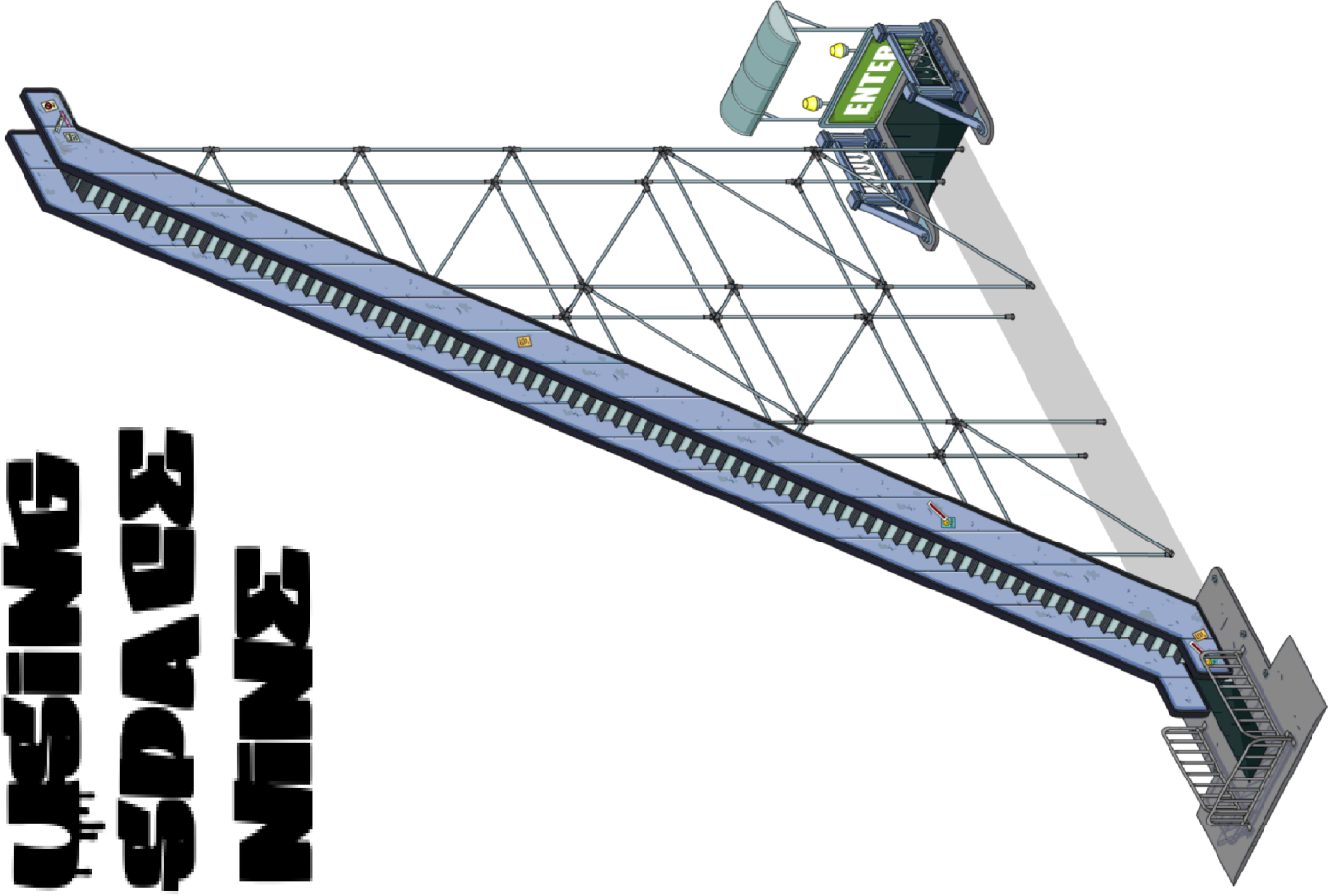


USING SPACE NINE



*using space nine
march 2016*



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DEDICATED TO HLOUP



HLOUPI

+++++ Yorkley Court, SqEK, Entrebanc, Overval, Amok, Kodama, ORKZ, Landbouwbelang and its tiny cousin ADM, 701, El Banc Expropriat, DHZRDM, oblo, Wij Zijn Hier, Poortgebouw, Can Mas Deu, Pino, Klinika ---

demonstrate that it is possible to quickly renovate office space into residential apartments, a process which would naturally go faster when the people themselves do the work. The growing crisis regarding the housing of migrants with a legal right to residence shows that dramatic solutions are immediately required.

ETCDEE

Contributions

Six reasons to support your local squats 3

Izzy Koksal & Luke Sheldon
<http://wired.com.au/2016/03/16/6-reasons-to-support-your-local-squats/>
via <https://en.squat.net/2016/03/16/uk-6-reasons-to-support-your-local-squats/>
Plus I added some fotos ... the support your local squats image came via squat.net, I've also seen this in different places including Rejkjavik, London and Amsterdam, Nice one!

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AMADOK
<https://medium.com/alt-rotterdam/don-t-support-nazi-inspired-apartheid-tourists-boycott-rotterdam-fcc5f014a523#.9okw602t1>
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Text&other fotos: Deborah
First from the awesome <https://hansfoto.wordpress.com/>

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E.T.C.Dee
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Graph 1 - Made by BLUBS based on figures available in:
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/02/01/van-ontruimen-naar-inruimen>

SIX REASONS TO SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SQUATS

Squatting has always been a direct solution to housing need, providing homeless people with immediate free housing that they can have some control over. Squatting has changed over the decades, from taking over entire empty streets neglected by councils in the 1970s to now moving into empty business premises before developers manage to tear them down and throw up yuppie flats in their place.

Changes in the law and attitudes (particularly from property owners who are taking a much greater interest in their empty properties these days), as well as the hyper-gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods have made it much harder to squat at a time when there is greatest housing need. Solidarity with your local squatters is more important than ever. Here are some of the reasons to support your local squat – and the growth of the wider housing movement – and how to get involved:

1. Rents are rising, homelessness is rising, buildings lie empty

We know the housing crisis is not due to a lack of housing, but an issue of distribution and power. There are still plenty of empty buildings across the UK – even London, where the housing crisis is most acute. A variety of homelessness statistics all point to rising homelessness; the number of people rough sleeping, the number of people accepted as homeless by local councils, number of possession orders, and youth homelessness.

The combination of rising rents, benefit cuts, low incomes, weak renters' rights, and the decimation of social housing are some of the factors causing this soaring homelessness and everything is pointing to the situation only getting worse. The racist and disgusting 'right to rent' policy prevents those without the 'correct' documents from renting altogether as part of the government's attempt to create a 'hostile environment' for migrants.

Housing need is at its greatest and there are empty buildings. The answer should be as simple as to squat the lot.

2. Where can we squat? Guardianship industry & gentrification

Watching the ascent of the property guardianship industry over the last couple of years in London has been horrifying. A previous Novara Wire article looks at this exploitative industry and its growth. On scouting missions in south London you sometimes come across more guardianships than squats, which has never been the case before. What would have been great non-residential buildings to squat have signs with various guardianship companies on them. This means people are paying near-market rent for what could have been (or once was) a rent-free squat. This is starkly illustrated by the former House of Brag squat in Kennington where wooden shacks in a large hall are now rented for J550 a month. We don't resent the individuals renting these buildings, but the exploitative companies running them. There is no doubt that the rise in guardianships has taken out a significant bulk of squattable buildings in inner-city neighbourhoods we call and want to make our home.

The hyper-gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods (of which guardianship companies play an albeit small part), particularly in London, sees poor people priced and pushed out, whatever their housing tenure – whether they are tenants or squatters. Areas that had been of no interest whatsoever to local councils or developers decades ago are now crawling with property developers looking to build on any patch of land they can find. Most of our neighbourhoods feel like massive building sites. Any empty buildings that are still left to squat are quickly evicted by property developers ready to knock the building down. So many of our former squats are now luxury flats. It is becoming incredibly difficult to find a decent empty building to live in for a good amount of time. Squatters are facing quicker evictions and nowhere

voices calling for more stringent regulation of vacancy and nothing much is happening. In illustration, the Minister of Security and Justice states “based on the evaluation, I conclude that municipalities, despite the large amount of vacant offices, are active and successful in every way in fighting vacancy and that the resources provided in the Act are supportive. Therefore, this assessment does not require policy changes regarding the Leegstandwet.”

This is ridiculous. There is an urgent need for housing, especially with the increased demand from migrants. Turning the huge amount of empty office space is becoming the clear solution.

Thus it seems clear that what is needed to be done is to expropriate unused property and to put it to good use. Of course, regulation would help with this, but the most effective tactic, despite its current illegality, is to squat property. Every day the mainstream media reports two or three stories about squatters all over the Netherlands occupying derelict space.

Of course squatting occurs whether it is declared legal or illegal, we only have to look around the world to see huge numbers of people living in informal settlements. But my argument here is specifically addressed to the Dutch situation, where juridical repression has stopped a lot of squatting with the express aim of preventing vacancy, whilst vacancy figures continue to rise exponentially. The statistics demonstrate clearly that the situation qua housing is getting worse, even if the amount of empty office space is growing. Dutch squatters have been occupying such spaces quietly and efficiently for generations, housing themselves and others in a manner outside the normal rent relations of neoliberal capitalism. What is staggering is that more people do not squat, instead of entering into bogus deals such as antisquat in which they sign away all their tenancy rights. It is pathetic that only seven councils have adapted the already very weak proposals in the law regarding the management of emptiness. Projects such as the Nieuwe Admiraliteit

For example, the Wilde Heisteeg was squatted in Amsterdam and then evicted in 2011 under the new law. It then stood empty for 5 years, before being resquatted in 2016. Whilst rightwing politicians bemoaned the squatting action, the Socialist Party representative Erik Flengte commented that "It's idiotic there is a vacancy in a city where the housing shortage is incredibly high." Further, he stated that whilst squatting has been repressed, very little has been done to combat vacancy. He urged that vacancy is what needs sanctions, not squatting.

Another perspective on the housing crisis is provided by a recent newspaper article in which housing corporations Vestia, Havensteder and Woonstad argue that in Rotterdam, there is not enough property in which to house migrants with a right to housing, since the increase in demand on top of all the other people requiring housing outstrips supply. In 2015, 970 refugees with a right to residence were housed in Rotterdam, out of a total of 1144. In the first half of 2016 there are predicted to be 906 migrants with a right to housing, with the total across the Netherlands forecast at 23,000 migrants needing to be housed in the second half of 2016. So, clearly a crisis is brewing, yet the previously quoted statistics also make it evident that there is enough property available which could be used.

Maria Miller, representative for Woonstad pleads for "unorthodox measures" to be taken. Precisely these methods have been suggested for decades already by squatters repurposing derelict property for housing. The refugee crisis shows that these tactics need to be mainstreamed, since it is not the case that there is nowhere to house migrants, more that there is no political will to do so. Currently refugees are housed in requisitioned buildings and tent camps across the country, in temporary and unpopular fashion.

Future Occupations

So we appear to be in a situation in which there are different

else to go as they find themselves pushed out with the rest of their communities.

3. Increasing criminalisation and evictions.

Since the 1970s squatting has become increasingly criminalised, and even though the law has just changed, squatting is still legal! The most recent significant change (LASPO Section 144) makes it a criminal offence for a trespasser to live or intend to live in a residential building. This has deterred many people from squatting the thousands of empty houses in London due to the real threat of custodial sentences. This law, combined with guardianships and gentrification, has made it much harder to find empty buildings to live in.

Even if you avoid residential buildings, the use of long-standing laws and legal processes used against squatters have been making it difficult to squat the remaining buildings. Interim possession orders (IPOs), which can be acquired from court by the owners, make it a criminal offence to still be in the building 24 hours after being served. Squat crews are regularly facing IPOs, and the use of violent high court bailiffs to enforce regular possession orders is rising. As buildings are re-squatted more frequently due to a lack of options, high court bailiffs have been repeatedly using old possession orders on new squatters by reactivating the warrant without the occupiers knowing. The high court bailiffs simply declare that the previous possession order still stands, claiming the squatters are the same ones as before. Although this is dubious behaviour it is supported by the court process. As a result, new squatters can find themselves violently evicted by high court bailiffs with no notice at all. These tactics of criminalisation and eviction have seen resistance increase. The residential squat ban only applies if you are 'living or intending to live there' – which is really hard to prove, as shown by the Brighton 3 case. And people are becoming increasingly bold, as the case of the six month long squatters' village on the residential Sweets Way estate

last year showed when 100 squatters 'occupied' residential buildings. Similarly, the Fight for the Aylesbury campaign saw squatters putting residential buildings to good use.



There have also been more people staying after IPOs, with a recent south London crew getting months longer in a building by just ignoring the order they were served. However, this does not always work out; five people got given nearly three months in prison for doing the same in Liverpool last year.

acquired by Bouwfunds Investment Management for 52 million euros and converted into residential apartments in the space of a year. According to their website in 2014:

The property will be redeveloped into new young professional and student housing units and will be totally refurbished to the standard of a new building and will have energy labels A and B. (...) Tower A is going to consist of 35 studios and 102 apartments. Tower B will house 76 studios and 106 apartments and Tower C will house 263 studios and 5 apartments. Besides the new units, 500 storage units, 400 parking spaces and 700 spaces for bikes are going to be created.

The first 268 apartments were ready to be lived in by the end of October 2015. This shows that it is possible to convert office space into residential accommodation in a relatively short time period. It was not possible to ascertain the rental prices for the building, but despite the majority of apartments being built for yuppies at least there was also some desperately needed student accommodation provided. But should the state not be regulating emptiness? The measures suggested by the 2010 law have had a shockingly low impact. As of January 2016, there are 390 municipalities in the Netherlands. The evaluation report states that only seven municipalities had introduced a vacancy regulation by the end of 2014, namely Amsterdam, Bussum, Oldambt, Sittard-Geleen, Sluis, Tilburg and Wormerland. These municipalities are examined in detail (except Bussum) and it is clear that the municipalities are in general very reluctant to force owners towards acting on their vacant property. Very little is in practice being done to compel vacant property to be put back into use, since dominant attitudes on the primacy of private property rights are so entrenched. In contrast, squatting has been made a criminal offence yet still continues to be a practical and useful means to open up property which has been locked up and left empty through speculation or incompetence.

(29.1%). Also, Amsterdam city council produces a website which depicts vacant office space. Academic Hugo Priemus argues that the solution for the housing crisis is the following: “empty office space should be converted temporarily or permanently into affordable living space for young people, with rental conditions based on temporary tenancy agreements.”

This is the obvious solution, but when he goes on to comment that “temporary tenancy agreements provide a much better legal position for occupants than squatting and anti-squatting” I would disagree, since there seems to be no political will to set up these agreements and instead what is booming is anti-squat, a capitalist recommodification of squatting. If squatting was again legally permitted this would be the incentive to introduce more temporary residential deals, and then matters would undoubtedly move faster for the requisition of buildings, which could then subsequently be legalised in their new form as housing.

As a quick aside, for those unfamiliar with the concept, anti-squat is the practice, begun in the 1990s, of installing a client in a building on a use contract, rather than through a tenancy agreement. Whilst this is legally dubious, since it favours a capitalist approach it has never been regulated. What this means is that thousands of people are living with very little rights in properties supervised by companies like Camelot, Ad Hoc, Intervest, Gapph and so on. They can have their contract terminated with little notice, they cannot go on holiday, they cannot have pets, often the company has a key and will come unannounced to check on tidiness. It's a terrible deal, which people only go for because it's cheaper than renting. Often then they get spat out the other side of the experience with regrets.

One example of an office block converted successfully into residential apartments is the Nieuwe Admiraliteit in Rotterdam. A huge building composed of three interconnected towers, this was formerly the local headquarters of Deloitte and Center Parcs. The complex was

4. More than just a roof or a home: squat crews and communal living.

To squat, you need a bunch of people. It would be pretty difficult to do it alone or as a small group (but not impossible, just harder). And it is much more fun and makes life much easier by sharing out various tasks and drawing on different skill-sets to keep a squat running. There is an almost inherently communal nature to squatting.

Squatting non-residential buildings means you often have much more space than you do in regular flats or houses. There might be big halls and rooms, which means people can run activities and events that you wouldn't be able to do in a regular flat. Squats are more than just a roof or somewhere to sleep. They're places to live – where daily needs are met collectively and where activities are organised and run together, rather than being a place where the main function is to recover from paid work. We try to live the antithesis of the poisonous ‘hardworking family’ rhetoric. Recent squats have run weekly queer, non-competitive muay thai kickboxing classes, Sunday craftmoons (arts and crafts), a HASL lunch club, a screen printing studio, band rooms, and benefit gigs. The Made Possible By Squatting exhibition in a squat in Dock Street in September 2013 collected together a squat archive which highlighted the many other projects that have had their homes in squats past and present.

5. Solidarity is not a one way process.

The request to support your local squats and the wider squat scene is not self-interested and one way. Supporting your local squat is about fighting for everyone's right to a good home. Many will happily return the favour to you. Squatting has been historically important in saving and creating social housing. Often, many of the events and projects run in squats are open to the wider neighbourhood. Squatters have played a very active role in many of the recent housing actions and the embryonic housing movement; it's important that actions and demands for free, self-organised and

controlled housing is a part of any housing movement.

6. Practical ways to support.

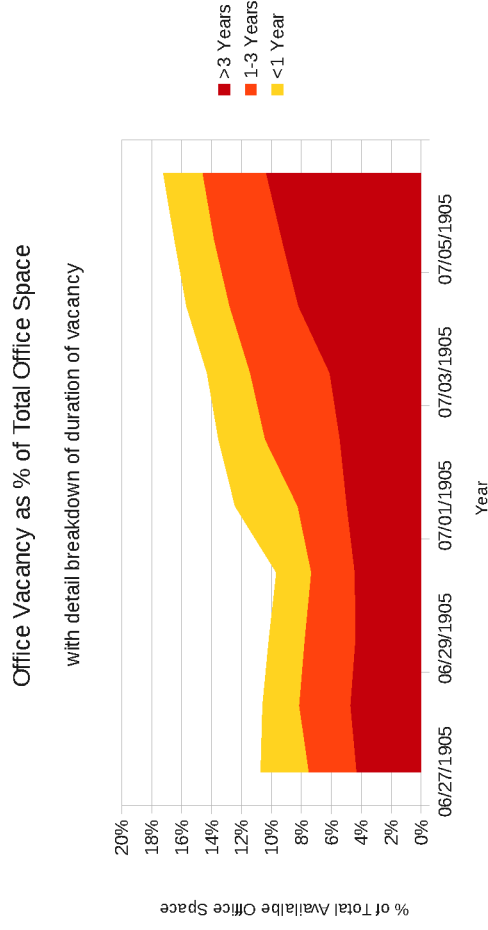
At every squat eviction resistance we've been to, local people have expressed their support for the squatters, explaining how they themselves had squatted in the past, or simply recognising that making people homeless is a gross thing to do. This sort of support is really valuable and we hope this call-out can highlight some of the current realities and difficulties squatters face and ways to develop stronger links in support of squatting and good homes for everyone. Londoners can join the squatters' phone tree, No Evictions London Squatters Network (NELSN), to be alerted to any evictions happening, other squat support and events. If you have more time to support the squatters, the Advisory Service for Squatters, which celebrated its 40th birthday last year, is always looking for more volunteers to help write legal defences for squats with court papers. If you see or know of any empty buildings, take down details and photos and take them along to your local practical squatters nights which happen every Tuesday in London.

Whilst the current picture certainly feels bleak, there have been recent squat celebrations including the 6th birthday of London's longest running land squat, Grow Heathrow, on 4 March and the recent Our House social centre squat, which opened a week before the national demonstration against the Housing and Planning Bill on the 13 March.

The question which immediately springs to mind is that if the law is not working, then why not repeal it?

Cleaning the mess

The evaluation report states that at the end of 2014 the level of emptiness of office space across the Netherlands is running at 17% (with 10% empty for more than three years). It has been increasing steadily since 2009. Also worth stating is the increase in the levels of empty shops, which by the close of 2014 was standing at almost 9%. The graph below shows the ever-increasing levels of emptiness for office space:



Regarding Rotterdam, the statistics compiled by OBI (Onderzoek en Business Intelligence or 'Research and Business Intelligence') show that at the level of office vacancy was 13.3% at in January 2013, up from 10.2% in January 2012. When the figures are broken down by area, some business parks have extremely high levels of emptiness, for example the Brainpark (22.6%) and the Alexanderknoop

Minister van de Steur observes this “remarkable” increase of numbers for 2014, which the authors of the report say they have no way to explain. However, it is common for there to be a lull in activity following the imposition of a changed legal situation and equally common for there to be an upsurge when practitioners realise the chance of punishment is in fact rather low. As the report concedes, there are no coherent figures on how many squats there are in the country; these statistics would be far more useful to the state than to squatters and actually it seems odd to have criminalised a phenomenon without first collecting data on it, which points to the political nature of criminalisation, but that’s another story.

Anecdotally, I can say that whilst there are now less squats then ten years ago, there are still many, with new places still being occupied. Squatting continues, but has become a less attractive option thanks to the demonisation of squatters in the mainstream media, juridical repression and the rise of other seemingly easier options such as anti-squat. However, an email list tracking mainstream media stories about squatting across the Netherlands tends to have two or three stories every day about occupations and evictions. Again anecdotally I can assert that there are many other occupations occurring which do not reach the media or prefer to remain silent. For example, my own squat, which was occupied in late 2014, has never been reported in the media. So the phenomenon of squatting may have been pushed underground by repression, but it is anything but finished.

In fact, to drive home the point that criminalising squatting with the express intention of regulating vacancy was from the beginning a doomed project, the report itself comments that “the investigation could not confirm that the squatting ban has had effects on the vacancy problem or the other vacancy policy in a direct sense has had any effect on the squatting phenomenon.”

GROW HEATHROW'S 6TH BIRTHDAY!

SUSTAINABLE HOUSING

SOLAR POWER

DIY

BICYCLE POWER

RUNNERS BEARS NOT RUNWAYS

FRIDAY 4TH MARCH
7PM - MIDNIGHT
DELICIOUS VEGAN
CUISINE FOLLOWED
BY AN OPEN
MIC NIGHT

SATURDAY 5TH MARCH
11AM - LATE
PIZZA, WORKSHOPS,
WELLBEING, SPEECHES,
LIVE MUSIC,
DJS + MORE

BUILD A BETTER MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

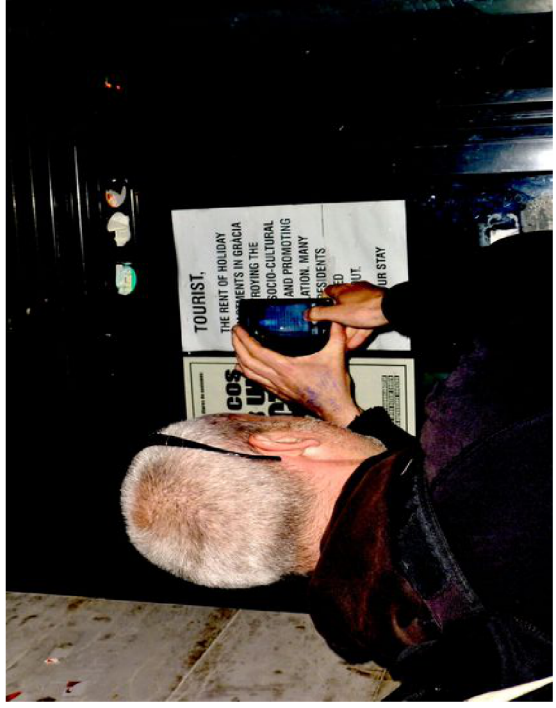
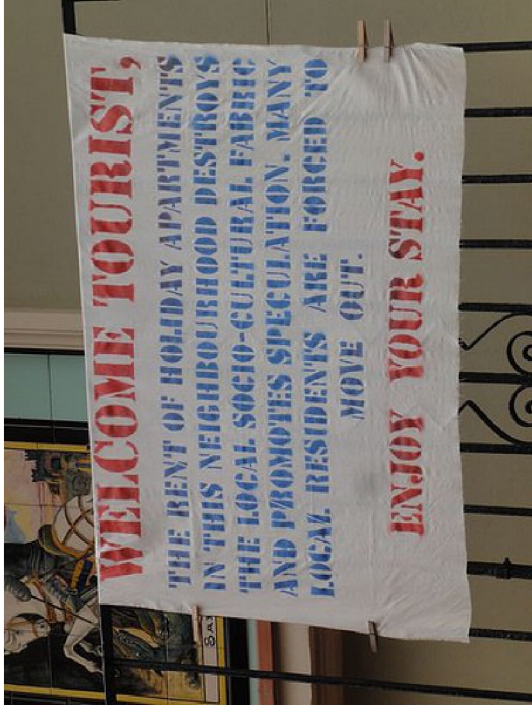
07706602284 INFO@TRANSITIONHEATHROW.COM WWW.TRANSITIONHEATHROW.COM
GROW HEATHROW. VINERIES CLOSE. SIPSON. UB7 0JH

Alongside this, 27 people received suspended sentences. Others were fined and yet more received community service:

Punishment	Number
Custodial sentence	39
Suspended sentence	27
Unconditional fine	95
Conditional fine	29
Unconditional community service	82
Conditional community service	39
	Total = 311

The total of 311 being larger than the figure of 210 convictions can be explained by people receiving fines in addition to other penalties. It is also worth noting that 42 people have been found not guilty of squatting by the judge. In terms of where the squatting is happening, the table below shows that it is still occurring everywhere, in all areas of the nation. The most arrests in 2014 were in the Hague, with a noticeable overall increase to 212 arrests country-wide.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total	%
Amsterdam	2	6	8	-	29	45	9
Den Haag	-	3	3	13	36	55	10
Limburg	-	5	1	4	2	12	2
Midden-Nederland	12	20	14	27	28	101	19
Noord-Holland	1	5	8	13	27	54	10
Noord-Nederland	-	2	10	2	13	27	5
Oost-Brabant	-	2	6	2	13	23	4
Oost-Nederland	6	17	25	27	25	100	19
Rotterdam	-	7	10	9	33	59	11
Zeeland-West-Brabant	1	33	12	1	6	53	10
Total	22	100	97	98	212	529	100



or acting in a group, which is almost always the case) and fined up to 18,500 euros. The regulation of vacancy was provided for by the introduction of the option for municipalities to adopt bylaws. As we shall see, this has been completely ineffective.

In the present, there are still many empty buildings and thus squatting continues. Unfortunately, some people have been charged and convicted under the new law, leading to the absurd situation in which between October 2010 and December 2014 529 people have been arrested for the act of occupying derelict buildings in 213 reported incidents (where the owner made a complaint to the police). Of these 529 people, 210 have received convictions. Of course, the number of successful squatting actions in which the police were never notified or were notified but no official complaint was made will be much higher. Likewise, the numbers of people arrested by the police inside a squat and then subsequently released, purely as a means to achieve an eviction, will be much more but they are not recorded. In addition, squatters arrested for other reasons such as criminal damage or resisting arrest are also not considered in these statistics.

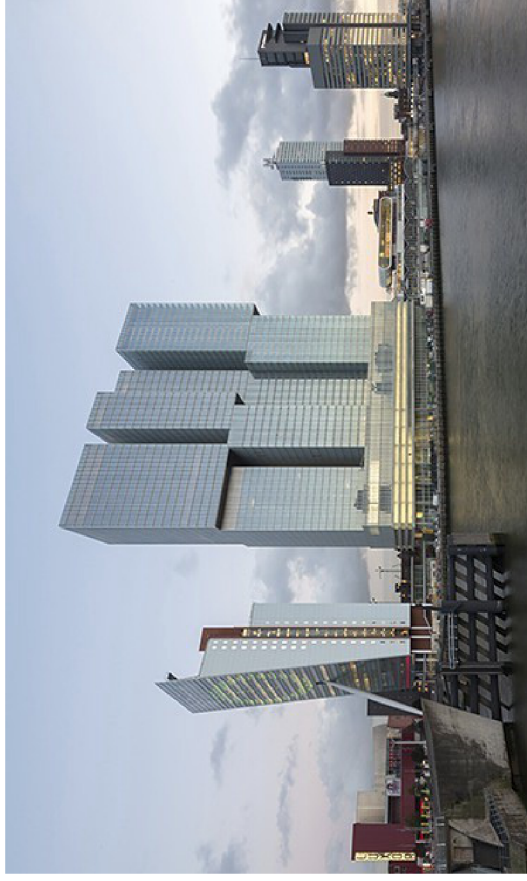
Of those charged and subsequently convicted, 39 people (not 37 as commonly reported) have been imprisoned. So 39 people have been put in jail for occupying derelict space. This is outrageous. Though the report obfuscates the numbers and declares only a “few cases” resulted in imprisonment for longer than a month, the figures are as follows:

Length of prison sentence	Number of people
Week or less	17
1 to 4 weeks	13
Longer than a month	9
	Total = 39

DON'T SUPPORT NAZI-INSPIRED APARTHEID: TOURISTS BOYCOTT ROTTERDAM!

Last week [October 2015], Rotterdam was ranked at number 5 in the Lonely Planet list of best cities to visit. This follows similar recent announcements from the Rough Guide and New York Times.

Now, I live here and I just want to say PLEASE DON'T COME. Rotterdam's already much much worse than it used to be and if it becomes any more of a fucking tourist attraction then it's game over for the Maastricht. That would be a shame, since Rotterdam used to be a nice city, with lots of squats, some cool bars, excellent festivals and lots of local initiatives going on. Of course, I'm not dealing in specifics here in case they might make you want to come visit.



Transformer sinks island in Rotterdam

In the 1990s, the city council decided upon a policy to build up the city on the 'strong shoulders' of the rich, instead of concentrating on the wonderful multicultural mix of people living here already. What has happened is that whole areas have been forcibly regenerated from above. Now perhaps this has had some advantages, but it's always interesting to notice who benefits. Certainly the yuppies who live in the glassy flats that have been puked up all over the centre are enjoying themselves and then the culture of the city has of course adjusted to this new vapid hipster class.

I don't want Rotterdam to be the next Berlin.

Gentrification is the displacement of working class people by successive waves of richer people. Gentrification is not making the city 'beautiful' through art projects, it's not the "restoration of dilapidated buildings" as I read in a PhD recently, it's not as easy as just saying that it improves areas, although that might also happen. But somehow the focus is always on the amazing opportunities of a fabulous upcoming new area, rather than on the people who used to live there and got displaced.

Gentrification is a cycle of urban renewal and it can't be stopped or reversed. But regeneration could be done responsibly and with awareness, listening to the needs of the local community. Yet it never seems to work out like that in practice and communities end up being ripped apart. What has happened in Rotterdam is that a form of state-sanctioned apartheid has been imposed, whereby rich white people return to the city and live alongside, but blind to and ignorant of, the people who already live there. Who are the people already there? Well, an interesting cross-section of minority groups, which naturally includes poor white Rotterdammers as well as immigrants from all over the world. Almost 50% of Rotterdammers were born outside the Netherlands or have at least one foreign parent.

THE VACANCY CRUNCH: THE CURRENT HOUSING CRISIS IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE REPRESSION OF SQUATTING

With the recent publication of a report evaluating the law realised in October 2010 which criminalised squatting and suggested a few paltry measures to combat building vacancy, an opportunity to discuss the current housing crisis in the Netherlands was wasted.

Whilst the Minister for Safety and Justice van de Steur writes that "this assessment does not require policy changes," the statistics produced by the report itself indicate that way more could be done.

The number of people needing to be housed is increasing and the best way to solve this problem is to liberate the empty building stock, putting it back into use through both legislative measures and squatting.

Repression of squatting

Squatting, defined here as making use of empty space without the permission of the owner, has been criminalised in the Netherlands since October 2010. Yet this was an action which was already sufficiently regulated by the law: previously, a building needed to be empty for one year before being occupied. With one elegant phrase, an anonymous civil servant had made a simple 'use it or lose it' demand: if you went away on holiday for two weeks, your house was safe, indeed your holiday home itself was protected by law if you used it only once in the year; but long term emptiness and neglect could be punished and highlighted through squatting. Thus squatters housed themselves, made space for many kinds of alternative projects and also performed a societal function in liberating derelict space and putting it back into use. Now, since the law change, squatters can be imprisoned for up to a year (two years if threatening violence

MEETING OF THE SQUATTING EUROPE KOLLECTIVE ROTTERDAM MAY18-23

may18

eetkafe poortgebouw

may 19

bike tour of squatted rotterdam in the day followed by film
night at WORM

may 20

presentation of academic work at the poortgebouw on
squattting and resistances to gentification followed by
seminar at erasmus university on squattting&migration

may21

presentation of academic work at the poortgebouw on
squattting

may22

evening panel discussion at V2

more info:

roffasqek.wordpress.com

radar.squat.net

**My worry is that Rotterdam will
become trendy like Berlin,
which will screw up the
city something chronic.**

But maybe I can persuade you not to come to Rotterdam simply by examining what puts it is on the list. In the AD newspaper, some idiot actor called Jan Kooijman states that Rotterdam is great because of the Markthal and the Central Station, Katendrecht and Witte de Withstraat, Urban Espresso Bar, Scapino Ballet, Conny Janssen Danst, Luxor and Schouwburg and Koopgoot.

Let's take these one by one (nice that he mentioned Koopgoot last) and maybe I can persuade you to go somewhere else instead...

I don't want it to the next anything.

The Markthal is hideous, a bad FengShui monstrosity. The square it sits wonkily beside hosts the biggest food market in Rotterdam twice a week as well as flea markets and so on. For some reason it seemed like a good idea to those in power to build an indoor market next to the actual market and stick yuppy flats on top. I've never been to the Markthal and I'm really pleased someone already tried to burn it down (unfortunately he got caught). It hosts olive counters for yuppies, an Albert Heijn supermarket, a bloody Jamie Oliver restaurant and other multinational projects. I rather support the original market thanks. No foto supplied.

Central Station. Well um yes the main train station has been redesigned and rebuilt over ten years. If you wanted to visit a city because it has a new train station, well then you should probably fuck off and die. My only other comment: Where are the solar panels they said would be put on top?

If you put the last 50 years of architecture in a blender, and spat it out in building-sized chunks across the skyline, you would probably end up with something that looked a bit like Rotterdam (Guardian)

This then created the space and opportunity for crappy architects to make a mess of things and to create the grey concrete city which I love (and you aren't allowed to visit).

So to bring it back to my original plea, please don't come to Rotterdam! We're doing just fine here thanks, please go have wanky conversations whilst drinking expensive coffee someplace else... I hear Barcelona is terribly underrated...

AMADOK



Aw look it's the old station

Katendrecht. I've got an excellent quote about Katendrecht which I've been itching to use somewhere. Here you go:

After Kop van Zuid, we went on to explore Katendrecht. This area, which was up to recently a no-go zone with many abandoned warehouses and almost exclusively working class inhabitants, has over the last decade transformed into a much more upscale area, with new shops, new squares and especially a new type of inhabitant popping up on the streets.

Now if you think that sort of attitude is OK and not describing a process of social cleansing, well what can I do? You should probably come to Rotterdam and hang out with other twangers at... the Urban Espresso Bar. I mean what the fuck, everyone has the right to the city, not just the rich. Katendrecht is the nexus of the Berlinification of Rotterdam, be warned.

(continued)

Fuck da police woop!



Feyenoord football supporters enthusiastically trashed the Koopgoot in 1999 when they won the Championship. (What would have happened if they lost???) Unfortunately fotos of this are not to be found on the internets, believe me I have searched. The fun ended when the cops shot three fans. The Mayor said it was a “fantastic neighbourhood party” although to be fair he did say that before the troubles.

Fun fact: the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam, built in the early 1950s, was the model for pedestrianised shopping centres all over the world.

So I blame the Nazis. I do actually. You see they bombed the shit out of central Rotterdam at the start of WWII.

Fun fact 2: if the Dutch hadn't surrendered the Utrecht was next

Moving on, Witte de Withstraat (WdW) is actually fun street, revitalised from the 1980s onwards. Aha! I hear you say, so some gentrification is OK?! Well no, it's more complicated than that. I didn't see the old street in its sleazy rundown state, that was before my time but also I don't hear people complaining now, since it's about how the street has changed. Change can't be stopped, but what is important is how it occurs. For example, one of my old favourite bars, de Schouw, is currently celebrating its 75th birthday. Back in the day it was a journalist hangout, when WdW was the Fleet Street of Rotterdam. As soon as de Schouw gets turned into a hipster cereal cafe, then you'll hear me complaining.

Nowadays, WdW has a lot of galleries and restaurants, plus WORM which is a funky alternative venue, in fact the street is just a victim of its own success and now it gets way too crowded at weekends. Probably thanks to the people who believed the Lonely Planet when it said in 2009 that the Witte Aap was the best bar in the world. Old faves like the Schouw are pretty terrible now. That's just what happens. Maybe you like drinking on the streets in a massive crush of people but that seems like hell to me. I rather go to my local bar and have a quiet drink. Or even stay in and read a book!

Scapino Ballet and Conny Janssen Danst, hmm dance companies, maybe you could simply see them on tour in your own city.

Luxor is a crap theatre, Schouwburg is an ok theatre. Yet would you really travel to see a theatre?

And finally we come to the Koopgoot. thanks to good old Jan Kooijman for mentioning that. I would honestly never have thought of it. I avoid the no-go consumerist area of the centre like the plague. It's a simply terrible shopping ghetto, you don't need to come here since thanks to multinational corporations you've got pretty much the same shops in your local concrete mall, anywhere in the world!

(continued after centrespread)

In 2015 the Tabakspanden, a row of squats in central Amsterdam (opposite Vrankrijk) were evicted.



Getting evicted

Pretty much a year later, I was in Amsterdam February 2016 and took a walk past the buildings. Some have been demolished, others are being renovated into yuppie apartments.

People talk about the violence of eviction resistance but what about the violence of urban renewal? You feel it in a visceral sense when you walk past: the houses which once had people living in them are now empty, or even completely gone, demolished, forgotten about.



In the picture above, note the same tree is still there, witnessing everything. The picture below is the same row, looking from a different angle.



Amsterdam just gets more boring.