unified theory. Instead, its scholars describe cultural criminology as ‘loose federation of outlaw intellectual critiques’, a field that is ‘attuned to the cultural dynamics of late capitalism, open to the human construction of collective meaning, aware of both the harm and the hope that transgression can offer’ (Ferrell, 2007: 99). Cultural criminology therefore serves much more as an open intellectual space where different disciplines coalesce to discuss the relationship between culture and crime. It rejects the linear approach of the rational choice perspective and the ‘methodological fundamentalism’ of orthodox criminology (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 169) and aims for a more dynamic criminology. It is within this dynamic field that builds upon the knowledge from these different disciplines whilst discussing the relationship between culture and crime that I would like to position myself. In short, cultural criminology’s broad focus and theoretical diversity offers this theoretical framework a firm foundation and the best possible point of departure for this particular study.

Important to this study is the notion of ‘crime as culture’. Introduced by Sanders and Ferrell (ibid. 1995), ‘crime as culture’ implies that the symbolism and style of the deviant subculture shape both the deviant subculture as well as the social and legal reactions deployed by the ‘guardians of the moral status quo’ (ibid.: 6). These guardians focus their efforts on regaining both social and legal control over the styles and symbols that shape the deviant subculture, for instance through criminalization (Ferrell and Sanders 1995). Here we can see a close parallel to the criminalization of squatting, where the squatted building, ‘the squat’ functions as the main symbol of the shared culture of squatting. The guardians of the moral status quo are trying to reestablish social and legal control over this symbol by criminalizing the act of squatting. This of course reminds us of Howard Becker’s classical notion that we cannot simply focus on the deviant subculture, but that we also need to direct our criminological critique towards the legal and political authorities who are behind the process of criminalization (Becker 1963). Therefore, Becker’s *moral entrepreneur* will be one of the key elements to this study, which I will explain in detail in the following paragraph. For now, it is

²⁰ The term liquid modernity was first introduced by Zygmunt Bauman and refers to a condition of social and individual disembeddedness that gives rise to an increasing feeling of uncertainty. Liquid modernity (or late modernity) is not a new state of being, but rather a continuation of modernity. See Bauman’s *Liquid Modernity* (2000) for additional information on the subject matter.

important to remember that the main focus of cultural criminology and the notion of 'crime as culture' is the interplay of (sub)-cultures, symbolism and style, deviant and/or criminal behavior and the politics of criminalization. All these aspects of cultural criminology will be incorporated within this study of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam and the recent criminalization of squatting in the Netherlands.

Another important aspect of cultural criminology, and another reason for studying the shared culture of squatting and its subsequent criminalization through a cultural criminological lens, has to do with the fact that cultural criminology makes it its business to incorporate the perspectives offered by other studies like media-studies, (urban) sociology, anthropology and philosophy, to allow for cultural criminology's wide angle view on late modern society. In order to understand the important processes at play we simply cannot rely on theories that only focus on squatters. For this reason I do not depart from the rational choice perspective, since it would explain squatting as a rational choice where squatters decide to squat a house after they made the best possible cost-benefit analysis given the information that they have. I already explained in the introduction to this chapter that this would mean accepting the very stereotypes that have led to the criminalization of the squatting in the first place. For this reason, an ethnography of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam serving as a critical reflection on the symbolic and cultural processes behind the criminalization of squatting should help us understand better that both are in fact cultural products and that both are responsible for the social construction of squatting. This dual analysis combining ethnographic field research and ethnographic content analysis should reveal these cultural processes; indeed, 'ethnography is no longer indivisible from textual analysis' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 81).

My choice for a theoretical framework with cultural criminology as its point of departure has much to do with my personal approach towards squatting and the criminalization of the act of squatting. Much like the authors of the rapport *Kraken in Amsterdam anno 2009* I do not wish to take part in a pointless discussion whether the act of squatting is right or wrong (Van Gemert et al. 2009). I do however wish to place this actual event within the broader contextual analysis of late modernity and one of its defining traits. This defining trait has been described by other scholar as a society where the authorities' only response to deviance seems to be imposing more laws and exercising more control (Hayward 2004; Garland 2001). A society where seemingly unimportant and mundane forms of transgression get picked out and become the main target of enforcement strategies often leading to criminalization, revealing to us the patterns of political and cultural power (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). By doing so, I hope to fulfill my part in the unraveling of the reversed causality that seems to be inherent to late modernity. This is the reality where we no longer spot a problem and then try to look at the causes, but where we rather single out the ones that *make* problems and then try to erase them instead of looking at the underlying factors that *caused* the problem in the first place. Apart from this critical gaze outwards, cultural criminology also aims its critical arrows on the field of criminology itself. This is a criminology that has become dominated by quantitative research methods such as statistical analysis and surveys, a criminology where the researcher has detached him or herself from the research subject, a criminology that according to some has become 'lifeless, stale and inhumane' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 165). This 'voodoo criminology' as Jock Young has come to call it (ibid. 2004), is often used for policymaking with the goal to clean the streets from everything that is perceived as scary and that looks out of the ordinary. According to Rene van Swaaningen, this type of policy-based research simply cannot add to any further accumulation of knowledge within the field of criminology (ibid. 2007). Therefore,

orthodox criminology has no place in a thesis like this, since it positions itself within the 'normal' consensual culture and thus builds a wall between the insiders and the outsiders, instead of tearing it down.

I do realize that positioning myself within cultural criminology and using its key concepts as the building blocks for my theoretical framework leaves me vulnerable to critiques of those who are of the belief that I am romanticizing deviant behavior. From this point of view, it might be important to realize that squatting, as I have explained in the introduction to this thesis, under certain circumstances was not seen as criminal behavior before the anti-squatting bill got passed by the Senate. The law provided an opening for squatting if a building had been empty for more than twelve months and when the owner had no clear intentions of taking the property back into use. Regardless of how one might feel about this rule, it is important to realize this: for quite some time squatting was, under certain circumstances, a *legally protected* act that only recently has been fully *criminalized*. Therefore, to avoid getting stuck within the debate whether squatting is a crime against the law or simply refers to a deviant act that deviates from the 'normal' consensual culture I will refer to squatting as an act of *transgression*. That is, an act that allows squatters to break free of their restraints, 'an illicit realization of immediacy, a reassertion of identity and ontology' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 72). Unfortunately, being critical towards the powers that be is often interpreted as being deviant yourself. David Bordua noticed this, and so did Howard Becker. They explain that 'such critics think that the principled determination to treat official and conventional viewpoints as things to be studied, instead of accepting them as fact or self-evident truth, is a mischievous assault on the social order' (Bordua 1976; quoted in Becker 1973: 165). I think this is missing the point. Regardless of my feelings toward squatters and squatting, we have to acknowledge the fact that squatting still exists, which proves that there are still problems when it comes to finding a decent *place* and *space* to live²¹. It also proves that there are different ways of being and living in the city. This is the underlying social problem that is most important, the underlying problem that squatters, consciously or not, expose to us and the problem that they cancel out quite effectively at least for themselves by squatting, by *transgressing*. As I have already pointed out on numerous occasions, cultural criminology tries to, through studying such outsiders, reflect on and where necessary critique the powers that be and their inability to recognize these social problems. Such a critical reflection lies at the foundation of this study.

Before we continue I should note once more that this theoretical framework, or for that matter this study, is not meant to explain every aspect of the shared culture of squatting and its subsequent criminalization. First of all because this shared culture is simply too diverse and heterogeneous to fully comprehend and capture within a single study. Therefore, the ethnographic part of my study should not be read nor is it meant to be a representation of *all* squatters. If we look at cities, squatting in Rotterdam is already extremely different from squatting in for instance Amsterdam. I will explain this in detail in the following paragraphs. For now it is important to realize that the ethnography should be read more as a description of the lived experience and daily lives of the research population. It is meant to offer you, the reader, a more diverse and detailed image of the lived experiences of squatters and serves therefore more as a critique on the moral campaign undertaken against squatting. Cultural criminology offers me with an opportunity to do this.

²¹ Michel de Certeau argues that '*space is a practiced place*' (ibid. 1984: 117), meaning that a place is set, indicating stability. The users of the set place turn it this place into a *space* by their usage and interpretation of what the place means (to them). See *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) by Michel de Certeau for more information.

Therefore, this study is descriptive and explorative in nature, not explanatory. That this conflict or the 'struggle between the forces of rationalization and those of existential possibility and lived experience' (Ferrell et al. 2004: 5) can only be understood when staged against the urban environment is something I will now continue to explain in more detail. This is the cultural criminology of the city.

THE DUALITY OF THE URBAN SPACE

The image of the city is an iconic signifier of the nation; it stands for the sense of the order, or the lack thereof
(Dovey, 2010: 83)

Many social scholars have tried to get their intellectual heads around the urban environment, or the city as it is more commonly known. One of the most influential works on the urban environment for both sociologist as well as criminologist is Robert Park's and Ernest Burgess's book *The City* (ibid. 1967). Especially important to this study is the fact that Park and Burgess argued that the city is not merely to be seen as a 'physical mechanism and an artificial construction', rather the city is 'a product of nature, and in particular of human nature' (ibid.: 1). But in late modern times, this human ecology that shapes the nature of the city is under extreme pressure by rationalization processes that are aimed at cleansing the city from all its unwanted or 'sick' features. Theorists like Jonathan Raban, Michel de Certeau and more recently Keith Hayward have therefore all argued that we can only understand the city if we view it as a 'duality' (Hayward 2004; see also Raban 1974 and De Certeau 1984). This duality is defined by the following two dimensions:

One dimension defines the city as mapped by mass planning, rationalistic discourse, quantitative data and demographics; the other opposing dimension defines the city as a more experiential place – an alternative reading of urban space in terms of possibility and dream, subculture and style (Ferrell et al. 2004: 5).

French sociologist Michel de Certeau contrasted this duality of the city by describing the 'concept-city', where one transcends high above the city which allows one to read the city's complexity, to see the city as a whole in an abstract form. This conceptual view of the city makes a person estranged to the human ecology of the city, a reality that becomes alien to him. After all, 'it is hard to be down when you're up' (De Certeau 1984: 92). The other perspective is the view from the ground level or the 'official city', the perspective of those who inhabit the city and where the everyday practices take place that are foreign to the maps and plans created by those with a panoptic view of the city (Hayward 2004; De Certeau 1984). These two contrasting views of the city quite obviously create misunderstandings that can lead to conflict. I would argue that these contrasting views can help us understand better the conflict between the squatters and the political authorities who seek to criminalize the act of squatting. In other words, the criminalization of squatting might reveal to us the tension between the sanitized view the political authorities have of the city and the lived reality of the shared culture of squatting.

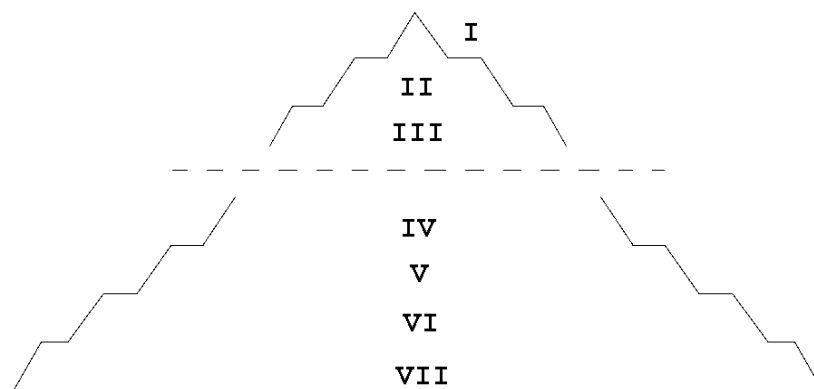
That such a sanitized view fails to deal with the messy uncertainty and the strains people in the city struggle with on a daily basis, was already acknowledged by Josh Raban in his book on the strains of city life, *The Soft City* (ibid. 1974). Here, Raban describes how people in the city can be seen as actors who all play their part on the urban stage. Most importantly, we all play a different part,

struggle with the uncertainties of city life while we try to create a place for ourselves in this ‘soft city’ (ibid.). But creating a place for ourselves becomes increasingly problematic within an urban environment where we as the users of space have a history of delegating our own interests in our environment into ‘the hands of the decision makers’ (Lefebvre 2003: 188). In turn, the user has become excluded from the decision making process. As Henri Lefebvre describes in *The Urban Revolution*, this depersonalization has become accepted by the users which is experienced by the decision makers as extremely convenient, since the user is perceived as;

... a fairly repulsive character who soils whatever is sold to him new and fresh, who breaks, who causes wear, who fortunately fulfills the function of making the replacement of a thing inevitable, who successfully carries out the process of obsolescence (Lefebvre 2003: 188).

As Lefebvre argues, individuals who do not accept this present a threat to these decision makers by making the decision for their own and through becoming personally involved as users of the urban space. They pose a threat to the functionalized rule over the city of the decision makers (Lefebvre 2003). This point of view can be extremely valuable in understanding the conflict between squatters and the initiators of the bill.

This functionalized rule over the city and the rationalization of the urban geography was also criticized by urban activist Jane Jacobs. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* Jacobs describes the importance of a mix of residential, recreational and work functions to the quality of life in the city. In short, she argues for a city that represents the needs of the users and not that of the urban planners (ibid. 1961; see also Beukers, Krakers and Dekker 1989). This view was supported by G.P. Hoefnagels and his *prevention pyramid* (tabel 1). Hoefnagels schematized how safety and feelings of safety as experienced by humans in the city streets and the city itself can be increased. Hoefnagels argues that tactics of situational crime prevention such as techno-prevention and ‘defensible spaces’ (Newman 1972) are far less effective than those tactics that focus on the social-cultural dimension of the city, or building the city according to the needs of the user. This of course links back to Lefebvre’s argument that the user has become excluded from decision making (Lefebvre 2003).



- I. Karatetop
- II. Technoprevention
- III. Architecture of “defensible space”
- IV. Socio-cultural measures
- V. Appealing urban planning attuned to wishes
- VI. Stimulating residential culture, positive social control
- VII. Social politics

Tabel 1: G.P. Hoefnagels’ *Prevention Pyramid*

Keith Hayward reads in such tactics of situational crime prevention the wish for 'strangely undangerous, sanitized, even clinical spaces' (Hayward 2004: 100) and continues by saying that within these rational logics and sanitized views of the urban environment 'the lived reality of urban space' is not included (ibid.: 101). Of course, Hayward argues, such strategies of disciplinary surveillance do reveal an important process to us. It shows how those with a concept-view of the city try to reassert control over lost urban spaces. If such spatial control is to work, these spaces have to include their subjects rather than to exclude them and these subjects have to be fully aware of the fact that they are under scrutiny (ibid.) In short, 'modern space is all about maximum visibility' according to Hayward (ibid.: 139). The importance of this notion for this study should be clear. After all, squatting represents the complete opposite of (spatial) inclusion and maximum visibility.

The reason why such dually constructed views of the city are important to this study is because they do not claim that these different views in any way represent clear dividing lines between the two groups. Seen as a fundamental flaw of the concept of the dual city by Jock Young, the idea that groups are divided by sharp boundaries diametrically opposes the notion that 'in reality, the contours of late modernity always blur, fudge and cross over' (Young 2007: 26). As we will see, squatters are a prime example to support this critique since they too cross these borders and participate in events that take place within the world of that 'normal' majority. It does however show how the stereotyping of squatters by the political authorities can serve to construct squatters as the *other*, as a group of people with 'defective norms' that deviate from the rest of the normal society (Young 2007: 26). In the anti-squatting bill, these defective norms point towards a disrespect of property rights. It is exactly those property rights the political authorities hold so dearly that will lead us to the next step in theorizing the conflict between the political authorities and the squatters; the culture of consumption. Because as Keith Hayward has already pointed out, the dual approach to the city as outlined in the above 'is also sharply reflected in many of the cultural practices and social dynamics associated with late modern consumerism' (Hayward 2004: 2). But first, I would like to briefly clarify my choice to study the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam.

SOME NOTES ON SQUATTING IN ROTTERDAM

As I have tried to explain, squatting is an act that mostly takes place within or on those borders of the urban environment. This is not to say that squatting does not exist outside the city, but a quick look at some of the most important historic events and research concerning squatting tells us that squatting is indeed a phenomenon that mostly takes place within the boundaries of the urban environment. It is therefore my belief that it is both valuable and most interesting to theorize squatting as an *urban phenomenon*. Squatting is a practice that takes place within (and is therefore a part of) the everyday life in the city, and for this reason it can offer us many valuable insights into the social and cultural ecology of the city (Ferrell 2006). Why then focus on Rotterdam and not the Mecca of squatting in the Netherlands, Amsterdam? Allow me to clarify my decision.

The first reason to focus on squatters in the city of Rotterdam can be described as a choice of convenience. By this I am referring to the fact that I live relatively close to Rotterdam but more importantly, I could rely on my previous contacts with squatters in Rotterdam with whom I went to parties and shared cheap beers before reworking them into the focus of my study. As explained before, this might be interpreted as a sure way to 'go native', but in my opinion it presented an opportunity to conduct a study causing a minimal intrusion on the research population and therefore enabling me to gather much more valuable information than I ever could have collected in any other

city. In short, focusing on Rotterdam certainly strengthened the *criminological verstehen* of the shared culture of squatting.

But the most important reason for focusing on squatting in Rotterdam has to do with the fact that squatting in Rotterdam is often seen as insignificant, both by squatters themselves (from other cities) and the city officials of Rotterdam. The latter will tell you that there are almost no active squatters within the city limits of Rotterdam, while any squatter from Rotterdam will tell you that there are at least 400 active squatters, and possibly more. Squatters themselves have offered me numerous reasons for this, of which I will give the two most important ones. First of all, squatting in Rotterdam is loosely-organized, extremely heterogeneous and no structure or hierarchy seems to exist. Squatters from Rotterdam are often criticized for this by their fellow squatters from other cities. For instance, in Amsterdam there are at least five (and probably more) *Kraaksprekuren* (squatting consultation hours, KSU) where people can gather information concerning squatting, whereas Rotterdam only has one KSU. In Amsterdam, the only accepted way to squat a building is via the KSU, squatting on your own terms is rarely accepted by the KSU. In Rotterdam, one of the KSU members told me that in Rotterdam maybe 30% of the squatters consult the KSU opposed to 70% who squat on their own terms. This would be unacceptable in Amsterdam, since squatters there want to control the squatting activity within their city and refuse the kind of squatters who tend to cause trouble. Of course, such an organized KSU offers many advantages. They help aspirant squatters to break the door, replace the lock and talk to the police and offer assistance when there is a threat of eviction (Uitermark 2004). But personally, I cannot escape the feeling that such a controlled way of squatting, telling people where and when to squat and when not to, sounds a lot like the way in which the very housing corporations they are fighting operate. Of course, Amsterdam has always been in the spotlight when it comes to squatters and they were certainly responsible for giving the squatters' movement its revolutionary character. But these recent developments seem to reveal their aim to become accepted as respectable members of the community, which according to The Wobblies is a problematic development since 'the moment a movement becomes respectable ... it loses its revolutionary character'²² (quoted in Ferrell 2001: 30). Squatting in Rotterdam is therefore much more interesting for me to study, since it invites anyone who needs or feels the need to squat. Other squatters might criticize the loosely-organized squatter' scene in Rotterdam, but with its healthy disrespect for hierarchy it is in my opinion much more anarchistic in nature than squatting in Amsterdam. Indeed, in Amsterdam they seemed to have made the mistake social movements often make; they have tilted to 'exclusion and encrustation' (Ferrell 2001: 238). Please keep in mind that this is my personal critique and motivation for focusing on the city of Rotterdam, and should by no means be seen as an academic representation of the way things are. My knowledge on the subject simply does not allow such a claim to truth.

Now of course, the fact that such big differences seem to exist between squatting in different cities of the Netherlands also points out that stereotyping squatters as a collective threat is at the very least shortsighted. After all, what might be a problem in one city might not even be an issue in the other city. In short, the anti-squatting law also denies the 'components of the urban locale' (Hayward 2004: 142).

²² *Industrial Worker*, October 24, 1912, p. 2. The Wobblies, officially known as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), strived for a unified class of workers and the abolishment of the wage system. For more information on the Wobblies see Jeff Ferrell's *Tearing Down the Streets: Adventures in Urban Anarchy* (2001).

THE CITY OF CONSUMERS

In a culture in which the supreme goal is to have ... and to have more and more ... and in which one can speak of someone as 'being worth a million dollars', how can there be an alternative between having and being? On the contrary, it would seem that the very essence of being is having; that if one has nothing, one is nothing
(Fromm 1976: 3; quoted in Presdee 2000: 57)

The condemnation and recent criminalization of squatting cannot be analyzed outside the context of the late modern city, the 'city of consumers' (Ferrell 2006: 168). The culture of consumption holds extremely valuable information that can help us to better understand the condemnation and criminalization of squatting.

In the last few decades, many social scholars have described late modern society as a society based on money, a materialistic society in the sense that it focuses on having. Described by Keith Hayward as a society in which the dominant values originate 'from the activity of consumption' (Hayward 2004: 3), it focuses on style, on the immediate satisfaction of needs and often sees goods as expendable things (Hall and Jefferson 1993). Of course, such a society has the undisputed advantage that it is 'a society of choice and consumer sovereignty' (Slater 1997: 25). From this point of view, squatting can be perceived as a direct attack on the dominant values of the culture of consumption. After all, squatters *consume* without paying. This is important in order to understand the argument put forward in the anti-squatting bill that claims that squatting is a threat to property rights. After all and as the above quote suggests, you can only be a full person if you *have*, and 'if one has nothing, one is nothing' (Fromm 1976: 3). From this point of view, one should definitely not take what doesn't belong to him or her because it is perceived as cheating at the rules of reward.

Zygmunt Bauman expressed his concerns about this and the way in which the culture of consumption is transforming the city. He conceptualized the city as divided in the 'seduced' and the 'repressed' (Bauman 1987). Here, consumption in fact functions as a form of spatial control that integrates those who indeed consume according to plan, the 'seduced', and excludes those marginalized groups who for whatever reason do not fit the patterns of consumption and are therefore not integrated into the consumer society (Bauman 1991; quoted in Hayward 2004). According to Hayward, this is exactly why these groups or the 'repressed' 'still require high levels of normative regulation and active repression via the traditional elements of social control' (Hayward 2004: 74). I would argue that the criminalization of squatting is a perfect example of this.

That consumption is transforming the city can also be observed directly by anyone who takes the tube into for instance the city of Rotterdam and witnesses a skyline where luxurious high-rise apartments are shooting up from the ground, revealing the impact of a commercial consumer culture on our cities. Sharon Zukin has described some of the important implications the linking of public culture to commercial culture has on social identity and on social control (Zukin 1995). According to Zukin, making the city into a 'consumer's playground' can mean that some groups are simply displaced from public spaces they considered to be theirs (Zukin 1995: 19). For the purpose of creating rational spaces, those who do not 'fit' are now denied access. This of course shares a great similarity with Lefebvre's notion that the user had become excluded from the distribution of space. The rationality demanded to organize such a form of consumption is described by Hayward as 'an attempt to build an urban Utopia' (Hayward 2004: 40). Trying to transform cities into such 'promotional spaces' (Hannigan 1998: 4) ignores many of the underlying social problems and tends to explain people's reactions to these problems in terms of opportunity and lack of control rather than it acknowledges the expressive character of many of these reactions (Young 2007). It is

therefore my belief that the condemnation and criminalization of squatting can only be understood against the urban stage of the city of consumers that draws a line between the haves and the have-nots.

Of course, just like we cannot stereotype squatting in terms of an act that is opportunity driven and made possible by a lack of (spatial) control, we also cannot stereotype the city in terms of such sharp lines between consumers and non-consumers. As I have already briefly discussed in the introduction to this thesis, squatters are human beings that are not simply defined by the act of squatting. And of course, other city dwellers cannot simply be defined by the act of consuming. As Jock Young has argued, the boundaries blur (ibid. 2007):

Both the punitive anger of the righteous and the burning resentment of the excluded occur because the demarcation lines are blurred, because values are shared and space is transfixed, because the same conditions of reward and ontology exist throughout society, because the souls of those inside and outside the 'contented minority' are far from dissimilar, sharing the same desires and passions, and suffering the same frustrations, because there is no security of place nor certainty of being and because differences are not essences but mere intonations of the minor scales of diversity (Young 2007: 34)

Here, Young describes a *bulimic society* where people are culturally included and at the same time structurally excluded (ibid.). By this Young refers to the fact that in late modernity people tend to experience a sense of 'chaos of reward and a chaos of identity' where people feel like they do not get what they deserve in terms of merit and recognition (ibid.: 35). Many of the included feel insecure and discontent whilst those who are thought of as being excluded seem to be well assimilated and getting by quite well (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). This can lead to a process of *Othering*, where an enemy is created that can be blamed for such feelings of ontological and economical insecurities. 'They' cause our problems, thus 'they' are different from us, 'they' are indeed 'filthy, parasitic, out of cultural bounds' (Ferrell 2004: 177; Young 2007). Such stereotypes can quite possibly create an overly negative image of a group, by which they are seen as a group that 'normal' society would like to live without (Dahrendorf 1985). In combining the structural with the human agency, Young combines the classical text of Robert K. Merton on the strains of not having (ibid. 1938) with Jack Katz's *Seductions of Crime* (ibid. 1988) and points out something extremely interesting; the acceptance of the cultural norms followed by a rejection from the very culture that produces these norms can generate intense resentment to these norms. According to Young, it is in fact this humiliation of exclusion that makes people transgress (Young 2007). As we will see, this approach can help us to understand the emotions that precede the actual act of squatting, or the decision to squat and its continuation.

Combining the 'chaos of reward and a chaos of identity' with this spectacle of consumption, Hayward makes an important argument by describing how the late modern city dweller tries to 'construct identity from the shop window' (Hayward 2004: 132). Hayward's point is that consumption now serves to free ourselves from worry, a means by which we can invest in a feeling of security. In my opinion, this is the essential point to the city of consumers that literally buys into the idea that consumption can create a sense of identity and therefore, a feeling of security. As we will see in chapter three, focusing on the importance of the right of ownership, the moral entrepreneurs literally struck a sensitive nerve since the home represents an investment not only in one's lifestyle, but also in that feeling of security (Hayward 2004). Let us now focus on those theories that can help us understand the processes by which squatting became criminalized.

IN THE AIR - POLITICS AND THE MORAL ENTERPRISE

The theories I will now continue to discuss focus on those important symbolic and stylistic strategies the moral entrepreneurs themselves employed in their quest for criminalization of squatting (see Ferrell and Sanders 1995). As I have already explained earlier in this chapter, the moral entrepreneurs function as the guardians of the moral status quo who work to construct squatting as a crime. From this perspective, I believe the criminalization of squatting can be read as the effort to regain both social and legal control over the styles and symbols that shape the shared culture of squatting (ibid. 1995). Through an ethnographic content analysis of the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and important affiliated documents, I wish to describe some of the most important strategies involved in the criminalization process. These strategies, which will be connected to the theories I am about to discuss, are meant to promote the moral entrepreneurs own 'ideologically justified political conception of space' (Lefebvre 2003: 78). That is, the concept version of the urban environment, rationalized and sanitized from those unwanted features that poses a threat to what the moral entrepreneurs ultimately believe is a healthy urban environment (De Certeau 1984; Hayward 2004).

THE MORAL ENTERPRISE

Rules are the products of someone's initiative and we can think of the people who exhibit such enterprise as moral entrepreneurs (Becker 1963: 147).

According to Howard Becker, a moral enterprise is initiated because the moral entrepreneur is not satisfied with the way in which the law is arranged and believes that this enables the continued existence of an act that allows the 'exploitation of one person by another' (Becker 1963: 148). In the eyes of the moral entrepreneur, the existence of such an act signals the existence of something so evil that any means to do away with it are justified (ibid.), even complete criminalization. Becker recognized that the processes through which an act becomes criminalized are both political and economic. Also, the fact that one group's social position allows them to create rules that apply to other groups whose social position is less powerful points out the fact that the processes by which acts are criminalized rest upon 'power differentials' (ibid. 17). The criminalization of squatting shows how any conflict over (cultural) values can lead to an expression of power of one group over another in the form of criminalization.

In order to make sure that these rules 'stick' and are being enforced, Becker explained, the moral entrepreneurs have to launch a moral enterprise (ibid. 1963: 146-163). Here, Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda introduce the *interest-group model*, for whom the most important question is; who benefits if a certain act is recognized as a threat to society? (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009: 67). Interesting here is the similarity between this line of thought and how I earlier described the way in which those who oppose to the anti-squatting bill see it as irrational, unnecessary and self-serving initiative. Goode and Ben-Yehuda argue that during a moral enterprise, the material interest and the ideology and morality are intertwined (ibid.). This resonate Becker's argument that the processes by which an act becomes criminalized can be both political (ideology and morality) and economic (serving material interests) (Becker 1963). Criminalization therefore often seems to combine the moral indignation over certain behavior with the wish to protect certain (material) interests. I would argue that this can also be witnessed in the process of criminalization of the act of squatting.

In his study of urban graffiti in Denver, Jeff Ferrell stresses that such moral entrepreneurs should be closely monitored (ibid. 1996). Ferrell points out that such moral campaigns hold valuable information about 'the absurdity of authority' and notes that this information should be used to 'make the authorities out to be the dangerous fools that they are' (ibid. 191-192). In my opinion, he insightfully points out that these moral campaigns create an ideological context that serves to expand the legal and political authority and suppresses any resistance to it; indeed, in such a society an alternative way of living like squatting becomes 'unreasonable' and 'unthinkable' (ibid. 192). Moral entrepreneurs therefore also seem to share that social hypochondriac vision of society that sociologist Willem Schinkel reveals in his critical vision on late modern Dutch society. According to Schinkel, we live in a society that spends too much time analyzing itself and talks itself into having a wide variety of diseases that threaten the health of the social body (Schinkel 2008). In the eyes of moral entrepreneurs, such threats to the health of the social body are unacceptable. Goode and Ben-Yehuda remind us that the moral enterprise often extends beyond criminalization and that we will often see how moral entrepreneurs attempt to influence the public opinion by using the media, give talks on how to counter the threat or try to discredit those who are advocating other views on a specific issue (ibid. 2009).

Here, we have returned to the important notion of 'crime as culture'. Through different theories I have described how the moral entrepreneurs can focus on advancing the material interests of certain groups and at the same time speak a language that reveals their own 'ideologically justified political conception of space' (Lefebvre 2003: 78), suggesting that the moral entrepreneurs indeed employ symbolic and stylistic strategies themselves during the criminalization process (Ferrell and Sanders 1995). As Ferrell and Sanders argue and as I will now discuss, these strategies intentionally reduce complex social phenomena by recasting those involved as criminals of the worst kind (ibid.). It is my assumption that the criminalization of squatting followed similar strategies. They are not the result of an underlying social problem, rather they *are* the problem. Indeed, a true moral entrepreneur knows how to speak the language of the moral panic.

SPEAKING IN MORAL PANICS

In a moral panic, a group or category engages, or is said to engage in unacceptable, immoral behavior, presumably causes or is responsible for serious harmful consequences, and is therefore seen as a threat to the well-being, basic values, and interests of the society, or sectors of the society (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009: 35).

Before I continue I would like to stress the fact that it is by no means my intention to suggest that the criminalization of squatting was preceded or accompanied by a full blown moral panic. Goode and Ben-Yehuda have argued that 'moral panics' are a matter of degree' that sometimes grips society as a whole and other times only creates concern among certain groups or categories (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009: 39). I do not believe that the criminalization of squatting produced a wide-spread moral panic throughout the entire Dutch society, and it certainly did not rule the front pages of the papers nor did it featured in hour-long news broadcasts. Also shuffled away under one of the most fierce political election campaigns in years, the criminalization of squatting often seemed to be a forgotten issue. However, the moral entrepreneurs certainly used the well-know moral panic vocabulary in order to create support for the anti-squatting bill. So the emphasis is more on the *use of the language* of the moral panic, rather than suggesting an actual moral panic took place.

Moral panic theory evolved out of Stanley Cohen's most valued work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (ibid. 1972). In short, moral panics typically represent 'a disproportional and hostile societal reaction to a condition, person or a group defined as a threat to societal values, involving stereotypical media representations and leading to demands for greater social control and creating a spiral of reaction' (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006: 251). Although the theory is not central to this study, it is important that Cohen showed how moral entrepreneurs (often intentionally) exaggerate a problem in order to make it seem like an issue that concerns the entire nation, pointing out the 'decline of morality and standards' (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006: 251). It is my assumption that the moral entrepreneurs behind criminalization of squatting simplified and stigmatized squatting through the use of this moral panic-language.

In his book *Empire of Scrounge*, Jeff Ferrell explains how moral entrepreneurs often use language to magnify the scope of a problem, making it sound as if practices of everyday life such as scrounging through garbage bins are equally worse as mob violence or even murder (Ferrell 2006). According to Ferrell, this is necessary to create the kind of folk devils essential to creating a moral panic over marginalized groups like the urban scrounger in order to deflect the public's attention away from authority's misdeeds (Ferrell 2001, 2006; Ferrell and Sanders 1995). This of course resembles Cohen's argument that underneath the 'hype' a significant issue does in fact exist (Cohen 1972).

It is furthermore interesting to point out that the language of the moral panic often uses or evokes medical terminology or epidemiological language (Young 2007). Jock Young argues that this serves the purpose of phrasing decisions or actions in 'the language of risk, vulnerability and pathology' (Young 2007: 113). As I have already pointed out on numerous occasions in the case of the anti-squatting bill, it is my belief that such language is intentionally used in order to recast squatting into a threat to property rights and a disease that threatens the health of the urban environment. This of course serves the process of *Othering*. Introduced by Edward Said, this process qualifies the *Other*, identifying him or her different as oneself (ibid. 1979). As Young explains, in this process the deviant has to be remolded into an undeserving and inhumane actor, not as a result of social problems but as a result of the deviants own actions (Young 2007). Described as an exercise in the 'maintenance of the symbolic universe' (Berger and Luckman 1966), Young explains that first the deviant is blamed for an act that is seen as unrelated to the normal functioning of the social order, known as *distancing*. Secondly, the deviant act is seen as a problem *for* society instead of being a part of the problems of society, known as *inversion* (Young 2007: 142). It is my belief that in the process of criminalization of squatting similar techniques were used, recasting squatting as a problem to society instead of an act that can result from deeper lying social problems.

In the end, the moral enterprise and the language of the moral panic represent 'a battle between cultural representations' (Cohen 2002: xxxiii). Set against the urban environment so important to this particular study, they are part of the symbolic and stylistic strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs to reestablish disciplinary control over those lost urban spaces. Henri Lefebvre explains why this control is so important. According to Lefebvre, the State 'has as one of its functions – and a more and more significant function – the organization of space, the regularization of its flows, and the control of its networks' and therefore has 'the power that controls urbanization' (ibid. 1991: 383). I would argue that this power to control can also be found in the language of the moral panic, serving the purpose to impose a specific view on and to reestablish their control over the urban environment. The strategies that are being used are inherently tied up with the moral entrepreneurs view on the urban environment, as I have described in the above paragraphs.

ON THE GROUND - THE URBAN PHENOMENON OF SQUATTING

The following theoretical perspectives serve to reveal the lived experience of the Rotterdam squatters who see squatting as an existential possibility. The theoretical perspectives that are offered here are meant to understand better the diversity within the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam. These perspectives therefore offer that critical reflection on the stereotypes the moral entrepreneurs have used in order to justify a total ban on squatting in the Netherlands. These theoretical perspectives will help criticize the simplicity of concept-city in terms of its rational and sanitized approach to city life and positions against it the messy uncertainties of city life that squatters are no strangers to. In chapter 4 these perspectives, that have proven their value to the field of cultural criminology, will be connected to the most important findings that originate from my ethnographic field work. With the urban environment as the stage on which the urban phenomenon of squatting plays out, I hope to understand better how these individuals arrive at the act of squatting and the continuation of squatting, in which squatting and the squat serve as building blocks for one's identity and ultimately for 'seizing control over one's destiny' (Hayward 2004: 152). Again, this is quite different from the oversimplified image of the squatter that sees an opportunity to live for free, although I am by no means implying that such squatters do not exist. I am implying however, that diversity exists and that it should be recognized.

ONTOLOGICAL INSECURITY and URBAN EDGEWORK

Following the line set out above, the dual-analysis of space can help us to better understand the pressures the late modern individual is experiencing. Keith Hayward explains that in our late modern society it is not only 'becoming more difficult to exert control and navigate a life pathway via the 'established' (and crumbling) norms and codes of modernity, but, at the same time, the individual is confronted by a reactive and burgeoning 'culture of control', something that can make the individual 'feel both ontological insecure and ... over-controlled' (ibid. 2004: 163; see also Garland 2001). As we will see in chapter 4, this paradoxical feeling that makes individuals feel both lacking control and being over-controlled is of great importance to understand better the reason why individuals decide to squat to begin with. Of course, this notion resembles Jock Young's description of a *bulimic society* where people are culturally included and at the same time are structurally excluded (ibid. 2007).

However, this feeling of chaos in both reward and identity is something squatters tend to address in an entirely different fashion than their fellow city dwellers. Described as 'edgework activities', Stephen Lyng explains how these feelings of insecurity and a lack of control can lead individuals to engage in risk-laden activities in order to seize back control, serving at the same time as a reaction against the 'forces that rob one of individual choice' (ibid. 1990: 870). Probably more applicable in the context of squatting is the concept of *urban edgework* as introduced by Fenwick and Hayward who claim that urban edgework are those activities that offer an individual control and at the same time, *excitement*. Urban edgework induces both 'feelings of self-realization and self-expression', activities through which the individual 'comes alive' (ibid. 2000: 49). It is my belief that the concept of urban edgework can help us to understand better some of the feelings of insecurity that precede the actual decision to squat and also the expressive nature of squatting.

SPACES OF OPPORTUNITY and SPACES OF RESISTANCE

Both the fields of urban and human geography (and of course urban sociology) have devoted a fair amount of time in trying to alter our standard perception of those seemingly lost urban spaces. Seen 'as places once used but now abandoned, to an authoritarian viewpoint they represent unacceptable socio-economic abandonment, contrary to the ideal image of the city' (Hudson and Shaw 2010: 1). Described by Armstrong as *voids* (ibid. 2006), Cupers and Miessen explain:

The void can on the one hand be considered as introverted desolation, an existential and sociological experience of loss. On the other hand, the concept of the void can also be interpreted positively; vacant primarily means empty, but also free and therefore full of opportunity. (Cupers and Miessen 2002: 80).

The idea that these voids can be experienced by others as an opportunity reflects De Certeau's discussed 'concept city' and his argument that '*space is a practiced place*' (ibid. 1984: 117). Indeed, where to one person the run-down building might represent a threat to the health of the urban environment, to someone else it might 'present an opportunity to try out numerous other identities and ways of being, unmediated by the physical, social and cultural demands that adhere to most other urban areas' (Jorgensen and Tylecote, 2007: 456).

In his description of the *parafunctional spaces* (i.e. the just discussed voids) Nikos Papastergiadis also explains such seemingly lost urban spaces as possible sites for creativity where 'informal and unintended uses overtake the officially designated functions' and where 'social life ... continues in ambiguous and unconventional ways' (Papastergiadis 2002: 45; quoted in Hayward 2004: 143). I would argue that squatting can at the very least be understood as such an unintended use, and the described theoretical perspective might shine a light on reason for that use.

That such different readings of the urban wasteland echo the concept of urban edgework is something beautifully described by Cupers and Miessen, who argue that these spaces offer the 'possibility of an escape, from the controlled spaces' because they operate outside of this control and 'outside the consumerist onslaught, bombardment and encroachment of meaning, signification and messages' (Cupers and Miessen: 2002: 83). Linking this to the concept of urban edgework, the void or the parafunctional space can therefore represent an opportunity for 'self-realization and self-expression' (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 49), the perfect way to seize back control over one's own life. It is my belief that these concepts are extremely important to a more nuanced understanding of the act of squatting. Both an act of transgression that at the same time can provide an opportunity to discover one's identity and exert control over one's own destiny, how can this not be *exciting*?

Framed in a slightly different way, in *Empire of Scrounge* Jeff Ferrell explores the world of urban scroungers and comes to understand it as acts of 'direct social and economic action ... outside the control of charitable organizations, multinational corporations, or governmental bureaucracies' (Ferrell 2006: 176). Similar to the concept of the parafunctional space or the void, these alternative reading of the urban environment and the ability to reassess the value of the discards of society point towards a true Do-It-Yourself mentality (DIY) where the marginalized refuse to sit around and wait for that official helping hand, but decide to take matters into their own hands and take control. DIY, as Ferrell describes it, does not need a permission slip or a seal of approval. It is a form of direct action against the existing social and authoritarian arrangements, proving that 'alternative actions and arrangements are imaginable' (ibid. 2001: 27).

Henry Lefebvre points to a similar DIY mentality in his description of the *counter-space*. According to Lefebvre, counter-space can 'shake existing space to its foundations, along with its strategies and aims – namely, the imposition of homogeneity and transparency everywhere within the purview of power and its established order' (ibid. 1991: 383). Lefebvre argues that the counter-space stands against expansion of the privatization of space and the profitability of space, it 'stands against specialized spaces and a narrow localization of function' (ibid. 382).

Of course, these theoretical notions of the void, the parafunctional space, and the counter-space share not only a similar approach in their perception of space, they also reveal some of the important tensions between the 'concept-city' and the 'official city' (De Certeau 1984). These perspectives are important because they help to move beyond simple notions of rational choice and the lack of spatial control. Instead, these spaces often seem to result from too much spatial control. It certainly will prove valuable in understanding the cultural conflict between the moral entrepreneurs and the shared culture of squatting. This leaves one more important element of the shared culture of squatting to discuss. The fact that there are people who decide to take matters into their own hands, to do it themselves and to resist and break through the cultural boundaries that are not of their own making proves that people in fact not only transgress boundaries, but also offer resistance to rules that are applied by the authorities. Here, we enter the concept of cultural resistance.

'FIGHTING BACK'

According to Ferrell, Hayward and Young, cultural resistance can be found in those 'little moments of illicit transgression' (ibid. 2008: 15-18). An understanding of the concept of cultural resistance is important to this study in order to understand some of the most important reactions squatters from Rotterdam, but also from other cities in the Netherlands, expressed against the criminalization of squatting. It proves that those criminalized do not readily accept the label; that often their answer is not, as Presdee suggested, 'rational compliance, but rather heightened emotionality' (ibid. 2000; quoted in Hayward 2004: 167).

In order to tackle some of the critiques on the labeling perspective, Joseph Rogers and Mark Buffalo introduced nine ways a deviant can adapt to a deviant label to prove that the labellee is not an overly passive agent and that they can respond as a collectivity (Rogers and Buffalo 1974: 101). In their paper, Rogers and Buffalo present a 'nine-cell typology of adaptations' (ibid. 101). Although this theoretical perspective will not be a central element of this particular study, it is important to know that Rogers and Buffalo stressed the fact that when a deviant label is faced, the labellee can pursue a number of alternatives that are aimed at 'fighting back' (ibid. 101). By using the term 'fighting back', Rogers and Buffalo showed that people sometimes openly question and fight off the deviant label. Indeed the response does not have to be rational compliance; a deviant label can also cause resistance that is in its nature expressive rather than instrumental and is often fueled by emotions rather than a rational choice (Presdee 2000; Young 2007).

Of course, such emotions do not necessarily have to be expressed through the use of violence, although the images of the 1980 coronation riots in Amsterdam have led us to believe that squatters do tend to express themselves by using violence. The fact that squatters more often than not express their grievances in more creative ways is often overlooked. I therefore hope that my exploration of

the more creative forms of cultural resistance in chapter 5 will stand as a corrective to the 'democratically-sanctioned myth' that all squatters use violence (Pruijt 2004, 701).

A good example of such creative forms of resistance and an important concept to the field of cultural criminology is the concept of *détournement*. Originally practiced by a subversive group of French writers and artists known as the *Situationists*, *détournement* signifies a reversal of meaning, converting it into something else or even the opposite, revealing 'moments in which the taken-for-granted order of daily life unravels' (Ferrell 2006: 186). *Détournement* gives new meaning to existing signs or situations, meant to critique them and to offer us an alternative understanding of that what we often take for granted (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). As we will see in chapter 4 and 5, squatters engage in the act of *détournement* on a regular basis, questioning the existing social order and resisting the criminal label.

Here we once again return to the importance of cultural criminology and the concept of *criminological verstehen* (Ferrell and Sanders 1995) which stresses the importance of gaining 'deep cultural and emotional knowledge' of those we study (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 177). By looking at crime as expressive rather than instrumental, cultural criminology forces us to ask ourselves a very important question; what is it an expression of? Cultural criminologists know that such questions can only be answered if we study crime and crime control in the context of culture, 'viewing both crime and the agencies of control as cultural products - as creative constructs' (Hayward and Young, 2005: 259). Taken all together and putting it in the cultural criminological blender, this study describes how 'the imaginary of the powerful confronts the citizen - and is negotiated, internalized, or *resisted by those it confronts*' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 80; emphasis added).

CONCLUSION

Cultural criminology serves as the firm foundation on which this theoretical framework has been built. Cultural criminology sees transgressive behavior and crime control as cultural products. The cultural criminology of the city helps us to understand better the struggle between these two cultural products, 'the struggle between the forces of rationalization and those of existential possibility and lived experience' as they play out on the urban stage (Ferrell, Hayward, Morrison and Presdee 2004: 5). This urban stage or the urban space is extremely important to cultural criminology. According to Ferrell, Hayward and Young, the urban space should in fact be seen as 'one of its key concepts' (ibid. 2008: 80). This theoretical point of departure and the supporting theories discussed above all touch upon different dimensions of the shared culture of squatting (in Rotterdam), the recent criminalization of squatting and the resistance squatters' offer against the criminal label. From the different dimensions and the theories that support them, the urban conflict between squatters and the moral entrepreneurs can be conceptualized along the following lines:

1. *The urban stage*

This is the dimension of the official city. Following the line of thought set out by Robert Park's and Ernest Burgess's book *The City*, the urban environment is not merely a 'physical mechanism and an artificial construction', rather it is 'a product of nature, and in particular of human nature' (ibid.: p. 1). The urban environment is in essence the stage where the conflict between the moral entrepreneurs and the squatters plays out; it is the 'urban stage'. In order to begin to understand what the conflict

between the moral entrepreneurs and the squatters is about, we have to take into account the personal and extremely different (ideological) perceptions these parties to the conflict have on the urban environment. From a cultural criminological perspective, their actions constitute meaningful human behavior, which shapes the urban environment. It is within this urban environment, the city, where the 'struggle between the forces of rationalization and those of existential possibility and lived experience' clash and create conflict (Ferrell et al. 2004: 5).

2. *Concept-city: squatting as seen by the moral entrepreneurs*

The second dimension describes the most important symbolic and stylistic strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs in their enterprise of the criminalization of squatting. The purpose of this dimension is to describe that the criminalization of squatting was preceded by a moral enterprise, an enterprise that was created for the purpose of advancing the moral entrepreneurs own ideological perception of space; striving to realize their concept-view of the city the social reality of city-life. In order to realize their agenda, the moral entrepreneurs both intentionally and unintentionally evoke the language of the moral panic in order to get across the message that squatting poses a threat to the 'normal' consensual culture. Because it is my belief that the criminalization of squatting both denies the expressive nature of squatting as well as the fact that it tries to stereotype squatters as an exogenous threat, this dimension will be critically reflected upon by a more nuanced image of the shared culture of squatting of Rotterdam, in order to do justice to the heterogeneity and diversity of squatting.

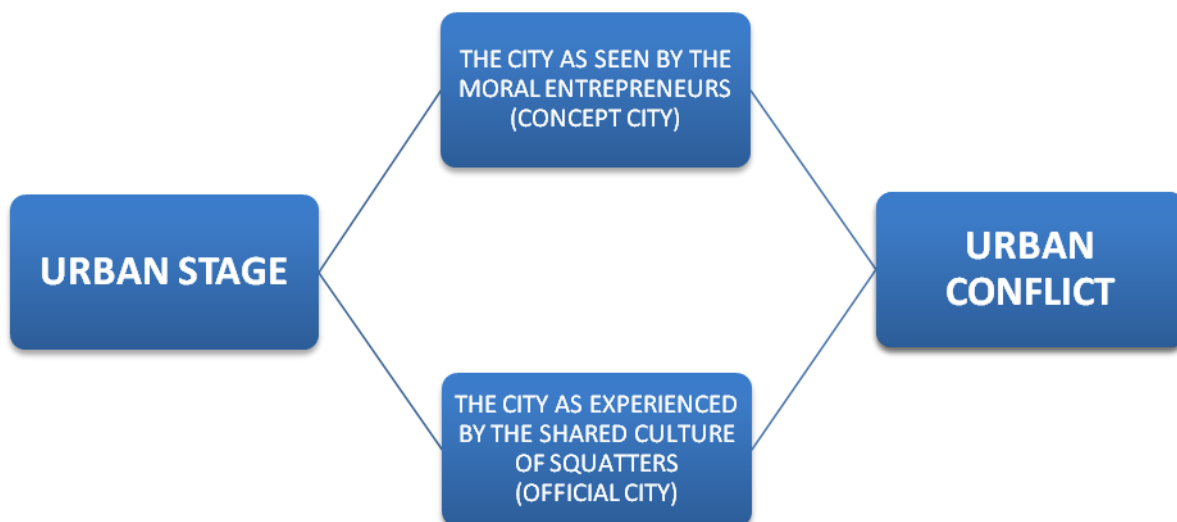
3. *Official city: squatting as seen by squatters*

This dimension shows how individuals that are confronted with a feeling of frustration, resulting from the lack of control in an over-controlled environment, look at the act of squatting as a way of getting back in control of their own lives. Squatting offers them at the same time excitement, an alternative mode of (economic) survival that allows them use the space as a platform on which they can build a stable identity and further develop their creativity, Through this they become more attuned to the possibilities places can offer them, places that often already have been discarded by the 'normal' consensual culture. Therefore, the squat serves both as platform of cultural significance as well as a symbol of empowerment for those who use it to escape from a situation in which they experience a lack of control in an over-controlled urban environment. However, this alternative lifestyle does come with its own restrictions and is therefore often seen as a temporary way of being in the city.

4. *Urban conflict: resistance against the criminal label*

The last dimension is where the two previous dimensions collide. The most important assumption here is that the reaction to the criminalization of squatting will not lead to compliant rationality on the part of the squatters rather it will lead to resistance that is fired up by emotions. This of course in turn support my previous assumption that squatting is expressive in its nature and not as the moral entrepreneurs argue, instrumental. By looking into some of the reactions squatters have positioned against the criminalization of squatting, I will be able to describe how squatters in fact 'fight back' and resist the imaginary of the moral entrepreneurs. I will describe the creative resistance squatters (from Rotterdam) have used in order to undermine the moral entrepreneurs. It also shows how this cultural resistance became more and more emotionally fuelled as the criminalization started to close in on the squatters.

The conceptual framework summarizes the dimensions I have just discussed and can be found in a schematized conceptual model below. In the next chapter I will start with a critical ethnographic content analysis of the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and other important documents, and public statements made by the moral entrepreneurs and supporters of the bill. The chapter will focus on those elements most important to this particular study and is by no means a claim to an absolute truth or an all-encompassing description. It is part of the totality of this study that ultimately has the modest aim of showing that diversity does exist within the shared culture of squatting. The ultimate goal of this study is coherent with the cultural and critical theories I have described above, theories that celebrate multiple perspectives and views and deny that there is such a thing as a universal truth (Henry and Lanier 2006).



Conceptual Model

3

**DOCTORS OF
SPACE**

INTRODUCTION

If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life (Henry David Thoreau)

This chapter starts off from the assumption that the anti-squatting bill, and in particular the Explanatory Memorandum to the bill, is much more than a simple collection of words and claims made by the moral entrepreneurs that designed the anti-squatting bill. The Explanatory Memorandum to the bill is a valuable document to analyse, because in it the initiators of the bill explain in detail why they believe that the act of squatting should be subjected to the rule of law. This makes it quite easy to understand that the Explanatory Memorandum in fact is in many ways an expression of an 'ideologically justified political conception of space' (Lefebvre 2003: 78) and casts a moral judgement over those that are seen as causing trouble for the rest of society. It is therefore my belief that Explanatory Memorandum should be read as a cultural product that in many ways expresses the cultural power of one group over another (Hall and Jefferson 1993). If it is true that the moral entrepreneurs employ symbolic and stylistic strategies of their own in their quest for criminalization of squatting, than the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill should be able to provide the textual evidence necessary to describe these strategies. In other words, this document communicates cultural meaning to us (Altheide 1987). I wish to reveal and describe this cultural meaning or cultural power through an ethnographic content analysis that mainly focuses on the Explanatory Memorandum to the bill, but also by focusing on the claims made by the initiators in the different media. What can this cultural document tell us about the moral entrepreneurs will to construct squatting as a criminal offence? What important methods are deployed to sustain this enterprise aimed at criminalization? But also, how does the document relate to the initiators own ideas of the urban environment? The foundation for answering these questions will be laid in this chapter. Furthermore, the ethnographic content analysis is meant to describe some of the important symbolic and stylistic strategies that lie at the foundations of the criminalization process from a different perspective and departs from the critical criminological notion that there is no universal claim to truth, but that there are different readings possible; this chapter offers one possible reading. It is a search for the control elements that serve the purpose of rationalizing and sanitizing the urban environment so that it fits a certain perception of the urban space.

In this chapter I will start by revealing and describing some of the most important claims to 'truth' made by the initiators of the bill. Departing from my primary interest, the cultural meaning of the document and the cultural power it communicates, I will then continue with an ethnographic content analysis of the Explanatory Memorandum to the bill and important affiliated documents such as claims made by the moral entrepreneurs in different media performances. The content analysis will offer an insight in the world and line of thought of the initiators responsible for the anti-squatting bill²³. It is my belief that this particular line of thought can be described along the lines of symbolic interactionism, or more specific along the lines of the moral enterprise and the generation of a moral panic to create the support for the criminalization of squatting (see Becker 1963; Cohen 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009). These theoretical notions are important to describe the symbolic and stylistic strategies deployed by the moral entrepreneurs, meant to advance their perception of the late modern (Dutch) city. The focus is therefore on the language that is being used

²³ For more information on the value of content analysis see A.L. Smeulers, *Perpetrators of International Crimes: Towards a Typology* (2008).

and the claims to truth that are being made. In the end, this critical content analysis serves as the starting point from which I will work towards a more nuanced description of the shared culture of squatting.

INCLUSION vs. EXCLUSION

But before we start with the ethnographic content analysis it is important to understand my reading of both the relevant documents and the public performances of moral entrepreneurs. Many scholars have raised arguments against this bill by focusing on the positive cultural contributions squatters made that helped to enrich the culture of the cities (see Uitermark 2004; Duivenvoorden 2001; Owens 2009; Pruijt 2003), trying to explain the value of squatting for the Netherlands. Others, amongst them the political opposition, have labeled the anti-squatting bill as 'unnecessary, illogical and foolish'²⁴. Many of such critiques are based on the belief that the criminalization of squatting is a repressive and exclusionary tool; it excludes people who squat from society. Of course such critiques are valid, but at the same time they fail to recognize that late modern tools of social control often also focus on inclusion. To borrow a phrase from Keith Hayward, the idea behind the criminalization of squatting is to create the 'conditions for disciplinary hygiene and civic surveillance' (ibid. 2004: 139). And in order to create that sanitized city and reestablish control over the lost urban spaces, these spaces must be *included* and not excluded. Therefore, I would argue that the moral entrepreneurs do not think of the anti-squatting bill as unnecessary, illogical or foolish at all because it is exactly in line with their 'ideologically justified political conception of space' (Lefebvre 2003: 78). That is, the idea that there is such a thing as proper activity that relates to a space and in order to ensure such proper activity, these spaces must be watched over. Squatters represent the complete opposite of this proper activity and maximum visibility and live in spaces that are in many ways outside of the surveillance and control of the authorities. These spaces and practices therefore stand completely 'outside their consciousness and understanding' and therefore they can only read squatting as 'immoral, uncivilized, obscene and unfathomable social behavior' that deserves to be criminalized (Presdee 2000: 7-8). Hayward describes these developments as the 'hybrid form of criminalization / social control' that has emerged in recent times, because new measures can look extremely punitive in essence, but at the same time reveal 'a move towards the conditioning and 'routinisation' of individual action' (Hayward 2004: 167). I would argue the criminalization of squatting follows a similar path. In short, by outlawing squatting and by at the same time threatening with hefty prison sentences, the moral entrepreneurs hope that possible squatters will think twice before squatting and therefore will control their actions. As we will see in the upcoming paragraphs, this rational approach to space and practice can also help us understand why the political authorities are in favor of vacant property management or 'anti-squatting'.

It seems that the criminalization of squatting is not simply an irrational act of exclusion, unlike the arguments of those who oppose the bill suggest. If the moral entrepreneurs wish to advance their perception of the urban space, or that view of Michel de Certeau's 'concept-city' (ibid. 1984) to create a controlled and functional urban environment, than these spaces have to be included instead of excluded. As I have described in the introduction to this thesis, these lost spaces are seen as sick

²⁴ This critique came from the *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party) during the debate held on the 18th of May 2010 in the Senate. See <http://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/veel-kritiek-op-antikraakwet.164996.lynkx>

spaces that threaten the healthy urban environment. Therefore, these spaces need to be sanitized and subjected to the rational logics of spatial control.

Now although it is very tempting to see the passing of the anti-squatting bill as that exact moment in time where history ends and where squatting is back at the point where it started off from, I want to remind the reader and myself as well that we have to keep in mind that 'the time we live in is not *the* unique or fundamental irruptive point in history where everything is completed and begun again' (Foucault 1983; quoted in Garland 2001: 22). Of course, the criminalization of squatting represents a unique moment in time that holds valuable information for understanding 'late modernity's distinctive forms of social ordering and social control' (Garland 2001: 23), but it is nevertheless the 'logical' continuation of a ever growing control culture that throughout history slowly but certainly tightened the net of social control around the squatters. To exemplify this I will offer a brief overview of this historic process, past to present.

GOING BACK AND INTO THE FUTURE

One of the central elements of this thesis is the process by which certain acts or types of behavior become criminalized. The criminalization of squatting did not fall out of thin air but was preceded by decades of attempts on the side of the legal and political authorities to outlaw squatting, and resistance against such attempts on the side of the squatters. In the beginning of the 1970's the authorities began to tighten the screws on the act squatting by gradually closing the net of control around them. This political approach to the problem of squatting shows uncanny similarities with David Garland's account of the rise of the control culture and the way in which the authorities have shifted from the assumption that crime is caused by an interplay of underlying social problems to the assumption that crime should be identified and singled out as a risk, stressing the need for more prevention and more repressive laws that can reduce this risk and protect and secure the public (Garland, 2001). Squatting, an act that was born out of the connection between housing needs and vacant property, revealed the social problems that existed when it came to finding available and affordable housing in (predominately) the city. However, the authorities response to squatting became more and more 'rational', reducing squatting to an act that was the result of a cost-benefit analysis and that could therefore be prevented by imposing more control. As Eric Duivenvoorden interestingly pointed out, these measures ranged from a direct clampdown on the act of squatting, but also by putting more social restrictions on young individuals, such as imposing stricter guidelines on the duration of studies, the height of student loans etcetera, meant to limit the amount of spare time and to place young individuals into a stricter *social bodice* (Duivenvoorden 2000).

On February second 1971 the *Hoge Raad der Nederlanden* (Dutch Supreme Court) ruled that squatting could not be seen as a violation of domestic peace if the squatted building was fact unused and empty²⁵. This decree meant that after the squatters took up residence in the squatted building, domestic peace was in fact created by putting in a bed, chair and a table²⁶, no longer making it a violation of domestic privacy as codified in article 138 of the Dutch Criminal Code. In fact, they were no longer intruders but became householders and were protected against illegal entry of other, including the rightful owner of the property (Van der Zee 2009). This proved to be unacceptable in they eyes of the political authorities and in March of 1973 the first anti-squatting bill was proposed in the House of Representatives (Duivenvoorden 2000). Disregarding some of the hefty criticism offered

²⁵ See HR 02-02-1971, NJ 1971, 385

²⁶ This bed, chair and table became known as 'het kraaksetje', the essentials you needed to create domestic peace and in order to squat under the protection of the law

by the Council of Churches in their rapport *Kraken in Nederland* (Squatting in the Netherlands), claiming that squatting in fact contributed to the housing problem by taking back excluded buildings, the House of Representatives continued and passed the law. In the end, the Senate refused to vote on the bill because the government did not reply to the enormous amount of criticism the bill evoked (Duivenvoorden 2000).

Early 1979 the *Partij van de Arbeid* (Dutch Labour Party) submitted the *Leegstandswet* (Vacant Property bill). This time, the criminalization of squatting was connected to the creation of a register for vacant property, meaning that squatting a building that was submitted to the register of vacant property would be against the law. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the law in 1981, but due to problems surrounding the effectiveness of the register for vacant property, the bill never made it. It was however adjusted leaving out the part of the criminalization of squatting and was accepted in 1984 took effect on January first 1986. This law created a possibility for private persons or organizations to specialize in the management of vacant property, setting up people in vacant property called *anti-krakers* (anti-squatters) in order to prevent vacant property from being squatted. The anti-squatters did have to pay some money in return for all this space. From this moment onwards, the protection of private property was no longer solely in the hands of the official authorities. The private market also became a legally accepted player, introducing private control against squatters. This development is in line with Garland's description of the rise of a private control culture, where non-state initiatives create forms of private control that originate from private interests and market forces of supply and demand (ibid. 2001).

In 1993, the introduction of the *Huisvestingswet* (Housing Law) added a new article, prohibiting the squatting of a building that had not been empty for more that 12 months consecutive months. This tightened the net of social control even more, further reducing the playing field of the squatter. Because of this new prohibition, the amount of vacant buildings that could be squatted with legal support dramatically declined (Duivenvoorden 2000) and with it, the amount of active squatters.

But the decline of the amount of active squatters cannot only be attributed to the growing culture of control. After the violent outbursts at the end of the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's, many squatters were done with squatting and heavily disappointed with all the violence both on the side of the squatters as well as the State-sanctioned violence of the riot police, they turned their backs on the movement. However, Duivenvoorden has described in detail that, regardless of the internal conflicts and radicalization of some parts of the movement, squatting still continued, although it continued extremely divided (ibid. 2000: 300). However, during the 1990's cities began to realize the importance of culture and its ability to attract tourists and new businesses. In other words, cities became aware of the fact that 'culture is also a powerful means of controlling cities' and by this logic cities became the primary sites of the cultural industries (Zukin 1995: 1). This made the authorities reassess their attitude towards squatting, since many squatters were in fact the artists of the city. They were the young painters, film-makers, dancers, photographers, DJ's, and created bars, public diner's, give-away-stores and much more. A start was being made, mainly in Amsterdam, with the legalization of squats that could contribute to the culture of the city, meaning the cities symbolic economy. Also, a breeding place policy was created that made subsidy available for those who wanted to develop their creativity using the cities vacant buildings. This market orientated regime encouraged the co-optation of squatters as service providers, which would imply the abandonment of their lives as squatters (Pruijt 2003: 152). Many squatters profited from this relatively open-minded approach. But as with everything that starts of new and afresh, available subsidies declined,

squats turned legal were confronted with a yearly raise of rent and cities took control over these cultural experiments, making many squatters weary about the 'good' intentions of their cities.

Although the moral entrepreneurs that initiated the current anti-squatting bill argue that squatters have had the playing field for themselves for the last few decades and that squatting has been tolerated for too long by the previous administrations²⁷, the facts seem to suggest that *tolerance* the history of squatting in the Netherlands. It does however support the claim that the political authorities and squatters have long been 'participants in an ongoing process' to define the nature and public meaning of squatting (Ferrell 1996: 159). In the end, it is the moral entrepreneurs that seem to have 'won' this battle over redefinition and managed to construct squatting as a crime. It is these processes by which squatting came to be constructed as a crime that I will now focus my attention on.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: THE MORAL ENTERPRISE

Criminalization is the explicit use of political power to impose the view of one specific symbolic-moral universe on other universes (Ben-Yehuda 1990: 65)

Pioneered by Howard Becker, the idea that we can only understand deviance if we also look at those who *make* the rules instead of only looking at those who *break* the rules is an essential element of this chapter (ibid. 1963). Of course, it is very unlikely that the moral entrepreneurs will see the criminalization of squatting as the explicit use of political power meant to impose their view of what constitutes a healthy urban environment. Instead, the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill begins with a statement that is meant to clarify without a doubt that the moral entrepreneurs are in fact the 'good guys' and squatters the 'bad guys'. The introduction to the Memorandum begins by stating that:

Recent incidents, like the eviction in Amsterdam in May 2008, that was accompanied by violence and where 51 squatters were arrested and where all kinds of weapons were found, clarify the need for this proposition law (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6, page 1)

Such an introduction serves the purpose of categorizing squatting in terms of a violent threat, a claim that is repeated throughout the document. For instance, this threat of violence is scaled up further ahead, where it is being said that there is a small group of squatters showing an intensification in the use of violence and intimidation, describing squatters as people who live by the 'laws of the street'. That these claims run counter some of the most important conclusions of the study *Kraken anno 2009* (Squatting anno 2009) did not seem to impress the initiators. Placing squatting in such a threatening and violent context is meant to create an image of squatting leading to social decay, an image that symbolizes 'the further disorder and decay' that will surely follow when squatting is left unchecked (Ferrell 1996: 142). In his study of the urban underground of graffiti, Jeff Ferrell explains how this imagery characterizes graffiti 'as both causing and caused by the breakdown of social order, and taps into public anxieties about street crime, youth cultures, and other phenomena represented

²⁷ Initiator Brigitte van der Burg called the criminalization of squatting a historic moment and a personal victory, ending '30 years of tolerance towards squatting'. See http://brigittevanderburg.vvd.nl/kraakverbod_14950/

as part of this social collapse' (ibid.: 143). Ferrell goes on to explain how the moral entrepreneurs in fact use such imagery to their own advantage, attempting to create a nightmarish social vision of graffiti as a threat to society's basic values (ibid.: 143). Along similar lines squatting is constructed as a threat against the 'normal' consensual culture. Connecting squatting to violence and vigilantism without making any distinction or, squatting becomes directly connected to that type of behavior that threatens the social order.

What is important to realize, is that this imagery is not based upon factual evidence. The study I just mentioned shows that a comparison through time supports the claim that nowadays, squatting is accompanied by far less violence and that there are also less serious confrontations between squatters and the authorities (Gemert et al.: 2009). When the Senate asked the initiators to comment on these findings, CDA-representative Jan ten Hoopen responded by saying that:

'The VU-rapport clearly describes how providing services and services in return, form the lubrication oil of the squatters' movement ... What's more is that squatters make their own calculation, apart from what is democratically decided. Thus it can happen that squatters offer resistance against the coming of private housing meant to revitalize a neighborhood, because they adhere to a different world view than the responsible councilor or councilmen'²⁸

This acknowledgement of the different world view squatters have opposed to the world view of the responsible councilmen implies that the criminalization of squatting is indeed that 'explicit use of political power to impose the view of one specific symbolic-moral universe on other universes' (Ben-Yehuda 1990: 65). According to Becker, this activity or use of political power can be described as a *moral enterprise*, 'for what they are enterprising about is the creation of a new fragment of the moral constitution of society, its code of right and wrong' (Becker 1963: 145). As we have seen, this moral enterprise dates as far back as the early 1970's. The statement of the CDA-representative also reveals without a doubt the root of the conflict that I have discussed in the previous chapters; a conflicting view of the urban environment, de Certeau's concept-city versus the lived reality of those who live their daily lives in the official city (ibid. 1984). It furthermore supports the cultural criminological claim that 'both crime and the agencies of control' should be seen 'as cultural products - as *creative constructs*' (Hayward and Young, 2005: 259 emphasis added). The assumption that the criminalization of squatting was in fact preceded by a moral enterprise and is a cultural product that reveals the symbolic and stylistic strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs is something I will now continue to discuss.

CONSTRUCTING SQUATTING AS CRIME

For the VVD goes that you keep your hands of other people's property and that you can't take matters into your own hands! (Brigitte van der Burg)

The above statement made by VVD-representative and initiator Brigitte van der Burg on her website²⁹ suggests that the moral enterprise against squatting, when stripped down to its essence, is about control and property rights. Squatting is seen as an act of vigilantism and an attack on property rights. Such statements imply that the anti-squatting bill is as much shaped by the moral

²⁸ See <http://www.omgevingindepraktijk.nl> for the full quote as part of the online article 'Eerste Kamer over het kraakverbod' of May 19, 2010.

²⁹ See http://www.brigittevanderburg.vvd.nl/anti-kraakwet_8726/

entrepreneurs own 'ideological political conception of space' as it has been shaped 'by the economics of ownership and enterprise' (Lefebvre 1970: 78; Ferrell 1996: 110). From a similar perspective, Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda introduced the *interest-group model*, describing the moral entrepreneurs for whom the most important question is; who benefits if a certain act is recognized as a threat to society? (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009).

Indeed, the moral entrepreneurs are certainly not the only ones who stand to gain from the criminalization of squatting. Vacant property managers see a bright future ahead of them now that squatting is finally criminalized. As Bob de Vilder of Camelot vacant property management said in an interview with tabloid paper *De Pers*³⁰: 'The new law will force the local authorities to counter vacancy. This offers us a lot of chances', De Vilder has all the reason to be excited, since the moral entrepreneurs reserve a big role for vacant property management. VVD-initiator Brigitte van der Burg even decided to give workshops on the subject. On May 30th 2010 Van der Burg picked the suitable location of theme-park *het Land van Ooit* (Land of Ever) to inform local governments, businesses and housing corporations on the possibilities of vacant property management. On the 8th of June 2010 she was also present on PROVADA, an annual event where people from the real estate industry meet up and talk shop. Van der Burg spoke at the stand of Camelot about the consequences and opportunities of the anti-squatting bill. Camelot proudly announced the workshop on their internet-site³¹. Such public performances make it hard to deny the fact that the criminalization of squatting is both in the interests of the moral entrepreneurs as well as the sector of vacant property management. According to Garland, such 'preventative partnerships involve a whole new infrastructure of arrangements whereby state and non-state agencies co-ordinate their practices in order to prevent crime and enhance community safety through the reduction of opportunities and the extension of crime-consciousness' (ibid. 2001: 141). The fact that the moral entrepreneurs openly discuss the criminalization of squatting in terms of business opportunities and interests for other parties shows that the moral enterprise against squatting serves both political as well as material interests. Goode and Ben-Yehuda noticed in this respect that actions which advance the material interest do not necessarily lack an ideological or moral basis; according to them, ideological and material interests intertwine (ibid. 2009). With this in mind, the moral enterprise that aims to construct squatting as a crime seems to originate less from the nature of the act of squatting 'than from the enterprise of those who stand to benefit from its obliteration' (Ferrell 1996: 115). In the Explanatory Memorandum, this presumption is confirmed without a doubt;

A complete ban on squatting has the undisputed advantage of clarity: squatting is illicit under all circumstances, there is no space for a consideration between the interests of squatters on the one side and the owner on the other side (Explanatory Memorandum: 13)

In other words, there is no space for a consideration of the underlying social causes that lead to squatting, since these causes are often tied up with the interests of squatters. Such a bold statement echoes Becker's argument that it is indeed those 'in the upper levels of the social structure' that have the power to decide on important issues like this one (Becker 1963: 149). As Becker has argued, claims like the one made in the Explanatory Memorandum describe how the 'differences in the ability to make rules and apply them to other people are essentially power differentials' (ibid.: 17).

³⁰ De Pers, 'Antikrakers Profiteren van Kraakverbod', Juli 19th 2010.

³¹ See <http://nl.cameloteurope.com/493/4/brigitte-van-der-burg-%28vvd%29-op-provada-over-wet-kraken-en-leegstand-/brigitte-van-der-burg-%28vvd%29-op-provada-over-wet-kraken-en-leegstand-.html>

The power of the moral entrepreneurs makes use of instruments, both political and material/instrumental. According to Lefebvre, such symbolic and stylistic strategies essentially serve strategies of neo-liberalism and neo-dirigisme; neo-liberalism is aimed at maximizing the amount of private initiative (i.e. vacant property management) and neo-dirigisme emphasizes on planning and 'promotes the intervention of specialists and technocrats, and state capitalism' (ibid.: 78). Simply put, the anti squatting bill advances both the material interest of companies like vacant property management and the concept-vision the moral entrepreneurs have of the city; a rationalized and sanitized city where places stick to their functions in order to maximize control.

Of course, in order to convince the rest of society 'of the moral necessity of a new rule' (Becker 1963: 155), the moral entrepreneurs have to go beyond the simple explanation that squatting is merely disrespect of property rights. As Ferrell explains, following the lines of Cohen's moral panics theory, 'they must also construct a machinery of language and ideology – a machinery whose imagery and symbols will create "moral panic"' (Ferrell 1996: 117; on Cohen 1972). It is the use of this particular type of language, the language of the moral panic that I will now turn my attention to.

THE MORAL PANIC: ADVANCING AN IDEOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF SPACE

As I have explained on numerous occasions, it is my belief that the anti-squatting bill should be read as a cultural document that communicates the symbolic and stylistic strategies the moral entrepreneurs themselves deployed in their quest for criminalization of squatting (Ferrell and Sanders, 1995). A closer examination of the Explanatory Memorandum and important other claims made by the moral entrepreneurs can help us understand the 'cultural politics' and the different ways in which they have tried to further stigmatize and demonize squatters. Moral entrepreneurs often (intentionally) exaggerate a problem or that what they perceive as a problem in order to make it seem like there is an issue that concerns the entire nation, pointing to the 'decline of morality and standards' (McLaughlin and Muncie 2006: 251) and so present themselves as the guardians of the moral status quo. The language of the moral panic often serves to strengthen the moral enterprise and the code of right versus wrong (Becker 1963). I will now focus on the most important stereotypes the Explanatory Memorandum relies on in order to construct squatting as a threat against the 'normal' consensual culture, thus placing squatters outside of this culture. They come to represent the social outlaws, people who stand outside the society and therefore society can never be held accountable for the misdeeds that these people produce.

OTHERING AND THE UNDESERVING SQUATTER

According to the moral entrepreneurs, one of the biggest problems connected to squatting is the fact that squatters fight vacancy completely on their own terms. This is described as a form of vigilantism where squatters only seem to adhere to the 'code of the streets'. There is of course no point in denying that squatting can be seen as a form of self-help, an act of transgression where people are fully aware of the fact that they are crossing certain boundaries of culture and legality. I will describe this in length in the next chapter. However, from the perspective of the moral panic this description serves a far more important purpose. By categorizing the squatter as part of a group of outlaws that have no respect whatsoever for the democratic laws of our society, an outsider is created that

supposedly poses a serious 'threat to the well-being, basic values, and interests of the society, or sectors of the society' (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 2009: 35). Although the Netherlands has been living with 'its' squatters for over 40 years and both scientific research as well as organizations such as the VNG, the Council of Churches and the Council of State refute the argument that squatting poses a serious threat to the well-being of society, the moral entrepreneurs stick to their claim that squatting is an act that lies outside of the 'normal' consensual culture and continue to stigmatize squatting in a negative fashion. By doing so, they are denying the diversity that exists within the shared culture of squatting. Ferrell noticed something similar in his study of the graffiti scene in Denver and its subsequent criminalization, which he described as the 'intentional manipulation of perception and understanding' (Ferrell 1996: 133). This is of course the most important task of a moral enterprise that wishes to criminalize a certain type of behavior. As numerous scholars have already pointed out, in order for the moral enterprise to succeed the general public needs to be made aware of the seriousness of the threat (Becker 1963). What Ferrell noticed in his study of the urban underground of the Denver graffiti scene, was that the moral entrepreneurs that worked to construct graffiti as a crime used 'discomforting images, factual distortions, and symbolic references' to locate it 'in specific contexts of perception and understanding' (Ferrell 1996: 134). That the moral entrepreneurs who worked to construct squatting as a crime follow a similar logic is beautifully illustrated in *het Zwartboek Kraken* (black-book squatting). In this book VVD councilor Bas van 't Wout took it upon himself to educate the public on the dangers of squatting. In his own words, the black-book is a collection of 'media reports and stories of anonymous Amsterdammers', which hardly makes it qualify as factual evidence (Van 't Wout 2008: 5). Apart from the discomforting images that are meant to add strength to his argument (see plate 1), the VVD councilor introduces his book by using the VVD's favorite symbolic reference meant to locate squatting in the context of crime:

Imagine: you decide to use public transportation for a while. The price of gas is rising, you take the environment into account and you are fed up with traffic jams. You are also away on travels for a long time. All this time your car is standing in front the door, unused. When you return from your travels you notice that others have been using your car for quite some time. And how: Both on the inside and the outside your nice car has changed into a socially deteriorated ride, with dents, garbage and a broken muffler. The children's seat in the back is being used as an ashtray and worse: indefinable and smelling garbage fills the space where once your baby had a warm, soft place on the back seat (Van 't Wout 2008: 3).

Statements like this one serve as a symbolic reference meant to make the public aware of the dangers squatters pose to society. In a clever way a symbolic reference is made to one of the most important symbols of mobility and freedom; the car. This symbolic reference is meant to advance the perception that squatters are indeed filthy and parasitic, they are not part of that 'normal' consensual culture and are therefore perceived to be 'out of cultural bound' (Ferrell, 2004: 177). In a very effective way, such discomforting images and symbolic references transform 'property values into social values and property rights into human rights' (Ferrell 1996: 135) and suggest that squatters are on the wrong side of what is right.

Constructing squatters as outsiders creates distance, and much like the description of Van 't Wout it creates the notion that it is 'us' versus 'them'. In his book *Orientalism*, describing the way in which Western societies perceive the Arab world, Edward Said has described this process as the process of *Othering* where 'they' are perceived to be different from 'us' (Said 1979). An interesting parallel with the process of *Othering* can be found in the anti-squatting bill or rather, it *can't* be

found. I am referring to the fact that in the Explanatory Memorandum and in any other document, the moral entrepreneurs only focus their attention on the crimes and acts of deviance the squatters supposedly engage in. According to Young, in the process of Othering normal activities such as work are often intentionally 'rendered invisible' (ibid. 2007: 8). When we look closely at the Explanatory Memorandum, it becomes clear that the document simply does not recognize the fact that many squatters in work for a living or that they set up shop in the squats. According to Young, the reason why such practices are denied existence is because it would give the Other a human face, making them look more like 'us' (ibid.). On those unique occasions that the moral entrepreneurs do recognize a spark of creativity connected to the activity of squatting, it serves the purpose to make it unmistakably clear these activities run counter the more economically viable activities and are therefore to be seen as acts of deviance and defiance. A perfect example of this is another claim made by CDA-initiator Jan ten Hoopen in an interview with *Elsevier*. Focusing on those squats located in the city's business districts, he argued that 'squatter parties do not promote the image of the business districts'. That the image of the business district does not include parties in vacant business premises is of course also an illustration of how the authorities 'try to keep specific spaces to their specificity' (Papastergiadis 2002: 45).



Plate 1: Discomforting images. The first image shows the weapons that were found during a forced eviction in Amsterdam. The second image shows the 'stereotypical' squatter. Source: *Zwartboek Kraken* (Van 't Wout 2008).

But there is another important aspect to the process of Othering that can help us understand the moral indignation that squatting evokes, one that the moral entrepreneurs incorporated in the construction of squatting as a crime. I will once more quote Ferrell, Hayward and Young in this respect for it so clearly supports the argument I am about to make:

Chief of these are the sense of moral indignation where those cast as Others are castigated for cheating at the rules of reward and evading the sacrifices which the virtuous citizens perceive as the nature of responsibility and duty (e.g., living on the dole, having housing freely provided, being single dependent mothers etc). This is particularly exacerbated where such deviants are seen as directly causing problems for the virtuous (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008; 23).

For VVD-initiator Brigitte van der Burg, squatting can also be described as cheating at the rules of reward. On the internet-site of her political party www.vvd.nl she stated that 'it can't be allowed that one group in society takes the law into their own hands and jump the queue on the housing market'. This claim is explicitly repeated in the Explanatory Memorandum:

When the act of squatting concerns living space ... this cannot be reconciled with the housing allocation policy: squatting is a form of jumping the queue, while others are properly awaiting their turn (ibid.: 3).

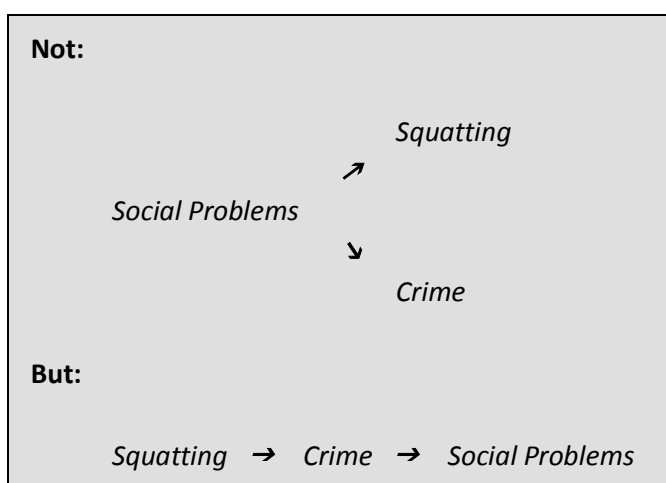
This statement further advances that feeling of 'us' versus 'them' and describes squatters as 'a group with defective norms who contrast with the normal majority' (Young 2007: 26). Such statements suggest that squatting is responsible for the inability of the decent hardworking citizenry to find a place to live and dismisses other possible 'culprits' such as inner-city gentrification and the fact that such 'urban redevelopment' usually results in the demolition of the more affordable housing inventory, a claim supported by the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS/CFV 2004). According to Young, statements like these are meant to 'explain deviance without indicting order' (ibid. 2007: 142). The explanation relies on a two-fold process Young describes in terms of *distancing* and *inversion*. Distancing serves to blame the deviant group for an act that is seen as unrelated to the 'normal functioning of the social order'. The second part of the process Young calls inversion and supports the claim that it is not social problems that give rise to deviant acts like squatting rather it is the deviant act which creates problems for society (ibid. 142).

Young recognizes a problem with this approach. He makes a distinction between the *atypical* and the *overtypical*; 'The overtypical is the presumption of the normal, it is the stereotype of the normal just as the atypical forms the stereotype of the deviant' (Young 2007: 113). Cast in terms of the act of squatting I am discussing here, we have a notion of normal living. The normal city-dweller does not jump the queue, instead pays rent or buys a house, respects private property, in short, does what is socially accepted and *expected* of him. This is the overtypical, a stereotype of the normal city dweller. The moral entrepreneurs use this stereotype as a mirror and critically reflect on the atypical, the abnormal city-dweller that jumps the queue, doesn't pay rent and has no respect for property rights. This person does not walk the socially accepted line and does not live up to the *expectations* of normal living. Young describes that such language is typical for the creation of a moral panic (ibid.). This is certainly true for the language that the moral entrepreneurs have used in order to strengthen the image of squatters as 'folk devils'. Supposedly, we are currently witnessing an increase in violence, organization and in general, problems caused by squatters. Squatting is presented as an ever growing threat to the well-being of our society. But what do the *facts* tell us?

First of all, when we look at the capital of squatting in the Netherlands, the city of Amsterdam, much has changed. The current population of squatters is estimated on a mere 20% of the population of squatters during the 1980's (Gemert et al. 2009). The city of Rotterdam claims that squatting hardly ever takes place in Rotterdam and states that squatting does not cause any serious problems (Renooy 2008). Although valid numbers are missing, it certainly disputes the claim of an increase in violence and organization. When we look deeper into the claim that squatting is connected to violence and other criminal offences, we see that in the period 2004 till the first half of 2007 the prosecutor's offices handled 85 cases concerning an offence of *article 429sexies Sr* (Dutch criminal law), and for 12 of those 85 cases an additional offence was registered. 10 out of the 85 cases concerned a criminal offence, where the suspects were charged with resisting arrest and inflicted severe injuries or were charged with destruction of private property. This comes down to an average of 24 cases each year, of which only 16 cases were about additional offences. Only an average of 3 cases each year concerns squatting connected to violence or destruction of property. I would like to add here that this is the data provided by the moral entrepreneurs themselves in the Explanatory Memorandum to the bill. These small numbers are complemented by an international comparison that shows, opposed to the Netherlands, that squatting in countries that criminalized

squatting is accompanied by far more violence and illegal immigration (see Van Gemert et al. 2009). Add to this the fact that a comparison through time proves that squatting today is less violent and leads to less confrontations with the authorities (ibid.) and we can see that the atypical does not pose a growing threat. In fact, it shows a steady decrease in prevalence. What is however changing, is the *overtypical*.

For those normal city-dwellers who wish to rent in for instance the city of Rotterdam, a waiting period ranging from two to eight years has become the rule rather than an exception. While people wait and wait, the amount of vacant residences in for instance the city of Rotterdam has increased from 21.087 in 2006 (7% of total) to 28.766 in 2008 (source: CBS 2006-2008). This means that 10% of the houses in Rotterdam were vacant in 2008. Also, in the last year (July 08 - July 2009) the rent for houses based on a low income increased with 2.5%. For student-housing, the rent has increased with 11.9%. This is the case in Rotterdam which shows an average increase in rent of 4.5% opposite to a nationwide increase of 5.8% (source: Kamernet 2008)³². Now I will be the first to admit that a number of explanations can put forward to nuance the image I just presented, and when we account for such nuances, these numbers will prove to be much lower. For instance, we would have to account for the difference between incidental and structural vacancy. And when the normal city dweller faces longer waiting lists and an increase of rent, it becomes logical to assume that social and economical insecurities grow as well. And when a house across the street then gets squatted and people take what you have been waiting for and for which you are paying a lot, frustration indeed finds a welcome Other to blame. The fact of the matter however is that while vacancy has gone up, waiting lists have lengthened and rent has increased, squatting in the Netherlands has declined steadily, and keeps on declining. The moral entrepreneurs know this too, but instead of recognizing (or admitting) the fact that long waiting-lists are likely to be caused by something else than a declining group of squatters, they simply create the image that squatters are responsible for making decent people wait this long.³³ In short, in the process of Othering used by the moral entrepreneurs, squatting is not causally related to social problems in society (i.e. no available or affordable housing), but squatting is described as the cause of social problems (i.e. they jump the queue and 'steal' other peoples opportunities). In a more schematized version, borrowed from Young (ibid.: 142), this suggests the following:



Tabel 2: the process of Othering

³² See <http://blog.kamernet.nl/content/binary/Woningmarktflash%20mei%2020081.pdf>

³³ I am indebted to Jock Young and his inspiring work *The Vertigo of Late Modernity*, offering me fresh insight which allowed me to describe the process of Othering of squatters in a more detailed fashion.

In terms of the language of the moral panic, the statement made in the Explanatory Memorandum plays on peoples own insecurities, who for instance also have been waiting for an affordable house or are struggling to make their rent. It can make squatters a ready target by offering them a demarcated homogeneous group, a group of 'undeserving poor' that is living the easy life for free (Young 2007). This feeling of resentment towards squatters as people who do not deserve what they have can lead to feelings of punitiveness, something that is often expressed on internet forums like <http://forum.fok.nl>:

It sounds so good to me, if you're a riot police officer, and such a filthy squatter is standing in front of your nose, and then you get the order to clear the place out, think it's so cool to see the fear in the eyes of that squatter 😊 Go, use your bat and away with these people! (27-10-2009)

Another reaction on an online article published on www.elsevier.nl argues for something similar:

Higher maximum penalties? Great idea, those anti-social rioting scumbags can't be dealt with hard enough. But where are the mohawks and dreadlocks going to live? Suggestion: ask for shelter with those leftist politicians who originate from the squat-world. They will most probably help you, right? (07-10-2007)

Much like the quote that I used in the introduction to this thesis, reactions like these reveal feelings of punitive anger that the moral entrepreneurs willingly use and further ignite in their enterprise against squatting. These one-sided descriptions or stereotypes undeniably help to strengthen the process of Othering and promotes such feelings of punitive anger. The 'democratically-sanctioned myth' that all squatters are criminals therefore allows us to 'act temporarily outside of our human instincts because we are dealing with those who are acting inhumane' (Pruijt 2004: 701; Young 2007: 35-36). In the end, the moral enterprise is meant to widen the gap; us versus them, normal versus abnormal, human versus inhuman; it all serves the purpose of labeling an act as a exogenous threat to the 'normal' consensual culture and in the end serves the process of Othering.

ORGANIZATION, VIOLENCE AND THE FOREIGN THREAT

Another symbolic reference to locate squatting 'in specific contexts of perception and understanding' is used in the Explanatory Memorandum (Ferrell 1996: 134), one that serves to strengthen the socially constructed image of the violent, organized squatter. The moral entrepreneurs speak of *squatters* (plural) versus *the owner* (singular). By doing so, they enhance the feeling of an organized threat against a defenseless owner. In fact, the Explanatory Memorandum mentions 'owner' a staggering 110 times. No reference is being made to the fact that this owner is more often than not a large housing corporation that does not have (as the term owner implies) just one house where they have to live themselves. In fact, the biggest housing corporation of Rotterdam *Woonstad* proudly advertises on its website that it has 50.000 tenement houses in stock³⁴, so it hardly qualifies as a defenseless owner. This 'symbolization process' then, as Goode and Ben-Yehuda call it (ibid. 2009: 27) serves to strengthen the squatters' status as 'folk devils' who prey on defenseless owners, the innocent victim in this conflict.

This image of the organized squatter is exacerbated in one very important way. In the Explanatory Memorandum, the moral entrepreneurs describe the behavior of squatters as

³⁴ See <http://www.woonstadrotterdam.nl>

anticipatory. They are referring to the fact that the vast majority of squatters wait till a building has been empty for more than 12 months since they only risk criminal prosecution if they squat before those 12 months. After those 12 months, the only threat they face is a civil procedure by which they can be forced to clear the premises. The moral entrepreneurs describe this as anticipatory behavior which leads squatters to quietly await their chance, observe their prey and then move in for the kill. For this reason, they describe a well-organized squatter with a rational approach to squatting:

Squatters actively keep count of how long property has been vacant, with the goal to squat after one year so that they are absolutely sure that a criminal procedure is out of the question...Squatters professionally adapt to this difference ... in the legal instruments that is available [e.g. criminal vs. civil law, TH].

This explanation stereotypes squatters in terms of well-organized, opportunity driven deviants that prey on innocent house owners, but rather than blaming these deviants for this the moral entrepreneurs suggest that a void in the law is responsible for the continued existence of this problem. Thus squatting, which is seen as the result of lacking restraints and available opportunities, can only be stopped by imposing stricter and more repressive laws, promoting forms of situational crime prevention such as vacant property management. This language effectively plays on late modern society's fear of victimization and invaders from the outside, and suggests that squatters are targeting our homes. Now according to Blakely and Snyder 'the home is of central psychological value, and it represents most families 'single largest investment, their most important source of financial security for the future' (ibid. 1997: 29-30). By suggesting that squatters jeopardize this (financial) security, the moral entrepreneurs obviously have struck a sensitive nerve. The symbolic language used by the moral entrepreneurs cleverly creates the image that squatting is an attack on the sanctity of home-life and in order to stop this, 'a lock on the door is not enough' (ibid.: 29-30); protection against squatters can only be guaranteed through the criminalization of the act.

Again, the argument that squatters will be deterred by criminalizing squatting and the threat of high prison sentences is based on the assumption that squatting is in fact a rational decision. This of course runs counter my belief that squatting should be read as a complex social phenomenon, an expressive act rather than an instrumental act. I will discuss in length in the next chapter.

Another reason for the moral entrepreneurs to criminalize squatting is what they call 'the shift to another kind of squatter' (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 8). According to the moral entrepreneurs, more and more squatters come to the Netherlands from Southern and Eastern European countries. VVD-initiator Brigitte van der Burg stated on her website that:

The Squatters' Movement has toughened in the last couple of years: there is an enormous influx in people from outside our borders, and there is an increase in crime, intimidation and violence in and around the squats.

This statement is interesting because it combines the statements about the threat of the organized, violent squatter poses to our culture with the threat that lurks beyond our borders. It magnifies the problem, promoting squatting from a national problem that takes place of a global scale. Their conclusion is that the Dutch policy concerning squatting attracts foreign squatters or 'so called anti-globalists, season workers and touristic squatters' (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 8). The fact that the Dutch policy works alluring on foreigners provides the moral entrepreneurs with another incentive to ban squatting. The moral entrepreneurs willingly use the media to make sure that the

public is fully aware of the connection between squatting and the foreign threat. CDA-representative Jan ten Hoopen argued in *Elsevier* that 'squatting causes problems and attracts foreigners'³⁵. His political colleague Pieter van Geel amps up the claim that squatters are in fact an organized and international threat and states on the website of his political party that:

The squat-scene is really not the well intentioned flower-power movement it was back in the seventies. It increasingly involves abrasive internationally organized clubs where there is little to romanticize³⁶.

In their report *Kraken in Nederland* (Squatting in the Netherlands) the Dutch Council of Churches finds it disturbing that claims about criminal, even terrorist activities are not avoided in order to demonize a certain population (Het Rapport van de Raad van Kerken 1978/2009). This critique seems justified since the moral entrepreneurs are unable to provide any factual evidence on the actual size of this threat, which can only lead to the conclusion that such stereotypical descriptions heavily depend on their own interpretation of the foreign threat, or indeed their own 'moral-symbolic universe' (Ben-Yehuda 1990: 65). Also, in a late modern global society where both the cultural and political borders are slowly eroding it is at the very least surprising that the moral entrepreneurs now wish to outlaw an act that has become part of Dutch culture in order to eliminate a foreign threat. Or is it? Described as the cultural criminology of the state, Ferrell, Hayward and Young describe something interesting; while both cultural and political borders are dissolving, while goods flow from one port to another, all in the name of the global economy, 'states and their bureaucracies are becoming more rigid and aggressive in their efforts at defining and maintaining sovereignty' (ibid. 2008: 78). In quoting Bryan Turner, they locate a possible source for this contradictory development:

There is ... a profound contradiction between the economic requirements of flexibility and fluidity and the state's objective of defending its territorial sovereignty. In particular, with the growth of the global war on terror after 9/11, states, rather than becoming more porous, have defended their borders with increasing determination (Turner 2007: 288; quoted in Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 76).

For the moral entrepreneurs, defending these borders is an absolute necessity since 'there are signals that squats in some cases function as safe havens for those who benefit from an anonymous shelter' (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 9). CDA-initiator Jan ten Hoopen already noticed this negative effect of our globalizing world in 2003 when he filed a motion stressing the need for the criminalization of the squatting of vacant business premises³⁷. Ten Hoopen clarified the motion in the media:

When I submitted the motion, I already visited many squatted business premises. Often large-scale organized raves were held where a lot of drugs were dealt. I noticed that there were many foreign squatters too. This is of course the result of the prohibition of squatting in surrounding countries, but this way you attract the wrong, criminal elements to the Netherlands³⁸

From this point of view, the moral entrepreneurs claim that the criminalization of squatting is necessary in order to prevent crime flowing into our society. To support this argument, international

³⁵ Elsevier February 23, 2006

³⁶ See <http://tweedekamer.blog.nl/vrom/2008/01/29/cda-er-van-geel-fel-tegen-kraken>

³⁷ Tweede Kamer 03/04, 29 200 XIII, nr. 6

³⁸ See <http://www.interveste.nl/nieuws/persberichten/de-nieuwe-krakers>

comparisons are made which suggest that we ourselves are in fact an anomaly since we are the only country that allows squatting to exist unpunished. As Ten Hoopen argued in the same article of Elsevier (February 23 2006), 'in Germany and Belgium squatting is also illegal'. What is however ignored in this comparison is that in countries where squatting is in fact criminalized, squatting is linked to much more violence and illegality (Gemert et al. 2009). And let me just add one more thing, doesn't it seem a bit unlikely that Mr. Ten Hoopen actually visited a squat-rave?

Similar to the argument raised by the moral entrepreneurs that squatters jump the queue and get in front of decent people who are waiting their turn to get a house, the stereotypical description of 'the foreign squatter' also explains the decision to squat in the Netherlands in terms of costs and benefits. Once again the possibility of underlying social causes that can lead to squatting are completely disregarded. This is once more described by Jock Young in his explanation of the process of Othering. As explained, in this process not the possible existence of social problems within society leads to the act of squatting, but rather the foreign squatter is labeled as the cause of the problem or causing problems. According to Young, this leads to a process of Othering similar to the one I already discussed above, only this time the line followed can be summarized along the following lines:

Immigrants → squatting → crime → social problem

Tabel 3: the process of Othering the immigrant

The foreign Other is often blamed for bringing crime into our society. If crime is to be kept outside of our society, squatting must be criminalized so that the foreign threat will think twice before crossing the border. If they still dare to cross the border, then we can simply arrest foreign squatters and keep them detained in order to establish their identity. But this is only possible if squatting is criminalized, since it is not allowed to detain people for a simple offence. This will also allow the authorities to investigate any prior criminal offences committed by the foreign squatter and depending on the outcome, they can be prosecuted and incarcerated, or indeed be sent back. But since the act of squatting will become a crime, these people will always be involved in a criminal offence, so any inquiry into their motivation to squat will be rendered obsolete. In similar respect, Turner describes a situation that he calls 'a parallel immobility regime'; on the one hand globalization leads to an ever increasing flow of services and goods, but on the other hand this leads to a regime of immobility where the authorities are 'exercising surveillance and control over migrants, refugees and other aliens' (ibid. 2007: 289). In the end, the rhetoric that serves to stereotype squatters as an organized, violent international threat can be described as an attempt 'to impose hard lines on a late modern city of blurred demarcation and crossovers' (Young 2007: 18). The moral enterprise of the criminalization of squatting seems to be an exercise that Turner describes as 'spatial closure' (Turner 2007: 290). This is of course antithetical to an ever globalizing world. On the other hand, we can't be too ready to dismiss that cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam also have a big stake in the cultural industry attracting tourism, so from this point a view a clean and sanitized city can also work attract more outsiders with a recreational purpose, based on consumption. However, this 'spatial closure' does seem to apply to those who are seen as a burden and do not contribute in a way the market society would like them to. As Sharon Zukin has argued, creating such a 'consumer's playground' is dangerous, since it can exclude the original users of space that cannot fulfill the function of consuming, which are often the most marginalized groups within a given population (Zukin 1995: 19).

HEALING SICK SPACES

Much like I discussed in the theoretical framework, the language of the moral panic often relies on medical terminology or epidemiological language in order to communicate the seriousness of a given threat (Young 2007). According to Young, this serves the purpose of phrasing decisions or actions in 'the language of risk, vulnerability and pathology' (Young 2007: 113). In the Explanatory Memorandum, the moral entrepreneurs often describe squatting in terms of pathology, as an act that infects the otherwise healthy buildings of our city. In their opinion, more often than not squatted property 'is severely damaged and neglected' because squatters are not willing to invest in the maintenance of the squatted property (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 6). Furthermore, the moral entrepreneurs argue that squats are often boarded up and defaced with spray paint. According to them, this does not only create a problem for the neglected property, but also has a negative effect on the direct neighborhood. The quality and the value of these surrounding residencies decreases, which leads to many negative consequences for the pleasure of living and the livability in the neighborhood (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 10). By this process, the moral entrepreneurs give their own highly personalized reading of the squat, which at the very least reveals what Jeff Ferrell recognizes to be '*the aesthetics of authority*' (Ferrell 1996: 178). It is indeed an aesthetic reading of the urban environment. What is interesting about this language of pathology is that the moral entrepreneurs almost never point the finger directly to the squatters as the culprit. Instead, they speak of squatters who live in squatted buildings that are often boarded up, defaced by spray-paint and neglected in total. I would argue that the moral entrepreneurs themselves are also aware of the fact that more often than not the owners themselves board up the doors and windows in order to prevent squatting (plate 2). Vacant property management is known to board up doors and windows of vacant property with steel plates. Also, the fact that most squats have been empty for more than a year before they were squatted is in essence a form of neglect and makes it of course plausible that these buildings were already in a state of decay *before* they were squatted. The moral entrepreneurs are not denying this, but for reasons of convenience they also do not mention this. Instead, they create a stigmatized aura around the building and leave it up to the public to make their own connections. As a consequence, this stigma of these run-down and filthy looking buildings becomes projected on the squatters that live there. They indeed are imagined to be 'filthy, parasitic, out of cultural bounds' (Ferrell, 2004: 177). Now I am of course not saying that there aren't squatters who trash houses and cause nuisance for the neighborhood. I am however saying that there are multiple causes for the state of decay squats are often in and that the moral entrepreneurs conveniently overlook this fact. This creates the problem of spurious causality, where other causes of decay are overlooked or denied.

Another interesting remark was made by VVD-representative Brigitte van der Burg when she visited the city Rotterdam. Although the local authorities already stated that squatting was not a problem in and for the city of Rotterdam and saw no point in criminalizing squatting (Renooy 2008), Van der Burg decided, as moral entrepreneurs often tend to do, that Rotterdam *did* in fact had a problem when she witnessed with her own eyes how squatting is also infecting the healthy urban environment of Rotterdam. During a tour through Rotterdam-North and Delfshaven, a local VVD-politician showed Van der Burg dozens of squats and empty property.



Plate 2: Palestinastraat in Rotterdam, an entire street boarded in order to prevent squatting. These houses are scheduled to be demolished later this year.

Van der Burg commented by saying that it was ‘sad to see how beautiful buildings are in complete neglect, my initiative law can mean a lot for Rotterdam’³⁹. Besides the fact that Rotterdam-North and Delfshaven are the few pre-war areas that were not bombed during World War II and therefore contain some of Rotterdam’s oldest houses, it once again creates an image that squatters cause neglect and even vacancy. But this statement also reveals again ‘*the aesthetics of authority*’ (Ferrell 1996: 178). It perfectly describes a personalized reading of the urban environment and by that logic sees squats ‘as offensive to the character and aesthetics of the city’ (Edensor 2002; quoted in Hudson and Shaw 2010: 4).

According to Henri Lefebvre such an aesthetic view of the city leads to nihilism and he provides us with a ingenious description of something that is also valuable in understanding the stereotypes connected to squatting; ‘the great power of the façade’ (ibid 1991: 99). Lefebvre explains that the façade only allows a small part to be visible. These are the acts that happen in front of the façade. The other acts, Lefebvre explains, ‘occur behind the façade’ and are therefore condemned to obscenity (ibid. 99). For squatting, it is behind the façade where the squatter lives out his or her life, outside the visual control of the authorities. And when the visible façade is in fact that building in state of decay, it evokes an uncomfortable feeling and an image similar to the image of the haunted mansion where indeed only ‘folk devils’ can live. The moral entrepreneurs in turn use epidemiological language in order to create a moral panic over the threat to the health of the urban environment squatting is said to pose. According to Lefebvre, this serves a clear purpose:

³⁹ See <http://pascallansink.wordpress.com/tag/brigitte-van-der-burg/>

This kind of phraseology makes it easier for people who use it ... to suggest the idea that they are, in effect, 'doctors of space'. This is to promote the spread of some particularly mystifying notions, and especially the idea that the modern city is a product not of the capitalist or neo-capitalist system but rather of some putative 'sickness' of society. Such formulations serve to divert attention from the criticism of space and to replace critical analysis by schemata that are at once not very rational and very reactionary (Lefebvre 1991: 99).

Lefebvre's argument shows how the moral entrepreneurs try to suggest that the problem society is facing is not caused by deeper lying social problems that connect to a capitalist system, rather the problem is caused by a group with defective norms that run counter the 'normal' consensual culture. It is them who are to be held accountable for the infection of the health of the urban environment. In order to prevent the threat from spreading, these 'doctors of space' need to reestablish control over these urban wastelands and heal them by sanitizing them from their ambiguity so they will once again do exactly as they are told. From this point of view, the Explanatory Memorandum and other important documents can indeed be described as cultural documents that communicate the moral entrepreneurs reading of squats; they represent the cities criminogenic spaces, spaces that promote crime and criminal behavior. Such spaces need to be sanitized and controlled. The criminalization of squatting essentially communicates the vision the moral entrepreneurs have of the city; it is the codification of Michel de Certeau's concept city (De Certeau 1984).

What makes this vision so disturbing is that it, just as Lefebvre argues, diverts the attention away from important social problems and replaces it with the idea that all our problems are caused by a rational decision-making process that can be prevented with more reactionary laws. It completely denies the expressive character behind much of 'our' crime. Indeed, 'not very rational' at all (Lefebvre 1991: 99). However, the symbolic and stylistic strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs to advance their own perception of the urban environment seem to have struck a sensitive nerve. I would like to describe how this process might work on the mind of the city-dweller by using a cultural criminological tool called *true fiction*. True fiction is 'a compilation of everyday situations and events extant in the contemporary world ... fictionalized into a single, integrated narrative' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 89). For this, I brought together statements made on different forums against squatting and blended it into a fictionalized narrative in order to describe how the language of the moral panic is meant to work out on society.

TRUE FICTION

So imagine you are one of those people who now have to deal with this normal situation, who now have to hear that it is in fact normal to wait for five or more years while 10% of the houses in the city stand vacant. Imagine that you finally get a room. You share the kitchen and the shower with a couple of other students. The house stands in a street with a couple of other empty houses, but who cares; you finally have a room. You pay close to 400 euro's each month, which is tight so you will have to find a job and maybe take a maximum student loan. When you come home from school later that week, you see that the one of the empty houses on the opposite of the street is not empty anymore. One of your housemates tells you the house has been squatted and three guys now live there and have the entire house for themselves. You think it's a bit unfair that you had to wait for all those years and squatters just take what they want, live big and pay almost nothing. Still, you shrug your shoulders, but then some politicians start yelling that it is in fact those pesky squatters that jump the queue, the same queue you have been waiting in for all those years. They are like a disease,

spreading across the country, infesting buildings and ruining your chances of a home for yourself. 'They, my friend, are not like us' the politicians tell you. 'They are against us'. First they made you wait longer in that damn line and now they can live large and for free while you are working yourself deeper in depths in order to pay for your life in the city. And because they live across the street you are reminded of this on a daily basis. But not to worry, the politician assures you. It is all their fault, they are not like us, with their 'short term hedonistic, lacking in restraint, unwillingness to forgo present pleasures, aggressiveness and willingness to use violence to achieve desired goals' (Young 2007: 24). And you do feel reassured; you feel the feelings of insecurity and economic injustice fade away. After all, the politicians promised to do everything they can to stop these evil-doers and thereby heal the injuries that they have inflicted on our 'normal' society. It will of course take some surgical intervention, the housing market will have to be thoroughly rearranged and 'responsible' parties will have to take their responsibility. But, at least society will be cured from that squatters-disease. Criminalization will make sure of that, the moral entrepreneurs assure us, everyone will get back their lives and the home will be safe once more. They are indeed, 'the doctors of space' (Lefebvre 1991: 99).

TO SQUAT OR TO ANTI-SQUAT

In the Explanatory Memorandum, the moral entrepreneurs put forward the claim that squatters take the law into their own hands, something that they believe to be unacceptable in a democratic State and can be described as a form of vigilantism and disrespect for property rights. They claim that the problem of vacancy and the allocation of housing are public tasks and too important to be left to the arbitrariness of squatters. The moral entrepreneurs therefore plead for a stricter policy on vacancy, where these 'public' tasks are to be taken up by the combined effort of 'the owner, the urban planner, vacant property management, council authorities, the police and the public prosecutor' (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 3).

This wish for centralized control echoes De Certeau's Concept-city; the moral entrepreneurs explicitly plead for control to be in 'the hands of the decision makers' (Lefebvre 1970: 188). This wish for spatial control, followed by excessive reactions against actions that undermine this control is according Nikos Papastergiadis 'symptomatic of fear for contamination and ambiguity' (ibid. 2002: 48). By this Papastergiadis means that the state and council authorities often try to keep the meaning of spaces fixed to their original function; a bench is for sitting, a house is for living etcetera (ibid.). Squatting is obviously an act full of ambiguity and one hard to control. From this point of view it is understandable why squatting became the target of a moral enterprise; it is the complete opposite of a fixed homogeneous space and defies centralized spatial control. Based on this assumption I would now like to focus my attention towards another form of control, one the moral entrepreneurs see as a good way to manage empty property and protect it from the threat of squatting; this is the 'commodified control' offered by vacant property management, more commonly known as the anti-squat bureau (Garland 2001).

Vacant property management is a market-based solution to vacant property and the threat of decay and, much like the term 'anti-squat' implies, offers protection against squatters. Garland describes such initiatives as non-state initiative that creates a form of private control that originates from private interests and market forces of supply and demand (ibid. 2001). Vacant property management therefore functions as the middle man; not having any property of their own, they

present themselves to the owners of vacant property and offer to protect their investment against decay or the threat of squatters by placing so called anti-squatters in the empty building. In return, the owner pays them for this service (but not always) while vacant property managers also charge the anti-squatters a certain amount of money, which is often lower than renting a house via the official channels. One can imagine that the business of vacant property management is extremely lucrative; and it is. In the Netherlands, between the 25 and 30 anti-squat bureaus are active together good for a combined profit of 960 million euro each year⁴⁰. One of the biggest vacant property managers *Camelot Europe*, also active outside the Netherlands, saw its 2009 turnover increase with 40%; a staggering profit of 12 million euro⁴¹. Furthermore, it is estimated that vacant property management currently houses close to 50.000 people. Now before we continue, I would like to describe the success-formula of this lucrative business and explain why I believe anti-squatting relies on what cultural criminology calls the commodification of resistance (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008), or as Garland describes it, commodified control (Garland 2001).

My assumption is as followed; for many young people, the idea of squatting seems exciting because of its transgressive and adventurous nature. With the concept of anti-squatting, vacant property management is able to successfully reconstitute the transgressive act of squatting into a commodity and basically sells anti-squatters 'the illusion of freedom and diversity' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 19). Vacant property management in fact advertises anti-squatting following this logic; Camelot describes living as an anti-squatter as adventurous living⁴²:

Would you like to live in adventurous places that are otherwise inaccessible to you? For example in a school, monastery or office building? Please look through our website and learn how you can become eligible for placement in one of the available locations.

Ferrell, Hayward and Young ascribe this process to one of late modernity's defining traits, the consumer culture and 'the vast potential of capitalism to co-opt illicit resistance into the very system it is meant to oppose, and so to transform experiential opposition into commodified acquiescence' (ibid. 2008: 18). This relates to Zygmunt Bauman's assumption that the culture of consumption is transforming the city, in which consumption in fact functions as a form of spatial control that integrates and controls those who indeed consume according to plan and excludes those who for whatever reason do not (Bauman 1987). This description of anti-squatting by Camelot relies on similar tactics of 'seducing' possible anti-squatters (ibid.).

This brings us to the most important reading of anti-squatting and why I believe anti-squatting carries favor with the moral entrepreneurs; the concept of anti-squatting is a control mechanism. This assumption leads us to the dark side of this lucrative business. Documentary maker Abel Heijkamp decided to dig deeper into this dark side of the anti-squat and presented the shocking results in a documentary called *Leegstand zonder Zorgen*⁴³ (Carefree Vacant Property) of which I will shortly discuss the most important findings. Anti-squats are known for a strict set of rules that the anti-squatters need to obey by if they wish to continue living there. Anti-squatters are seen as an extension of the property manager; they *manage* a vacant building and are not seen as tenants. It is meant as a temporary form of living, without a rental contract and therefore also without any

⁴⁰ See <http://www.bndestem.nl/regio/breda/5937203/Antikraak-bedrijven-voor-rechter.ece>

⁴¹ See <http://nl.cameloteurope.com/432/4/resultaat-camelot-2009/omzet-stijgt-met-40-procent-in-europa.html>

⁴² See <http://nl.cameloteurope.com/25/1/wonen-via-camelot/avontuurlijk-antikraak-wonen-via-camelot.html>

⁴³ See <http://www.leegstandzonderzorgen.nl/>. With English subtitles: <http://vimeo.com/9649993>

security of tenure. The maximum term of notice is just two weeks (just a two week notice if a person has to leave) and this decision does not have to be clarified. Take for instance Anti-Kraak BV, one of the biggest vacant property managers active in Rotterdam. They uploaded their rules of engagement in bold letters on their site, of course shuffled under by the promise of adventure. I will list a few of their rules⁴⁴;

- *Always make sure that the object on loan and any surrounding terrain is cleaned up, tidy and hygienic. When multiple Anti-Squat residents are staying in the building, you create a cleaning schedule together.*
- *Garbage attracts vermin and should therefore be offered as often as possible to the waste disposal. (For the collection days please check with the municipalities). Empty bottles and / or other loose domestic waste should be disposed off immediately.*
- *Visits may take place in the object. We always try to communicate this to our best abilities. But please make sure that the object is always well kept, tidy and hygienic and private affairs are stowed away.*
- *Every two weeks the object will be inspected by Anti-Kraak BV. Always ensure that the object is cleaned up and has a tidy appearance. Anti-Kraak BV only gives one warning if the property does not look as it should. A second warning means termination of the loan agreement.*
- *Pets are NOT allowed. If pets are found the loan agreement will be terminated immediately.*
- *Bikes are to be placed outside. Not inside or stalled against the property.*
- *Creating noise or nuisance in any form is unacceptable. Fellow residents and neighbors should not be bothered by you as an Anti-Kraak occupant.*
- *You are not allowed to throw parties or to have more than five people at the same time in the object that is loaned to you. Giving parties is strictly prohibited and constitutes an immediate dissolution of the loan agreement.*
- *When you are away for a longer period than three days, you will inform Anti-Kraak BV in advance.*

You might as well have stayed with your parents. Now of course, I am extremely tempted to critically attack these rules from that are obviously inspired by George Orwell's *1984*, but I will restrain myself and stick to a more criminological reading. Although, these rules and the constant 'threat' of the owner barging in do bare a striking resemblance to Orwell's telescreens which offered a 24 hour possibility of being looked at, of being controlled by Big Brother.

In their study into the social control of Disney World, Shearing and Stenning argue that in order for Disney World to assure its daily operations, it uses social control as a power tool. In short, detecting and immediately rectifying any form of deviant behavior of the visitors is vital to the daily operations of the theme-park. Here, social control is aimed at *preventing* chaos (ibid. 1997). Vacant property management relies on similar forms of social control; in order to prevent chaos and the loss of control, rules are created to ensure control and the continuation of these daily operations. By doing so, it creates a homogeneous community through authoritarian control and management (Fjellman 1992). Why homogeneous? Well, in order to live as an anti-squatter you have to be introduced by someone who already lives anti-squat. This person had to vouch for you, guarantee the vacant property manager that you are in fact 'good people'. Michel Foucault describes such social control measures as power tools. According to Foucault, rules much like the anti-squat

⁴⁴ For the full regulation see http://www.anti-kraak.nl/files/Reglementenkaart_Antikraak_ZS.pdf

regulations are meant to make people cooperative and to make them 'the source of their own control' (Foucault 1977: 170). As Foucault explains, it is a mechanism of power that tries to insert control in the bodies of its wayward subjects:

In thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary forms of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and inserts itself into their actions of attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday lives (Foucault 1980: 39).

The internet site www.tijdelijk-beroofd.nl (temporarily robbed) is filled with anonymous complaints made by displeased anti-squatters and many of them support Foucault's explanation of power. For instance, one of them writes:

I'm afraid to file a complaint. I am afraid that if they don't like it they will just throw me out of my house. Afraid, that if I ... complain to much the same thing will happen to me (Anonymous – February 1, 2010).

This brings us back to Hayward's notion of the 'hybrid form of criminalization / social control'. The rules anti-squatters have to live by sound extremely punitive in essence, but at the same time they mark a move towards the 'conditioning and 'routinisation' of individual action' (Hayward 2004: 167). From this point of view it becomes clear why the moral entrepreneurs advocate anti-squatting, because it helps them to create that controlled and functional urban environment through the inclusion of space (Hayward 2004). In short, vacant property management connects to the 'ideologically justified political conception of space' (Lefebvre 2003: 78), the rationalized and sanitized view of the concept city.

The reason why I brought Disney World into the mix, is because of the fact that its founder Walt Disney sincerely believed that corporate control would ultimately solve the problems of our modern day society, or as he called them, 'the problems of the cities' (Fjellman 1992). CDA-representative Jan ten Hoopen proves to have a similar vision. When critical questions were asked in Chamber of Representatives following Abel Heijkamp's documentary, Ten Hoopen did not see any cause for the state to intervene and believed that vacant property managers have to address the problem themselves:

They don't need the government for that. Let the good companies from the market sit down together and let them come to an agreement. The rest of the branch can then be tested according to the reached agreements.

In fact, the moral entrepreneurs predict a bright future for vacant property management as partners in future urban and social planning of cities:

Vacant property management has a very useful role in solving incidental vacancy. The use of vacant property management has many positive effects; impoverishment of buildings is countered, burglary and damage are quickly reported and addressed, some groups are able to find cheap housing and finally, **it prevents squatting**. All these advantages are still applicable after the initiative bill comes into force (Explanatory Memorandum: 40; emphasis added).

In other words, vacant property management *prevents* complexity; vacant property does not represent a social space, rather it represents a criminogenic space. It is a space that will quite possibly produce crime if it is left uncontrolled, so the only logical answer is to reestablish control

over these spaces. As Garland argues, this policy only focuses on reducing available opportunities, increasing both situational and social control and conditioning the everyday routines of the users. The welfare and needs of marginalized social groups however seem to be subordinated and of less importance (ibid. 2001).

I hope that I have been able to reveal to you the most important similarities between the underlying rationale of both the anti-squat and the moral enterprise against squatting. Both are linked to the culture of control and the strategies of crime prevention and control that seem to be integrated within late modernity. As cultural criminologists have argued, 'it reduces crime and crime control to a managerial problem, reducing criminality itself to a set of exogenous factors' thereby forfeiting 'any understanding of internal psychic-emotive processes, any analysis of structural inequalities and injustice' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 67). This is my critique on the overly rational sanitized vision of the city, seen by the moral entrepreneurs as a concept that they can structure so that it fits their own political and economical agenda (de Certeau 1984). It denies the expressive and transgressive nature of squatting, the underlying social causes that can lead to squatting and stereotypes and demonizes all people who squat into a single homogenized group of evil-doers. Such an approach deserves to be criticized, and it deserves to be mirrored and nuanced by an exploration of at least a part of the reality. That reality, the lived experience and daily lives of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam, is something I will focus my attention on in the following chapter.

CONCLUSION

That the political parties behind the moral entrepreneurs also took the enterprise aimed at the criminalization of squatting serious and very personal, proves the party that was organized by the JOVD, the youth division of the VVD. When the anti-squatting bill was passed by the Chamber of Representatives, JOVD organized a party to celebrate their victory over the squatters. JOVD-chairman Jeroen Diepemaat stated in the tabloid paper *Spits* that from a moral standpoint, he always saw squatting as theft and that he was happy that politics finally recognized this as well⁴⁵. He furthermore argued that the party, kicked-off by VVD-initiator Brigitte van der Burg, was also meant as a provocation towards squatters. This moral standpoint of Diepemaat once again shows that 'criminalization is the explicit use of political power to impose the view of one specific symbolic-moral universe on other universes' (Ben-Yehuda 1990: 65). It furthermore strengthens my own assumption that the criminalization of squatting is not the result of correct legal proceedings supported by factual evidence, but that this is more likely to be the result of a mediated campaign set out to construct 'perceptions of guilt and criminal identity' and project them on *all* squatters alike; a looping process of 'cultural criminalization' (Ferrell 1998; Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 132).

Central to this chapter was an ethnographic content analysis of the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and other important documents and statements made by the moral entrepreneurs who initiated the bill. The assumption was that these documents are in fact cultural documents that communicate meaning. In order to expose this cultural meaning, a 'reading-between-the-lines' was important to describe the symbolic and stylistic strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs who also

⁴⁵ See http://www.spitsnieuws.nl/archives/binnenland/2009/10/vvdjongeren_feesten_na_kraakve.html

aim to advance their own politically ideological perception of space. Such an analysis is important to cultural criminology's claim that all human behavior is meaningful human behaviour.

Of course not all documents were analyzed. A selection had to be made and it is therefore not useful to see this analysis as an analysis that covers all. It serves merely to offer the reader that fresh insight to get a more nuanced understanding of the criminalization-process. I described how the authorities have always tried to contain or outlaw the act of squatting, that they have been tightening the so-called net of social control since squatting first surfaced in the Netherlands. Furthermore I described how the current criminalization of squatting can be interpreted as a moral enterprise where the initiators of the bill, the moral entrepreneurs, see themselves as the guardians of the moral status quo and see squatting as an act that under no circumstances should be accepted; it is criminal behaviour for them. Their collaboration with the private sector suggests that the anti squatting bill both advances the material interest of companies like vacant property management and also their own rationalized and sanitized concept-vision of the city.

In order to make the rest of society aware of this threat, moral entrepreneurs evoke the language of the moral panic. I have described how the moral entrepreneurs describe squatting in terms of undeserving, a (criminal) organization, a foreign threat and a threat to the health of the urban environment, and use for this the process of Othering to intentionally or unintentionally create the image of squatters as the *cause* of social problems instead of a *result* of social problems that exist within the late modern society. I have used true fiction in an attempt to clarify this process of Othering. Lastly, I have described how the underlying rationale of vacant property management relates to the underlying rationale of the anti-squatting bill and tried to describe why the problems connected to anti-squatting are not seen as a problem by the moral entrepreneurs, but rather as a solution that can help to establish social and spatial control over those spaces that do not do as they are told.

All of this serves the intention of this study; a critical reflection on the recent criminalization of squatting. It furthermore reveals a part of the duality of the city, the view of the moral entrepreneurs who see a concept city, rationalized and sanitized from its unwanted features (de Certeau 1984). It describes an apparent inability to look beyond notions of rational choice and crime as an instrumental act to see other, deeper lying social causes that can lead to deviant or transgressive behaviour. In the next chapter, I will describe amongst others these deeper lying social causes and will try to reveal the expressive nature of squatting; the expressive nature that the moral entrepreneurs willingly or unwillingly refuse to accept that it exists. This critical reflection is of the utmost importance, because when moral entrepreneurs suggest that they are the ones able to rid society of its social illnesses, then we always must ask ourselves the question; 'is the doctor we are dealing with really a good one?'⁴⁶ (Miłosz, 2001: 144).

⁴⁶ Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*. Originally written in 1953 (Translated into English by Jane Zylonko in 2001), Polish writer and academic Miłosz wrote his non-fictional work in Paris after escaping the Communist regime in Poland, describing the danger of tyrannical regimes who achieve power over humans not only through terror, but also through ideas. It is a work that stands against the totalitarianism of the State and asks questions that are even relevant today, and in my personal opinion also to the field of Criminology (Miłosz, 2001).

4

THE CULTURAL MEANING AND SYMBOLISM OF THE SQUAT

INTRODUCTION

By regarding the extremes as outside of our society we put them outside of our consciousness and outside of our thinking. Out of sight, out of mind. We need to be able to make sense of marginalized groups not make them invisible. We need a criminology that knows they're there and has the ability to 'read' them, indeed we need to know and want to know why they are marginalized and criminalized in the first place and how the process works (Presdee 2000: 11).

The goal of this chapter seems simple enough; its aim is to break down the stereotypical barricade thrown up by the anti-squatting bill, offering a more nuanced ethnographic account of the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam. As I have already explained, this study does not claim to represent all individuals that squat in Rotterdam, or anywhere else in the country for that matter. It is an ethnographic account of the lived experiences and daily realities of *this* research population. Squatting is and will always be an act undertaken by an extremely diverse, heterogeneous group of individuals. This makes it even harder to accept the fact that our democratically elected representatives created a law that completely denies that diversity. The stereotypical description of squatting, labeling all squatters as urban outlaws or property thieves, suggests that we are dealing with a group that stands outside of our society. In short, the moral entrepreneurs deny the fact that these individuals are *part* of our society and often make an important and necessary contribution to the cultural diversity of the city. This chapter is an attempt to look beyond the label 'squatter' and meet the individuals behind the label. My assumption is that squatters do not stand outside of our society, but that they are in fact active participants. In this chapter, participation is understood 'as a critical platform of engagement', or as 'conflictual participation' by which individuals can express their perception of the urban environment (Miessen 2007: 2). Therefore, it is my belief that this chapter, admittedly a subjective insight into the lived lives and experiences of individuals who squat buildings in Rotterdam, can effectively serve as that broken mirror in which to reflect on and critique the criminalization process and its consequences (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). The key word to this chapter is therefore not sympathy, rather it is *empathy*. By empathy I mean that during the research I tried to mentally, emotionally and experientially enter the world of the individuals I wished to understand (Goode 1974). Empathy allows us to understand the world through *their* eyes. Hirschi claimed that this will inevitably blind the researcher 'to the less attractive features of deviance' (Hirschi 1973; quoted in Goode 1974: 574). Goode counters this argument by saying that 'to empathize is to see the world from a first-hand perspective, to acquire an insider's view' (Goode 1974: 574), and it is the insider's view that will allow for an honest description. Furthermore, the fact that it is life seen through their eyes ensures a bottom-up description; it is the lived experience of squatters, the perspective from the ground level. And again, this perspective from the ground level will serve to contrast the top-down approach of the moral entrepreneurs, and therefore fits well Michel de Certeau's dual analysis of the urban space; the concept-city versus the official-city (De Certeau 1984) and the cultural criminology of the city (Ferrell et al. 2004).

But let's clear the urban stage for the real actors in this debate; the squatters. This chapter combines an ethnographic account with the observations that were made over the last few months. The purpose is to describe the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam in all its diversity and ambiguity. I will do this by describing some of the most important elements of the shared culture of squatting. It is my belief that these elements can help us to critically reflect on some of the claims made by the moral entrepreneurs as discussed in the previous chapter. This is an account meant to describe the personal motivations to squat, why they the act of squatting is continued, the emotions

and feelings of excitement that are inherently tied up with squatting, and how squatters see society around them *and* their fellow squatters. It is about the way in which the urban experience can create 'a sense of injustice and of ontological insecurity' (Hayward and Young 2005: 8). It is about the way in which squatters express themselves and how they resolve what Hayward and Young have described as 'a *crisis of being*' (ibid. 8). My focus will therefore be on the cultural significance and symbolism that the squat has come to represent for those who live there. The gathered data will be placed against some of the important theoretical notions that I have discussed in chapter 1 on the theoretical framework.

GENERAL MOTIVES FOR SQUATTING

To get up each morning with the resolve to be happy ... is to set our own conditions to the events of each day.

To do this is to condition circumstances instead of being conditioned by them

(Ralph Waldo Trine, *'The Winning of the Best'*)

To squat or not to squat, when does it become a question? The decision to transgress the often rigid cultural boundaries and break open the door of a vacant building with a crowbar implies that somewhere along the line the transgressor made a choice. It is my belief that understanding this choice heavily depends on the definition one gives to *culture*. Now the moral indignation over the act of squatting expressed by the moral entrepreneurs that was later translated in a codified wish for criminalization points to a rigid definition of culture. For the moral entrepreneurs, 'culture is the stuff of collective cohesions, the Durkheimian glue of social order and preservative of predictability' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 4). Whether they explain squatting as a rational choice, vigilantism, or a disrespect for property rights, it all leads to the same conclusion; squatters stand outside of our 'normal' consensual culture, they lack 'our' culture and represent nothing more than 'an anomic failure of socialization into collective meaning' (ibid. 4). This leads to a process of polarization, the notion that it is indeed us versus them.

But for cultural criminologists, culture represents quite the opposite. From the cultural criminological point of view culture is not rigid nor should it be seen as a completed process, rather it should be seen as an *unsettled* process. Culture is something that can be accepted or negotiated which, according to cultural criminology, 'positions it precisely at those points where norms are imposed and threatened, laws enacted and broken, rules negotiated and renegotiated' (ibid. 4). Now from this point of view, the decision to squat can hardly be described purely in terms of lacking culture. Quite the opposite, within the field of cultural criminology 'culture is seen as a hive of creativity, an arena of magical solutions where symbols are bricollaged into lifestyles, a place of identity and discovery and, above all, a site of resistance' (Hayward and Young 2005: 2). Now it is this understanding of culture, as a site of creativity, a platform for the discovering and creating one's identity, a renegotiation of rules and the ability to resist them that will allow us to capture and describe the diversity of the shared culture of squatting and the expressive nature of this transgressive act; squatting is a form of everyday resistance expressed through the everyday lives of those who squat. Only an active engagement in these lives will allow us to grasp at least some of the diverse motives that form the foundations for squatting.

THE SEARCH FOR CONTROL

... everything has a past. Everything – a person, an object, a word, everything. If you don't know the past, you can't understand the present and plan properly for the future (Chaim Potok, 'Davita's Harp').

If the act of squatting is expressive in nature, then what is it an expression of? The mistake we often make when we look at squatters is to think that they were somehow born into this world as squatters. Such images are strengthened by the moral entrepreneurs who work to typecast squatters as the problematic 'Other', which leaves us with little space to think about the possibility of diversity, both in people and in motivations. The fact however is that these individuals should not be seen as the Other; they often struggle with similar feelings of injustice and insecurity as any other city-dweller struggles with. We all have dreams and desires, and we all project them on our immediate environment. As Josh Raban already argued in his work *The Soft City*, the city represents a stage where we as the actors all play out our part to the best of our abilities and all have to struggle with the uncertainties of city life, while trying to create a place and a stable identity for ourselves within this 'soft city' (ibid. 1974). Now city-life or modernity for that matter provides us with certain expectations of self-realization and how we can and should grow as a person (Morrison 1995). Moving out or having a place of your own is of course seen as one of the most important foundations to achieve personal growth. But as Morrison suggest, in reality many people are not fully able to escape being defined and restrained by their circumstances and direct environment. Therefore Morrison argues, 'human beings will be disappointed, they wish to take control of their selves, they wish to realize their (future) self-potential, but are located in demeaning and restraining circumstances – a crisis of action develops' (Morrison 1995: 301). For some, this crisis of action means getting involved in the transgressive act of squatting. This point of departure allows for a more nuanced understanding of squatters, suggesting that these individuals do not stand outside of our society and blurs the often preferred distinction that separates us from them. Like Jock Young explains, those who transgress 'are far from dissimilar, sharing the same desires and passions, and suffering the same frustrations, because there is no security of place nor certainty of being and because differences are not essences but mere intonations of the minor scales of diversity' (Young 2007: 34). Young describes this modern day society as a *bulimic society*; a society where people are culturally included and at the same time are structurally excluded (ibid. 2007). It is my belief that this point of departure allows for a more progressive understanding of the act of squatting.

Now of course the action that follows from these similar feelings of insecurity and frustrations, the act of squatting, is quite a different solution to the late modern strains than most people are willing to support. But it does become clear that, if anything, squatting is rarely the result of a rational choice and more often than not originates out of feelings of that are better described as a *lack* of choice. Bert, a 27 year old squatter from Rotterdam explained to me why he decided to squat instead of walking the more conventional path of renting. His story clearly illustrates how that 'crisis of action' can develop:

I moved out when I was 18, because the home situation was no too good. I started looking for a house with a friend and his sister, who were also looking to move out. Back then, I didn't even know what squatting was, I actually never really heard of it. So then you start looking ... I wasn't a student but worked, so that also narrows down your possibilities [i.e. student housing, TH] and for council housing there was a 7-year waiting list. So then you're basically left with the private market and those prizes are pretty high for an 18-year old. I did work full time ... but when you're 18 your salary is not that high yet, so I was unable to pay for that ... I also witnessed a lot of strange things, people who ask for money even

before they actually provided you with housing ... Also, people who rented out 'closets' [very small room, TH] for 300 or 400 euro, where you couldn't even fit in a bed. So this led us to anti-squatting, AD-HOC, but there you had to know someone who could vouch for you and even then there was still a waiting list, so that's also not a quick way to find a house ... At some point we went to check out a place for which they asked 800 euro, without utilities But in the same street 6 similar apartments were vacant, for more than a year. So the sister of my friend visited the KSU and they explained to her what to do, so afterwards we squatted the place. Which didn't work out the first time, but the second time all of the sudden, we had an apartment ... It was the LAST option, we were already looking into mortgages, but I didn't feel like putting myself in deep debts at the age of 18 already. Everything just took so long, which doesn't help you if you just need to get out and start something for yourself. (Bert – March 25, 2010).

Bert explains that he in fact did try to find a place through the culturally accepted channels, but for him and his friends this proved to be extremely difficult. Long waiting lists and a lack of financial resources represent the two most common boundaries in the search for a place to live. Such a situation can of course magnify already existing feelings of insecurity, especially when you experience a pressing need for a place of your own. Similar to Morrison's argument, what we see is that at a certain point a crisis of action seems to develop (ibid. 1995). Bert and his friends felt that they could no longer wait for the 'official' help to get a house and decided to take matters into their own hands. Such an explanation runs counter the oversimplified explanation that squatters simply want to live for free on the best possible location, since it denies some of the important frustrations people can experience prior to the act of squatting. Here the true expressive nature of squatting begins to surface; squatting seems to represent an activity in which the squatter can seize back control, breaking free of restraints and the everyday bureaucracies, solving at least for themselves the ontological insecurity that comes with year-long waiting lists, shady rental agreements and houses that one can't afford. Of course, you might be able to make rent, but like Johan so eloquently describes it to me, rent is not the only thing you have to worry about:

Imagine that you can get a job in Amsterdam that you really want, only your monthly income is, also because you have to pay off your student loan ... 800 euro. Having 800 euro left to live, eat, pay utilities, the whole nine yards... Well, then you can FOR-GET about it! (Johan – May 11, 2010).

For people like Bert and Johan, prior to the actual decision to squat a vacant building, numerous channels were investigated in order to live life in a culturally accepted way, but a discrepancy existed between what they expected and that what was possible in reality for them. As Bert's story shows, squatting offered him and his friends a way out of this powerless situation; a situation in which he felt he was unable to financially provide for a place to live. This motivation for squatting of course has been recognized by many scholars before (see for example Duivenvoorden 2000; Pruijt 2004; Uitermark 2004; Owens 2009). It suggests that squatting represents first and foremost 'an alternative mode of economic survival' (Ferrell 2006: 172).

The background or life-story that leads to such feelings of necessity and a wish to exert control will of course be different for each person, for the simple reason that each person is different. For Katja, a 24-year old Humanistic-student and squatter from the Crooswijk area, squatting represented an immediate relief to the problems she was facing as a young teenager, at an age when most teenagers are not yet worrying about finding a place to live:

My parents were addicted, so they did not really have something steady, no education or anything. My father was a sailor and a criminal. He died when I was 5 years old. And my mother, she struggled on for a while, but died two years ago, a bit short of her 50's ... It led me to squatting, it really connected to the way that I am living now. I couldn't get along with my mother, so when I was 14 I became homeless, and the whole circus that followed ... like youth care, but they just didn't recognize the problem, they just weren't there. So squatting really saved me... (Katja – March 9, 2010).

Katja's life-story shows how stereotyping squatters in terms of opportunity driven deviants and explaining squatting in terms of profitability completely denies the importance of the underlying social causes that can lead a person to squat. Katja's experience reveals a wide variety of underlying social problems; drug use by family members, problematic home situation, problems with the intake of homeless children by the responsible governmental agencies; they all oppose the moral entrepreneurs oversimplified explanation that squatting can only lead to more social problems and support this study's assumption that the underlying social causes that *can* lead to squatting are of as much importance as the act of squatting itself. As cultural criminologists often stress, it not only the phenomenology of the act that is of importance, 'but also the phenomenology of everyday life as lived in the late modern era' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 65). As Katja explained it to me 'squatting saved my life' (Katja – March 9, 2010). Here it becomes clear how squatting can in fact function as an immediate safety net that allowed individuals to continue living out their everyday life, something that official agencies are unfortunately sometimes unable to offer individuals like Katja.

One of the most interesting motivations to squat I have heard myself came from those individuals who prior to squatting were in fact living anti-squat. This is interesting, because the moral entrepreneurs claim that the anti-squat is an excellent and affordable way to live for people who lack the financial resources to rent off the market. Furthermore, together with vacant property management, the moral entrepreneurs claim that the anti-squat serves as a protection against the threat of squatters. But for Joeri, a 28 year old squatters who now lives close to the city centre, the reality is that he did not started squatting till *after* he was kicked out of his anti-squat:

Seven friends of mine were all living anti-squat at the time that I broke up with my ex and had to move out. Because the company I worked for went bankrupt, I was also out of a job. So I had no money and no place to live. So yeah, I was becoming a bit desperate, thinking what can I do? So my friends offered me the opportunity to live with them for a while, until I found something else. They would introduce me to AD-HOC anti-squat, because they had the rule that someone who already was an anti-squatter introduced you to them. Not everyone can apply; they have a pretty restrictive policy. But I applied and in the end they accepted my request, so I moved in with two of my friends who had a three bedroom apartment. But somewhere halfway of August we got a letter saying that we had to be out of there by the end of August. So I called the other guys and they received the exact same letter. So then we called those guys from AD-HOC but they claimed that they had no other place for us to live. They said that we could have expected something like this to happen and said that they were not obligated to give us other accommodation, even though they advertise by saying that they will. So we had to figure out what to do, because we would be out on the streets with at least 5 guys. We had less than a month to figure out where we could live and although everyone was on a waiting list of some housing corporation, no-one was yet eligible for placement. But then, one of my friends who worked for a corporation knew about a place that stood vacant, so we decided to check it out. We posted for two days ... and on the third day we decided to squat the place ... for us, it developed out of necessity (Joeri – May 20, 2010).

So while the moral entrepreneurs explicitly support vacant property management by stating that it enables some groups to find cheap housing and at the same time ‘prevents squatting’ (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 40), the reality seems to suggest something quite different. And so we witness something interesting; commodified control does not necessarily incorporate transgression, but in some cases it actually strengthens the foundation for transgression to occur (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). Joeri and his friends weren’t the only anti-squatters turned squatter. Joeri’s current roommate Dion told me that he was kicked out of anti-squat after throwing a party, which was not allowed by the vacant property manager. A few days later, the vacant property manager evicted him. Haakon, who started squatting because his dad had kicked him out, told me a similar story. After being kicked out, he lived ‘under the dining table’ of a friend for six months. He kept his mattress and his clothes stacked underneath the table so he would be of as little inconvenience to his friend as possible. After a while, he decided to apply for anti-squat because his girlfriend was living anti-squat too at the time. But as he explained, he soon abandoned that idea:

I had a girlfriend who lived anti-squat and one night we had a party there. The next morning some guy woke me up who told me to clean up the table. So I said ‘first of all, who are you? You’d better fuck off now’. He was from anti-squat, AD-HOC, the property manager, and he just came in to tell her to clean up the mess, otherwise he would kick her out the same week. So I explained to him that we had a small party the night before and he said ‘party? That’s not allowed!’ while it was a party for three people, I mean come on! So I explained that we were sleeping and that we just woke up, and that we would clean it but that he shouldn’t approach us like this. So anti-squat was not for me (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

These experiences are not unique to Joeri, Dion and Haakon. From the squatters I interviewed, all but one knew squatters that were in fact anti-squatters before they got put out on the streets. In the previous chapter I already referred to the documentary *Carefree Vacant Property* by Abel Heijkamp and the internet site www.tijdelijk-beroofd.nl. The fact that vacant property management demands its users to completely obey by their rules, evicting them if they deviate from these strict and inhumane rules, resembles Bauman’s description of the seduced and the repressed. People who do not live by these rules seem to prove that they are not sufficiently integrated into the system of vacant property management, and are therefore removed from participation (Bauman 1991).

But not everyone squats because they are in direct need of a roof over their head. Johan, now 34 and ‘retired’ of squatting but still squatting for others, explains how he was introduced into the squat-scene:

The amount of money you have to pay to live in certain places just doesn’t seem right. In my student years, I lived on the Mathesserdijk ... where it was one big drugs-scene at the time. On either side of my apartment and later also the apartment underneath housed heroin dealers ... and on the other side of the street there were also around four apartments where people ‘used’, and I could see it all this from my window. And there was of course a lot of nuisance from all the junkies it attracted and the drug-runners moving the stuff. And I paid 350 guilders [around 160 euro, TH] for around 50 square meters ... And then you start to notice how many houses are vacant, so the question becomes if you allow yourself to adjust your norms and values. But I always had a hard time believing that there is a housing shortage and that THAT is the reason why the prices are so high, while in the meantime the apartment next to you stands vacant (Johan - May 11, 2010).

As Johan explains, for him squatting evolved more out of feelings of injustice; injustices one can feel when you do pay rent but have to deal with living in an unsafe neighborhood. Johan experienced

these feelings of injustice, because while the officials suggested that there was a housing shortage and that people just had to deal with their situation, Johan spotted one vacant house after another. As Johan explains, this can lead to an adjustment of your own norms and values, because the reality as he saw it at that time threatened his existing norms and values. Johan's readjustment of his norms and values support the claim made by Ferrell, Hayward and Young, that being in such a situation can indeed lead to a renegotiation of the very rules one has been living by for a long time (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008).

Similar to what Johan's motivation to start squatting suggests squatting does not only seem to evolve out of lacking financial resources. In fact, many squatters would be able to rent but they firmly believe that the amount of money you have to pay is not reflected in the quality of the room or house that you get in return. This suspicion was very recently underlined by *Huurteam Rotterdam* (Rental-team Rotterdam), an organization that keeps a watch on the prices for rented apartments⁴⁷. According to this organization, a staggering 80% of the tenants in Rotterdam pay too much rent, being cheated out of an average of 140 euro on top of the acceptable amount of rent (*Metro*, August 6, 2010). PJ, a 29 year old squatter from the Punk scene, explains that he had a similar experience. PJ came to Rotterdam 13 years ago to start his education at Rotterdam's graphic college *het Grafisch Lyceum*. He applied for a *woonpas*, a card necessary to become eligible for a rented apartment or room in Rotterdam, and many other cities in the Netherland for that matter. After six years of being on the waiting list, the housing corporation finally offered him an apartment. Although the apartment was outside of the city centre, PJ decided to have a look. As he explains, he found out that he would have to pay a monthly rent of 500 euro without utilities for an apartment that he describes as 'extremely small':

Of course you could say that I'm spoiled ... but at the time a friend of mine just bought a house in Vlaardingen, which was bigger than the rented apartment and for which he had to pay less mortgage than I would have to pay rent. So I wondered if I should really do this, because it would mean that I would have to lead my life under straitened circumstances ... while for me, squatting gives me a certain amount of freedom (PJ – April 29, 2010).

As PJ describes, squatting provides him with a certain amount of freedom that allows him to express himself and to fulfill his self-potential. For him, having to set aside a lot of money for rent would impose serious restrictions on this freedom. Being held hostage by rent would mean that he would have to work in order to make ends meet, which for him would mean that he could not do the work that satisfies him as a person. This is an argument often put forward by squatters. This important motivation is described by Justus Uitermark as a possibility for 'the cultivation of an alternative lifestyle' (Uitermark 2004: 237). The other option, described by PJ as living under straitened circumstances, indeed seems to suggest living an everyday life of 'routinised alienation and boredom ... a world in which individuals find themselves over-controlled and yet without control' (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 49). Control therefore seems to be an integral aspect to the motivation for squatting. Dieter, a 28 year old freelancer and media-artist originally from Belgium, is able to explain this significance of being in control in a very detailed manner:

For me it serves the purpose that I am not financially committed to the rent that I have to pay to a housing corporation ... it enables me to share a life with people with whom I have a tight personal

⁴⁷ <http://www.huurteamrotterdam.nl/>

connection ... to share something with each other, helping each other to fix up the house, organizing social gatherings like *eetcafe* [low cost diner: TH] ... For me personally it is extremely valuable to live in an environment where you share a tight connection with your neighbors. It also enables me to do all sorts of things that do not necessarily generate money, because my costs of living are much lower than those of any other citizen. I can pursue my artistic ambitions even when this doesn't generate a lot of money. I can do a lot of socially active work ... like organizing a block party that doesn't involve money, but which is very enjoyable to do and which is also very important for my own personal development (Dieter - March 9, 2010).

For both PJ and Dieter, the decision to squat originates from a wish for freedom of personal growth and self-expression, without being restrained by possible high living costs. By doing so, squatters effectively circumnavigate a society of which the dominant values originate 'from the activity of consumption' (Hayward 2004: 3). This wish to be able to pursue ambitions without financial restraints is an important aspect of the cultural resistance, since squatting resists the dominant structures of society, and the ways in which housing allocation and prices are determined (Duivenvoorden 2000). This was clearly expressed by Sim, a 23 year old squatter from the UK who kind of 'ended up' in the Netherlands after hitchhiking to the Netherlands in order to meet up with some friends he met on a skiing trip:

I see it as anti-capitalist because I'm going against specific policy, I'm going against housing. I'm saying ... this housing situation that we have is wrong. I think housing is something that is very important, especially for young people ... I am more than happy to do this and I can't see a point where I don't want to squat anymore at the moment (Sim - April 14, 2010).

Dieter shares Sim's discontent with the way in which housing in the Netherlands is organized. For him, this forms the foundation for his decision to start with squatting:

My primary reason to squat is because I believe that the corporations are big commercial companies that deal with urban development as if it was a monopoly game, who put down money like putting down a pawn, and the residents are merely extra's to them (Dieter - March 9, 2010).

Dieter's main frustration with the way in which housing allocation is currently arranged seems to be the fact that the actual users of space are excluded from the decision making process. By squatting, squatters invite themselves back into this process. Scholars like Lefebvre's explicitly described how urban planners see the user of space, as that 'fairly repulsive character who soils whatever is sold to him new and fresh ... who fortunately fulfills the function of making the replacement of a thing inevitable, who successfully carries out the process of obsolescence' (Lefebvre 2003: 188). What these arguments put forward by squatters suggest is that squatting is as much 'an alternative mode of economic survival' as it is a critique directed against the functionalized rule over the city and the rationalization of the urban environment (Ferrell 2006: 172). This is a city that in the eyes and the lived experience of many squatters should represent the needs of the users and not the needs of urban planners (Jacobs 1961; Beukers, Krakers and Dekker 1989).

However, this wish for freedom of self-expression and the ability to develop one's self-potential without financial or spatial restraints, to pursue ambitions and to do the things that you enjoy should not be disconnected from the fact the act of squatting also breathes 'an air of excitement' (Matza and Sykes 1961: 173). As I will now continue to describe, my assumption is that

squatting represents and activity offering the individual with both 'the possibility of excitement *and* control' (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 49).

THE SEARCH FOR EXCITEMENT

Already described in the theoretical framework and already shortly mentioned above, Fenwick and Hayward's concept of *urban edgework* aims to explain risk-laden activities as activities that can offer an individual control and at the same time, *excitement* (ibid. 2000). Fenwick and Hayward notice something extremely important, which connects to those feelings of being restrained squatters struggle with and the inability of the moral entrepreneurs to understand squatting in these terms. Indeed, to the moral entrepreneurs 'it might be an unpalatable thought, but it is through such activities that individuals *come alive*' (ibid. 49; emphasis added).

Squatters from the Rotterdam scene do not make a secret out of the fact that squatting indeed induces feelings of excitement. As Katja explains, it can give you a real adrenaline rush:

The police came by, while the lock was barely in. But the door also broke, it fell out and broke down in three pieces so we all had to hold the door in place while the police officer was pushing the door and looking around and said 'it must be a false call then' and left again, which is hilarious! Then you really get a sort of adrenaline rush (Katja – March 9, 2010).

Katja describes such experiences as 'an adventure' which even to the point where you can get arrested can still be perceived as having fun. As she explains, 'if you get arrested with a group you will just sing and have fun in the cell'. Now a little while ago an article surfaced in the free tabloid *Metro* of November 23, 2009. A young man was stopped by the police and they found a flyer on him, sending for people to help out with the collective and organized 'squat' of a vacant building on the *Slachthuiskade* as a protest against the anti-squatting bill. The police decided to coordinate an action aimed at preventing the squat from happening. On the scene, the squatters said that they would not take any action today, but moments later a group of squatters started to move away from building. The police decided to follow this group fining those who were not carrying any form of identification on them (something squatters often not take with them during squats in order to remain as anonymous as possible). But while the police was focusing their attention on the wandering squatters, the actual 'break' group moved in on the building a successfully squatted the place. It became clear to the police that this was planned and that they were intentionally led away from the building. The reporter of the *Metro* described the event as a cat-and-mouse-game that was being played between the squatters and the police, and squatter proudly told the reporter that this had been the plan all along, revealing the exciting aspect that comes with squatting.

This cat and mouse game can also be played with the owner of the property. Once squatted, the squatters have rights and the owner's hands are tied by certain legal procedures. Some owners do however try to claim their property back with disrespect for these procedures. This can lead to a situation that Bert found himself in when he first squatted a vacant building that was owned by a housing corporation:

They weren't too happy with us. I think they changed the lock three times although we already squatted it. So at some point it just became a game, which was pretty funny... when we got home we first had to go by the locksmith to get a new lock and then we just went back home to change it again [re-squat, TH]. I thought it was pretty funny, and at a certain point they just gave up (Bert – March 25, 2010).

Now squatting is often explained as the type of criminal behavior that results from a lack of self-control, so the logical line of thought then becomes to tighten the net of control in order to deter or incapacitate the individuals who otherwise would continue committing the act of squatting. But as these examples suggest, squatting serves much more as an act to take back control. As the previous stories suggest, it is being in control that induces the most feelings of excitement. As Hayward and Young have suggested, the transgressors often seem to 'push themselves to the edge of danger in search of both excitement and certainty' (Hayward and Young 2005: 9). For many this is exactly what makes squatting exciting, the part where they get back in control. As Haakon explains, this is in the real victory of squatting:

That's what I'm doing it for ... It gives you such a good feeling when you hear that door crack, when you're handling the crowbar with someone else and then you almost reach the lock and you hear it go... CLUNK! And you're in ... It's a victory. Bert has a map of Rotterdam, red and white drawing pins, the red ones we squatted but didn't maintain, and the black ones were squatted and we maintained them ... so it's a victory you know. Another one added, one less empty building, another person helped (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

This victory Haakon is talking about indeed supports the assumption that squatting, more than simply resisting the official organization of everyday life, is about breaking free of restraints and being able to directly organize one's own everyday life. I would therefore suggest that squatting does not represent, as the moral entrepreneurs suggest, a 'symptomatic lack of self-control', but that squatting more often than not represents a way to arrange one's own life (Hayward 2004: 157). As Hayward explains, this is the case for most of the deviant acts that take place, deviancy 'represents an attempt to take responsibility for one's own destiny' (Hayward 2004: 157). However, attempting to take responsibility for your own destiny can also be perceived as a very scary thing to do, as Sim experienced for himself:

I think the scariest thing for me about the whole process of squatting was when I was staying at Joeri's for a couple of nights, and I realized that, ok, if we don't do a good job tomorrow, I'm homeless. That was when it really hit home for me, that night before realizing that if this doesn't go well, then I'm homeless. Then I'm going back to England, I would have to go back and live with 'mommy' and 'daddy' again (Sim – April 14, 2010).

So whether squatting is being described as an adventure, as a cat-and-mouse game, or as something that scares the hell out of you, it is hard to deny that squatting is in fact an expressive act, 'an *intense* experience, not merely of material deprivation, but of a sense of injustice and of ontological insecurity' (Hayward and Young 2005: 8). For people like Sim, breaking open a door represents so much more than simply breaking open a door. It represents leaving behind feelings of insecurity and injustice and being able to say that you have a *home*; it represents a victory.

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

I have described how squatting can serve as an act to take back control in those situations where people can feel ontological insecure and over-controlled in an environment that is not of their own making. For them, blending in with the 'normal' consensual culture is not an option, if not seen experienced as impossible. If anything, these quotes taken from my conversations with squatters suggest that the contemporary cultural arrangements can make it extremely difficult for people to

create their own identity 'through the 'established' norms and codes of modernity' (Hayward 2004: 154). While for many the act of squatting is difficult to make sense of and represents a crime that is committed by people who are nothing like 'us', for squatters it provides them with the power that is necessary in order to express one's true individuality (Presdee 2000). The search for identity is therefore an integral part of squatting. As Dieter already explained and elaborates on, squatting creates a platform to express the real you and to pursue your true ambitions:

What I get out of squatting, this way of life, is that I can do things on my own initiative, produce or organize events ... *a life of authenticity* which is not being sold to me or forced upon me by a government who invented it for me, or that it is simply motivated by money, and I would really like to see people within our society becoming more aware of the possibilities that lie within themselves, or within their community. To do things, initiate things to lead their lives and to give their lives direction and purpose. I believe this is not being done enough because it is being repressed by commercial motives, by the media, by culture wherein so much is being forced upon you from the outside ... a form of autonomy or independence ... should come from within the people themselves (Dieter - March 9, 2010).

That many squatters do not feel that they can express their individuality by living their lives through the 'established norms and codes of modernity' (Hayward 2004: 154) is something Joeri expressed in a very emotional manner:

If you don't have anything, you can't start anything. So where do you start? A mathematical equation shows that zero plus zero is zero and will remain zero. If you don't have something, it's hard to start something. That's not right ... So sometimes you need to take matters into your own hands. I'm not going to *wait* if houses are empty and I'm waiting for a house. I'm not going to *wait* for the corporations to provide me with a home costing hundreds of euro's for which I will get a few square meters in return. I think it's insane that people accept that. People accept that you have to pay a ridiculous amount of money for something that is a basic need; a roof over your head. That people don't think about that, that they just accept that. People are not motivated, they are being scared, they are brainwashed. They cannot think outside of the box. I wake up, brush my teeth, make my sandwiches, go to work, earn a lot of money, listen to my boss, I watch the news, the news scares me, I go home, watch the news again, I become even less motivated, I sit down on the couch, I go to bed and do it all over again. How is it possible to live like that as a human being? Is that freedom? Is that the meaning of life? That you are 'owned' by someone above you? ... That's not being a human, that's being a caged animal (Joeri – May 20, 2010).

Similar to Dieter's argument, but expressed with heightened emotionality, Joeri's argument gives expression to that '*crisis of being*' which according to Hayward and Young flows from 'a sense of injustice and of ontological insecurity' (ibid. 2005: 8). Feelings of injustice towards the current social arrangements that seem to dictate that 'if one has nothing, one is nothing' (Fromm 1976: 3) and one will in all likelihood never be something. This can create feelings of being restrained by a world that is not of your own making, feeling trapped in an ever expanding 'culture of control' (Garland 2001). As both Dieter and Joeri suggest, the fact that late modern society apparently allows itself to be restricted and to be the recipient of a pre-packaged lifestyle that is not of their own making frustrates them. For them, squatting enables them to condition the circumstances instead of being conditioned by them (Trine 2006: 97). Standing vacant, abandoned and uncontrolled, the squat represents the stage on which individuals can construct their own identity and express their

individuality. The uncertainty of these spaces seem to offer squatters 'both a relief and a promise', because these unused spaces are 'as undefined' as they are (Cupers and Miessen 2006: 4). From this point of view, squatters find it even harder to cope with the fact that they are facing criminalization. Most squatters carry their label with pride and have no problem with being called a squatter. However, as Dieter explains many squatters do regret the fact that they are often perceived merely as a 'squatter':

How it's being presented by the media, when you are a squatter you are only a squatter, and that it represent you're entire existence. For me that is simply not the case, and not for any other squatter neither. People study, people live, work, have families, have hobbies, passions which are also a part of their lives and squatting is a small part of that life (Dieter - March 9, 2010).

In the previous chapter I have described how the moral entrepreneurs heavily rely on the highly negative, stereotypical label of 'the squatter'. This creates the image that our 'normal' consensual culture stands in conflict with squatters, who are seen as outside of this culture and outside of our society; the image of 'us' versus 'them'. In this process of 'Othering' normal activities that are maybe less connected to squatting, activities like Dieter described them, are intentionally 'rendered invisible' (Young 2007: 8). Squatters come to be seen as non-humans, stripped from their humane features and turned into what Stanley Cohen has famously described as *folk devils* (ibid. 1973). As Katja continues, the negative stereotype can indeed cast a negative shadow over everything else a person does:

I see myself as a human being who squats, that's how I see myself and I would like others to see me in the same way, that everybody sees each other as a human being that does something ... This is Dieter, human, artist, squatter, musicians etcetera, an more than that. It does cast a shadow over everything you do (Katja – March 9, 2010).

As Sim explained in one of our conversations, when people call you a squatter they already made up their minds about you: 'they think you're kind of smelly, that you trash your house...' (Sim – April 14, 2010). Becker argued that being labeled in a negative fashion can have negative implications. It shows people that you are a different kind of person than you were supposed to be, and the fact that an individual possesses one 'negative' trait can lead people to automatically assume that the individual also possess the 'other undesirable traits allegedly associated with it' (Becker 1963: 32-33). In the case of the squatters, the label might not be perceived as problematic by squatters themselves, but to it can have a negative effect on their public identity. It is their public identity that now has been criminalized, their master status as squatters, the rest of their activities and lives rendered invisible (Young 2007). From this point of view it becomes understandable why squatters perceive the criminalization of squatting as a direct attack on their life-style, an act of 'cultural criminalization' by which the moral entrepreneurs have labeled squatters as a criminals (Ferrell 1998; see plate 3). But many do not perceive themselves as criminals, like Sim explains:

Just because someone doesn't want to fit in with the ideal theme of how to live your life doesn't necessarily make them a bad person. Not everyone has to, say finish school at 18 then go straight on to do a degree, to work for three years, then get a traineeship and then to work their way up and not leave home till their 25 or something. Just because you want to be able to experience different things and do something different with your life doesn't mean you're a bad person. I'm not trying to hurt anybody by being here.... But just because you don't live by a set diagram of how to live your life from A to B to C to

D, just because you do it in a different order or a different way, I don't think that makes you a bad person (Sim – April 14, 2010).



Plate 3: Protest banner, CRIMINALIZING SQUATTING = CULTURAL CRIMINALIZATION!

For squatters this has always been the strength of squatting, its tolerance for an alternative way of living, both free from economic restraints and feelings of insecurity, an opportunity to chase dreams, instead of being chased by them. As Dieter explained it, it represents a *life of authenticity*, an act through which individuals are allowed to take control, express their true individuality and 'come alive' (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 49). And without having to wait for an official permission slip, squatters can take direct action against the existing social and authoritarian arrangements proving that 'alternative actions and arrangements are imaginable' (Ferrell 2001: 27). Herein lays the cultural significance and the symbolic value of the squat; it is a space that presents the squatters with 'an opportunity to try out numerous other identities and ways of being, unmediated by the physical, social and cultural demands that adhere to most other urban areas' (Jorgensen and Tylecote, 2007: 456). As I will now continue to discuss, the act of squatting creates a stage that allows squatters to invent new ways of being in the urban environment.

A DIFFERENT IDEOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF SPACE

As a consequence of their indeterminacy and ambiguity they – the wasteland, the void, in general the left over spaces are freer more tolerant spaces which represent sites for spontaneous activities to unfold, activities and experiments evocative of a future beyond restrictive capitalist, urban forms
(Hudson and Shaw 2007: 5)

Described in the previous chapter, the moral entrepreneurs have their own 'ideologically justified political conception' of the urban environment (Lefebvre 2003: 78) which dictates a proper activity that relates to a certain space, and in order to ensure that proper activity these spaces must be spatially controlled. According to Michel de Certeau, this perception of the urban environment can be described as the view from above, the top-down approach with the wish to create a monofunctional and readable city; the concept-city (ibid. 1984). Squatting opposes this functional reading of the urban environment and counters it by showing how these 'fixed' spaces can be put to use in ways that indeed supersedes that original intention of the structure.

Like Hudson and Shaw point out, there are individuals or groups for whom these wastelands represent sites where they can experiment with alternative ways of living and where spontaneous activities are allowed to unfold (ibid. 2007: 5). These are the spaces where 'informal and unintended uses overtake the officially designated functions' (Papastergiadis 2002: 45). Squats represent similar spaces. For many city-dwellers the vacant houses merely represent an ugly scar on the street or the city, an offence to the idealized image the city. What I began to realize in the course of this study, is that squatters read the urban environment in quite a different way; to them, these abandoned and often neglected buildings are 'objects of fantasy, creativity and alternative appropriations' (Jansson and Lagerkvist 2009: 18). A squat is therefore not merely a home, but also carries cultural meaning and communicates a certain symbolic value. Therefore, the squat is a crucial element of the shared culture of squatting. Furthermore, the fact that these alternative readings are indeed being transformed into an everyday reality suggest that squatters resist the officials reading of the urban space in terms of fixed spaces and wasted spaces, and take these spaces back. Other studies have already pointed out that squatters indeed take back buildings that are not being used, taking themselves off the waiting list instead of jumping the queue on the waiting list (Het Rapport van de Raad van Kerken 1978/2009). Of course, the fact that the act of squatting is practiced without the consent of the owner, the moral entrepreneurs and segments of society makes it by definition an act of resistance. This resistance is often expressed through the squat, which I believe in many ways functions as the stage on which squatters feel they can express their true selves, where they can develop their self-potential and pursue their ambitions without the restraints that come with living life via the established norms and codes of conduct. As I will begin to describe in a moment, these alternative readings that opposes the moral entrepreneurs (and others) personal perception of space is in fact part of that resistance. As Hayward rightly describes it, it is 'resistance through redeployment' (Hayward 2004: 143), proving that alternative ways of being are possible. Let's take a closer look at what these alternative readings communicate.

The squatters I have met read the urban environment in quite a different way than most of us do. As I have shortly mentioned in chapter 2, looking around for a squat requires looking at the city in a different way. To claim that squatters are simply looking for a cheap and big place on an A-location misses the point, and also does not explain why so many squatters are in fact squatting vacant business premises on the cities industrial terrains, that are by no means located in the city center. If

the squat serves as a platform to develop one's self-potential and to pursue one's ambitions, than the squat needs to be able to accommodate these wishes. But since many of these buildings have their defects, squatters do need to possess that DIY mentality, like the KSU Squatting Guide suggests:

Available immediately, in virtually all Rotterdam neighborhoods and the entire Netherlands. All kinds of unused floors, houses, buildings and spaces for short or long *legal* living. Suitable for enthusiastic, open minded and social people. No rent, no deposit, no mortgage. A do-it-yourself attitude *is* required. Utilities (gas, water and electricity) are almost always possible. We work without memberships cards or other bureaucratic non-sense. We do help you to help yourself get a suitable home within a few weeks. More information and / or practical help? -> **Come see the KSU!!** (KSU, July 2004).

The Squatting Guide suggests that future squatters should take their time and walk or bike around the city to get a better impression of the amount of buildings that stand vacant, how long they have been vacant and if these buildings suit your needs. Ferrell underscores the necessity of the spatial practice of walking or biking around the city, because it allows people to become more attuned to their environment. He describes such spatial practices as 'a form of anarchist practice and urban revolt' and an 'engagement with the spatial politics of the everyday' (ibid. 2001: 243); a description I believe is very applicable to the act of squatting. But let us turn to some interesting examples of these alternative readings that were dreamt up and made into an everyday reality. I will discuss a few of the most interesting alternative readings I came across, since describing them all would lengthen this already ever growing body of work.

During one of my walks through the city, I came across a place called *Materialen Magazijn* (Material Depot). Not entirely sure if it was in fact a squat, I decided to contact the initiator. A bit later, I met up with Max. Max was not your average squatter. 30 years old, married and father to a young daughter, he and his family live in a rental apartment two blocks from the Material Depot. Because of a growing frustration with the deterioration and vacancy of the surrounding buildings and the lack of community feeling in his direct neighborhood, Max and his wife decided they wanted to do something that would counter both. They decided to squat an empty store, where they would collect household furniture and other tradable goods. 'The idea is not only to create a place where people can pick out used furniture and drop off the ones they do not want anymore, but also to create a place where people from the neighborhood can meet up', Max explained to me. One night when I was helping Max out with fixing up the shop, I witnessed for myself how these low-cost and seemingly idealistic initiatives actually do work. People from all kinds of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds walked in and looked around, talked a bit and found stuff that they were looking for. Max was not the only one who set up shop in this street. In fact, in the shop next to him another squatter already started a do-it-yourself bicycle workshop even before Max decided to squat the place. This place enables people from the neighborhood to come in with their dysfunctional bicycles and fix them with materials and tools that the 'shop holder' provides them with, all for free (see plates 4 and 5). Max also uses the space to organize meetings for Transition Town Rotterdam, an initiative he himself takes active part in which strives to utilize local resources for self-sustainment in the form of community gardens, or recycle and energy projects⁴⁸. As he explains, 'we go to people and ask them if we can for instance use their gardens to grow vegetables and potatoes. They don't have to do anything, we take care of their garden and in return we get a certain percentage of the crops. The idea is that people create their own sources of foods and vegetables and trade whatever

⁴⁸ See <http://transitiontowns.nl/> for more information on Transition Town Netherlands.

they do not need'. Thus for squatters like Max, a squat can also function as a platform to help create 'a diverse and entrancing community' (Shoard 2008: 82).

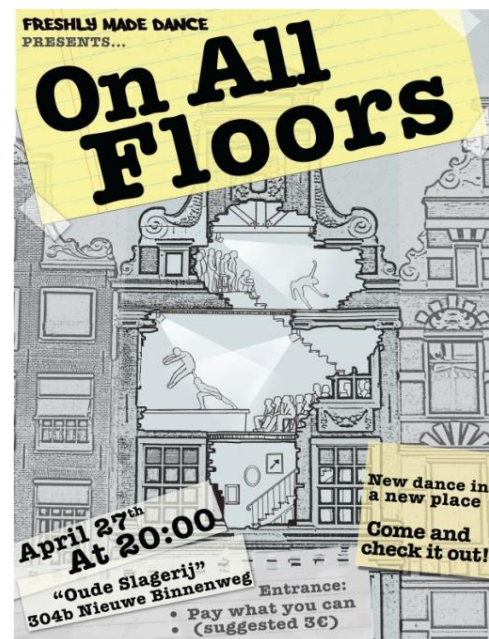


Plate 4: The storefront of the Material Depot, still in the progress of setting up shop.



Plate 5: Storefront of the DIY bicycle work shop.

The availability of such vast empty spaces can be interpreted as spaces that can offer an ‘unfulfilled promise and unlimited opportunity’ (Cupers and Miessen 2002: 83). PJ squatted an enormous empty office space which they renamed the *Punk Tower*, located on the industrial terrain *Spaanse Polder* on the outskirts of Rotterdam. This building stands six stories tall plus an extra story on the top of the building that can only be described as a penthouse (see Plate 11). PJ explained to me that the most important reason for him to squat this vacant building, was because it provided him with the opportunity to pursue a creative lifestyle without feeling restrained by the enormous amount of money this would cost him if he would have to rent. As a Punk-rocker playing in two bands, practice space in Rotterdam is both hard to find and too expensive for him to rent on a regular basis. As PJ explains, playing in these two bands ‘costs more money than it generates’. For most gigs, they only get their expenses compensated and when they play for friends or in other squats they simply do charge money, because they do not want to make money of it. PJ describes the Punk Tower as an ongoing project, providing the space for people who really want to create something for themselves. He offers space to an American girl who designs and makes her own T-shirts with self-made prints. Another girl is starting up her own art studio with enough space to paint, and with the possibility of organizing exhibitions. On the top floor he and a friend built their own kitchen, since it was not present in the original building. On the other floors PJ was able to create a practice space for his two bands, which allows them to practice whenever they like without having to worry about putting down any rent for practice space. And with some friend, they built a fully functional bar and a stage from scratch that allows them to organize parties with live-music on the weekends. Whereas people like Jan ten Hoopen worry about the fact that these practices do not promote the image of the business district, for PJ it was important to be able to both have the space that can serve as a platform to further his ambitions as well as being outside of the densely populated neighborhoods in order to be of as little inconvenience as possible. Now of course, being of little inconvenience to others serves the more important purpose of continuing one’s practices. Similar to what Tonnelat suggests in his description of the wasted spaces that often exist around and within cities, the vacant office building represent a space of freedom that offers individuals like PJ, ‘whose creativity is muted by too many technical, economic and cultural constraints, a place for new expressions and new programs, freed from the usual straightjacket of regular allotment’ (Tonnelat 2008: 292). In chapter two I have described that Nikos Papastergiadis describes such spaces as parafunctional spaces. According to Papastergiadis, these seemingly lost urban spaces can in fact function as possible sites for creativity where ‘informal and unintended uses overtake the officially designated functions’, representing spaces where ‘social life ... continues in ambiguous and unconventional ways’ (Papastergiadis 2002: 45). That squats can be seen as such ambiguous spaces is something I have witnessed for myself on many occasions. Sim, who squatted an old butcher shop in Rotterdam where the meat-hooks were still literally hanging from the ceiling, invited me to an in-house dance event that was organized by his roommate Christine, a Canadian exchange student studying dance at the Codarts Academy for Arts.

Plate 6: *On All Floors* official flyer.

Similar to what the flyer suggests, *On all Floors* used the entire house as its stage, with dance and music performances throughout the entire place, even in the backyard. Not only is it interesting to see how rooms that are normally being lived in are turned into fully functioning stages, the event also drew a wide crowd of people who just happen to pass by the squat. I was talking to a man who told me: 'I was on my way to do some shopping, but passed by this place so I decided to have a look. Funny though, instead of doing my groceries I'm now drinking a beer and watching dance performances in someone's house!' As such events prove, converting an old butcher shop and the attached living space into a dance and music stage indeed suggest that in these buildings which were vacant prior to being squatted, unintended uses can in fact take over the original function, allowing for social life to continue in ways that are unimaginable to those with a more conventional and functional perception of space (Papastergiadis 2002). Furthermore, events like *On all Floors* but also the live performances and parties organized by people like PJ do not ask permission from the local authorities. Without any permits or liquor licenses, squatters make things happen for themselves and their social environment by taking what Ferrell describes as 'direct social and economic action ... outside the control of charitable organizations, multinational corporations, or governmental bureaucracies' (ibid. 2006: 176).



Plate 7: Musicians performing in Sim's bedroom.



Plate 8: Dance performance by Codarts students in the dining room.

Scholars from the field of urban and human geography have argued that the vacant buildings in and around the city can also represent the 'possibility of an escape from the controlled spaces' (Cupers and Miessen: 2002: 83). Squats seem to have a similar function. For instance, Haakon lives in an old billiards hall. When he told me to meet up with him there, I actually managed to go to the wrong one because I thought he just wanted to meet up in a functional billiards hall, not for a moment realizing that he was actually *living* in an empty one. For Haakon, living in such an enormous space allows him to express himself in ways unimaginable if he would try to realize them through the accepted and established channels. According to Haakon, this is an issue of control and the reason why to many squatters the squat symbolizes a space that offers an escape from that control, which in turn makes the moral entrepreneurs want to criminalize the act of squatting:

They don't want emancipation, they would rather have everyone to do exactly the same at any given moment in the day and that they can just control that... Equilibrium (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

The projects Haakon is trying to realize in his squat stand as a perfect example of this attempt to escape the over-controlled environment of the public space. During a grand-tour, Haakon showed me how they were currently building an in-door skate park. As Jeff Ferrell already pointed out, skaters quite often fall victim to the 'exclusionary spatial politics' of the city, regulating everything from where you are allowed to skate till how late you are allowed to skate, and getting fined whenever you decide to skate on your own terms (Ferrell 2001: 70). For many skaters then, places like the indoor skate-park in Rotterdam with its ban on smoking, alcohol, drugs and eating outside of the designated areas just doesn't cut it. Haakon however has the space to build his own indoor skate-park, on the same floor where people use to play a relaxing game of billiards (see plate 9).

Haakon also provided a place to 'tag' and create 'pieces' for one of his roommates, a graffiti artist. Practicing graffiti, a cultural practice and art-form to some but a crime against property rights to many others, is becoming increasingly difficult in a city where more and more spaces are being monitored by private and public security cameras, and where more and more industrial terrains are being patrolled by private security companies. Therefore, Haakon and his roommate decided to construct a graffiti wall where they could practice their graffiti art without risking to get caught and be fined or arrested (see Plate 10). Regardless of how one might feel about such practices, it does describe how people who do practice graffiti feel an urge to escape the controlled urban environment and to have the opportunity to express themselves without all the barriers that they would normally run up against. In many ways then, squatters intentionally 'transgress spatial constraints' in order to be able to 'produce different environments' (Doron 2000: 253).

But squatting by no means only offers a safe haven for practices that are being restricted or banned from the public space, or practices that are simply seen as a criminal offence. For many squatters in Rotterdam, it is important to share the space they create for themselves with other people who might also be in need for space, but are unable to provide in it for themselves. Like Haakon suggest:

I just think it's really important when you have such a big building that you will provide others with the opportunity to create something ... I provide space for an old pensioned man who makes standing lamps, a lady who makes Brazilian carnival dresses, she first made them at home but that took up her entire living room ... so she came and asked me for some space. I just think it's master, so if someone else comes with a good idea then they can just build their own shed downstairs, so they can do what they want to do (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

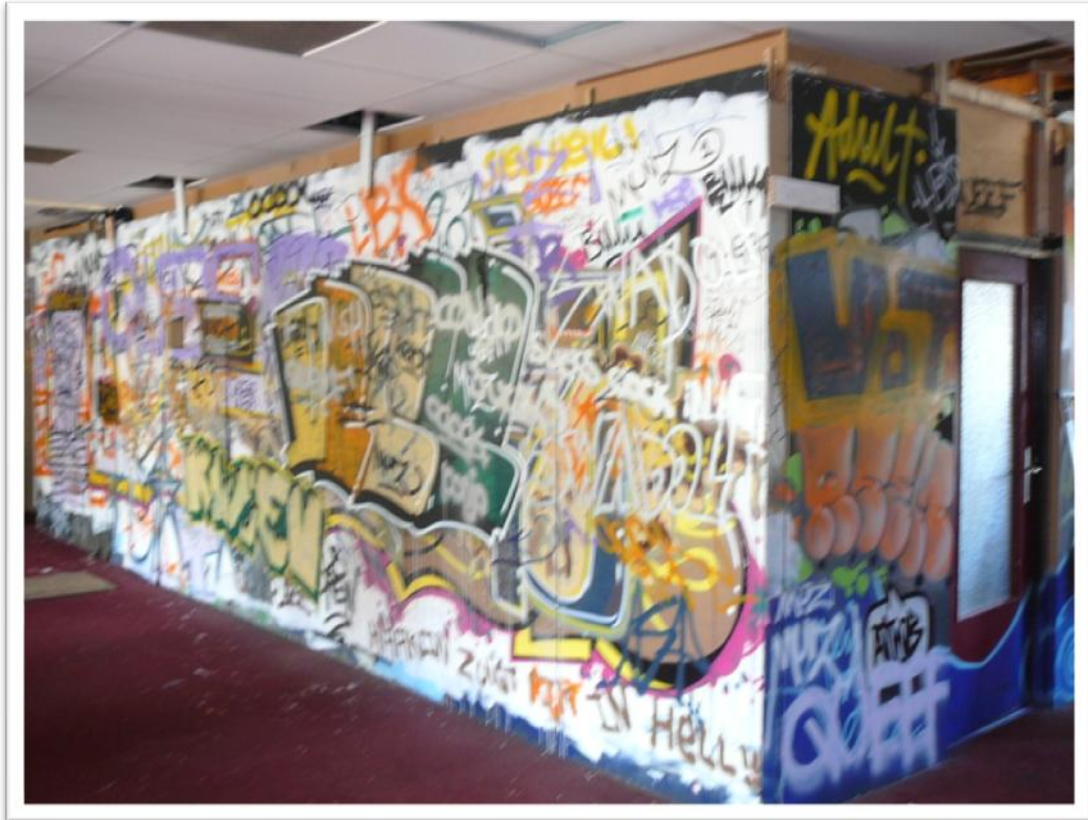


Plate 9: Self-constructed indoor graffiti wall.



Plate 10: Former billiards hall being reconstructed into an indoor skate-park.

Haakon provided these individuals with a place and the *space* to be able to do what they love, the ability to express themselves through their creativity. The elder retired man Haakon mentions used to work in a 2 by 1.5 meter shed with no place for his tools. The man did not have any money to rent a bigger shop to work in, so Haakon provided the man with *space*. But maybe even more important than having a space, the man was able to go out and meet different people again:

He's happy, he's meeting people again and meeting a lot of young people. I gave him a dog too, because I had a dog but I wasn't able to take good care of it and he was feeling a bit lonely, so it's a win-win situation (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

Haakon is not the only squatter in Rotterdam who believes it is important to provide people in need for space with that space. Sim also provided two French students with a place to live for two months because, as he puts it, 'their rental agreement got fucked up'. Later, he set up a friend from Switzerland who came to study in the Netherlands with a room. Sim explains that having all this space at his disposal allows him the opportunity to offer people in need a place to live. Others are more involved with actively squatting for 'outsiders' in need. Katja for instance described to me how they once squatted a place for an elder man that was put out on the street:

The waiting lists were overcrowded and this man had no place to go ... He was already very old and they evicted him from his home because he didn't pay his bills, but this man was becoming completely senile. Those are also things that you experience ... and then you encounter a lot of bureaucracy (Katja - March 9, 2010).

From this point of view not a lot has changed since the early 1970's. Squatting still serves as that social safety net for people who are risking falling off the edge of society. Squatting allows them to get back at least some semblance of control over their own lives. Unfortunately, when the moral entrepreneurs connect squatting with providing the marginalized with shelter, they claim that this shelter is being provided to people who are illegally staying in the Netherlands, disregarding the many studies that have proved throughout the years that squatting functions as a safety-net for the homeless, the runaways, the addicts, the mentally ill, even people with marital problems and single mothers with debts (Het Rapport van de Raad van Kerken 1978/2009). For the latter, Haakon squatted a house six times in the past six years. As he explains, the housing corporation does not want people who are unlikely to fulfill their financial obligations.

Similar to what Uitermark already suggested, these examples indeed suggest 'that squatting is about more than just housing and confrontation', but that squatting also represents an act that 'involves an alternative way of living' (ibid. 2004: 234). An alternative way of living for Punk-rockers, media-artists, exchange students, graffiti artists, skateboarders or a social safety-net for the marginalized I have just mentioned, and even the evicted anti-squatters. In short, a shared culture where people from all different groups or sub-cultures find a space to escape from those pressing feelings of insecurity and the lack of control over their own destiny. They do not see the vacant building 'as offensive to the character and aesthetics of the city', rather these vacant buildings offer them with the opportunity to take direct social and economic action without making themselves dependable on the control of governmental bureaucracies, charitable organizations or multinational corporations (Edensor 2002; Ferrell 2006). Squatting described from this point of view represents a form of every resistance against 'the imposition of homogeneity and transparency everywhere within the purview of power and its established order' (Lefebvre 1991: 383). The moral entrepreneurs might

have a point when they say that squatting is theft, but it is not a simple theft of property that squatters get involved in; squatting is 'the theft of conventional meaning' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 153). The practices that I have just described produce different environments that stand the conventional reading of vacancy on its head. These squatters engage in a playful version of *détournement*. Ferrell describes *détournement* as a reversal of meaning, converting vacant buildings into something else or even the opposite revealing 'moments in which the taken-for-granted order of daily life unravels' (Ferrell 2006: 186). As Nikos Papastergiadis rightfully argues, these 'parafunctional uses of spaces oppose the technocratic definition of the city', proving that alternative readings and uses are possible and valuable. In house dance events, indoor skate parks, indoor graffiti walls, practice space in vacant business premises, or shelter for the marginalized population, they all resist the official reading of space and communicate the same question to us; why should this not be possible?

A more direct theft of meaning and a possible answer to the just posed question stood on the roof of the *Punk Tower*. The Punk Tower, which was squatted on new-year's day 2010 as a protest against the anti-squatting bill, had an enormous 'for rent' sign on top of the roof. Now in Dutch for rent is written as *TE HUUR*. Together with some friends, PJ decided to take out a paint brush in order to make a minor adjustment; the letter H was converted into the letter D, after which the enormous sign on top of the six story building no longer spelled *TE HUUR* but *TE DUUR*, which means 'too expensive' (see plate 11). This simple act of *détournement* quite effectively gave new meaning to an existing sign and by a minor adjustment criticized the existing situation. Ferrell, Hayward and Young explain how such acts of *détournement* offer us a clear-cut, alternative understanding of that what we often take for granted (ibid. 2008). What we take for granted in PJ's eyes, is that currently 13.3% of the business premises in the Netherlands stand vacant and unused (Zadelhof 2010), while we continue to build new ones.

The Rotterdam KSU produced a flyer already back in the 1990's that offers a similar reversal of meaning (plate 12). In a flyer that resembles a for-sale add similar to ones printed in the newspaper, they replaced *TE KOOP* (for sale) with *TE KRAAK* (for 'squat'). The price is conveniently set on zero. The flyer starts with the same sentence as the Rotterdam Squatting Guide; '**Available immediately**, in virtually all Rotterdam neighborhoods and the entire Netherlands'. Through a simple recontextualization, both PJ and the KSU flyer manage to create a critique and an analysis of the existing social and authoritarian arrangements, showing indeed that 'alternative actions and arrangements are imaginable' (Ferrell 2001: 27). Together with the actual realization of these alternative actions and arrangements in the squatted buildings, squatters indeed seem to engage in acts of cultural resistance that reveals the lived experience and the daily realities of those marginalized groups who live out their life in the official city. Furthermore, these acts of 'resistance through redeployment' and *détournement* help us to critically reflect on the moral entrepreneurs claim that squatting is an act exogenous to the 'normal' consensual culture, the idea that squatting somehow exists outside of society and is in no ways connected to the current social arrangements and the social problems that exist within society (Hayward 2004: 143). These acts of resistance suggest that both the moral entrepreneurs and the squatters are active participants in conflict over the urban environment and that both try to express their vision through a process of constant renegotiation. The wish of the moral entrepreneurs to somehow place squatters 'outside of our consciousness and outside of our thinking' (Presdee 2000: 11) only strengthens the assumption that that the moral entrepreneurs see in the process of criminalization an effective solution for 'the management of spatial conflicts' (Miessen 2007: 1). But many squatters refuse to be excluded from

the decision making process and wish to be active users of space. This makes them participants on the urban stage, or 'active agents insisting on being actors in the forcefield they are facing' (ibid. 3). It is on their part as active agents and critical participants in a situation of conflict that I will now focus my attention.

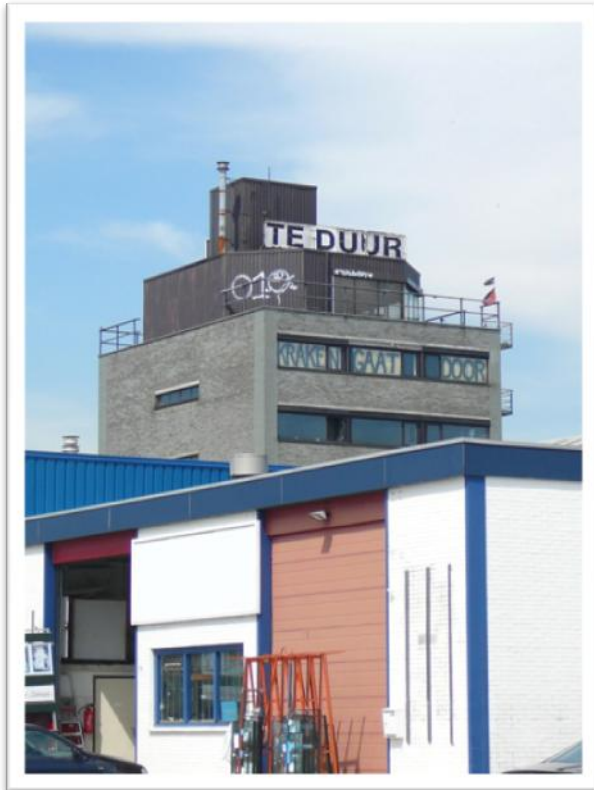


Plate 11: The alteration of a for rent sign on top of the Punk Tower: *TOO EXPENSIVE*.

Plate 12: The KSU advertisement, standing as a proof that there are alternative ways to live life in the city. (source: <http://rotterdam.squat.net>)

PROPERTY: ULTIMATE RIGHT or ULTIMATE RESONSIBILITY?

Do property rights need to prevail over everything else? In times of scarcity, in times of big personal suffering or social problems, are property rights, which includes the right to let your property go to waste or to leave it vacant, more important than personal suffering or the social responsibility that you also have when you own property that is located in such a community? (Dieter – March 9, 2010)

On the issue of property, the moral entrepreneurs and the squatters have a diametrically opposed opinion. Where the moral entrepreneurs claim that 'there is no space for a consideration between the interests of squatters on the one side and the owner on the other side' and argue that criminalizing squatting will once and for all establish this clarity (Explanatory Memorandum nr. 6: 13), for squatters there *should* be space for such a consideration and they make this clear by transgressing the cultural boundary of absolute property rights by squatting vacant property. Whereas criminalizing squatting from the moral standpoint that it represents a threat and a disrespect to property rights is enough a reason for the moral entrepreneurs to stereotype squatters as property thieves, for squatters the issue is less clear-cut. Let us have a short look at how squatters explain their actions and why they believe that owning often vast amounts of property is not simply a

right, but also comes with great social responsibilities and why they believe that under certain circumstances, when owners waive their responsibility, squatting becomes acceptable.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The issue of property rights has always been indissolubly connected to the act of squatting. From this point of view, squatting is the ultimate act of direct-action and echoes one of the most famous Wobblies' direct action slogans, *Direct Action Gets the Goods* (Ferrell 2001: 27). Getting the goods through the act of squatting is often explained as a direct attack on property rights. However, many squatters are not necessarily against property. What they are against is the way in which they feel property is unequally distributed over society. An inequity that in the eyes of many squatters is at the core of many of society's social issues, as Katja explains:

I take it on loan. Of course the fact that I am residing in someone else's property is debatable, but it is also not a very personal property. And I also believe, with space, this can also be argued upon, because I am coming to this earth, I have been placed here and apparently all the space is already gone. I'm not allowed to take anything, I'm not allowed to sleep in the streets, I can't do this or that; there is simply no space for that neither ... It might sound very naïve, but I do think that this is something we should think about, that a big corporation owns all these things and allows us to live in it, like they are doing us a favor and then we also have to pay for that. I don't really know if I agree with that... (Katja – March 9, 2010).

According to Katja or any other squatter I have met for that matter, property rights can never be elevated above that basic human right of a roof over your head. In her eyes, as long as houses stand vacant and people are homeless, property rights can take a back seat. In her argument, she also reveals something else that can be of interest; the skewed allocation of space in the city. Her argument reveals both the frustration with the way in which public space is becoming more and more watched over by the authorities, but that it is also getting harder to carve out your own private space. The majority of this private space is owned by the housing corporations who decide, of course restricted by legal procedures, on the price you have to pay and the location they will allow you to live. The first argument echoes Mike Davis description of down-town Los Angelus in *City of Quartz*, in which he argues that the increasing privatization of the public space by imposing restrictions on spatial movement and practices leads to the criminalization of everyday behavior and works alienating on often the more socially disadvantaged (ibid. 1990). While Los Angelus seems far removed from everyday reality of cities like Rotterdam, here we are also witnessing how the local authorities are readily posing more and more restrictions on our everyday lives, increasingly privatizing and criminalizing social behavior in the public space (see *walking the streets*, page 107). Katja's second argument, which is concerned with the skewed allocation of property, suggest that squatters believe that the companies who own everything and basically hold the key to the city have a social responsibility to make sure that they do everything in their power to provide people with at least a copy of that key. As Johan explained it to me:

As a big real-estate owner, what kind of moral responsibility do you have? ... That what you own you must also share to certain extends. I have no problem that a person makes a lot of money in the real-estate business and becomes IN-CRE-DI-BLY rich from it, I couldn't care less. You did it, congratulations. But you do have a responsibility, it creates a social responsibility ... Especially in a country like the Netherlands, where the only thing that we can say is that our country is full (Johan – May 11, 2010).

As I have already described earlier, the amount of vacant residential spaces in Rotterdam has increased from 21.087 in 2006 (7% of total) to 28.766 in 2008 (CBS 2006-2008), which means that 10% of the houses in Rotterdam stood vacant in 2008. For squatters like Johan, this offers him with enough reason to renegotiate the rules which dictate that one has to wait for a house to be provided to him. By this logic, squatting is explained by some as a course of action directed at those who are not taking the social responsibility that, according to squatters, flows from owning vast amounts of property. This generates a certain idealism that diametrically opposes the interests of the late modern city of consumers.

It is against vacancy, against the consumer society. Especially now, with 15% of all business premises are standing vacant. They say that if nothing is done about it, then this number will double in one year time to 30%. Yet still they continue like idiots building new buildings ... but this can also be said for residential buildings and the prices for them ... What I have seen happen in *Crooswijk* is that they wrecked an entire neighborhood with houses that could have lasted for at least another 25 years, and what do they replace it with? With bigger houses that are even more expansive, of which the majority is also meant for the private-housing market. So the social aspect is taken from housing ... While I believe that habiting is a right, and that should be accessible, at least affordable (PJ – April 29, 2010).

For many squatters, like Joeri also explains, this idealism came only *after* the first time they squatted:

Idealism came later. Because of this experience I realized the *origin* of the housing problem, more than simply being aware of the *existence* of the problem. The origin is about the source of the problem, why is there a housing shortage rather than there is a shortage, period. And the problem is maladministration of the housing corporations (Joeri – May 20, 2010).

From this point of view, squatters can be described as active participants in the urban environment who take a direct-action approach that effectively points to the social responsibility that comes with owning property. The squat therefore functions as a *counter-space*, a space described by Lefebvre as a space that has the ability to 'shake existing space to its foundations, along with its strategies and aims – namely, the imposition of homogeneity and transparency everywhere within the purview of power and its established order' (Lefebvre 1991: 383). On the other hand the shared culture of squatting, which is in many ways is the combined culture of the marginalized that share with each other the act of squatting, also offers squatters a direct refuge from the 'creeping criminalization of everyday life' (Presdee 2000: 159). However, this criminalization have crept itself through the front door of the squat and is now sitting inside, ready to kick the squatter out. For many squatters, this is a frustrating notion and they believe that the criminalization of squatting has less to do with protecting home-owners and more with protecting those businesses that have a stake and make their money in the real-estate business. This frustration takes us back to chapter 3 where I described how the language of the moral panic was used in order to create the image that squatters are attacking people's homes. According to squatters like Sim, this is an extremely unjust depiction of the situation:

They say they want it to protect home-owners and home-owners interests. Which I understand, I understand protecting people's homes, but you can't squat someone's home because it's gotta be empty for a year. So you're not protecting home-owners, you protecting the people who own these properties, but it's not their home, it's not a home if nobody lives in it ... it's a house-owner maybe, but it's not a home-owner because it's not their home. You can't possibly say somewhere that's been empty

for more than a year is owned by a home-owner, it's a play on words ... You can protect someone who owns a home because they live in it, you can't squat a house when someone's living in it ... I think it more protects business, business and people with housing investments (Sim – April 14, 2010).

Sim's argument shows the frustration with the way in which the moral entrepreneurs create the image that all squatters victimize home-owners and rightfully asks the question if property that has been vacant for over a year can really be seen as someone's *home*. Now this question has been at the core of the conflict that squatters start, and in over 40 years time no-one managed to come up with a definitive answer. So squatting continues to exist as an act of trespassing and thievery to some, and an act of social resistance by which you can enforce your rights to others. In these conflicting definitions and the fact that the negative stereotype does of course exist lays the true ambiguity of the act. Now I have described that squatters firmly believe that the act of squatting is an act of social resistance, an act of transgression that exemplifies the moral and social responsibility of property owners, but also of the authorities and of our society in general. But is this enough to fully justify squatting or does this life-style come with its own set of responsibilities?

THE CODES OF CONDUCT

The second life is lived in the cracks and holes of the structures of official society. It searches for and finds the unpunishables whilst official society seeks to dam up the holes, and fill the cracks, criminalizing as it does and making punishable the previously unpunishables
(Presdee 2000: 9)

Many squatters are aware of the fact that in the eyes of society squatting is still perceived as an unconventional way of providing yourself with a home. Although fully justifiable from their own point of view, squatters often remain sensitive to the fact that they are the ones that start a conflict and that it is therefore also partly their responsibility to make sure that they address this conflict and look for ways to solve it, or at least try to soften the initial shock. Of course, to address the conflict in this way can be perceived as 'the right thing to do', but often it also serves the purpose that such an approach increases their chances of staying in the squatted property. Regardless what the moral entrepreneurs might want us to believe, most squatters work hard to stay outside of the official frame because they have nothing to win by being perceived as deviants, yet everything to lose (Tonnelat 2008). This is also connected to the fact that for the past four decades the authorities have been closing down the net of social control around the squatters, making it hard for squatters to squat and maintain vacant buildings (Pouli 1981). So in order to squat under the radar of the authorities, squatters have to follow the codes of conduct that apply to them. By doing so, they are able to live their lives 'in the cracks and holes of the structures of official society' (Presdee 2000: 9). Let's have a look at some of these codes of conduct.

WALKING THE STREETS: WHO HOLDS THE KEY TO THE CITY?

This critique points towards a development many Criminologists have already been studying and discussing for quite some time now. Cities are becoming increasingly intolerant to diversity in the streets, sanitizing them from unwanted features that give the 'normal' citizens an uneasy feeling. As Ferrell points out, cities are trying to create a 'Disney-like atmosphere' where the only pleasure one is allowed to pursue and the only spectacle that can be witnessed is the spectacle of consumption (ibid. 2001: 6; Presdee 2001). Those who can't consume according to plan or cannot keep up are slowly being banned from the 'consumer's playground' (Zukin 1995: 19); homeless people, street musicians, but even skateboarders and free-runners are being redirected to those places that the city deems proper for such activity, thus putting restrictions on the creativity that drives such practices. The city of Rotterdam, priding itself for being *Manhattan aan de Maas* (Manhattan on the river Meuse), is also doing a very fine job on slowly closing in any form of unauthorized behavior or creativity, suggesting that 'unauthorized fun' is strictly off limits within the boundaries of the city center (Hayward 2004: 189). Granting the city-guards with the authority to fine citizens under the motto of keeping Rotterdam 'clean, undamaged and safe', and proudly letting us know about it through advertisement (source: <http://cpr.rotterdam.nl>), setting up new strict guidelines for landscapers and road-workers dictating the materials they are allowed to use, also known as the *Rotterdamse Stijl* (Style of Rotterdam) which strives for unity and functionality in the public space, and we begin to understand how diversity and alternative functions are slowly but certainly sanitized from the public space. The first victims are already falling. On the *Oude Binnenweg*, a busy shopping street in the city centre, the lady who owns the flower stall has got her permit revoked because in their eyes of the city officials, she is spoiling the image of the street. A few meters up the road the snack-bar with an enormous soda-can attached to it recently saw its permit renewed. Apparently, this contraption represents less of a problem to the city officials' perception of what does and doesn't spoil the image of the city. Or maybe they simply love more the smell of French fries with mayonnaise than the smell of fresh flowers in the morning. Who knows, what it does show however is that such practices reveal the '*aesthetics of authority*', a rather personal ideological perception of space that can be expressed through the use of power (Ferrell 1996: 178; Lefebvre 1991).



THE 12-MONTH RULE:

In 1993, with the introduction of the *Huisvestingswet* (Housing Law), the squatting of a building that had not been empty for more than 12 consecutive months was criminalized. The initiators believed that 12 months would be enough for the owner to take the vacant property into use again. However, structural vacancy continued to exist, and squatting survived with it. The fact that the vast majority of the squatters indeed only squat property that has been empty for this amount of time is something the moral entrepreneurs describe as a sign of professionalization of squatters, who supposedly actively keep count of the amount of vacant property. Therefore they wish to criminalize squatting and, to borrow a phrase from Presdee, 'dam up the holes, and fill the cracks, criminalizing as it does and making punishable the previously unpunishable' (ibid. 2000: 9). Interestingly enough, many squatters have always seen this 12-month rule as the golden rule by which the game is played:

I believe that ... you have to give the owner at least a year the time to put someone up in his property. Myself, I wouldn't be that eager to squat buildings that have not been empty for more than a year. I believe it's fair, I mean you can't expect someone to always be able to immediately find a new tenant (Katja – March 9, 2010).

Dieter adds that he even believes one year is often not enough for the owner to find a new use for the property. Still, most squatters believe that the 12 month term is a fair term, because you do have to give the owner some time to find another destination for the property. Squatting is therefore often explained by squatters as a tool of external pressure, a possible threat to the owner that if he does not want his property to fall 'victim' to squatters, then he had better take care of it.

PREPARATION: THE KEY TO THE CASTLE

If we accept the act of squatting as a means by which people can take back a semblance of control, than in order to get in control a certain amount of preparation is necessary. For beginning squatters, this boils down to visiting the local KSU and read documents like the *Kraakhandleiding* (squatting guide). These guides, that freely circulate the internet, are full of tips and pointers on how the inexperienced squatter can successfully squat vacant property. It covers everything from how to select a space, how to establish if the property has been empty for more than 12 months, when to squat, what tools you need, what new lock you should buy, with how many people you should squat, how to contact the police and the owner, and even how you can barricade the premises⁴⁹. More than serving an instrumental goal, being prepared allows squatters to be in control over the situation, otherwise you will allow the owner or the police to take over control and things will inevitably go wrong, as Haakon describes:

Bert taught me 'the workings of the craft'. How to break a door, how to talk to the police, how to go inside, basically everything. You have to learn it, you have to cross a certain boundary. It is a boundary, breaking open a door, putting in a new lock and facing the police while saying 'listen up, I squatted this place' ... You always have to remain calm, make sure that you have everything black on white, what part of the law applies to the situation. For instance the 24-hour agreement, that has already been abolished six years ago, some still bring that up. So when I squat I always make sure that I have everything on paper, so when they claim something I can just show them it's not correct and they can read it themselves ... I did squat without preparation, but that's bound to go wrong because when the police

⁴⁹ For the Rotterdam squatting manual see <http://rotterdam.squat.net/images/kraakhandleiding-rdam.pdf>

shows up you don't know what to say. If you really want to live there, then you have to be well prepared (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

Preparation often means that the act of squatting takes place with more than one person. The moral entrepreneurs see in this the organized element of squatting and therefore decided to raise the punishment for squatting in organization with others, which is higher than for a squatter that squats by him or herself. Robin, one of the squatters I met during the demo on the 18th of May 2010 in The Hague was extremely irritated by this type of argumentation and argued:

How else are you gonna you squat? I mean, you have to bring a crowbar, than you also need a bed, a table and a fucking chair to create domestic peace. You can't see anything because it is night, so then you're standing there with all this stuff, how is that possible? And even if you manage to get in, how will you defend yourself against the police who will try to talk you out, or worst, some pissed-off owner who pays you a visit with his bouncer-boy? It's impossible (Robin – May 18, 2010).

Of course, there are squatters who manage to squat on their own, but the argument that it is smart to have some back-up is of course a valid one and one that is aimed at making sure the work you do will not be done in vain. It does however deserve to be mentioned that generally speaking, squatters from Rotterdam are very satisfied with the way the police handles squatting. They often feel protected by the police, which is logical when we realize that squatting can often evoke strong emotions, also on the side of the owner:

I also squatted from private owners, and those private guys would be glad to cram a stick in between my skull, but the district officer just said to him 'you better start acting normal, this guy is just living here and is keeping it clean' (Haakon – May 21, 2010).

Few owners/corporations will be happy to learn that their property has been squatted and would rather see the squatters leave the same day. Similar to what Howard Becker described in his study of the Jazz-musicians and 'the square', starting a conflict with the property owner can therefore be tricky, since the owner of the property is in the strongest position to get his or her way (Becker 1963: 89). Many squatters therefore realize that if they want to stay in the squatted property, they will at least have to try to create a workable situation and therefore have to try to get on the owner's good side as much as possible:

If you want to move around in such a world, then you have to inform yourself on the ins and outs. So you HAVE to try to get in contact with the owner. Even when the owner doesn't want it, you have to try it. I always say, start a charm-offensive, you always need to show your good side to 'those people', otherwise you're giving them an incentive to be against you. As long as you are open and you're trying to talk to them, then they might even say ok, maybe we can figure something out (Joeri – May 20, 2010).

Being prepared increases the squatters change to be in control of the conflict, or at least allows him to come across as a well-taught and reasonable person. For owners, this can come as quite a shock as I witnessed myself when I was attending the first meeting between Sim and the property manager who came to discuss the situation on behalf of the owner. Joeri, who was also present during the meeting, indeed started his charm-offensive. Offering the property manager a cup of coffee, explaining why they squatted the building and reassuring the manager about their good intentions, it

all serves a clear purpose on making sure that they will have the least possible reason to be against you. Of course, it will not always work out like this. Some squatters do not go through the trouble to inform the owner, and some owners do not go through the trouble to visit the squatter and just start a procedure. However, the initial aim is indeed to take away the conflict situation, or as another squatter quite recently explained it to me:

You have to treat them like the unsatisfied customer you know. They come in angry, and you just try to make them leave with a smile on their face, haha or at least a bit calmer [he smiles]. There's no use in pissing them off, they will just make life more miserable for you if you do (Anonymous - July 26, 2010).

Preparation, following certain codes of conduct, starting a charm offensive, it all seems to serve the purpose of being in control of the situation and trying to keep the owner off your case. Documents like the *Kraakhandleiding*, advice from the KSU or from the more experienced squatter thus seem to serve the purpose of carrying out the 'deviant activity with a minimum amount of trouble' (Becker 1963: 39). As Becker found in his study of the Jazz musicians, all the possible problems and obstacles they can possibly face by transgressing the moral and cultural boundaries 'have been faced before by others' and 'solutions have been worked out' (ibid. 39). The *Kraakhandleiding* undeniably proves that this can also be argued for squatting. Kim Dovey argues that invisibility is important to those who are involved with acts that will possibly be disapproved of and therefore invisibility operates as a means of protecting themselves and their cultural practices within (Dovey 2010). As I have just described, this invisibility, or silent acceptance is certainly important to squatters who wish to reside in a building without encountering too much problems. It pays to remain under the radar of the formal agents of control, which may of course prove difficult when you squat the property of either a private person or a housing corporation. Some squatters therefore go through a lot of trouble to keep their cultural practices invisible to the authorities. For instance, in Rotterdam but also in other cities, the more 'hardcore' squatter parties are not held in the squat of residency. Such parties are organized on locations often outside of the city and in buildings that were only squatted for one single purpose: organizing a good party. These parties are not promoted publicly, but the information finds their way to insiders, most of the times only a few hours before the event and via text messages. The reason for this is of course that these parties are illegally organized events. But as Joeri suggested, these parties are also becoming harder to organize since police forces now have the ability to intercept these messages, so often they are already waiting on the spot, ready to shut the party down.

Parties in inner-city squats are also kept relatively quiet. Most events are communicated by word of mouth or you have to be on a mailing list. And even when you're on the mailing list, the organizer will often still remind you of the importance of keeping the information to yourself. The following excerpt from an invitation via email serves as a prime example of this:

AND REMEMBER:
DON'T PUT OUR ADDRESS ON THE INTERNET!
NOT ON FORUMS, MYSPACE, HYVES, FACEBOOK AND OTHER WEB SHITES
'THEY' HAVE EYES! 'THEY' READ AS WELL!
KEEP IT UNDERGROUND AND INFORM TRUSTED FRIENDS, MAKE THEM AWARE OF THIS MAILING LIST!
We don't want to get evicted or have any unnecessary dealings with police, government or other
'officials'
Remember kids: LOOSE LIPS, SINK SHIPS!

Again, the main motivation for ‘keeping it underground’ seems to be the fear of exposure and for the cultural practices to become visible to the ‘officials’. Such warnings thus serve to protect the cultural practices and the squat itself. Such cultural practices have a lot in common with Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the *second life*, a life that is characterized by ‘freedom, equality and abundance’ (Bakhtin 1984: 9; quoted in Presdee 2000: 9). Presdee described how this second life is essential to our understanding of the *carnival of crime*: ‘The expression of the second life of the people is performed and brought to life through carnival, which becomes for rational society understood as no more or less than the carnival of crime’ (Presdee 2000: 9). The second life is therefore better off when kept invisible, if possible. In other words, the self-constructed bar, the live performances, the 50 cent beers, and one-hundred people gathered under one roof might represent real life to squatters, but in the eyes of the authorities all of this simply represents a stream of license and building violations and will therefore be labeled illicit or criminal behavior.

Still, it would be a mistake to take this as evidence for arguing that squatting is always rational or utilitarian, although I am by no means claiming that there are no squatters who squat out of such motives. Yet for many others, squatting is resistance; socially, economically, politically, for squatters the squat is the logical place to look for that semblance of control over your own life. Now the reason that squatters read vacant spaces in terms of these possibilities becomes understandable when we look at Hudson and Shaw’s description of the vacant space. To them, these spaces ‘exist in contrast to the clearly defined, rigidly programmed and aesthetically and socially controlled spaces of the core city in which, it can be argued, identities are constantly fixed and differences erased, and the chances of alternative social practices are limited’ (ibid. 2007: 3). This mirrors the true cultural significance and symbolism of the squat.

A SHORT NOTE ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ROTTERDAM AND AMSTERDAM

But whereas squatters from the Rotterdam-scene seem to focus on ‘squatting by the book’, other cities with a more active squat-history like Amsterdam or Utrecht often claim that squatters from Rotterdam are not activist enough. This image is shared by squatters from across the border. When visiting the Rozbrat squat in Poznan, Polish squatter Ruda explained to me that she used to squat for a while in Rotterdam, but she found the squat-scene ‘too soft’ for her taste and therefore spent most of her time in Utrecht or Amsterdam. According to squatters from cities with a more activist past, squatters from Rotterdam are often perceived as ‘softies’.

In their turn, squatters from Rotterdam are often annoyed with squatters from Amsterdam. According to Bert, the difference between Rotterdam and Amsterdam is that squatters from Amsterdam do not play by the rules. He explains how they use the 12-month term to justify their actions, but when a court then rules that they have to leave at some point they do not listen. Bert finds this extremely irritating and describes this behavior as self-righteous. In his personal opinion, when you accept the 12-month rule you should also accept the other rules that are part of it, which means leaving when the court tells you to leave. For some, this suggested self-righteousness of Amsterdam squatters compromises what squatting is about. In Amsterdam, squatting happens with the help of the local KSU. They demand that new squatters actively participate in the squat-scene, which functions as a selection mechanism to filter out the ‘undeserving’ squatter (Van Gemert et al. 2009). In Amsterdam, the KSU therefore has a lot of power with the ability to allocate vacant property. This strange twist of events sends off the impression that the KSU in Amsterdam functions more like their own housing corporation, with the power to decide who is allowed to squat. Haakon experienced this first hand, when he decided to squat a vacant building in Amsterdam:

One time I squatted in Amsterdam ... and there you have squatters against squatters. I squatted a building and all of the sudden some guys from the local KSU came by asking questions:

KSU: *Who are you guys?*

Haakon: *We squatted this building, who are you?*

KSU: *You have to consult this with us!*

Haakon: *Why? Is this your building then?*

So we got into an argument, and in the end we just decided to leave.

Of course, we have to realize that Amsterdam is the capital of squatting, having to deal with more negative imagery and stereotypes than any other city. As Dieter argued, squatting in Amsterdam is centrally organized and there is more social control amongst squatters. In Rotterdam, 70% of squatting happens outside the KSU. As Angelo, one of the volunteers at the KSU of Rotterdam explained that in Rotterdam the KSU functions more as a place where you can go if you need assistance or information. However, squatting in Rotterdam relies more on self-help and using existing social networks of friends and colleagues. So although squatters from the Rotterdam scene do not approve of the tactics employed by squatters from Amsterdam, they do understand that the pressures are higher. As Katja explains, the climate in Amsterdam is incomparable to any place else:

The climate is just very different. Amsterdam organizes forced evacuations. That doesn't happen here. There you HAVE to resist, because they evict you while nothing happens with that building. There's also less to choose from, while in Rotterdam so many building stand vacant. So the climate under which people squat is just very different, which means that people will also act differently. Who know, if I would have started out in Amsterdam I probably would have been more activist myself too (Katja – March 9, 2010)

The claim that Rotterdam does not have much of a squat scene is often echoed in the research on squatting. It is said that squatting in Rotterdam barely exists or the city is simply not mentioned at all (see for example Renooy 2008). The Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill does not talk about squatting in Rotterdam at all (whereas Amsterdam is connected to squatting 14 times). From this point of view it is of course strange to realize that the moral entrepreneurs locate the source of the 'problem' in Amsterdam, but create a law that will take effect in the entire country. As Hayward argues, 'ignoring such components of urban locales – what makes them local spaces and not just segments of grid space – can lead to serious policy errors' (Hayward 2004: 142). Squatting in Amsterdam is quite obviously not the same to squatting in Rotterdam. Squatters in Rotterdam lead relatively anonymous lives (Dossier de Krakende Stad 2009: 2). Also, the city of Amsterdam organizes around three big forced evacuation rounds a year, executed by the riot police. Such events of course generate a lot of media attention (Renooy 2008: 62). 'Such forced evacuation rounds are unknown to Rotterdam', I was told by Katja, 'here, squats are mostly cleared on a voluntary basis or after a private conversation with the owner'. Also, Rotterdam counts only one 'famous' squat, *het Poortgebouw*, which is actually a free-space since it was legalized already years ago.

This does not however mean that squatting does not exist in Rotterdam. In an open letter that was send to the local authorities on November 12 of 2009, a group of Rotterdam squatters stress that there are in fact many active squatters in the city. According to them, in the areas of Rotterdam-North, West, the city centre and Crooswijk alone there are already more than 150 squats known to them. The squats are spread over 50 streets and approximately 400 people live out their daily lives in these squats. They furthermore stress the fact that this is merely 'the tip of the iceberg' since they

themselves do not know all the squatters in Rotterdam, which has to do with the fact that there is no internal organization that keeps count on how many squats there are and, more importantly, because squatting is a 'dynamic culture' where people move around a lot. The KSU confirms this number, and estimates the amount of squats to range between '200 and 600 on any given moment' (Dossier de Krakende Stad 2009: 9). The initiators of the open letter therefore criticize Rotterdam's lack of interest in 'their' squatters because according to them, by doing so they disregard the fact that there is a big group of people who are possibly facing serious consequences once the law will become effective.

This short discussion of differences between Rotterdam and Amsterdam does shine some light on the perceived effectiveness of remaining invisible. Although not being visible, or not being perceived as a deviant might offer the squatter a chance to stay longer in the same building without too much conflict with the owner or the local authorities, it also presents the problem that the initiators of the letter pointed out. Kim Dovey describes that this is one of the dilemma's people who wish to remain invisible often face; they can become trapped by this invisibility, because this 'invisibility enables residents to be left alone and enables the state to abrogate responsibility' (Dovey 2010: 84). This is exactly what the initiators of the open letter stress but fail to recognize that they themselves are also responsible for this, since they are the ones who have willfully accepted this invisibility.

This wish for invisibility or to be left alone is sometimes taken to the extent. I myself have experienced how hard it sometimes is to be trusted as an outsider, something that I have shortly addressed in chapter 1. There are indeed squatters who have a hard time trusting outsiders. As Joeri explains, this can take paranoid proportions, as some will intentionally try to put outsiders on the wrong track:

Yeah they are. Some people are so paranoid and will not give you their first name, or they will give you a false name. Some will lie in order to put you on a wrong track, things like that... Also now because of the possible criminalization, for instance that you get a letter from the local authorities with an invitation that says 'please come by the opening of this exhibition', while you are thinking shit, I have to leave even before you opened the letter. When someone knocks at the door you often think 'shit it's the OBR, what do they want now?' (Joeri – May 20, 2010).

Kaz explained how this can have negative consequences for the way squatting is perceived by society. According to her, it is extremely important to keep the dialogue open. From this point of view squatters are themselves of course also responsible for maintaining the façade, allowing only a small part to be visible. This attempt to keep outsiders out was also described by Becker in his study of the Jazz musicians. Becker explains how the Jazzmen label outsiders as *squares*, referring to those outsiders who are incapable of understanding their world (Becker 1963). The square is to be kept out at all times, which for instance resulted in setting up the instruments in such a manner that it became hard for outsiders to reach the Jazzmen (ibid. 1963). Mix in some paranoia and modern day technology and a similar attempt by squatters to keep the outsider out might occur, as Bert explains:

A lot of people are paranoid ... that is also something that irritates me, when I for instance attending a meeting, 'Ok, mobile phones have to be turned off, because they can listen in on you even though you are not making a phone call!', which makes me think, who the fuck wants to listen in on us, you know, who are we that we are so important? I think they will be busier with trying to find out what of Al-Qaida

is maybe coming this way, then those few squatters that are discussing over what building to squat next' (Bert – March 25, 2010).

The problem here of course as Kaz rightfully points out is that this type of behavior, however logical it might seem, might shut out the outside world. This can strengthen 'the great power of the façade' as described by Lefebvre (ibid 1991: 99), which makes it easy for outsiders to go with the stereotypical image of what a squatter represents, an image that is rarely a positive one. This esoteric aspect of the shared culture of squatting, however small and whatever the reason for it might be is likely to strengthen already existing negative imagery associated with squatting.

CONTRADICTIONARY SPACES

However exciting squatting might look on paper, it is not a life-style without consequences. Against the advantages of having a platform to express yourself and to further your true ambitions and not having to worry about the economic strains, stands the nomadic lifestyle. Although some squatters have managed to live in the same squat for more than eight or ten years, or even longer, the majority of squatters build their lives around the notion that they will eventually have to leave again. For some this is however more a blessing than a problem. For Kaz, it is the perfect lifestyle:

I'm proud of my life as a squatter, it made me the person that I am. The nomadic character of squatting is exactly what I find so appealing about the lifestyle; it's something that I guess has always been a part of me. If you're stuck in one place for too long, you tend to get too comfortable. I take that as a signal, that it is time to start looking ahead again and move on (Kaz – April 21, 2010).

For others, this lack of stability and knowing that the door you are closing behind you on a daily basis is not actually your door can create a feeling of restlessness which makes them realize that the freedom that comes with squatting is relative, as Joeri explains:

The freedom [of squatting: TH] is relative. For instance, if you want to go somewhere for a while, for whatever reason, than you can't just leave because you don't know what will happen to your place during that period. Will it be re-squatted or will the owner come and take it over? What will happen to your stuff, will your stuff be safe? (Joeri – May 20, 2010).

Johan also explains freedom as a rather relative term, which seems to wear off more and more as the time goes by. Johan has been squatting since 1998, and in his own words, he believes the time has come for 'more consistency and control over the place of residency'. Johan is becoming tired of living life out of a box. He points towards his bookshelf, which is easy to take apart and ready to be moved to the next location. Johan explains to me that he would like to have a nice bookshelf to put all his books in, and that he can be the one to decide when they will come off the shelf again. According to him, it's the 'trade off' you make, something that comes with the lifestyle. This is of course one of the problems when place of habitat and transgression, or resistance are gathered under the same roof. Squatters might be able to circumnavigate their way around the control and predictability of the everyday life in the city, but their *use* is at least visible to the outside world, and therefore it is also condemnable (Doherty 2004; Tonnelat 2007). From this point of view it becomes understandable that for many, living in a constant state of possible conflict becomes less and less exciting as time moves on. Many of them would like nothing more than to build something up that they can call their

own, closing behind them a door that belongs to them. Still, many squatters will say that you accept these disadvantages when you choose this lifestyle, and that this by no means outweighs the more positive aspects of squatting. Similar to Ferrell's study of the urban scrounger, where the homeless take the freedom of the shopping cart over doing work for minimum wage at WalMart (Ferrell 2004: 178), the squatter often takes the freedom of the squat over the chokehold of rent. Regardless of the motivation, it is hard to deny that for the last 40 years squatting has unequivocally proved that alternative uses and destinations, different ways of being in the city, are indeed imaginable.

But still, control and freedom are never absolute, especially not when interest-groups like the moral entrepreneurs behind the anti-squatting bill try to impose their top-down vision of the concept-city on the everyday lives of the city-dwellers, designing out the unwanted and offensive features that to others simply represents a way of life. Therefore, squatting often functions more as an intermediate stage than as an ultimate destination. Sim told me about one of these possible ultimate destinations, showing how squatting sometimes allows squatters to save up enough money necessary to create a more stable life for themselves:

I've got a couple of friends who just bought a house just up the road in *Delfshaven*, who were squatters before and from the rent they saved, they put it aside and bought a house ... so instead of paying rent they pay a mortgage. I mean, you get a house out of it right? (Sim – April 14, 2010).

There are more squatters who share this vision of squatting as a temporary lifestyle. For Bert, this has always been the function of squatting. To him it was never meant to be a permanent life-style, rather it functions more as a buffer zone where the marginalized find something to hold onto and allows them to eventually integrate back into society:

It's a temporary solution. My idea has always been, I squat as long as I study, then I will find a job and will buy a house of my own (Bert – March 25, 2010).

As Tonnelat suggests, for those who move through space without a clear destination, vacant buildings come to represent 'a practical occasion for a change in a course of action' (ibid. 2008: 304). For squatters like Bert, squatting allows for a form of upwards mobility in life that would be impossible for him to realize without squatting. For others, it functions as a social safety-net saving them from ending up at the bottom of society. The conflict becomes a 'trade-off' that most squatters are therefore happy to make. Squats, as spaces that float somewhere between control and conflict, transgression and resistance, illicit behavior and social security, represent spaces that quite literally 'stabilize, and still, exist through instability' (Cupers and Miessen 2006: 4).

CONCLUSION

A city which is dominated by monofunctionalism is a repressive city. Some residents may find safety and comfort in such a city. Yet a city, in order to evolve, must also incorporate difference (Papastergiadis 2002: 51).

Central to this chapter was an ethnographic account of the shared culture of squatting in the city of Rotterdam, combined with important data I gathered through (non-)participatory observations and my individual walks through the city. In order to allow you, the reader, to share at least partly in this experience, I have decided to incorporate some of the visual imagery I have collected through the

months of active fieldwork. The primary focus of this chapter was to describe the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam in all its diversity and ambiguity, in order to allow for a more nuanced understanding of their practices. This nuanced understanding was based on *empathy*, an attempt to mentally, emotionally and experientially enter the worlds of the individuals I wished to understand (Goode 1974). In the end, this understanding serves as a critical reflection on the stereotypical and heterogeneous image the moral entrepreneurs exacerbated in order to demonize squatters as the 'Other' and to disconnect squatting from the more broader social problems that exist within society.

This is however not to say that squatters are innocent bystanders in the social construction of squatting. Like the moral entrepreneurs, they engage in the conflict on their own terms and although vast power inequalities do exist between them, the act of squatting and the criminalization of squatting are impossible to separate (Becker 1963; Ferrell 1996). As we have seen squatters themselves can also play an active part in the process of Othering by intentionally keeping outsiders out, in order to remain invisible or simply because they wish to be left alone.

By describing the daily lives and the lived experiences of squatters in Rotterdam, I attempted to at least partly reveal the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam, a *cultural house* where different rooms are squatted by people from all different cultural and sub-cultural backgrounds. It therefore fits well the cultural criminological view on culture, where 'culture is seen as a hive of creativity, an arena of magical solutions where symbols are bricolaged into lifestyles, a place of identity and discovery and, above all, a site of resistance' (Hayward and Young 2005: 2). Squatters share a certain set of values and ideas of what should be possible (Hall and Jefferson 1993), which leads to a shared understanding of the cultural meaning and the symbolism of the squat, and the possibilities it has to offer them.

In this chapter I have tried to describe the cultural meaning and symbolism of the squat and the act of squatting itself. We have seen how squatting allows individuals to take a semblance of control and to break free from the everyday insecurities and restraints that the 'official' life confronts them with. Through a renegotiation of those 'established' norms and codes of modernity' (Hayward 2004: 154) the transgressive act of squatting becomes the place where control can be taken, excitement can be felt and expression of one's true individuality is possible. The vacant building offers individuals a space where they can try out numerous identities and experiment with different ways of being in the city (Jorgensen and Tylecote 2007). The symbolic value of the squat can thus be found in the fact that it represents a space where alternative actions and arrangements become possible. Therefore, squatting functions as a safety-net, 'a form of direct social and economic action' that allows people to keep 'a certain independent dignity' (Ferrell 2004: 178). This makes it hard for squatters to accept that squatting has been criminalized, because for them it is not so much a simple transgressive act more than it is their true identity that is being labeled as criminal. For many squatters, the criminalization of squatting is therefore perceived as an act of 'cultural criminalization' (Ferrell 1998).

Through their different perception of the urban environment and its wasted spaces, squatters also resist the technocratic and economic reading the officials often have of these spaces. A reading that claims that all spaces should stick to their original function, but also the fact that the urban environment is often analyzed and judged in terms of costs and benefits. The alternative readings turned reality can therefore understood as an act of cultural resistance. This resistance can originate out of the belief that property comes with a social responsibility to make vacant space available and affordable to everyone, This of course diametrically opposes the moral entrepreneurs' definition of property rights as an absolute right. This does not however mean that squatters themselves do not

have any responsibilities of their own. Many squatters believe that they have to live by certain codes of conduct. Of course, this can also serve the purpose of staying in control and staying in the squat. For the squatters, invisibility therefore also operates as a means of protecting themselves and their cultural practices within (Dovey 2010). Also, because of the instability of the lifestyle, for many squatting functions as a temporary buffer zone that allows them to live life the way they seem fit until they can provide for a more stable lifestyle. Squatting thus allows for upward mobility in life, a way to escape being defined and restrained by one's original location (Morrison 1995). In all it's instability, squatting seems offers an opportunity to eventually lead a more stable life.

We are beginning to see that shared culture of squatting represents a lifestyle full of diversity, but also of complexity and ambiguity. Squatting is an integral part to the diversity of city life and represents one of many different ways of being in the city. According to Papastergiadis, such different ways of being are important for a city if it wishes to evolve (ibid. 2002). If anything, I hope I have been able to describe that squatting can by no means be reduced to an instrumental choice of wanting to live for free on the best possible location, although such simple motivations undeniably exist. However, by criminalizing squatting, the moral entrepreneurs deny the existence of diversity and the deeper lying social causes that are often connected to the act of squatting. By doing so, the transgressive act of squatting is disconnected from its expressive nature. As we will see in the final chapter, by imposing rationalising rubrics like the criminalization of squatting, they deny that a more nuanced understanding of squatting is possible. It is my assumption that denying the possibility of more progressive solutions, simply condemning the perceived immorality of squatters and labelling it as criminal behaviour, that will provoke squatters to respond with heightened emotionality. As Hayward already suggested before me, such a respond will only provoke more repression on the side of the authorities (Hayward 2004).

5

RESISTING THE CRIMINAL LABEL

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, crime is as much about emotions – hatred, anger, frustration, excitement and love – as it is about poverty, possessing and wealth. In a society such as ours where emotion stands against the rational and material world, those without wealth are left only with the world of emotions to express their hurts, their injustices and their identity. Their transgression, arising as they do from this world of emotions, are as a consequence seeped in emotive elements (Presdee 2000: 4)

The purpose of this final chapter is to describe how the process of criminalization can evoke both creative and emotional reactions on the side of those who face criminalization. A little over seven months was all it took for the anti-squatting bill to get passed by the House of Representatives on October 15 2009, and to be accepted by the Senate on June first, 2010. In those seven months, squatters used both their creativity and emotionality to express their grievances against the criminalization of squatting. As I have described in chapter 3, squatters themselves have often referred to the ban on squatting as an act of ‘cultural criminalization’, arguing that the moral entrepreneurs did not seem to take any interest in the facts, not even when they were presented by the legal authorities or criminological research (i.e. Van Gemert et al. 2009). In many ways squatters have refused to accept the criminal label, through deploying various tactics that can also be described as forms of cultural resistance. But a change have seem to occurred somewhere along the line. From my conversations with squatters, there were few that really believed that the anti-squatting bill would ever get passed by the Senate. The resistance that they offered against the criminalization of squatting was therefore characterized more by creativity rather than outright emotionality. However, with the passing of the anti-squatting bill on that first of June 2010, many gave up the creative outline of defense. The tone seem to have gotten harder and as one squatter said to me on that very day that I visited The Hague, with somewhat of an painful smile on his face, ‘we’re back at throwing toilet bowls’ (Anonymous – June first, 2010). It goes to show how their cultural resistance became more and more emotionally fuelled as the criminalization started to close in on the squatters, and finally caught up with them. So while the anti-squatting bill is a testimony to the rationalization and sanitization of the urban environment, attempting to reestablish control over those spaces that do not do as they are told, attempting to deter individuals by imposing stricter laws and hefty sentences, the outcome seems to be quite the opposite. As I will describe through following some of the actions squatters have been taking, the response does not seem to be ‘rational compliance, but rather heightened emotionality’ (Presdee 2000; quoted in Hayward 2004: 167).

In this chapter, I will therefore look into some of the reactions squatters have positioned against the criminalization of squatting, describing how squatters in a strange mixture of creativity and emotions have tried to resist the imagery of the moral entrepreneurs. Revealing the expressive nature of this resistance will allow for a ‘*criminological verstehen*’ of the way in which squatters use symbolism and style to express their emotional outrage towards the criminalization of their cultural practice (Ferrell and Sanders 1995). Through a description of some of the important ways in which squatters from Rotterdam and other parts of the Netherlands have tried to resist criminalization, and by describing how that feeling of standing with your back against the wall can evoke a heightened emotional response, I hope to support my assumption that the criminalization of squatting will in all likelihood not be followed by rational compliance but that it will only shatter the possibility for an open dialogue with people who are trying to find out new ways of being in the city. The door that was already being watched will now simply slam shut.

‘PROMOTING’ THE POSITIVE SIDE

Much like the moral entrepreneurs, squatters themselves of course use symbolic and stylistic strategies of their own to exemplify the positive aspects of squatting. Similar to the strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs, they also target the *outsider*, that member of the ‘normal’ consensual culture. But whereas the moral entrepreneurs are busy to purge impurities on the squatters in order to wall them off, squatters use strategies that are aimed to break that wall down (Gitlin 1995). While the moral entrepreneurs are busy inventing new strategies that show the harm squatting causes to our society, squatters are busy inventing strategies aimed at showing society all the contributions they made and that were beneficiary to society as a whole. Of course, this struggle over representation is extremely skewed, because where the moral entrepreneurs have the possible means to simply eliminate the threat of squatting, squatters might at best be able to safeguard some form of continued existence under the contemporary social arrangements. As scholars like Howard Becker in *Outsiders* and Jock Young in *The Drugtakers* already noticed, this difference is rooted in ‘power differentials’ between the two groups (Becker 1963: 17; Young 1971). It is therefore no surprise that these differences in power also lead to differences in strategies, and whereas the moral entrepreneurs can afford to rely on their image of politicians that are trying to realize what is best for the country, squatters will have to rely more on their creativity in order to ‘convince’ the general public of the necessity of squatting. I will discuss a few of the strategies that were followed prior to and in the course of the criminalization process.

BANNERS, BOOKS and PETITIONS

A few years back on June 12 2006 *het landelijk actiecomité tegen het kraakverbod* (National Committee against the Criminalization of Squatting) started a national banner campaign to show how much vacant property was rescued by squatting. These banners were hung from over 150 buildings in almost 15 cities and read ‘made possible by the Squatters Movement’⁵⁰. In the Netherlands, some of the most important cultural institutions are initiated by squatters. For instance, the two major music stages *Melkweg* and *Paradiso* in Amsterdam, *Tivoli* in Utrecht and the former music stage of Rotterdam, *Nighttown* were in fact all squatters’ initiatives (see plate 13). These undeniable positive aspects of squatting are often conveniently ‘forgotten’ by the moral entrepreneurs. By hanging up life-size banners from these cultural institutions, squatters were able to subvert the critique that squatters only steal and trash buildings into an in-your-face insight that squatting can also keep the city diverse. Such actions relate to the concept of *détournement*, ‘a turning of everyday understanding back on itself’ (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 198). As seen in the previous chapters, scholars like Henri Lefebvre have been known to criticize the notion that the users of space are somehow incapable of inventing new forms of living and that this should be left in the hands of the decision-makers (Lefebvre 2003). These simple acts *détournement* express a similar critique, in a playful, creative and non-violent manner.

⁵⁰ A more comprehensive description of this campaign can be found on <http://www.krakengaatdoor.nl/>



Plate 13: the banner 'made possible by the Squatters' Movement' (www.indymedia.nl)

A group of squatters from Rotterdam also actively participated in a similar act of *détournement*. In chapter 3 I have already shortly mentioned the Black-book Squatting written by VVD councillor Bas van 't Wout (ibid. 2008), a book that was to inform the public on the dangers of squatting and a public support for the criminalization of squatting. A group of squatters, ex-squatters and sympathizer to the cause decided to come up with a counter-reaction which they quite logically called *het Witboek Kraken*⁵¹ (White Book Squatting). This book, which was published on January 15 2009, gives an oversight of 35 cases concerning squatting and describes close to 80 personal stories. Newspaper *De Volkskrant* wrote the following about this book:

Whereas the Black-book largely gets stuck in non-verifiable casuistry, the White-book mentions every address and above all provides a broader perspective (*De Volkskrant*, February 20, 2009).

As the paper mentions, the white-book is able to offer a broader perspective. Dieter, one of the Rotterdam squatters who actively participated in the making of this book, explains that this was indeed the main purpose of the white-book:

... To illuminate the more positive aspects of squatting; the buildings that were saved, the speculators that were slowed down, the cultural centres that were started up, etcetera. (Dieter - March 9, 2010).

The white-book is an example of how cultural resistance does not (always) has to be violent resistance. This simple reversal from black-book to white-book offers an alternative understanding of squatting not by launching their own smear campaign aimed against the black-book, but by revealing the lies and stereotypes through a critical analysis that disrupts the oversimplified yet comfortable stereotypical image which suggests that all squatter are criminals, that they are in fact the 'Other' that is to be feared. These acts of *détournement* are important in order to, as Dieter calls it, 'bring the balance back'. As Ferrell argues, such initiatives try to disrupt 'the stultifying stability of everyday life' (Ferrell 2006: 196). In the case of the white book, it tries to disrupt the stereotypical image of squatters as 'folk devils' that a book like the black book tries to propagate. As Jock Young describes, the notion of what constitutes a folk devil is to describe them as an enemy of all that the 'normal' consensual culture stands for. It is 'constituted by negativity – it is the black and white of moral photography' (Young 2007: 141). Initiatives like the white book are designed to counter this image and forces people to see that the moral snapshots of life are by no means as black and white as the black-book would like us to believe.

Dieter, together with Katja, Bert and Kaz and other squatters from the Rotterdam scene, also started a nation-wide petition against the criminalization of squatting over a year ago, one that people could sign online via <http://www.kraakpetitie.nl>. On the 8 of September 2009, the initiators

⁵¹ See <http://www.witboekkraken.nl>

presented the petition signed by more than 15.000 supporters to the Chamber of Representatives in The Hague. On the website the initiators claim that the criminalization of squatting will not deter people from squatting vacant buildings. This might happen at first, they argue, but in the long run squatting will continue to exist as a social phenomenon, as it does anywhere else in the world. According to them, criminalization will at most change the *character* of squatting. The study *Kraken anno 2009* already confirmed this assumption, by showing that in those countries where squatting is a criminal offence more violence and illegality is related to squatting (Van Gemert et al. 2009). Compliant rationality indeed does not seem to result from the criminalization of squatting. Kaz explained to me how they were also actively trying to generate more support for the petition. They were standing on the *Nieuwe Binnenweg* in Rotterdam trying to get more people to sign the petition. For her, it is important to be out there and to give voice to the more positive aspects of squatting. However, the petition never generated much media attention, so therefore not many people became aware of its existence. For Dieter, who worked hard on the petition, this was frustrating. According to him, the mainstream media only focused on the stereotypes and negative aspects of squatting. The petition, which can of course be understood as a symbolic strategy to generate support for their cause, was apparently not an effective enough strategy to bring back that much needed balance.

BETWEEN TALK and ACTION

Others have used their connections to organize public discussions and debates on the topic of criminalization. Bert works for the *Raad voor Kunst en Cultuur* in Rotterdam (Counsel for Art and Culture) where he frequently organizes debates on social issues concerned with life in the city. One of the debate he helped organize was *De Krakende Stad (The Squatting City)* held on November 11 2009. This debate was part of a series of debates called *van wie is de stad?* (to whom does the city belong?), concerned with the question if young and creative people in the city of Rotterdam felt a part of the city and if the local authorities did enough to include them into the city. During this debate squatters, city officials and those interested debated on the question if the city will lose touch with its creative community if squatting would be criminalized. Such debates that try to create a political awareness that squatting should not only be understood in negative terms can of course be described as a politically orientated strategy.

Others offered a more direct-action orientated response to the threat of criminalization. When the anti-squatting bill was passed by the Chamber of Representatives on October 15 2009, the wish of the moral entrepreneurs was to have squatting criminalized by January the first of 2010. In a strategic act resistance, PJ and a group of squatters squatted what came to be known as the *Punk Tower* on the first of January, making it the first act of squatting in Rotterdam of the year 2010. The message behind it was clear; If they make the promise that squatting will be criminalized on January first 2010, then we will make our own promise; that squatting will continue, ban or no ban.

THE GAZE OUTWARDS

Now many of these initiatives meant to promote the more positive aspects of squatting were not connected to each other. They functioned more as isolated islands that originated out of the already existing networks between squatters. Although this does guarantee diversity in courses of action and proves that squatters can by no means be labelled as a homogenous and organized unitary movement, it does reveal once more the power differentials I have mentioned before. But however small or 'individual' these initiatives might seem, they do have something very important in common.

First of all, they all rely on the creativity of squatters. Being disadvantaged in terms of power, these initiatives show how creativity allows individuals to resist a negative label, often by relying on visual imagery and playful acts of *détournement*. Secondly, these acts of cultural resistance all have in common they try to communicate a different perception or ideology *without* the use of violence. Lastly and most importantly, this resistance is directed *outwards*. All these initiatives try to make those outside of the squat-scene aware of the fact that squatting cannot be stereotyped only in negative terms and that squatting relates to important social issues that exist within our late modern society. Now of course, like Hans Pruijt has already argued, we must realize that squats are also people's homes and that squatters will fight off the threat of eviction in every possible way, indeed by deploying their own symbolic and stylistic strategies (Pruijt 2004). However, the point to this study is not whether these initiatives are altruistic or egoistic. The point is that as long as these initiatives are directed at the general public, it communicates to us that there is in fact still a possibility for an open dialogue. These creative and expressive initiatives serve as forms of stylistic communication, an appeal on the general public and the moral entrepreneurs to come up with a different response to squatting. Of course, squatting is too diverse to ever claim that this is the case for all squatters, because it simply is not. However, the initiatives that I have just discussed do undeniably prove that there were in fact squatters that were willing to keep an open dialogue. This appeal was however disregarded on the first of June when the Senate went ahead and passed the moral entrepreneurs codified response to squatting: 'imposing more intense forms of social control' (Hayward 2004: 166). I was there that day the bill got passed and witnessed how one squatter could not contain himself and in an emotional outburst he started yelling that squatting would continue. He was escorted out of the building by the attending police officers. No response of compliant rationality, but an outburst of frustration and emotions. Once again, the door slams shut.

THE TURNING POINT

When there are people on the other side of the room trying to wipe out your life and things are stacked against you, you can get nervous
(Jello Biafra)

During the many conversations I have had with squatters from Rotterdam, there was always some time to take a look into the future and discuss what they thought would happen if squatting would be criminalized, and what they believed this would mean for them. From the many answers I got, it was interesting to realize that squatting indeed helped these individuals to create a stable basis for identity. Some do however find it hard to accept that squatting, functioning as a social safety net, will become unavailable to those who might need it the most. Like Katja explains:

I'm not worrying about myself, but I am worrying about those people who will *not* be able to get by. Not people who are already squatting, but people who might have to use it someday ... illegal immigrants, homeless people, mothers who are abused ... former drug addicts who want to start something up again, people with debts, the elderly, all kinds of different people who are often not seen as squatters but often are in fact squatting (Katja – March 9, 2010).

In fact, many of the squatters I have talked with believe that they are inventive enough to find something else. Reminding ourselves of Mike Presdee's argument, these squatters will be able to

navigate their life through the cracks and holes in the official society, finding the unpunishable and settle down there for the time being (ibid. 2000). But similar to what the recent criminalization of squatting suggests, the authorities are eager to fill up these holes, criminalizing any form of 'unauthorized fun' taking place within the city limits (Hayward 2004: 189). Presdee referred to this rational domination of space as 'the creeping criminalization of everyday life', putting restrictions on people's everyday actions and making them feel trapped and oppressed (Presdee 2000: 159; see also Hayward 2004). This can however evoke emotional reactions on the side of the individuals who are feeling trapped and oppressed, quite possibly leading to more intense resistance. Like Kaz described it to me, 'desperate needs lead to desperate deeds'. This is something Joeri fears as well:

I think I will be able to find myself something different. But I do fear that by criminalizing squatting a big group will think, 'ok if no one wants to listen to us we'll just do it our own way', so what do you get in return? ... I think those people we'll say ok than we'll do it like in the old days, then we will squat with a group of a hundred strong, then we'll go back to the time that squatting was indeed illegal. But together you're strong, so that will create a tougher core group that we'll need to be repressed even harder (Joeri - May 20, 2010).

What I realized during these conversations more than ever, is that Hans Pruijt was right on the money by claiming that squats are simply people's homes too (Pruijt 2004). For many of them, it is therefore even harder to swallow that their life-style *and* livelihood, which provided them with the opportunity and a platform to find and express their true identity and to develop their full potential, will soon be labeled criminal. This can create some emotional and conflicting feelings, forcing people to make almost impossible choices, as PJ explained very clearly to me:

It would really strike me deep down in my heart if it would be criminalized, really. I thought about it a lot, but I would sacrifice my job for it, while, I really love my job and my colleagues, but they are trying to take something that has been a part of me for so long. So that's what it will be, it's almost an impossible choice. I don't know if I would use direct violence, but resistance, for sure. But it's still very difficult ... I still find it incomprehensible that we are just going to be eradicated. It's just so bizarre, every time I think about it, how they constructed it and what they are planning to do. It goes against so many of my principles, and norms and values (PJ – April 29, 2010).

When I went by the *Punk Tower* a few months later, I got the impression that PJ made the impossible choice after all. On the top floor in front of the window, a construction of cardboard and spray-paint formed a message that communicated to the outside world an unmistakably clear message, one that has become the leading title to the modern squatters manifesto; 'Squatting will continue' (see plate 14 on the next page). Like Joeri and PJ, Haakon fears a similar response if squatting would become criminalized:

If the squatting bill will pass, people will still continue to squat. You can't change overnight, so then it will become more aggressive, putting on the baklava, throwing bricks and toilet bowls, waiting for the riot police to come in via the roof and just burn the place down. If it has to be like that, it will be like that (Haakon - May 21, 2010).

Similar to what Joeri already suggested, Haakon too believes that criminalization will only lead to a tougher core group, which in turn will have to be repressed even harder. The criminalization of squatting seems to provoke to opposite of what it claims it wishes to achieve. Hayward explains how

this is often the case when new 'rational' and repressive laws are introduced. Instead of rational compliance, it creates a spiraling effect where the rational logics of a law are resisted by emotional transgression, in turn demanding more rational and repressive measures in a desperate attempt to contain the problem (Hayward 2004). Presdee described the consequences of this spiraling process vividly:

In this way the powerless put into place the last link in the logic of being powerless by doing what is expected of them by both the powerful and the powerless (ibid 2000: 25).

Squatters have started doing what is expected of them. No more banners, no more white-books and no more debates. As I will describe below, only now we are beginning to witness how squatters are beginning to lose their faith in the usefulness of demonstrating or sending off positive signals to society. Personally, I doubt that this loss of faith will somehow magically result in squatters saying to each other that it's been fun, but now it's over. More likely the emotions are still running strong, only not through the streets and onto the square, but they are being contained in the squat, behind closed door. Of course, this is all just guess work since no actual confrontations have yet occurred. But if we can assume that the emotions discussed above (and below) are real, then denying their existence and their possible consequences would be the most ignorant thing to do. Like Joeri, Haakon, PJ and so many others have explained to me, the most likely thing to happen is that some will give up the struggle, others will wait and see, but some will fight off evacuation with all they got. To borrow a phrase from Dick Hebdige, they will throw themselves away before they will give the authorities the change to do it for them (ibid. 1988).



Plate 14: The former Punk Tower, even in vacancy it still communicates a clear and emotional message: KRAKEN GAAT DOOR (SQUATTING WILL CONTINUE).

PLANNING THE NEXT MOVE

The Sunday after the anti-squatting bill officially got passed by the Senate, a meeting was organized in Rotterdam for squatters, by squatters. I was surprised to see all these faces I had never seen prior to that Sunday. I was even more surprised by the fact that half of the squatters present also did not seem to know each other. It became apparent that, at least in Rotterdam, squatting was far from organized. The meeting was supposed to change this, trying to lay the basis for creating a network between squatters in Rotterdam in order to offer a more organized form of resistance against the possible consequences of criminalization. Numerous courses of actions were discussed, and the idea was to form workgroups that all focused on a specific task; a legal team, an information/media team, a political team, but also groups that would be focusing on effective protection and barricading squats or trying to get around the law by for instance squatting land instead of buildings. And in an interesting twist of events, that what the moral entrepreneurs claimed was already the case, only now starts to become a reality; the resistance is becoming more organized. Of course, this might not be a problem for the moral entrepreneurs at all, since the only answer they would have to come up with is 'I told you so'. Still, the meeting itself was anything but organized, and the emotional outbursts ruled over the more rational arguments. More meetings have been taking place ever since in order to develop a steady course of action. It diametrically opposed the notion that rational laws will generate rational compliance. It also opposed the explanation of the act of squatting in terms of rationality, being instrumentally orientated. If this was to be the case, the threat of criminalization and imprisonment should deter people instead of giving them an incentive to organize. In other words, this supports my assumption that squatting is an act that is indeed expressive in nature. Squatters will continue to squat, ban or no ban. Only with the process of criminalization having reached its goal, the possibility of an open dialogue between squatters and the authorities have drastically diminished, while the emotions are only getting higher. Indeed, people who feel like they are being cornered, pushed with their backs against the wall, can get nervous.

MANIFESTO

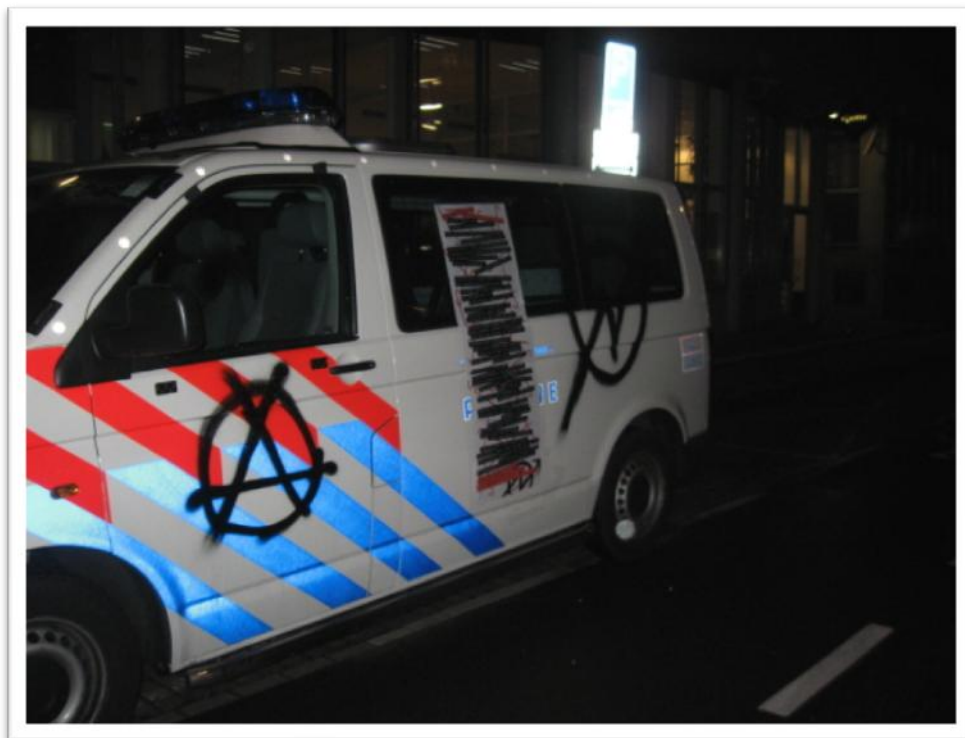
The week prior to the passing of the anti-squatting bill by the Senate, close to 2000 posters were distributed to squat groups from all over the Netherlands. These posters were to be attached to the buildings of known (to squatters) slumlords, speculators, anti-squat agencies, real estate agencies and as we can see, the occasional squad-car (see plate 15). This poster is interesting for the simple reason that it is more than just a poster; it is a manifesto, an attack on the more conventional understandings of everyday life (see plate 16). And as one of the initiators explains on www.indymedia.nl, the time to attack has come:

De poster is not necessarily meant as a protest against the ban on squatting. For starters, because lobbying is in our opinion lobbying not (longer) effective: We have let ourselves be pushed into the defense for long enough! It's time for us to attack, and let it be heard that squatting will continue, law or no law, until the housing problem is solved. That we will not stop before slumlords and speculators are declared criminals. That we will continue to create free spaces as long as there are not enough of them. It is time to show that we as a movement will not budge, and that we will continue to squat, until every vacant space is put to use (Anonymous – May 28, 2010).

Undoubtedly, such imagery can and will be used by the moral entrepreneurs to their own benefit in order to further strengthen the placement of squatting in a threatening context, as direct attack on

private property (Ferrell 1996). However, such oversimplified readings, however justified they might be, will inevitably blind us to the cultural and symbolic significance of this imagery and allows for the poster to be torn down before anyone ever fully realized what it is trying to communicate to us. It is therefore my belief that it is of importance to this study that I will shortly discuss the meaning of this cultural document.

As Hayward, Ferrell and Young describe, a manifesto is a 'declaration of purpose and intent, a statement of how things are and how they should be, a call to analysis and action' (ibid. 2008: 205). And if the history of squatting in the Netherlands has taught us anything, than it is that denying such a declaration will only strengthen the basis for more organized and emotionally charged actions⁵². Therefore, such actions should not only be condemned and seen as acts of anarchy and chaos, but they should also be taken serious because of the message they are trying to get across. This manifesto signals a more organized, emotional response of squatters to the criminalization campaign of the political authorities. It is the opposite response to what the moral entrepreneurs hoped for, although I seriously doubt that even they did not expect this. And so the criminalization-process seems to be the culprit in creating exactly what it claims to counter; an organized Squatters' Movement that is getting ready for to attack. It shows how squatters are once again willing to organize in their cultural resistance and employ 'subversive political strategies' in order to get their message across (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 18). We are starting to witness some of the consequences of what can happen when the underlying social problems that can lead to acts of transgression are denied any part in the process of criminalization, blinding the moral entrepreneurs and preventing them from coming up with more progressive solutions. By not acknowledging the expressive character of squatting in the first place, images like the one below are now again becoming reality.



Plate

15: The

⁵² For a more detailed and extremely insightful description on this history, I would like to refer you to Eric van Duivenvoorden's book *Een voet tussen de deur. Geschiedenis van de kraakbeweging 1964-1999* (2000).

squad-car that has fallen victim to the manifesto - (www.indymedia.nl).

Although it is impossible to say with any certainty what will happen in the months/years following October first 2010, the official date that the law will come into force, a few assumption can be made. Bare in mind that these assumption, although voiced and supported by both supporters and opponents of the bill, are not based upon factual evidence. With the passing of the anti-squatting bill, squatting will be a criminal offence under *all* circumstances, and the so-called 12-month term will therefore become obsolete. If squatters indeed keep their promise and continue to squat vacant property, this means that *all* vacant property will become a target for squatting. After all, before or after the 12-month term, the squatter can be singled out for criminal prosecution either way. Similar to what squatters are already suggesting themselves, this will make selection of a building easier on them. Also, no effort will be made any longer to contact the police (why would you tell them you're a criminal?) or the owner, indeed killing off any possibility for an open dialogue. As we have seen in chapter 3, this will quite possibly lead to an increase in the revenues for vacant property manager, since vacant property will then have to be protected from day one. Since it is highly unlikely that such vacant property will be converted into anti-squat over night, the likelihood is that these buildings will be shut off with the steel plates that have already become the standard in some neighborhoods of Rotterdam. Of course, this is a necessary evil, a preventative strategy to keep criminal squatters from going in. Although I doubt that the surrounding neighborhood will appreciate steel plated doors and window frames from this perspective. But similar to what Joeri and Haakon have argued, and the emotions that PJ expressed, 'hardcore' squatters will in all likelihood not interpret criminalization as a time to move on. Like the manifesto already suggests, it is more likely that they will choose the attack. By this logic, the criminalization of squatting is viewed as a challenge to squat more active instead rather than an effective deterrent measure.

And so we not only seem to have returned to the start of this study, but we seem to have witnessed a return to the start of squatting in the Netherlands. Squatters resist, they fight back, and they use tactics that will only promote more punitive and 'rational' measures by the State. The State might say that squatting a house is not an argument because you can also live in an anti-squat. They might say that resisting evacuation is not an argument, because the law simply states that you have no right to be there in the first place. The might say that putting up posters all over town and defacing private property with graffiti is no argument, because it threatens the aesthetic look of the city. They might say that, and squatters will undoubtedly agree with them, but they will once again respond by saying that these actions are simply hesitating attempts to express themselves in the only language that the moral entrepreneurs seem to understand. And I for one believe that they have a lot more to say.

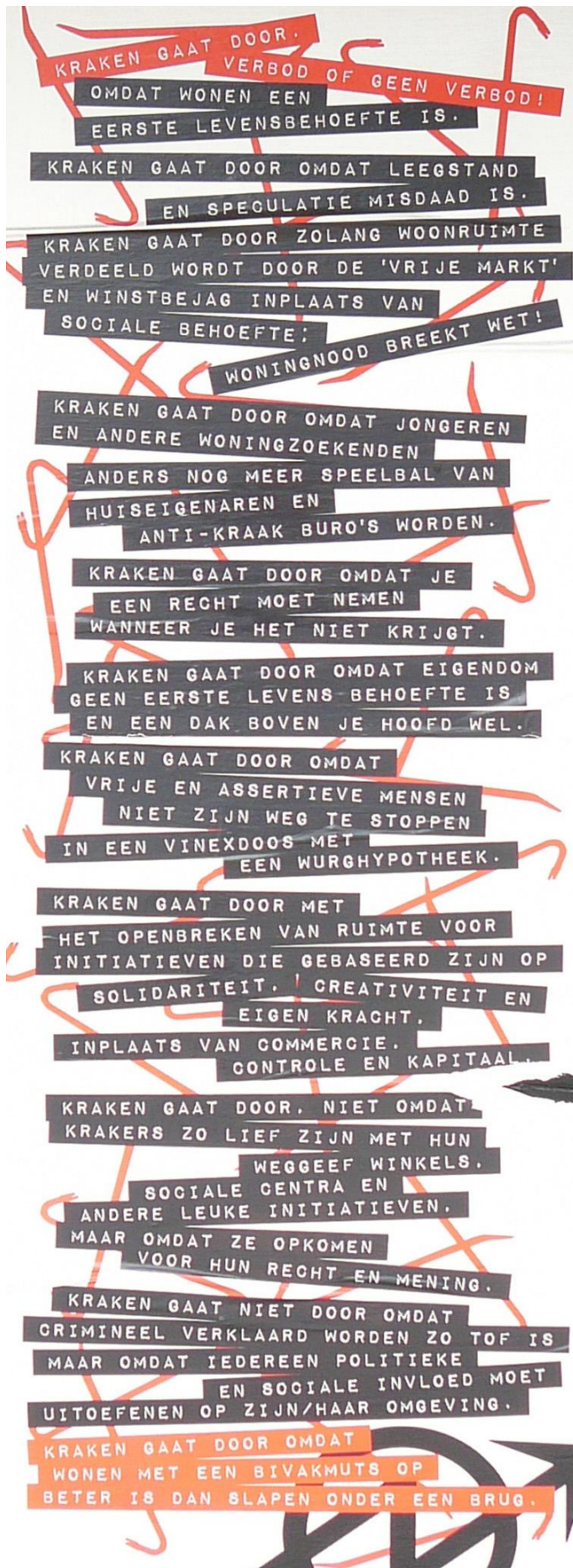
CONCLUSION

I have tried to describe how squatters use their own stylistic and symbolic strategies in resistance against the criminal label how these strategies are directed outwards in order to convince the general public of the more positive aspects of squatting, which are claimed to be beneficiary to society as a whole. In order to illustrate this, I have discussed some of the different actions squatters have taken. However, as Becker argued, the ability to apply the label and to make it stick is deeply rooted in power differentials between the two groups (Becker 1963). In the end, it was the moral entrepreneurs who succeeded in applying the criminal label, criminalizing the act of squatting in the

Netherlands. Standing defenseless against the imposition of this label, the only thing squatters feel they have left to express their identity, and their feelings of injustice, anger and frustration is what Presdee has referred to as 'the world of emotions' (Presdee 2000: 4). The idea was to describe that the reaction of squatters to the official criminalization of their life-style will not be 'rational compliance, but rather heightened emotionality' (Presdee 2000; quoted in Hayward 2004: 167). I have described this by using some of the claims made by the squatters I have spoken with over the course of the last few months, but also by shortly describing the emotions of that first meeting after the official criminalization of squatting, the day that it finally hit home for them that squatting in the Netherlands would forever change.

I have also discussed in more general terms the manifest that was spread across the country. I described how the manifest is meant to offer a direct critique and a course of action, not meant to protest against the ban, but meant as a way to fight back. It shows that the rational logics of criminalization only seem to amplify the emotional reaction on the side of the squatters, which in turn can only lead to more repressive measures on behalf of the state. Also, the manifest seems to communicate to us that squatters no longer have anything 'staked on continuing to appear conventional' (Becker 1963: 28). The bonds with the conventional society seem to be broken off and the days that open dialogue and the search for more progressive solutions were investigated now seem to have passed.

Ironically enough, we are back at where it once all started; squatting is again illegal and the history repeats itself once more. Their emotions stand against the rational world from which the anti-squatting bill originated, and again the squatters are left 'only with the world of emotions to express their hurts, their injustices and their identity' (Presdee 2000: 14), in the only language that they seem to understand.



Squatting will continue, ban or no ban!

Because habiting is a primary necessity of life

Squatting will continue because vacancy and speculation are crimes.

Squatting will continue as long as living space is allocated by the 'free market' and the pursuit of profit instead of social needs: housing shortage breaks the law!

Squatting will continue because otherwise the young and others in search of housing will become even more the puppets of house owners and anti-squat agencies.

Squatting will continue because you have to take your rights if you're not getting them.

Squatting will continue because property rights are not a primary necessity of life and a roof over your head is.

Squatting will continue because free and assertive people cannot be put away in a suburb-box being strangled by their mortgage.

Squatting will continue to break open space for initiatives that are based on solidarity, creativity and personal strength instead of commerce, control and capital.

Squatting will continue, not because squatters are so nice with their give-away stores, social centers and other fun initiatives, but because they defend their rights and their opinion.

Squatting will continue, not because being declared a criminal is so cool but because everyone has to exercise political and social influence on his/her environment.

Squatting will continue because living with a baklava is better than sleeping under a bridge.

Plate 16: squatters' manifesto

**CONCLUSION:
WELCOMING THE
BRAND NEW
CRIMINAL**

INTRODUCTION

In many ways it is exciting to study a phenomenon and the official labeling of that phenomenon as criminal while it plays out before your very eyes. It requires for the researcher to go along with the unpredictability of the spectacle in order to grasp the cultural nuances and a cultural understanding that otherwise is likely to remain buried beneath the surface of our mediated world. The world around us comes to us in sound bites, but it would be a mistake to accept this for the real world. Reality hardly ever allows itself to be defined as homogeneous, divided by clear cut boundaries. Therefore it is essential that we critically examine laws that are set out along these lines. I hope I have been able to do just that.

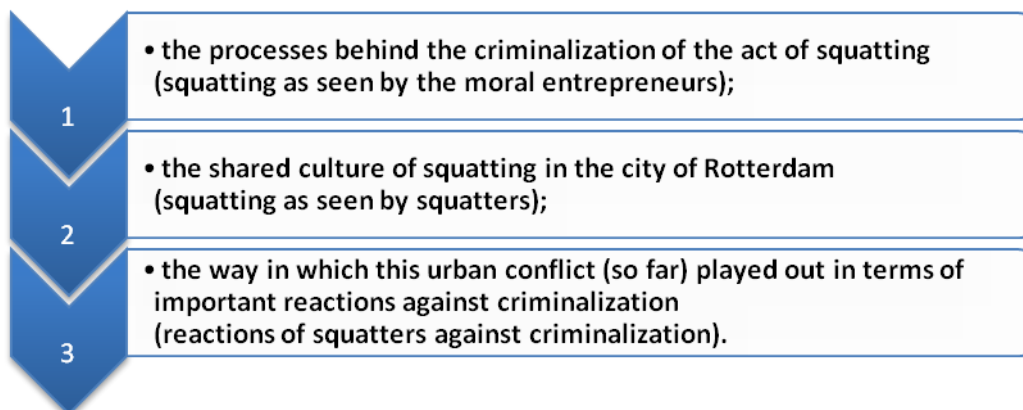
The criminalization of squatting represents a conflict between two diametrically opposed perceptions of the urban environment. My goal was to reveal what these opposed perceptions communicate to us, in order to understand that both the moral entrepreneurs and the shared culture of squatting engage in meaningful human behavior and both play an integral part in the social construction of squatting. Existing within vast inequalities of power between them, this study has been built around the assumption that the authorities, increasingly involved in the daily lives of its citizenry, present themselves as the doctors of space who are able to cure the illnesses that exist within the urban environment by admitting their medicine of a rational logics and sanitized inclusion, following a concept-vision of how the urban environment should look like and ultimately, should function (De Certeau 1984). In both the introduction to this thesis and the chapter on mission and methodology, I have clarified that a cultural criminological point of departure was necessary in order to critically reflect on the criminalization of squatting as the expression of this concept-view, and in order to describe the shared culture of squatting in order to come to a cultural criminological understanding of this shared culture and the important process of criminalization; a *criminological verstehen* (Ferrell 1997). This dual analysis would in my eyes be capable of showing that squatters and the political authorities are involved in an ongoing conflict of spatial control and spatial transgression. Because of the fact that this study took place *during* the criminalization process, I choose to let the data guide the research questions, a grounded method that according to advocates of the grounded theory allows for 'a fresh perspective in a familiar situation' (Stern 1995: 29). By means of qualitative method triangulation, the ethnographic content analysis, the ethnographic field work and observations, I have attempted to gather a wide variety of data in order to support my assumptions. No discussion of these methods will be part of this conclusion, for I have discussed these methods and their limitations in chapter 1 of this thesis. In the conclusion, the stage that was set in the previous chapter will be used to come to a final answer of the research question as presented in the introduction to this thesis. This is my final exploration of 'the uncertain nuances of transgression and control', which forms the backbone of this study (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008: 178).

THE CITY

I have tried to clarify the importance of the city and what it means to the city-dwellers who live out their daily lives in the urban environment. In line with Park's argument that 'the city has quite a life of its own' (Parks et al. 1967: 4), my attempt was to describe that the city in fact has *many* lives of its own. By following the argument important to the cultural criminology of the city, I have tried to explain the importance of a dual analysis of the urban space in order to reveal two opposed ideological perceptions that are at conflict and which can ultimately lead to the criminalization of an

act, imposed by those who have at their disposal the power to decide on right and wrong. In its most abstract form, this conflict exists between the city planners (architects, local authorities, *moral entrepreneurs* etc.) and the city dwellers (those who live out their daily lives in the city). The city planners look at the city from above and see abstract grids, neat lines and clear demarcations of spaces and their functions. To them, the city is a concept that needs to be worked on and their aim is therefore to rationalize and sanitize the urban environment of its unwanted features for the purpose of keeping it conveniently arranged and controllable. But on the ground the true users of space live out their daily lives, trying to navigate their way through the structures of the official society. For them, the city represents a possible locus for experience, an existential possibility that has come under increasing pressure from this 'colonization of everyday life' (Debord 1995: 29). This explanation of course echoes Michel de Certeau's description of the concept-city and the official city, the on the ground reality of the city dwellers (De Certeau 1984). Now I have described why I believe that these conflicting perceptions of the urban environment ultimately led to the criminalization of squatting, combining it with my critique on the fact that the act of criminalization denies this on the ground reality and the underlying social causes that can lead to the transgressive act of squatting. With this in mind, I have tried to describe how both the moral entrepreneurs and squatters use symbolic and stylistic strategies of their own and engage in the social construction of squatting. I have tried to capture this in the following main question, as presented in the introduction to this thesis:

How can we describe:



A number of research questions were distilled from the main question, which were answered in the combined chapters 3, 4 and 5. The rest of this chapter follows the line set out in these three chapters and will provide an answer to these three main questions. Here you will be able to read back the results, and the important theoretical notions that help us to understand these results from a cultural criminological perspective. This will allow me to work towards a final conclusion to this study.

SQUATTING AS SEEN BY THE MORAL ENTREPRENEURS

The recent criminalization of squatting can be described as the logical result of a long cherished political wish of a handful of political parties to outlaw the act of squatting. During the last four decades we have witnessed how the net of social control slowly but certainly was tightened around squatters, by imposing more regulation and supervision on the act of squatting. The wish for a

complete ban on squatting as presented in the anti-squatting bill, which was passed on June first, 2010, represented in essence the ultimate expression of the moral entrepreneurs ideologically justified perception on the urban environment. Ben-Yehuda had described this expression as the 'explicit use of political power to impose the view of one specific symbolic-moral universe on other universes' (ibid. 1990: 65). This implied that the moral entrepreneurs in fact use symbolic and stylistic strategies of their own in order to realize a complete ban on squatting (Ferrell and Sanders 1995). From this perspective, it became important to describe the moral entrepreneurs will to criminalize squatting and to take a closer look at some of the methods they used to support their claim that squatting can never be justified. Therefore, the Explanatory Memorandum to the anti-squatting bill and other important, affiliated documents were analysed, based on the assumption that these documents communicate cultural meaning to us that can help us to understand better the will and methods used to criminalize squatting, revealing the moral entrepreneurs' personal perception of the urban environment.

The criminalization of squatting was preceded by a moral enterprise that was shaped by the 'economics of ownership and enterprise' (Ferrell 1996: 110), in which it was important that the moral entrepreneurs placed squatting in a threatening and violent context. Squatting was presented as the ultimate threat to property rights and connected to the social decay in cities. From this point of view a complete ban was justified. In order to communicate this threat to society as a whole and to make them aware of the supposed threat squatters pose to our society, the moral entrepreneurs used the familiar language of the moral panic to make the perceived problem appear bigger, suggesting that squatting is by no means connected to the underlying social problems that exist within cities. In short, they presented the problem as a nation-wide threat that somehow exists outside of our society and outside of our fault. The symbolic and stylistic strategies used by the moral entrepreneurs and other supporters therefore served a process that Edward Said has described as the process of Othering (ibid. 1979), a process described by Jock Young as the intentional dehumanization of a certain group or individual that intentionally renders their normal activities invisible, in order to create the image that it is 'us' versus 'them' (Young 2007). In the case of the moral enterprise against squatting, the moral entrepreneurs exacerbated this image by characterizing all squatters as individuals that have something that they by the standards of the 'normal' consensual culture do not deserve. They jump the queue on the waiting list and parasitize off society, which makes them the embodiment of the undeserving poor. By doing so, they furthered the image that squatters create social problems and are not the result of social problems. In short, squatting is explained to be the result of a rational decision-making process, an instrumental act instead of an expressive act.

In order to strengthen their already existing status as 'folk devils', the Explanatory Memorandum relies on highly negative stereotypes and suggests that squatters represent a homogeneous group of people. Squatting is made synonymous to organized crime, extreme violence and a threat that is lurking even beyond our own borders. The locality of squatting thereby explodes into the globalized world where it saturates amongst transnational organized crime and international terrorism. In terms of organization, the Explanatory Memorandum effectively describes squatting in terms of a well-organized group of people that prey on innocent home-owners, creating the image that everyone who owns a home is a possible target of squatters. A simple lock on the door will therefore not be sufficient; squatting has to be criminalized in order to protect the property rights important to late modern society. However, I have described the act of squatting in fact has been steadily declined over the last few decades, as well as the associated illegality and violence. On the

other hand, it is in fact the waiting lists and the average rent that has been steadily increasing over the last few years.

But besides linking squatting to organized crime and violence, the moral entrepreneurs also linked it to illegality. To them, a major justification to criminalize squatting sprung from the fact that more and more squatters seem to have another nationality than the Dutch one. The argument was that our liberal approach to squatting attracted people from beyond our own borders bringing problems into our society. Apart from the fact that research has shown that countries where squatting is criminalized deal with much more crime, violence and illegality than the Netherlands (Van Gemert et al. 2009), the moral entrepreneurs insisted that the existence of squatting attracts problems from beyond our borders. Again, in this process of 'Othering', the possibility that the problems caused by foreign squatters could also be at least partly rooted in social problems that already existed in our own society was completely denied. The criminalization of squatting therefore also shows how, in an ever increasing globalized world where goods and economic services flow across our borders, national authorities increasingly try to control the flow of immigrants. The anti-squatting bill therefore seems to be an act of spatial closure and contributes to an 'immobility regime' directed at people we don't need (Turner 2007: 289).

Furthermore, we have seen how the language of the moral panic relies heavily on the use of medical terminology, describing squatting in terms of a disease that threatens the health of the social body. Squatting is often linked to damaged property and social decay which also infects surrounding buildings. This explanation of squatting reveals even better the moral entrepreneurs perception on the urban environment and what Ferrell has described as '*the aesthetics of authority*' (ibid. 1996: 178). The moral entrepreneurs give their highly personalized reading of the urban environment and see squats 'as offensive to the character and aesthetics of the city' (Edensor 2002; quoted in Hudson and Shaw 2010: 4). According to Lefebvre, such narrow readings can be attributed to 'the great power of the façade' (ibid 1991: 99). In the case of squatting, the moral entrepreneurs can only witness the façade itself and have no idea what kind of lives are being lived behind the façade. Since squatters are already connected to a negative practice, their other practices are also perceived to be unfavorable and are therefore automatically condemned. However, the moral entrepreneurs are fully aware of the fact that many buildings were already boarded up or defaced by graffiti before squatters moved in there, but they conveniently leave this fact out of the equation.

I have furthermore described how the criminalization of squatting can be described as an act of 'sanitized inclusion', not of squatters but of the spaces they squat (Hayward 2004: 137). In all its ambiguity, to the moral entrepreneurs squatting seems to represent an act that is hard to control. I have tried to connect this element of the anti-squatting bill to the moral entrepreneurs' public support for vacant property management. Often described as a cheap way of living, vacant property managers impose heavy restrictions on individuals that live in the so-called anti-squats. By saying that anti-squatters have no legal tenement rights and by saying that the owner and the vacant property manager are allowed to enter the building at all times, vacant property management tries to make the users of the anti-squat control themselves. This rational approach to living space that presents itself as an exciting way to live in the city can therefore be described best as a form of 'commodified control' in line with 'late modernity's distinctive forms of social ordering and social control' (Garland 2001: 23). The moral entrepreneurs openly attribute their support to this type of social control, claiming that vacant property management has a bright future.

SQUATTING AS SEEN BY SQUATTERS

The ethnographic study of the shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam was meant to position a nuanced understanding against the stereotypical image of the squatter as a violent, organized and overly rational individual who squats vacant property out of an instrumental motivation. Although these squatters undoubtedly exist, for many the reality seems to be quite different. For the squatters I have talked to during the course of this study, squatting often seems to evolve out of a wide variety of reasons and social problems, like an acute need of space, the lack of finances to provide for it, but also because of their different perception on what a space should enable them to do (see also Pennen et al. 1983). Squatting can thus be described as ‘an alternative mode of economic survival’ (Ferrell 2006: 172) that at the same time offers a direct solution to those feelings ontological insecurity and the inability to escape an over-controlled environment. Through the act of squatting, squatters are able to take immediate control over their lives. Self-realization and self-expression are important elements that can be accomplished through this control. Fenwick and Hayward described such transgressive acts as ‘urban edgework’, attempts to ‘construct an enhanced sense of self’ by engaging in risky activities. Such acts can allow the individual to express ones true individuality, an at the same time offers excitement (ibid. 2000; Hayward 2004: 166). I have described the act of squatting along similar lines in order to exemplify my assumption that squatting is indeed an expressive act through which the individual expresses his fears and insecurities, but also his hopes and dreams. From the squatters point of view, the authorities’ inability to solve the housing problem and their inability to provide society with affordable housing justifies the transgressive act of squatting. The existing norms of society are renegotiated and a creative, immediate solution is found in the act squatting. Squatting opens their eyes to new, alternative ways of being in the city.

But squatting also comes with a different perception of the urban environment. Whereas the moral entrepreneurs believe that the function of spaces should be fixed in order to keep the city organized and clean, to squatters the vacant building represents a ‘domain of unfulfilled promise and unlimited opportunity’ (Cupers and Miessen 2002: 83). Connected to the wish for control, the squat allows them to experiment with new ways of being, trying out different identities. As we have seen in chapter 4, squats are used as more than simply living space, but are seen as spaces where a wide variety of activities can be organized. We have seen how the squat can function as a stage to organize cultural activities such as in-house dance events, set up give-away stores and DIY repair shops, build in-door skate parks and graffiti walls, and even build their own bars and organize parties with live performances. By doing so, these squatters resist the top-down approach of habiting, in which the house is presented as a homogeneous and quantitative space. Squatting echoes Lefebvre’s famous critique on modern day housing, the apparent ‘requirement that “lived experience” allows itself to be enclosed in boxes, cages, or “dwelling machines” (Lefebvre 2003: 81).

This type of ‘resistance through redeployment’ (Hayward 2004: 143) of vacant spaces originates out of the belief that property rights come with a social responsibility to provide everyone with available and affordable living space. However, many squatters also believe they have their own responsibilities, or the codes of conduct by which they have to play the game. Of course to many these codes of conduct, which includes taking into account the 12-month term, contacting the police and the owner and being aware of your rights, serves the purpose of being able to stay in the squat without too much problems. In general, they have nothing to win by being perceived as deviants who cause trouble. This is also why many make sure that they are prepared when they squat a building, because it is no use to squat a building only to be thrown out of it a day later because you could not clarify your purpose of being there. Preparation therefore serves more as a defensive mechanism to

stay in control of the situation rather than it expresses an instrumental motivation. If this was the case, squatters would not go through the trouble notifying the police and the owner. We have also seen how invisibility is important in order to protect the cultural practices that often take place within the squat. Fully aware of the fact that the self-constructed bar, the live band and having hundreds of people stuffed in one house is likely to be interpreted by outsiders as an illegal party without the proper licenses, information surrounding these events is often spread on a strictly need-to-know basis. Some squatters however seem to take this wish to remain undetected to the extreme. As squatters like Joeri and Bert have explained the wish to be left alone can result in behavior that they described as paranoia. Other squatters however argue that squatters need to keep an open dialogue with the outside world, and that closing oneself off will only strengthen the negative label, making them also responsible for the creation of the negative stereotypes associated with squatting.

The act of squatting thus seems to float between property theft and cultural innovation, depending on one's perception on the act. At any moment, the balance can tip towards the more negative perception which means that squatters will have to move on in search for a new place to live. Not all of the squatters I have talked to found the nomadic lifestyle a problem, while some were getting tired of living on the go and wanted a bit more stability in their life. Everyone did however seem to agree on the fact that these are the trade-offs of squatting that you silently accept when you start squatting. For many then, squatting is seen more as a temporary life style, one they will lead as long as they are not socially or economically able to provide themselves with a place that is truly their own. Squatting thus allows for upward mobility in life, a social-safety net that keeps them from falling off the edge of society and allows them to get back in full control of their life. That this is true for a wide variety of people in the city, often the marginalized groups within our society, I have described in detail in chapter 4.

The shared culture of squatting in Rotterdam is literally a culture that is being *shared* by an extremely heterogeneous group of individuals. Functioning as a sort of a *cultural house* where different rooms are squatted by people from all different cultural and sub-cultural backgrounds, the shared culture of squatting truly represents a culture that can be seen 'as a hive of creativity, an arena of magical solutions where symbols are bricolaged into lifestyles, a place of identity and discovery and, above all, a site of resistance' (Hayward and Young 2005: 2). Within this shared culture, it is the squat through which the cultural meaning and the symbolic of space are being expressed. Therefore, the squat is the most important cultural element and symbol of the shared culture of squatting. From this point of view, it becomes clear why these individuals do not see the criminalization of squatting simply as a ban on the act of squatting. For them, criminalization is a direct attack on their lifestyle, on the cultural practices through which they express their individuality, signaling a loss of a social safety net and a sure way of losing control over one's life, both social and financial.

REACTIONS OF SQUATTERS AND THE CRITICAL MIRROR

In the final chapter I have described the resistance squatters have so far offered against the criminalization of squatting. I will not focus on the content of these acts, since I have already described them in chapter 5. What is important is how the form of these actions or resistance has changed during the course of the year. When the Chamber of Representatives passed the anti-squatting bill on October 15 of 2009, squatters have responded with a more playful type of resistance, except of course for the disturbances that took place in The Hague right after the bill was passed. Apart from that, squatters have tried to convince the general public and politics that the

criminalization of squatting was unacceptable, and did so through playful forms of resistance that were orientated outwards, still allowing for an open dialogue with squatters. However, with the passing of the bill by the Senate on June first of 2010, the possibility for an open dialogue dramatically declined. Expressed very clearly in the manifesto, many squatters are done trying to stop the ban on squatting and the focus has shifted inwards again, back into 'the world of emotions' (Presdee 2000: 4). It seems that squatters are not being deterred by the criminalization of squatting. In fact, so far the criminalization of squatting has not promoted 'rational compliance' in squatters 'but rather heightened emotionality' (Presdee 2000; quoted in Hayward 2004: 167). However, the moral entrepreneurs have successfully fulfilled the moral enterprise and managed to criminalize squatting. It is their 'ideologically justified political conception of space' (Lefebvre 2003: 78) that has gained victory over the squatters' perception of the urban environment. The moral entrepreneurs have at least by law managed to seal off the act of squatting and its parafunctional use of vacant spaces in the urban environment. Those who saw the criminalization of squatting as 'unnecessary, illogical and foolish' have not considered the possibility that the criminalization of squatting might also have been a manifestation of the moral entrepreneurs wish to create a rational and sanitized city, an effective way to reestablish control over those lost urban spaces. The spaces are being included back into the social, economic and political frame of the consumer culture. Repressive and reactionary laws like this one offers the deviant the option of being 'seduced' back into this frame, or being 'repressed' 'via the traditional elements of social control' (Bauman 1991; Hayward 2004: 74). The criminalization of squatting can therefore be described as 'an imposition of a limit on the identity of users' (Papastergiadis 2002: 51).

CONCLUSION: WELCOMING THE BRAND NEW CRIMINAL

I do not wish to imply that the moral entrepreneurs are simply making unjust claims to truth. It is true that squatting is an act that is goal orientated. However, by disconnecting the decision to squat from the emotions and the complex social dynamics from which it often originates, and by reducing the act of squatting to a managerial cost and benefit analysis that is being made at some imaginary headquarters of the internationally organized squat-mob, they openly supported an image constituted only by *negativity*. It is, as Jock Young describes it, 'the black and white of moral photography' (Young 2007: 141). If the city is an organism, as Parks argued (*ibid.* 1969), then it is bound to suffer from (social) illnesses, and it is highly unlikely that slapping on some cover-up will help to change that reality; it might improve the aesthetic look of the social body, but underneath this it will continue to suffer from the same social illnesses. The criminalization of squatting does not provide us with any answer or any solutions to those social problems that lay at the core of the act of squatting, so again we should ask ourselves; 'is the doctor we are dealing with really good one?' (Miłosz 2001: 144).

If we are to take the critiques and reservations of the oppositional political parties, the VNG, the G4, the Council of Churches, the Council of State, the Dutch Housing Association, and Chief Commissioner of the Amsterdam Police Leen Schaap serious, then the question will have to be answered with a negative. Still, the moral entrepreneurs pushed through with their wish for criminalization of squatting and in the end, squatting was in fact criminalized. Now how this will all work out is of course impossible to say, although we are witnessing how actions against the new law organized by squatters have changed from the more creative forms of resistance to more emotional

forms of resistance. According to Henri Lefebvre, the State tends to make such mistakes because 'the State, which should serve all of society and extends its capacity for organization and rationality within it, manages to achieve the exact opposite. It strengthens the exploitation of society as a whole, it sets itself above society and claims to be the essential element of social life, its structure, whereas it is merely an accident (a superstructure)' (ibid. 2003: 101). The criminalization of squatting makes a similar mistake and puts itself above the needs of society as a whole, by denying the social problems that can lead to squatting. Instead of seeing squatting as a warning signal, pointing out these social problems, criminalization will simply blind us to this signal and will bury with it the problems it can reveal. Unfortunately, these laws that are based on extreme stereotypes, condemning acts without for a moment considering these possible underlying social causes that allow the act to exist are accepted without too much resistance or critical discussion. However, the problem with imposing laws for the purpose of rationalizing and sanitizing the urban environment, as Mike Presdee argued, is that they will not generate rational compliance. Rather the brand new criminals are likely to respond with heightened emotionality (Presdee 2000).

The stages are measured out in advance, and they succeed each other with mathematical precision. The only interest lies in watching the reactions of the human material ... Human material seems to have one major defect: it does not like to be considered merely as human material. It finds it hard to endure the feeling that it must resign itself to passive acceptance of changes introduced from above (*Czesław Miłosz 2001: 244*)

Criminalization in general might indeed have 'the undisputed advantage of clarity', but it also carries the undisputed disadvantage that it will not help us 'to understand the complex and diverse social and cultural motivations and individual experiences' which drive such transgressive acts (Hayward 2004: 111). This much can certainly be said for the criminalization of squatting. The only clarity the criminalization of squatting seems to have, is that the moral entrepreneurs personal definition of leadership in a democratic society seems to be governing through fear and exclusion, something that can hardly be seen as advantageous. Therefore, cultural criminologists argue for ideas that are able 'to define social life in other, more progressive terms' (Ferrell Hayward and Young 2008: 198). In the end, the only thing the criminalization of squatting has so far succeed in is revealing to us the tension between the sanitized view the political authorities have of the city and the lived reality of the shared culture of squatting. These tensions are by no means restricted to the act of squatting. If anything, I hope that this thesis has contributed to the important realization that we should try to understand acts before we condemn them and push them over the edge of our society.



Plate 17: Banner during a demonstration against the anti-squatting bill. The text on it reads: *Solution for the housing problem close: send everyone to prison!!*

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Result votes 'for' and 'against' anti-squatting bill

FOR	AGAINST
VVD - 22 seats	GroenLinks - 7 seats
ChristenUnie - 6 seats	SP - 25 seats
CDA - 41 seats	PvdA - 33 seats
SGP - 2 seats	D66 - 3 seats
PVV - 9 seats	PvdD - 2 seats
TON - 1 seat	
Total: 81 seats	Total: 70 seats

Parties of the House of Representatives that voted for or against the anti-squatting bill on October 15 2009 (source for additional information on the division of seats: <http://www.parlement.com>).

FOR	AGAINST
VVD - 14 seats	GroenLinks - 4 seats
ChristenUnie - 4 seats	SP - 11 seats
CDA - 21 seats	PvdA - 14 seats
SGP - 2 seats	D66 - 2 seats
	PvdD - 1 seat
	OSF - 1 seat
	Fractie-Yildirim - 1 seat
Total: 41 seats	Total: 34 seats

Parties of the Senate that voted for or against the anti-squatting bill on June first 2010 (source for additional information on the division of seats: <http://www.eerstekamer.nl>).

Appendix 2: Topic-list (in Dutch)

DEMOGRAFIE

- Geboortedatum/Leeftijd
- Geslacht
- Nationaliteit
- Relatie
- Opleiding
- Politieke voorkeur

OPLEIDING/WERK

- Samenhang met de kraakcultuur?

OUDERS

- Afkomst
- Werk
- Opvoedingsstijl

KRAAKCULTUUR (in Rotterdam)

- Kleding
- Muziek
- Vrije tijd/Uitgaan
- Anders dan elders (bijvoorbeeld Amsterdam)?

VRIENDEN/CONTACTEN

- Binnen 'de groep'
- Buiten 'de groep'

HET KRAAKPAND

- Redenen om te kraken
 - *Politiek, idealistisch, eigen leefwereld, gebrek aan woonruimte*
 - *Voordelen en nadelen*
- Werkwijze kraken
 - *Voorbereiding: Intensief of gemakkelijk*
 - *Gesprek met eigenaar/politie*
 - *Woonbaar maken*
 - *Pand als uitvalsbasis/werkplek*
- Vertrek/Ontruiming

MATE VAN OPENHEID

- Naar familie/vrienden
- Naar werkgever/collega's

AFKEURING

- Intern (binnen de cultuur)
- Extern:

- *Media* → *eigen media*?
- *Politiek* → *zelf politiek actief*?
- *Dominante cultuur*

HET VERZET

- Tegen de anti-kraakwet
- Tegen de corporaties
- Tegen de negatieve beeldvorming
 - *Werk*
 - *Kunst*
 - *Initiatieven (petitie)*
 - *Demonstraties*

ZELFBEELD

- Het label 'kraker'
- Schuldgevoel/schaamte (kan men zich in enige mate vinden in de beeldvorming)
- Normalisering van gedrag
 - *De kraak*
 - *Gratis wonen*
 - *Verdediging van het pand*

MAATSCHAPPIJBEELD

- Positief/negatief
- Wat is er mis met de samenleving?

TOEKOMSTBEELD

- Wat na criminalisering kraken?

Eventueel te behandelen:

Stellingen

- Kraken is een vorm van eigenrichting en tast het eigendomsrecht ontoelaatbaar aan
- Krakers stellen de leegstand niet meer aan de kaak, ze willen gewoon gratis wonen
- Krakers veroorzaken overlast verloedering
- Krakers worden steeds gewelddadiger, er vind verharding plaats

Vooroordelen : Krakers zijn...

- Mislukte kunstenaars
- Links tuig
- Junks
- Verdringen andere woningzoekenden
- Uitekeringtrekkers en relschoppers

OPEN DISCUSSIE: EIGEN VERKLARING VOOR DE VOORRODELEN?