Flowers shed petals: The political squatters' movement and social centres in Amsterdam

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ABSTRACT

This article examines squatted social centres in Amsterdam and the political squatters' movement which created them. Amsterdam has long been regarded as one of the squatting strongholds of Western Europe. A database of 115 social centres is analysed in terms of housing, legalisation processes, time period, duration of project, type of building occupied and location by borough. The database was produced using a range of sources, including participant observation, archive materials, conversations with squatters past and present, academic sources and activist websites. I consider external factors affecting the squatters' movement such as gentrification and anti-squatting. I pay particular attention to the broedplaats concept as it pertains to institutionalisation, with significant individual projects described where appropriate. Conclusions are then reached about the contexts, cycles and institutionalisation processes of the squatters' movement in Amsterdam.

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HEADING
Introduction

Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands and sits at the top of the Randstad area. It has a population of 800,000 and 1.5 million people live in the greater metropolitan area. With this article, I will suggest conclusions regarding the contexts, cycles and institutionalisation processes of the political squatters' movement, as seen through the lens of squatted social centres. For the focus of this study I will be examining the city proper although there are some significant outliers for example the squatted village of Ruigoord.

Amsterdam has long been regarded as one of the squatting strongholds of Western Europe, a thought which we will critically interrogate here. I shall first set out my methodology and next examine factors affecting the squatters' movement such as gentrification and anti-squatting. I will pay particular attention to the broedplaats concept as it pertains to institutionalisation. I then analyse a database I compiled of 115 squatted social centre projects, in terms of housing, legalisation processes, time period, duration of project, type of building occupied and location by borough. I examine some significant individual projects and make general conclusions.

HEADING
Methodology

The database was generated following multiple visits to the archives at the International Institute for Social History (IISH), reference to the academic and activist sources in the bibliography, internet research (using sites such as squat.net and indymedia.nl), participant observation and informal conversations with squatters both past and present. The database can be found online at **http://sqek.squat.net/database/**.

The IISH has a huge archive on the Dutch squatting movement containing posters, books, zines and other paraphernalia. This collection was broadened when Eric Duivenvoorden donated the Staatsarchief, a movement archive collected by the Stadsliedenbuurt squatters in Amsterdam West. This provides information on squatting in Amsterdam and also other cities sch as Arnhem, Den Bosch, Groningen, Haarlem, Leiden, Nijmegen, Rotterdam and Utrecht. It also has documents concerning squatting in the UK. The IISH holds practically all of the 600 plus issues published of the Grachtenkrant, an Amsterdam-based squatters newspaper produced between 1979 and 2008. It was intended to come out every two weeks and to report news from the grachten, the curved streets containing waterways which together make up the centre of Amsterdam. The paper also often gave news from other parts of Amsterdam and the Netherlands, reprinting mainstream media stories about squatting with handwritten commentary. With the kraakbeen insert (literally 'gristle') news was supplied on evictions and occupations.

The database was compiled according to the categories listed in Appendix 1. Drawing on the data gathered, the following categories were selected for analysis:

Total number of projects.
Housing.
Negotiations.
Legalisation.
Time period of social centre.
Life span of projects.
Location of social centre by borough.
Type of building occupied (listed in Appendix 2).

Whilst I have made efforts to be as comprehensive as possible in constructing this database, it would be impossible to compile a list of all the projects which existed. This is in some ways frustrating but also useful, since this database can make no claim to be definitive or hegemonic (nor should it). Hopefully it will contribute to a wider appreciation of some of the positive contributions squatters have made to the ever-changing city of Amsterdam. Obviously, the majority of squats are residential and silent, whereas the projects profiled here had a public presence demonstrated by events which were welcome to all (and for most recent projects a website, which is also recorded in the database). Private residential squats are not recorded and indeed the size and persistence of the squatting movement in Amsterdam would make it a daunting task to record even simply the number of residential squats.

HEADING
Database Analysis

In the database there are 115 entries. There are many more social centres which are not included. In a city like Amsterdam, where in the heyday of the squatting movement in the early 1980s there were over twenty neighbourhood squatting assistance hours (kraakspreekuren), there will assuredly have been many projects which are not recorded here. And indeed, the rough draft of the database has many more names and possible addresses which I was unable to factcheck adequately. But many of the longer-lasting, more influential and thus better recorded projects are included in the database. And this work will hopefully prove useful to activists in some shape or form, as well as having an academic function.

SUBHEADING
What is a social centre?

The squats listed here all acted as in some way a social centre, that is to say they hosted events open to the public which were advertised through listings or flyers. This definition of social centre tends to make a lot more sense when applied to projects from the 1990s onwards, since the notion of squatted social centre as a radical left organisational space owes much to the influence of the CSOAs (self-managed, occupied social centres) of Italy and Spain, which spread across Western Europe as the anti-globalisation movement networked and set up hubs from which to organise. Steve Wright (2000: 118) commented in 2000 regarding the CSOAs in Italy: "From a few dozen spaces grouped at the beginning of the 1980s around the remnants of earlier radical circles, the centres have spread across Italy over the past decade, so that a recent 'unofficial' tally lists more than 130 of them all told, of which close to one-third are concentrated in Rome and Milan." Whilst some earlier projects can clearly be identified as social centres in form, this term has only really been employed as a self-definition from the 1990s onwards as the anti-globalisation movement spread across Western Europe. Therefore the definition is used in a broader sense before the 1990s.

Subheading
Broedplaats

A peculiarity of the Dutch context is the broedplaats concept, which originated in Amsterdam. The huge Wyers squat (1981-1984) was a place where the discourse of the broedplaats ('breeding place') was formed as an alternative frame to the traditional frame which justified squatting as based on housing need (Uitermark 2004). Wyers, eventually evicted for a Holiday Inn, housed in the region of a hundred squatters and also hosted a restaurant (Zorro's Zion), a skate park, a theatre, a fruit and vegetable shop, 30 artist ateliers, an art gallery and a creche. Uitermark (2004: 235) states:

> Wyers became a meeting-ground for a huge diversity of people, ranging from skaters (there was a skate hall in the building) to pop music lovers. It became, in other words, a 'breeding place.' Part of the reason the breeding place proponents could win the argument from the hard-liners, was that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the 'uncompromising housing shortage' frame within the movement.

Thus the concept originated with squatters, but it did not have very much traction with the authorities until the late 1990s, when the aims of some squatters and the Amsterdam City Council became aligned. This was because the council started to realise that in order for the cultural element which was so important for attracting people and investment to the city to thrive, artists needed cheap spaces to rent and work. The squatters had been demonstrating this for some time already, but now the city was onside, in its quest to regenerate the city.
Thus, Uitermark (2004: 237) reports:

> One of the squatters of Wyers, a long-time proponent of the breeding place frame who was also involved in this address to the council, says that he and his associates repeatedly addressed the city council to voice his concerns about the eviction of landmark squats in the city centre and the resulting deterioration of the city's cultural climate:
>
> "In the 1990s, during the economic boom, everything that was alternative was killed, witness the many evictions. I was extremely surprised that in 1998 the council suddenly responded to our call. We had written such manifests and council addresses in 1994 and 1996 but only at this point in time did they see that squats are important for the cultural and economic climate."

In 2000, the Gemeente (Council) published a report entitled *Geen cultuur zonder subcultuur* ('No culture without subculture') and the breeding place policy still exists today as can be seen by its page on the council website (Gemeente Amsterdam 2014). There is however controversy surrounding how the term has been appropriated by the state. Eric Duivenvoorden, writing in 2002, states (2002) that "of itself such a breeding ground policy would be a praise-worthy endeavour if it weren't that the idea goes completely contrary to the manner in which these places have always existed and developed themselves" although he does admit that "free zones that want to survive for a somewhat longer term will need sooner or later to find more structural solutions which in one way or another direct their sights on authorities." Duivenvoorden is himself now one of the names behind Urban Resort, a group which aims (2014) to "provide cheap space for the cultural and creative sector." It currently runs seven such projects, providing infrastructure for artists' studios and suchlike.

The breeding place policy can be seen to have evolved from practical action by squatters in the early 1980s, long before the creative city discourse had been invented. Occupying large empty

buildings which were originally used for such purposes as canteens (Edelweiss), printers (Inktfabriek, van Ostadestraat 233), military (Rijkshemelvaart, Vredenburgh), schools (Frederik Hendrikschool, Zaal100) or offices (NRC complex, Wyers, Tetterode), the squatters set up what they called woon/werk panden ('live/work buildings'). Sometimes these took in entire areas such as a village (Ruigoord). In recognition of their self-organisation and also thanks to the famed Dutch tolerance (for more on this see Poldervaart 2001), many of these buildings managed to legalise and some still exist today. Another wave of occupations occurred in the late 1990s, including a former film academy (OT301), warehouses (Kalenderpanden, Plantage Doklaan), an embassy (ELF) and a dry dock (ADM).

The VrijeRuimte project gathered data on many of these projects in 2000, calling them vrijplaatsen ('free spaces') and publishing a book called *Laat 1000 vrijplaatsen bloien: onderzoek naar vrijplaatsen in Amsterdam* ('Let 1000 free spaces blossom: Research concerning free spaces in Amsterdam'). Whilst not all these free spaces were squatted, many were. It should also be noted that not all live/work spaces had a public function. The comprehensive list (2001: 135-139) compiled in *Laat 1000 vrijplaatsen bloien* shows that there are also woon/werkpanden which were private rather than public, in the sense we have defined the distinction between social centres and residential squats. Also some projects which began with public functions have over time become more private. In contrast, Vrankrijk (literally 'France') on Spuistraat in the centre was occupied in 1982 and is still part of the radical scene, with a bar which currently hosts events such as queer and punk nights. In addition, de Slang ('Snakehouse'), a squat directly opposite from Vrankrijk, had been quiet for years but then reconnected to the movement to ask for support when it was threatened with eviction (and began doing events such as film nights).

Regarding institutionalisation then, we can find significant number of projects which have managed to legalise and stay alternative, in distinction to other cities such as Brighton, London and Rotterdam, where the numbers of institutionalised projects are few and far between (Dee, forthcoming). The danger of course with institutionalisation is that the project would end up a tamed and commercialised facsimile of its former self, but to a greater or a lesser degree, projects can be said to have legalised successfully in some cases. Conversely, some places have been evicted despite seeming eminently suitable for legalisation, for example the warehouses Kalenderpanden and Pakhuis Afrika, where broedplaats arguments were wiped away by the bare commercial value of the land on which they stood. Before its eviction, the Kalenderpanden posted (2000) the following on its website:

> The form of the 'new Amsterdam' is becoming clearer and clearer: a city where the centre is affordable only for the rich, with lower-income people, immigrants and students pushed out to deprived neighbourhoods. [...] The middle-class consumer lifestyle is selling itself well! Never before has Amsterdam been so boring and never before has the city reaped so many hundreds of millions of guilders in profit and rising property prices.

When it does work out, useful way to conceptualise this form of institutionalisation would be to use Martinez's (2013) conception of anomalous institutionalisation, since the projects have followed the path towards legalisation (in some cases even buying their own building), compromising on some aspects, but managing to maintain a radical identity. Thus, as he argues (2013: 667), these places have legalised according to their own codes, rather than being completely assimilated and are therefore defined as anomalous as a means of "distinguishing the countercultural, experimental and mixed orientations of collective projects that had a significant duration and social recognition, although not enjoying all the benefits of being considered a mainstream cultural or subcultural institution." Of course, every specific case has its own context and much also depends on the degree

of sympathy held by local authorities to to the individual project. I can refer to cases such as Vrankrijk (mentioned earlier) and Molli. The latter has been a squatted bar in various locations in the Pijp neighbourhood since 1982. It now is legalised and pays a small rent. Other spaces may be politically situated further away from the current squatting movement but still for example displayed banners to support squatters when criminalisation was threatened. The banners read 'Made possible by the squatting movement' (Mede mogelijk gemaakt door de kraakbeweging).

The concept of the broedplaats has obviously played an important role here in institutionalisation, yet only when it suited the local authorities and as an additional point, not everyone in the squatting movement thought or thinks that breeding places are a good idea. For example in the West, there is a complex of buildings squatted in 1984, which includes a venue (OCCII), an anarchist infoshop (Bollox) and an eetcafe (MKZ). Known altogether as the Binnenpret ('chuckle'), it has been legalised but affirms (Binnenpret N.d.) on its website that it receives no cultural subsidy from the state.[1] Further, a wall in the garden was painted with the statement 'Fuck broedplaatsen' (Anon 2009).[2]

Of course, other forms of squatting have existed apart from or even alongside breeding places. such as residential with occasionally public functions e.g. Bajesdorp (2003 to present), hacklabs e.g. ASCII (early 2000s in at least six locations) and social centres e.g. Joe's Garage (2005 to present in two locations).

Whilst squatting had existed previously, it achieved the status of a social movement with the large-scale occupations in areas of Amsterdam such as the Nieuwmarktbuurt and bitterly contested evictions of the late 1970s such as the Groote Keyser and early 1980s such as the Vondelstraat (Duivenvoorden 2000; Owens 2008, 2009). In the Nieuwmarktbuurt, squatters played a crucial role in preventing demolitions of entire blocks as well as a monumental building, de Pinto House. The council had planned to build a dual carriageway through the area but now today it is preserved a conservation area, known for its quiet street despite being just to the east of the centre (Uitermark & Nicholls 2013).

Uitermark and Nicholls (2013: 1-2) assert that "the squatting movement established countless autonomous centres" in the 1970s and 1980s, and that it had "contracted" in the 1990s. Aside from the internal disintegration of the movement, examined in great detail by Owens in his 2009 book *Cracking Under Pressure: Narrating the Decline of the Amsterdam Squatters Movement*, one important external factor is the urban regeneration of Amsterdam. Oudenampsen (2014 web) observes that "the ground was set in 1995, when the housing corporations were semi-privatised and subsidies for the construction of social housing were abolished." As the local authorities reached out to the creative classes, squatters were at first useful in providing the broedplaats idea for alternative culture to flourish, but then were eventually squeezed out by increasing property prices as a result of gentrification. For example, in the Pijp neighbourhood, the squatters from the Bakkerblokken and then the Verbindingsblok (which featured the Eigenaardig social centre), two sites of struggle against the yuppification of the area were well aware that once evicted, there would be no more spaces large enough for them to occupy as a group. The Pijp now has hardly any squats, although the Molli remains as a legalised squat bar.

SUBHEADING
Gentrification

W.P.C. van Gent (2013: 509) sees gentrification as beginning spontaneously in central Amsterdam in the mid-1970s "sparked by several contingent factors such as low interest rates, a relatively

young population and commercial disinvestment in the city centre." It then accelerated in the 1980s and from the 1990s onwards was driven by state actors, as we have seen in the discussion of the broedplaats concept above. Now, as Oudenampsen (2014 web) notes, "gentrification in Amsterdam is largely state-led. The core of this government policy is so-called 'social mixing': creating more expensive houses in poor neighbourhoods." As regards squatting, then this policy will as a side effect then eventually lead to reduced opportunities for occupation, since top-down regeneration plans will result in less derelict properties (even if during the process, with the inevitable delays, there may be increased short term opportunities).

Two important factors here noted by van Gent (2013: 519) are the "deregulation of state institutions (housing construction subsidies and associations) and the logic of homeownership ideology, which casts owner-occupation as the superior form of tenure." The entrance of housing corporations into the market has had disastrous results. Whilst van Gent (2013: 510) may argue that "even though housing associations are private and have been deregulated, they are required by law to invest their proceeds in improving the quality of housing and neighbourhoods and in new development" this is to ignore recent scandals concerning corruption and mismanagement. To give some examples:
- Rochdale (based in Amsterdam) was defrauded of millions of Euros by its director Hubert Mollenkamp (Anon 2014)
- De Key (Amsterdam) sued two former directors for fraud (Anon 2010b).
- Woonbron (Rotterdam) wasted 230 million Euro on a failed plan to make an ocean liner into a hotel (Anon 2014)
- Vestia (Rotterdam) almost went bankrupt after speculating on the stock exchange and losing 2.5 billion Euro in the process (Allen & Fearn 2012). The director is currently facing criminal charges and Vestia's bank ABN Amro was fined for breaking anti-money-laundering rules (Anon 2013).

Unsurprisingly then, housing corporations are often the target of squatters, who occupy the buildings left empty through mismanagement. Squatters also organise against speculators and take action to protect monumental buildings.

To give an example, in the case of the Verbingsblok mentioned earlier the block was owned by the housing corporation Eigen Haard ('Your own hearth'), spoofed in the name of the social centre, Eigen Aardig ('peculiar'). The neighbourhood letter sent out in January 2009 (Verbindingsblok 2009) states that the squatters offered an alternative plan for the building but were rejected:

> This summer we had a plan to buy Verbindingsblok and to restore it. [...] New demolition and building permits have been issued for the block. Their plan is from 30 rental flats to make 24 luxury apartments with garages, roof terraces [...] Despite the fact that many building codes and rules are broken in the plans of Eigen Haard, the city granted them full exemption. This was to be expected, as the city prefers highly educated dual earners to tenants and squatters.[3]

SUBHEADING
ANTI-SQUAT

Huisman (2013) argues that the traditionally strong Dutch tenancy rights are being eroded by more precarious forms of temporary rental agreements and examines the phenomenon of anti-squat. As is clear from the name, one motivation for anti-squat is to protect a building from being squatted through occupation. A company is paid both by the owner to find inhabitants and by the 'renters' for the lease agreement (rather than a traditional rental contract). These tenants are not classified as renters and such have very little rights. They are subject to stringent restrictions, such as not being

allowed to have pets, not being permitted to go on holiday, access for the anti-squat company at any time, short termination time, no parties and no contact with the press. Whilst it therefore appears legally dubious, anti-squat is now big business and Priemus (2011: 3) estimates there to be "tens of thousands of anti-squatters in the Netherlands." He also comments (ibid) that "in effect yesterday's squatter is today's anti-squatter" since despite the terrible conditions, the 'rent' is cheap and following criminalisation squatting perhaps appears even more precarious. In a sense, the political squatters' movement is a victim of its own success here, since by demonstrating just how easy it was to acquire a living space immediately without costs, it created a situation in which many (non-political) people were squatting and thus led to subsequent capitalist recuperation of the idea of using space such as anti-squat and later the criminalisation of squatting in 2012. Unfortunately there is very little academic work on anti-squat, as Huisman notes (2013: 2).

Now, having considered some factors affecting the squatters' movement such as the broedplaats concept, gentrification and anti-squat, I will move on to examining the database I drew up, which covers projects from the late 1970s (with one outlier in 1965) until the end of 2013.

SUBHEADING
TIME PERIOD

SUBSUBHEADING
Table 1: Timing of projects

TIME	BEGAN	STILL ONGOING TOTAL																	
...-1979	13	6	6	1	1												
1980-1984	34	11	6	1	1	11											
1985-1989	6	2	6	1		11	1	2									
1990-1994	15	2	6	1		11	1	2	2	1	1						
1995-1999	7	3	6	1		11	1	2	2	1	1	3	1				
2000-2004	12	3	6	1		11		2	2		1	3	1	3	2		
2005-2009	16	1	6			11		2	2			3		3	2	1	3
2010-2013	12	4	6			11		2	2			3		3		1	3	4
TOTAL	115	32	6			11		2	2			3		3		1		4

In Table 1, above, we can see that out of the total of 115 total projects, the '1980-1984' time period contains by far the most new projects, namely 34 (30% of the total). At least eleven of these still persist today. This would seem to confirm the widely held view that this period was the heyday of the squatters' movement.

I can say for certain that 32 projects were ongoing at the close of 2013; in fact the figure is probably higher since I was not able to ascertain if all places had been evicted.

The sixteen columns on the righthand side of Table 1 indicate how many projects continued through the five year time periods, thus for example we can see that from the 'until 1979' section, 6 projects

remained in operation at the close of 2013, with one lasting until 1980-1984 (Groote Keyser) and another until 2000-2004 (de Loods). All of these 6 projects were legalised at a certain point, a theme we will look at in more detail below. Of course, projects which were evicted within the same time period as the occupation are not mentioned in this way.

The lowest number of new projects is 6, in the time period 1985-1989. Interestingly, this directly follows on from the highest amount. This may well reflect the generally accepted decline of the movement following the peak of the early 1980s, but another factor could be that since so many previously occupied projects were still open and vibrant, there was a reduced need for more public projects.

The potential for contradictory conclusions is also present when we look at the contemporary figures, since between 2010 and 2013, there were 12 occupations, of which four were still running at the close of 2013 (Valreep, Vluchtgarage, Antarctica, Vondelbunker). The survival rate of one in three projects would certainly suggest that the criminalisation of squatting in October 2010 has not completely succeeded in repressing the squatting movement, yet the overall numbers are small. Also, perhaps these new occupations were in response to previous evictions, which then created a need for new projects. Nevertheless, 12 occupations in this period is an impressive amount when one considers that the squatters' movement was under severe repression.

SUBSUBHEADING
Image 1: Social centres by time period

SOCIAL CENTRES BY TIME PERIOD
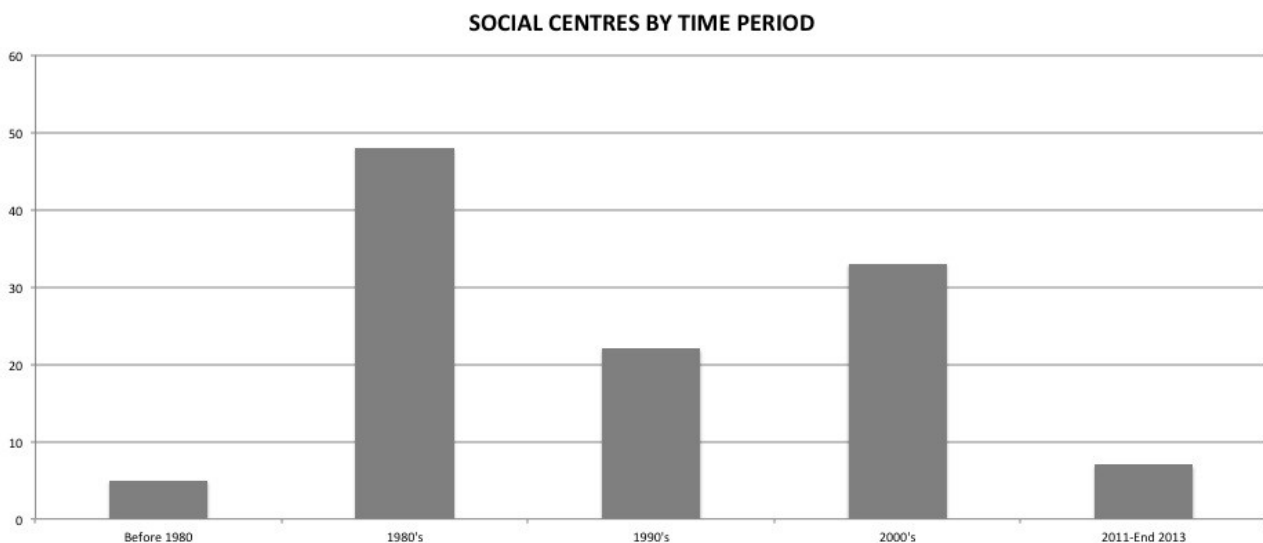
Also worth noting is that the Vondelbunker is included here since it is very much a part of the squat scene (for example the Studenten Kraakspreekuur meets there) but it is actually a legal space, from its very beginning. It is run by the Schijnheilig collective, which previously squatted buildings in the centre as venues for art galleries and events. It is therefore counted as one of the four projects which continue to the end of 2013 having been occupied, since it is part of the squatters' movement.

Of the others, Antarctica and Valreep are currently under eviction threat and the Vluchtgarage was the latest in a series of squats (which are continuing into 2014) in which squatters are providing skills and support to help the people from We Are Here (Wij Zijn Hier) to house themselves. We Are Here defines itself on its website (2014) as "a group of refugees without papers, that want to make our problem visible." Further, they say (ibid):

We have applied for asylum in your country. Our claims have been rejected. Now we are called 'illegals.' But we prefer to call ourselves refugees. Wars, international conflicts and systematic violence have devastated our countries. So you understand why we don't like being called illegals. We are refugees. And now we live on the streets. We barely have rights. We have no means of subsistence.

The help of the political squatters' movement was prompted by the harsh winter eviction of the Tentcamp at Osdorp, which resulted in the occupation of a former church. With the agreement of the owner, the Vluchtkerk (Refugee Church) was used for 6 months and then the group squatted the Vluchtflat (Refugee Flat), then the Vluchkantoor (Refugee Office) and then the Vluchtgarage. A fuller and more up to date story is hosted on their website (Wij Zijn Hier 2014).

SUBSUBHEADING
Image 2: The occupation of the Vluchtgarage
Credit - Hansfoto

Following the criminalisation of squatting, the Mayor of Amsterdam promised in 2010 to evict 200 of the 300 (mainly residential) squats in the city, but actually the old tradition of an eviction wave every three months has since been stopped (Anon 2010b). Yet the traditional Sunday squat actions also stopped almost completely and it would seem that criminalisation drastically reduced the number of people squatting (thus removing the need for evictions). The number of kraakspreekuren reducing to just three and it is only now, a few years later, that squat actions have begun in earnest. Nevertheless, social centres continue to be occupied (and evicted) and as we have seen, other squats persist.

As a sidenote, it is interesting to assess where this number of 200 to 300 squats comes from. It appears to have first been stated on the krakengaatdoor.nl website, which was set up to fight the kraakverbod ('squatban' i.e. criminalisation). In answer to the question 'How many squatters are there?' the answer given is 'It is not known [...] in Amsterdam estimates range from 200 to 300 squats and 1500 to 2000 squatters.' This number has been repeated in both van Gemert et al. (2009: 47) and Rennoy (2008: 53) and seems to have been gained general acceptance.

In May 2014, Vice magazine (Roes & Ritzen 2014) was told by a press officer from Amsterdam council that:

> We have no idea of the number of squatters in Amsterdam. That's because we only know the reported squats. In addition, it is not known how many people live in these squats. Regarding the number of evicted places: in 2013, there were 62 buildings evicted in the usual manner and 3 properties emptied in a speed eviction ['spoedontruiming' - a new process permitted by recent legal battles over the new law]. In 2014 so far, a few buildings have been evicted. The exact number we do not know but it's not more than 10.[4]

This opinion appears more honest than police commissioner Leen Schaap's claim in 2012 that 350 squats had been evicted since the kraakverbod in October 2010 (Anon 2010a).[5] This was presumably an overblown figure designed to create the impression that squatting in Amsterdam had been wiped out. On this point, Deanna Dadusc (2012: 7-8) sees criminalisation as a "strategy to de-motivate people from squatting, of letting the movement shrink to specific groups of people and specific spaces of the city: this strategy would lead at leaving a few hot spots, containing squatting to those areas and to a strict number of radical activists."

To return to the analysis then, we can suggest that from 2010 onwards, following the criminalisation of squatting, the squatters movement has been at a low ebb, losing participants and caught up in battles over the new meaning of squatting. However, the movement has not been completely destroyed and there are recent signs of a resurgence, since more squat actions are now being carried out again. However, the landscape has changed dramatically, from the previous situation in which a chair, table and a bed constituted living arrangements and once a place had been secured, the squatters would call the police, who would come round to check the place had previously been empty, then (in most cases) congratulate the squatters and go on further with their day. Now, police are seldom permitted entry to squats and there have been instances of police violence at occupations. All this would seem familiar to squatters from other countries such as the UK (Dee forthcoming). In this way then, Amsterdam has appeared as a squatters paradise in the past, since squatting was a legally available option, but I think that the MOVOKEUR research will make clear that in recent years, in terms of numbers both of squatters and of occupied social centres, Amsterdam falls behind other cities such as Barcelona, Madrid and Rome.

In terms of cycles, we could therefore construct a very crude overview, below:

SUBSUBHEADING
Table 2: Cycles of squatting

TIME PERIOD	CYCLE
1970s-1984	BOOM
1985-1989	DECLINE
1990-1999	CONSOLIDATION
2000-2009	UPSURGE
2010 onwards	POST-CRIMINALISATION

No-one would dispute that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, squatters formed large-scale social movement in Amsterdam. Such flashpoints as the 1980 riots against the Queen's coronation and the squatters' effective campaign against the Olympics coming to the city indicate an organised and effective movement (for more information see ADILKNO 1990). It is also uncontroversial to state that the movement then declined, although exact dates can be argued over. For Uitermark, writing in 2004 (2004: 236), "after 1980, the movement declined rapidly and stabilised around 1990. Only in the past two or three years can we discern some ways in which the movement may again gain momentum and acquire new political significance." It would indeed appear that there was a recent upturn in the squatters' movement, which lasted until criminalisation in 2010. Criminalisation dented this upsurge, but has not ultimately stopped it.

SUBSUBHEADING
Table 3: Housing

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
HOUSING	60	9	46

We can see from Table 3 above that for 60 projects (over half the total) there definitely was housing in addition to the social centre, for 9 definitely not, and for 46 it is impossible to say. We cannot draw much conclusions from this except to say that in other cities such as Berlin for example, the majority of projects were also used for housing, with a social centre function on the ground floor and/or basement, since many properties were apartment blocks (see Azozomox 2014). In Amsterdam, a range of buildings were occupied, as we will see below in Table 4 which shows the type of buildings which were occupied (the type referring to the use prior to squatting).
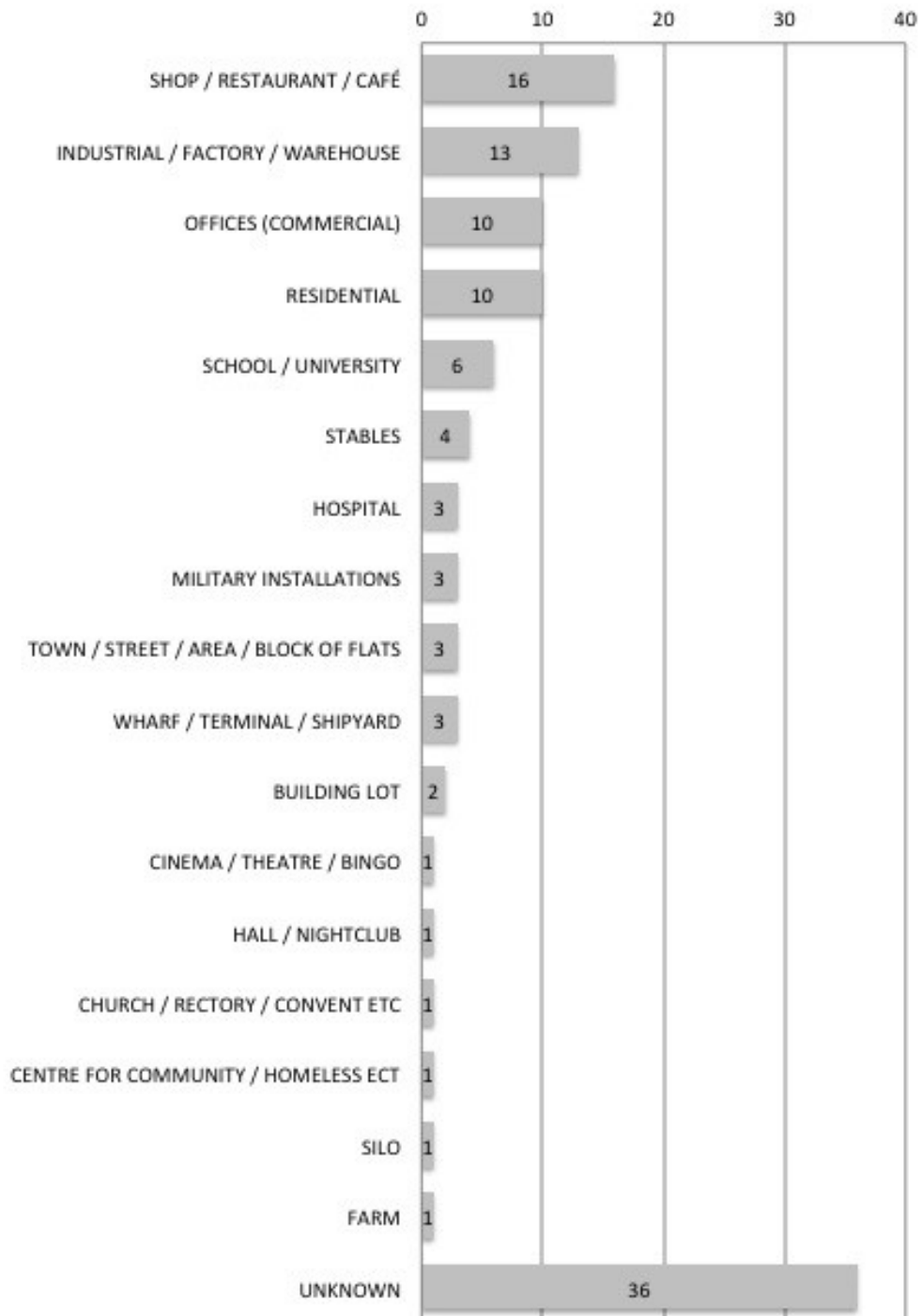
SUBSUBHEADING
Table 4: Types of building

TYPE OF BUILDING	NUMBER
Shop/restaurant	16
Industrial/warehouse	13
Commercial/offices	10
Residential	10
School	6
Stables	4
Wharf/terminal/shipyard	3
Village/terrain/island	3
Hospital	3
Military	3
Empty building lot	2
Community centre	1
Silo	1
Nightclub	1
Farm	1
Church	1
Cinema	1
Community Centre	1
Unknown	36
TOTAL	115

The diversity of buildings demonstrates the squatters' willingness to requisition whatever derelict property is available.
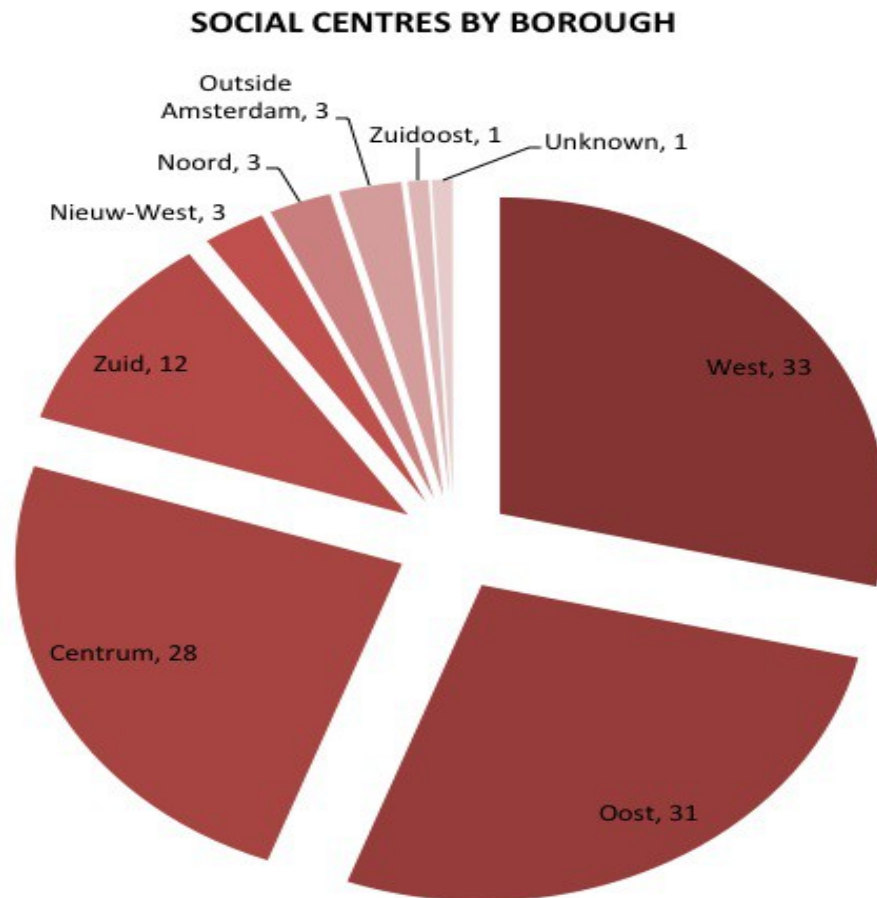
***SUBSUBHEADING***
Image 3: Type of space

TYPE OF SPACE

Type of space	Count
SHOP / RESTAURANT / CAFÉ	16
INDUSTRIAL / FACTORY / WAREHOUSE	13
OFFICES (COMMERCIAL)	10
RESIDENTIAL	10
SCHOOL / UNIVERSITY	6
STABLES	4
HOSPITAL	3
MILITARY INSTALLATIONS	3
TOWN / STREET / AREA / BLOCK OF FLATS	3
WHARF / TERMINAL / SHIPYARD	3
BUILDING LOT	2
CINEMA / THEATRE / BINGO	1
HALL / NIGHTCLUB	1
CHURCH / RECTORY / CONVENT ETC	1
CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY / HOMELESS ECT	1
SILO	1
FARM	1
UNKNOWN	36

Image 4: Social centres by borough

SOCIAL CENTRES BY BOROUGH

Outside Amsterdam, 3
Noord, 3
Nieuw-West, 3
Zuidoost, 1
Unknown, 1
Zuid, 12
West, 33
Centrum, 28
Oost, 31

We can see from the pie chart above that most squats were in the three central boroughs of Centrum, West or Oost ('east'). Their locations are shown in the image below. This is unsurprising, since for a public project, squatters would want to be in the centre where people will find it easier to come to events. The diversity of buildings occupied shows that the type of building is itself not an obstacle, rather more of a challenge to be worked with. However, the discussion of gentrification above throws up the question of whether there will continue to be the same number of squats in the central boroughs in future. This seems unlikely, since as areas gentrify the empty building stock is used up. Whilst gentrification is far from being a smooth, city-wide process, tending to occur more in specific pockets, we have seen that districts such as the Pijp now have far less squats than in previous decades and as this trend continues squatters may find themselves occupying empty buildings more on the fringes of the city. Yet this prediction itself is far from certain, since gentrification is of course itself part of a more general processes of change and urban renewal, in which areas improve and decline. As certain places experience the bust following the boom, opportunities for squatting may increase again.

Image 5: Boroughs of Amsterdam
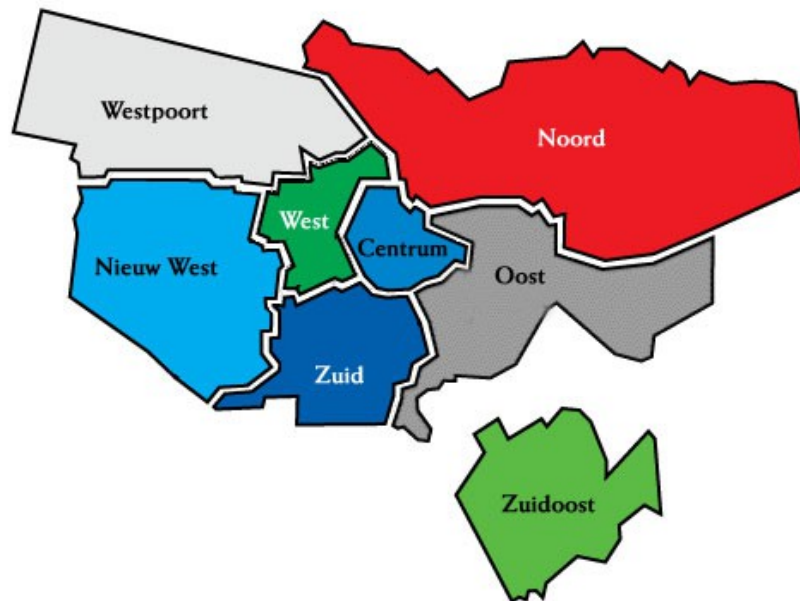
HEADING
Conclusions

Whilst the total number of social centres in Amsterdam will no doubt be dwarfed by the figures for other West European capitals such as London and Rome, it is of course a smaller city and it is clear that social centres (as a visible, public part of the political squatters' movement) have over time made a huge impact on the city of Amsterdam. Owens asserts that "few groups have influenced Amsterdam's recent development as much as the squatters' movement, who helped transform the city's housing, political and cultural landscape" (2008: 44). We can roughly chart the cycles of the movement as boom, decline, consolidation, upsurge and post-criminalisation.

Right now, in the years following criminalisation in 2010, it is hard to say what comes next - in a gentrifying city there are less large buildings available to be squatted in at least some areas of the centre (e.g. the Pijp in Oost) but more broad urban cycles of growth and decay mean that it is unlikely the supply of empty buildings will dry up completely. But then are there still people squatting? Yes, certainly there are, perhaps in small numbers than before but the 32 ongoing projects at the close of 2013 (including four squatted since 2010) indicate that a scene still exists.

The squatters' movement in Amsterdam benefits from the infrastructure provided by long-existing social centre projects, some of which have been active for decades. Of course, different people favour different places and groups veer between greater and diminished political activity, but nevertheless the places provide both physical spaces from which to organise and a cultural memory of former victories.

In this article we have seen that squatters from the 1970s onwards have claimed all sorts of buildings both to live in and work in, and to create cultural spaces, mainly in the three central districts of Centrum, West and Oost. Thanks to a tolerant council policy, and backed by a large social movement, a significant number of places negotiated a legalised structure for themselves in

the 1980s, in some cases even buying the property. Whilst not all of these projects have remained connected to the movement, many have, and this has allowed the movement as a whole to survive over time and even through the recent period of criminalisation. The concept of the broedplaats was proposed by squatters from the 1980s onwards and when in the late 1990s it began to tie in with the cultural policies of the city authorities, the convergence of interests facilitated some cases of anomalous institutionalisation.

Now, following the criminalisation of squatting and at a time when the movement itself is smaller, it seems unlikely that many projects will follow this pattern. Other factors would include the shift to a less tolerant governance, the lack of space for broedplaats style discourses, the phenomenon of anti-squat and the ongoing gentrification of Amsterdam. However, this is not to say that the squatters' movement no longer exists and indeed there are some indications that it is currently undergoing a resurgence following a lean period.

HEADING
Endnotes

1 De Binnenpret is geen broedplaats en ontvangt geen broedplaatssubsidie.
2 'Fuck broedplaatsen' staat een paar keer in nette letters op de muur van de tuin geschilderd. Binnenpret is zelfstandig, heeft anders dan de geïnstitutionaliseerde broedplaatsen niets met de gemeente te maken.
3 Deze zomer nog hadden we een plan om het verbindingsblok op te kopen en zelf op te knappen. Door de geld lust van eigen haard, zij kunnen immers veel meer geld vangen als ze dit blok per etage verkopen, en niet verrassend de onwelwillende houding van het stadsdeel, is dit mislukt. Wij zagen er wel wat in om onafhankelijk van bazen en politici ons eigen plan te volbrengen.Nu zijn de sloop en bouwvergunningen voor het blok afgegeven. Hun plan is om van 30 huurwoningen 24 luxe appartementen met garages, dakterrassen en alles er op en er aan te maken. Ondanks het feit dat veel bouwvoorschriften en regels overtreden worden in de plannen van Eigen Haard, heeft het stadsdeel hen volledige vrijstelling verleend. Ook dit was te verwachten, het stadsdeel ziet hoogopgeleide tweeverdieners graag komen en huurders en krakers liever gaan.
4 Wij hebben geen zicht op het aantal krakers in Amsterdam. Dat komt omdat bij ons alleen de panden bekend zijn waarvan aangifte wordt gedaan. Daarnaast is niet bekend hoeveel mensen er in deze gekraakte panden wonen. Wat betreft het aantal ontruimde panden: in 2013 zijn er via de reguliere weg 62 panden ontruimd en er zijn 3 panden ontruimd met een spoedontruiming. In 2014 zijn tot nu toe een paar panden ontruimd. Het precieze aantal hebben wij niet maar dat zal niet meer dan 10 zijn.
5 In the same report, Schaap added the derogatory remark "Ik sluit niet uit dat ergens een Pool in een pandje zit dat we niet kennen, maar Amsterdam kun je geen krakersstad meer noemen" ('There may be a Pole sitting in a flat somewhere that we are not aware of, but you can no longer call Amsterdam a squatters' city').

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SUBHEADING
Image Credits

Table
1 - Author
2 - Author
3 - Author
4 – Author

Image
1 – Author / BLUBS
2 - Hans Foto

3 - Author / BLUBS
4 - Author / BLUBS
5 - Author / BLUBS

SUBHEADING
Database Sources

Blacklist
Broedplaatsen
http://www.amsterdam.nl/kunst-cultuur-
sport/werkplekken/broedplaatsen/projectenlijst/broedplaatsen/
De Vrije Ruimte
http://www.vrijeruimte.nl/
Grachtenkrant
Indymedia
http://www.indymedia.nl
Omslag
http://www.omslag.nl/wonen/woonwerk.html
Squat!Net
http://en.squat.net/weblinks/nederland
http://nl.squat.net
http://radar.squat.net
Staatsarchief
http://www.iisg.nl/staatsarchief//index.php
SUBHEADING
Appendix 1

Self-definition – How the social centre called itself eg "social centre," "community garden,"
"cafe," "free space" etc (if known).
Name - The name of the social centre as used in its publicity or by its users (if known).
Address & Ward of social centre
Day / month / year of occupation (if known)
Day / month / year of eviction (if known)
Duration of squat (if known)
Duration in months (if known)
Time period in which squat was occupied (from occupation until eviction) – This category was
adapted to include different non-exclusive categories so that various degrees of precision could be
permitted. For example, a squat occupied from 1983 until 1992 would be placed in the categories
before 1985, 1985-1989, 1980s, 1990-1995 and 1990s, whereas regarding a squat for which the
only mention in a zine suggested it was occupied in the 1980s, it would be put in the category 1980s
alone.
Type of space occupied – The types are listed in Appendix 2.
Time empty before occupation
Ownership and whether this owner was private or public.
Political network and various categories of activism and activities – this was impossible to fill in
except for projects I knew personally, since it was far too detailed (and in addition some categories
only made sense in the Spanish context from which this database was originally drawn) so I did not
use it for analysis.
Type of eviction – legal, self, illegal, police attack.
Whether negotiations occurred.
Use of building after eviction.

Was there ever an attack by **fascists.**
Organised groups using the space.
Did the project include **housing**.
Did the project have a **website**.
Source(s)

HEADING
Appendix 2

BUILDING TYPES
School / university
Factory / warehouse
Shop / restaurant/ cafe
Hospital
Hotel
Military installations
Commercial / offices
Residential building
Cinema / theatre / bingo
Town / street / area / block of flats
Empty building lot
Health centre / doctor / dentist
Cafe
Burial vault
Funeral parlour / morgue
Post office
Pier
Courthouse / municipal
Police/ambulance/fire station
Baths / swimming pool / lido
Bank
Nightclub / hall
Church or similar
Community / shelter / kids / old
Workshop
Stables
Wharf / terminal / shipyard
Silo
Farm
Pub / bar
Library
Unknown