The Politics of Occupation in the Neoliberal City

Relationships between squatting movements and housing justice movements in London and Madrid

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"No fence can contain us. No fence can keep us out. We are squatters who are not bound by the borders of the Aylesbury estate. We are residents who still have leases and tenancies. We are everyone who needs a place to stay. We are bound by nothing but this need. See you soon at Aylesbury. See you soon at Sweets Way. See you at the Guinness Trust. See you at UAL, LSE, Kings and Goldsmiths. See you soon in all the squats. See you at every protest and minor act of resistance. See you soon everywhere."

- The Aylesbury Occupation

ABSTRACT

Neoliberalism has significantly impacted urban landscapes since the 1980s. In the wake of the 2008 global financial crash, different neoliberal housing policies lead to varied ramifications across Europe, manifesting in mass sell-offs of public housing in the UK compared to mass eviction from mortgage-indebted homes in Spain. However, the spatial and ideological assault wrought by neoliberal urban redevelopment has not been unopposed. Grassroots movements for housing justice have emerged across Europe, offering alternative conceptions of urban living based on themes such as the "right to the city" and, increasingly, on explicitly confrontational, oppositional politics. Many of these movements use occupation as a strategy, however, there is a discursive and practical distinction in the framing of occupation by different groups. The Radical Housing Network (RHN) in London explicitly included squatters within their solidarity framework, while the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of people affected by mortgages - PAH) in Madrid does not mention either occupation or squatting within their discourses despite engaging with occupations. This thesis investigates the relationship between the squatting movements and the housing justice campaigns in each of these respective cities and argues that an explicitly supportive relationship offers the greatest affective potential for resisting neoliberal urban change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Housing Crisis across Europe

The bursting of the housing bubble in 2008 can be traced to the 1970s and the advent of neoliberalism and the failure of the Bretton Woods consensus. However, in order to look specifically at the housing struggles in Europe today, we need to reflect on what has occurred since the 2008 financial crisis. The global financial crisis led to the collapse of housing markets in many cities across Europe. Central to the effects of the housing crisis was the previous process of celebration of home-ownership since the 1980s both concretely through policies such as Right to Buy, which catalysed the neoliberalisation of housing across the UK and served as an inspiration to neoliberal urban governments throughout Europe, and implicitly through wider access to precarious mortgages, the gradual denigration and stigmatisation of social housing, and the financialisation of the housing market. A major contributor to the financial crash of 2008 was the failure of the precarious mortgage market throughout most of Europe. The mortgage-debt market was incredibly lucrative for investors and global financial elites, however, escalating speculation contributed to the crash, and a subsequent Europe-wide wave of evictions and repossessions; an inevitable outcome of the project to recommodify and financialise housing (Hodkinson 2016).

The financial crash created an environment in which policies strengthening the neoliberal project could be implemented, under the name of necessary "austerity measures". This included decreasing regulations, intensifying privatisation of housing, and further dismantling of welfare. Accompanying this process of "austerity" and acceleration of dispossessions, evictions, and dismantling of social housing, has been a rise in "global corporate landlordism". This refers to the process in which large private equity firms such as Goldman Sachs purchase empty homes and mortgage loans, therefore transferring desperate residents to the benevolent control of their new Wall street landlord (Hodkinson 2016). This process decreases accountability and transparency, allowing global financial elites to take advantage of what Tom Slater (2017) termed "planetary rent gaps", created from the financial crash they themselves instigated.

However, the development of neoliberal urban policy has not been unopposed. Throughout Europe groups, organisations, and individuals fought back in a myriad of ways and configurations. I focus specifically on the repercussions of neoliberal housing policies and their subsequent effects in two global cities; London and Madrid. Thus, the rest of this section briefly introduces the main ideological and economic changes since 1970 in these two cities and outlines the methods of resistance which will be the subject of this thesis.

1.2. *London*

Since the 1970s the UK has been a flagship neoliberal project. As elsewhere, this involved the decrease in regulation of the housing market, increased rental-sector marketisation, the mass sell-off of public-owned housing, and an increasing primacy, both ideological and material, given to owner-occupation, contributing to the decline in the quality, safety, and affordability of the rental sector. These developments had particularly significant impacts in London, which has seen enormous decline in its public-rented stock, increases in empty luxury flats owned by foreign investors and privatised spaces of consumption spreading throughout the city centre. This is partly due to its international role as a "global city", providing a base for international finance and trade operations (Sassen 1991). As a global city, developments in London are more extreme and damaging than in other urban centres across the UK, though this is not to say that other major cities, such as Manchester and Glasgow, have not also seen significant effects of neoliberal urban policy in terms of declining provisions of social housing and increase in centres of elite consumption and financial activity.

Key developments contributing to the current dire state of housing in London, and the UK in general, began, of course, with Margaret Thatcher's infamous Right to Buy policy of 1979 which allowed tenants the right to buy their publicly-rented properties at a discounted price. This led to the sell-off of millions of socially rented homes over the last 30 years (*Figure 1*). The systematic degradation of the existing social housing stock accompanied this, justifying demolition, increased participation in the private-rental market, and the subsequent soaring of rents within this sector. These developments were exacerbated in the wake of the financial crisis leading to widespread dispossession and displacement as residents of former inner-city estates and communities were forced out either through demolition of their homes, untenable rent increases, or displacement through decline in networks and social ties, leaving residents isolated and vulnerable.
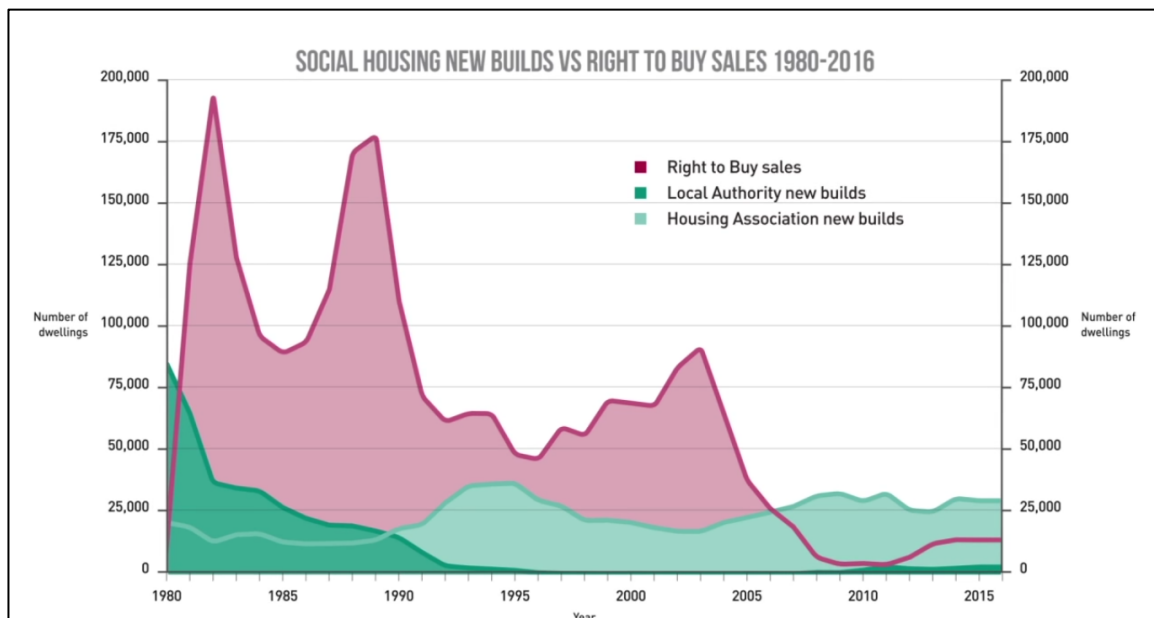

Figure 1 - Social housing new builds vs. right to buy sales in London, 1980 – 2016, (Dispossession 2017)

1.3. *Madrid*

Homeownership has been the dominant housing tenure in Spain ever since Franco's regime, during which increasing state-subsidised home-ownership was considered a staple contributor to national stability and support for the regime. In Madrid, as in Spain in general, there has historically been an absence of a strong welfare regime due to reliance on family ties to provide welfare (Esping-Anderson 1999). They thus lack a history of large-scale social housing provision and have a historically higher proportion of home ownership among residents (Allen et al 2008). In the years leading up to the financial crash, Spanish policy was dedicated towards the real-estate market, constructing more homes than Germany, Italy, and France combined, with the residential construction centre becoming the main resource of the Spanish economy. However, most of the work resulting from this was highly precarious and temporary, creating a highly unstable economic model. Further, rents did not decrease as a result of this increase in housing provision and instead continued to rise. In this context, the neoliberalisation of housing has manifested largely in increasingly precarious and financialised mortgage markets, as people adopted risky loans in order to own their own houses, without the kind of social safety net that existed in Northern European cities under the former Keynesian regime (Sabaté 2016). Thus, the financial crisis crippled the residential housing construction centre, threw millions of people into unemployment, and therefore made mortgage-repayments an impossibility for many households, leading to widespread evictions across the country, and in Madrid itself.

1.4. *Resistance*

In both cities strong resistance movements have sprung up against neoliberal housing developments, particularly since 2008. Both London and Madrid are home to historically strong squatters' movements, that, while having faced increasing repression in recent years, were re-invigorated in the wake of the financial crash. During the same period both cities saw the emergence of broad-based housing campaigns which fought against widespread evictions, targeting predominantly low-income or heavily-indebted residents. The campaigns under study are the Radical Housing Network (RHN) in London, and the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH), in Madrid. The RHN is a London-based network of locally organised groups who support each other in eviction resistances, solidarity projects, and campaigns, as well as organising protests *as* the RHN. The PAH are a nation-wide group with over 300 local chapters who fight against mortgage-based evictions since the financial crisis. Although they are also organised on a localised network-model, their structure and aims are more concrete and singular than that of the RHN.

Both campaigns used occupation as a protest-strategy. However, despite these similarities, there are key variables which are the subject of this research. In Madrid the housing crisis largely affected heavily-indebted mortgage-holders, whose mortgages were bought up in the wake of the financial crisis by international financial corporations, which lacked accountability or transparency on the urban level. In London, the housing crisis accelerated the sell-off of public lands, accelerated the speculative purchasing which had been occurring in London (3rd wave gentrification), as inner-city council housing became considered increasingly attractive sites for new luxury developments which were bought and sold, again in global financial markets. Further, at the micro-level, the nature of the housing campaigns differs in each city, as does their relationship to their respective squatters' movements. The PAH frame the occupation of bank-owned buildings in terms of the legitimacy of the residents' claims to their property and the right to social housing. In the RHN, due to the network nature of its structure,

the claims range from those of tenants fighting eviction to those of squatters and occupiers who claim a universal right to housing and autonomous public space. Perhaps due to this difference, the PAH in Spain have achieved a greater level of legitimacy than the RHN, with one of the leaders of the movement, Ada Colau, becoming the Mayor of Barcelona and her party achieving a large proportion of votes, along with widespread public acceptance. In London, no such institutionalisation or legitimisation of the RHN has occurred. It is for another paper to fully delve into the ramifications of institutionalisation (or not), however, the philosophy that guides each movement and determines (or contributes to) its level of institutionalisation and homogenisation will form a contextual background to the subject of the thesis. The focus of the thesis is the varying relationships between the housing campaigns and the respective squatters' movements in terms of their use of occupation. The point of divergence will be in the inclusion or exclusion of squatters from the campaigns' practices, discourse, and justifications of claims upon urban space. In order to understand the specificity of the London or Madrid context, comparison with similar cases holds great value.

1.5. Research Questions and Mission Statement

Thus, the research questions that guide this investigation are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the squatters' movement and the RHN in London, and the squatters' movement and the PAH in Madrid?
2. How do these relationships differ? Why?

Further, this thesis has the openly political agenda of arguing for the explicit inclusion of squatting practices in housing justice movements, based on an affective and prefigurative orientation towards resistance to neoliberal urban development. Therefore, after outlining the main similarities and differences between the Madrid and London cases I demonstrate the potential of exactly such a unity between squatters and housing activists and posit that this is the direction that future urban insurrections ought to follow.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Whilst there exists a fairly extensive literature regarding the PAH in the context of the housing crash in Madrid, and literature on various forms of housing activism in London, there is little overlap between this literature and that of squatting movements in the respective cities. This thesis aims to remedy this malaise by directly interrogating the connection between the use of occupation between these struggles and the alliances or conflicts that arise due to the mutual use of tactics but potentially divergent aims or ideologies.

2.1. The PAH and squatters' movement in Madrid.

The PAH, (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca), founded in 2009, have been a powerful force of resistance against evictions across Spain. Whilst many commenters have observed the increasing use of occupation by the PAH, with empty buildings owned by the banks occupied by evicted families, little research has been done on their engagement with the squatters' movement in Madrid. Activists within 15M and the PAH recognise the need for broad-based coalitions in order to further their gains. Whether the squatters' movement is a co-operative or conflictual part of this coalition strategy will be explored further in this thesis.

Regarding specifically the Madrid context, there has been significant overlap in my research thus far between material regarding post-Crash Spain and the current housing crisis (Sabaté 2016), and the emergent social movements which have gained traction as a result of this (Gonick 2016; Barbero 2015; Di Feliciantonio 2017). Gonick in particular highlights the multifaceted nature of the resistances to the neoliberal government in Madrid, from those willing to engage with institutions to those choosing instead to organise externally, emphasising autonomy. Gonick argues that both strategies, rather than being seen as in conflict with each other, can work together to offer a broad framework of resistance, through both agonistic and antagonistic channels (Gonick 2016; Mouffe 2005). Although, I focus specifically on the use of occupation by the PAH, drawing on researchers such as García-Lamarca (2017) and Gonick who deal specifically with this social movement, I also look at research regarding the squatter's movement in Spain in general, as potential overlaps, or indeed conflicts, between these two forms of occupation offer interesting subjects for analysis of contemporary struggles against neoliberal urban development.

The literature on the Okupa movement in Spain is broad, spearheaded by Martinez Lopez (2010), Cattaneo (2014), Vilaseca (2013) and Villacampa (2004), overlapping with broader studies on squatting across Europe, largely through the work by the Squatting Europe Kollective, who produce edited volumes on various aspects of squatting practice in cities across

Europe (Squatting Europe Kollective 2013, 2014, 2017). These works emphasise the role of squatting as an autonomous struggle against capitalist control of the city through the creation of autonomous zones or liberated spaces. These reflect broader analyses by Chatterton (2007), Pickerill (2010), Springer (2016) and others on the importance of autonomous geographies of radical democracy and spatial emancipation. The squatting movement in Madrid follows a similar pattern to that of Italy, in that it tends to be oriented more around squatted social centres (SSCs) than squatting for housing. Although most SSCs tend to be occupied during their first months in order to defend against evictions, housing is not their primary purpose. Therefore, in the case of Madrid, the focus will be on the ways in which the squatters involved in the *movement* (however they determine that) engage with the PAH. Thus far, there is little overlap between this literature and new geographies of occupation which are being generated through the action of the PAH.

2.2. The RHN and squatters' movement in London

There has been little academic research specifically on the Radical Housing Network, which is remiss, considering its central role in uniting various housing struggles across London. Wills (2016) penned one of the few articles which directly relates the RHN to the housing crisis in London. He outlines the significance of the connectedness of different urban struggles in terms of amplifying each other's aims and strengthening power, but also in terms of generating discussion over the different strategies and ideologies various actors have. The network plays an integral part in creating understanding over the need for mutual support between these different struggles (Watt & Minton 2016). Other literature on the RHN neglects the role of occupation or the inclusion of squatting within its aims and membership (Bowie 2015).

Whilst there is a growing literature around the squatting movement in London, much of this is historical, analysing and documenting the impact of the squatting movement during its peak in the 1970s and 1980s (Wates & Wolmer 1980, Reeve 1980). More recent research deals with the changing face of squatting since residential squatting became criminalised in 2012 (Finchett-Maddock 2014; Dadusc & Dee 2015). One of the most cited studies in squatting, by Pruijt (2013) attempted to generate a typology of the different "types" of squatters based on their socio-economic status, activities, and political leanings, but this has since been critiqued for creating a false binary between political and deprivation squatters which fails to acknowledge the radical act of occupation in itself (Milligan 2016, Polanska 2017). While the inherently political act of occupying urban space has been acknowledged in broader social movement literature (Springer 2016, Tonkiss 2013, Swyngedouw 2007, Chatterton & Hodkinson 2007) the connection between the reappropriation of space, squatting, and contemporary housing activism has not been fully explored. Since the Focus E15 campaign first utilised occupation as a tactic in September 2014, protests at estates across London have increasingly incorporated squatting methods in their repertoire of resistance. I feel the literature on housing struggles and squatting has yet to catch up with this new reality that is apparent on the ground and I am dedicated towards remedying this.

As such, in the literature on housing activism and squatting in Madrid and in London, the connections between occupation as a strategy and occupation as a "lifestyle" or practice has not been explored in significant depth. It is this void that I hope to fill. By interrogating the ways in which housing campaigns work with (or are in conflict with) squatting movements in their respective cities, I hope to deepen understandings of the ways in which occupation is used

by diverse groups and the potentiality that can arise from their uniting in the struggle to reclaim urban space for common good.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To investigate this question, I first outline conceptions of neoliberalism and the neoliberal city. Whilst I recognise that neoliberalism is the dominant economic model that conditions modern society I reject interpretations of neoliberalism as monolithic and impenetrable. This is in order to conceptualise resistances as not inherently futile but as having multiple potentialities. Second, I use conceptions of the post-political city to situate and investigate the role of contemporary urban uprisings in challenging the post-political urban consensus and recentering "the political" in the urban imaginary (Swyngedouw 2007). I further utilise radical democratic conceptions of antagonistic or agonistic public spheres (Mouffe 2000) in order to situate the politics of occupation theoretically. However, this literature is limited in its appreciation of the prefigurative and affective value of temporary or small-scale moments of struggle. As such, shifting to the micro-scale, I third, use the concept of "cracks" within capitalism (Holloway 2010) to posit that small acts of rebellion and occupation can be part of a larger pattern of struggle, separate nodes in an international canvas of anti-capitalist urban resistance in order to place squats and occupations alongside more formalised social movement structures (such as the PAH and the RHN). This enables an affective and prefigurative understanding of the political subjectivation wrought through engagement in such struggles and an awareness of the importance of solidarity between different modes of struggle in order to manifest effective (and affective!) oppositional politics and construct new urban political subjectivities.

3.1. Dismantling the neoliberal hegemony

In this section I first outline theories of neoliberalism in general before briefly outlining its impact in urban landscapes with a focus on London and Madrid. Second, I engage with the concept of hegemony before arguing for a critique of hegemonic interpretations of neoliberalism in order to highlight the value of resistance movements against neoliberal processes.

According to Larner (2003) neoliberalism appears to have surpassed globalisation as the explanatory term for contemporary forms of economic restructuring. Neoliberalism is generally defined as the simultaneous processes of opening up national economies to global institutions and multinational corporations, the liberalisation of international markets, and the increasing role of non-state actors in national, regional, and local governance. The impact of neoliberalism since the 1970s has fundamentally restructured cities across the world, leading to the decline of democratic processes and increasing socio-spatial polarisation. "When we refer to the

neoliberal city […] we are describing the dynamics through which the neoliberal ideology is applied to urban policy." (Walliser 2013, p.5) The commodification of urban space occurs in terms of employment, housing, and leisure space, leading to the creation of exclusive urban spaces and the expulsion from the inner-city of those deemed not fit or able to contribute to the new urban imaginary of a space of consumption (Brenner and Theodore 2002).

There is a tension in the literature between describing neoliberalism as a hegemonic project and theorising the potential for resistance. Gramsci understood capitalist society as composed of two overlapping spheres, that of the "political society" who rule through force, and the "civil society" who rule through consent. To Gramsci, hegemony is the manufacturing of consent on a mass scale (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci defines hegemony as "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production." (Gramsci 1971, p.12, in Lears 1985). However, hegemony is only made possible through domination - a monopoly of the instruments of coercion. A factor that Gramsci considers key to domination and hegemony is the significance of discursive practices in enforcing hegemony, as the vocabulary used and made available conditions the analyses of one's situation, making it difficult to locate and then critique the source of one's discomfort or repression (Lears 1985). However, this hegemonic interpretation of neoliberalism and its creative destruction (Harvey 2007) has faced critique from feminist, anarchist, and post-colonial scholars, who beg caution towards inscribing neoliberalism with the hegemonic power to destroy it has commonly been afforded. The Gramscian conception of hegemony itself recognises the contingencies, ruptures, and contradictions within such a model. Thus, to engage with discourses of hegemony is not to wholesale abandon possibilities of resistance or alternatives.

The fact that neoliberalism is so broad means that it can not be monolithic. The fact that it operates on multiple scales means there are multiple points of entry and exit; different variants of neoliberalism. Attention must be paid to the hybrid nature of the global neoliberal project and the "multiple and contradictory aspects of neoliberal spaces, techniques, and subjects" (Larner 2003, p.509). Critical academia has a responsibility to not simply reiterate the status quo as we see it, but to look closely at processes and complexities which initially seem monolithic. Current definitions of neoliberalism need to be disrupted and challenged. McKinnon accuses these "capitalocentric discourses of a "paranoid stance"", which:

> "habituates us to seeing only examples in the world that reinforce and repeat familiar narratives -
> in this case our narratives of what is wrong. There is a perverse pleasure in paranoia and a joy
> attached to being able to see here, and everywhere, again, another example of neoliberal devastation,
> or neo-imperialist dispossession, or capitalist exploitation." (McKinnon 2016, p.345)

Thus, I break away from the current geographical tradition of reading neoliberalism from a neomarxist perspective which emphasises the dominance of the neoliberal model, towards more post-structuralist and anarchistic perspectives, which emphasise the potential available in gaps and fractures, rather than the pessimism evoked by focus on the monolith. This allows us to think more carefully about other forms of power (Allen 2003), wherein spaces, states, and subjects are constituted in various forms through both state and *non-state* processes. It enables analysis of neoliberalism to expand into new and important domains such as bodies, households, families, sexualities, and communities.[1] Therefore, to fully conceptualise

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[1] This analysis will be taken up with reference to affect literature in the epistemology section

alternatives we must dismantle the hegemony commonly afforded to neoliberalism, not only on the streets but within the academy.

3.2. The post-political city and possibilities of urban insurrection

Whilst an understanding of neoliberal urban processes is necessary for conceptualising resistance, to understand the political processes which manifest in moments of urban rebellion an engagement with radical democratic theories of politics and the post-political city is necessary. In recent years there has been a call among critical urban theorists to expand their understanding of the political, generally, and the "urban political" specifically, to take into account the multitude of urban insurrections that have taken place, particularly since 2011 (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). This is necessary to shift understandings of urban politics away from simply the realm of states, governments, and governmental institutions, towards grassroots and insurrectionary political mobilisations. Since 2011, global urban insurrections have taken different forms, with some becoming institutionalised (such as Podemos in Spain) and others being brutally quashed (such as many squatting actions, Occupy Wall Street etc.). However, they all signify a new form of engagement with both the urban environment and the political that transcends theorising based on the social movements model which previously led much critical engagement with urban activism.

3.2.1. From Critical Urbanism to "The Return of the Political"

One of the primary distinction that sets apart this new wave of insurrections and uprisings is a shift from demands that could be reconciled within the post-political consensus framework, such as demands for housing, transport, better environmental quality, towards claims on a broader, more universalist scale, such as for a fair and equitable society, a dismantling of capitalism, and an end to neoliberal redevelopment of urban space. The observation of the different nature of urban rebellion is accompanied by a theoretical shift led by a desire to "place politics at the heart of radical urban political theory and practice" (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.2). Dikeç and Swyngedouw consider these urban insurrections "incipient political movements" that institute "new forms and choreographies of urban political acting" (2017, p.2). Instead of single-issue claims that could be contained or pacified by neoliberal participation politics they demand wholesale a new process for producing space politically (Lefebvre 1991).

The emphasis on production and social reproduction in much Marxist and general leftist critical urban literature left the conception of the political largely out of their theorising, whilst the political became increasingly confined to the realm of states, their non-state partners, and post-democratic processes of participation within institutionalised forms. The role of traditional social movements as rebellions against the *state* therefore became increasingly marginalised as the organisations to whom their claims were made became increasingly irrelevant.

As such, the theoretical models that previously were used to analyse social movements are not equipped with the tools to deal with such wholesale demands, and instead, a combination of radical democratic theory of the political is needed alongside traditional critique of neoliberal urbanism and analysis of the social movements that rebel against it. An emphasis on the immanent, incipient, and experimental forms of these new insurrections is needed in order to

understand the significance of both the temporary, in terms of evoking a new urban imaginary, and also the prefigurative potential that arises from engagement in such a struggle. Dikeç and Swyngedouw term this "recentering the urban political" (2017, p.3).

3.2.2. A politics of antagonism: Radical democratic theory and resistance

Radical democratic theory can be used to clarify what it means to describe something as "political". It is important to define politics in order to sustain an analysis of a political event. The problem of definitional vacuity is pervasive in much of the scholarship around urban struggle. I understand politics to be defined by a conflict over what is considered just (Schmitt [1932] 2007). This conflict forms a political arena as it is explicitly between those within the status quo and those without. Unlike the varying liberal traditions that see politics as the striving for peace or consensus, where conflict is erased from the domain of politics, radical democratic theorists see conflict as central to politics (Mouffe 2000). 'The political is the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations' (Mouffe 2000, p.101).

Mouffe argues that the presence of a conflictual us/them division is inherent within politics, and indeed, fundamental to the creation of a political sphere (2000, p.105). Divisions and exclusions are ontologically central to the creation of any community. For a community to exist there must be those who exist outside of it. This necessarily creates conflict between those within the system, who view it as just, and those without, who don't. For Mouffe, agonistic politics attempt to convert the "enemy" who must "be destroyed" into the "adversary", whose position is to be respected if a compromise or solution is to occur (2000, p.102). In other words, politics aims at domesticating violent divisions, whereby groups can contest each other without destroying one another.

The emphasis on the desire for agonism within conceptions of a politics of contestation has important implication for urban movements and oppositional forms of politics (Lloyd 2009). The concept of agonism refers to the practice of mutually respectful contestation between adversaries, in contrast to antagonistic forms of engagement aiming at the destruction of one's enemy (Mouffe 2000). This suggests that movements which strive towards social and political change need to have an alternative framework of democracy which challenges that of neoliberalism, which centres consensus and thus obfuscates dissent (Swyngedouw 2007).

Radical democratic scholars identify the current era as one in which the "post-political condition" structures and controls the nature of state and non-state relationships and the possibilities of dissent and rebellion. Much theorising on resistance to the post-political moment is pessimistic in nature. Gualini, Mourato, and Allegra's discussion on the failings and contestations of contemporary urban politics use Mouffe and Rancière's framing of the political to locate the debate over contestation of space within radical democratic theory, in which antagonism is converted to agonism in a democratic political sphere (2016). They warn against the pacification of struggle which occurs when the framework of debate is co-opted and embedded within the parameters of the institutional order of "liberal-global hegemony" (Swyngedouw 2007, p.65), identifying this phenomenon as "post-political".

However, I argue that there is potential within the post-political paradigm and as such there are limits to the imaginings of urban uprisings and insurrections outlined in the new critical urbanism which takes "the post-political city" as its theoretical basis. Whilst Dikeç and Swyngedouw, among others, call for a shift in the critical urban literature away from emphasis

on social movements with specific claims for changes within the status quo based on social production and reproduction, their imagining of the possibilities evoked from what they call a "politics of rupture" (2017, p.14) is limited. They see the "cracks" and awakenings in the insurrectionary urban imaginary as existing only in specific moments, a specific uprising, rebellion, or riot, after which the energy dies away, and the movement is either suppressed by the police or institutionalised into an organisational structure which fits within the consensus-making model of the post-political regime.

The multiplicity of struggles, their tendency towards grassroots organising, general assemblies, consensus, and equality between individuals suggests that we are in an era, facilitated by the internet and the increasing interconnectivity of resistance networks (Shepperd 2002), where the potentialities that arise from diverse urban insurrections are more tangible than ever. Practices of mutual aid and consensus decision-making which particularise the new form of "politics from below" (Graeber 2011), observed from Occupy Wall Street to Rojava are key methods of generating a new urban imaginary and transcending the post-political pessimism towards a multitude of possibilities for remoulding our future and embodying the insurrection of everyday life.

3.3. Cracking buildings, cracking capitalism

Due to the limitation of the post-political framework in conceptualising possibility, I hybridise the understandings of uprisings within the post-political neoliberal city with analysis of the importance of "cracks" and the significance of the temporary. The concept of cracks within capitalism comes from John Holloway's arguments that individual actions can create "cracks" in capitalism's shield, by asserting alternative ways of living (2010). Choosing not to go to work but instead read a book in a park is a concrete act of resistance. Small can be beautiful. Beyond prefigurative living, cracks can also take on a concretely spatial form, in terms of occupations of urban spaces, guerrilla gardening, the refusal to relinquish public space to control and surveillance. Tonkiss refers to these potentialities as "ordinary audacities", which can occur in the cracks of formal planning, speculation, and local possibility (2013). Swyngedouw speaks of:

> "fissures, cracks, and 'free spaces' form… nodes for experimentation with new urban possibilities. It is… where new forms of urbanity come to life… These are the sorts of spaces where alternative forms of living, working, and expressing are experimented with, where new forms of social and political action are staged, where affective economies are reworked, and creative living is not measured by the rise of the stock market and pension fund indices." (2007, p.72)

As Swyngedouw illustrates, to reclaim the city we must open up spaces in the cracks between capitalism's edifices and structures. We must reclaim space through actively living differently, through treating each other as actors rather than subjects, by crumbling the façade of capital to create a new space of possibility and political subjectivation. Occupations and squats are a concrete and spatial manifestation of this concept. This is not to say that squats and other autonomous spaces can't become co-opted or institutionalised, only that it is much harder to pretend to share the same goals with movements which have an explicitly oppositional orientation (Pruijt 2003). An alternative urban future seems impossible because neoliberal hegemony has engineered it to seem so, but it is precisely the impossible that we must strive for (Žižek 1999). We must strive for conflict, for the "recentering of the polis as the space of dissensus and disagreement", as the site of true democratic politics (Swyngedouw 2007, p.73).

Temporary, impermanent, or overtly anti-capitalist projects are often critiqued on the basis of their outsider status inhibiting their ability to affect change, thus, are only considered truly political if they achieve a degree of permanence or continuity (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Further, due to the illegality or confrontational nature of their praxis, many projects, occupations, sites, and acts of resistance are temporary, and thus considered ineffectual. However, in recent years arguments have been put forward for a reinterpretation of the importance of temporary occupations and uses of urban space. In her article on austerity urbanism and the make-shift city (2013) Tonkiss suggests that rethinking the importance of time and delay in terms of urban activism is necessary. To capitalists "money is time", and this line of thinking is followed by mainstream development companies and planners who rigorously ensure they stick to a fixed cost-schedule analysis in their urban development projects. Thus, to undermine or to *delay* these processes can in itself be a significant criterion of success for an urban project. What Marco Clausen refers to as "spaces of deceleration" and Hodkinson terms "the power to delay" (Clausen in Tonkiss 2013, p.320; Hodkinson 2012, p.515) can be significant tools, not only in delaying a specific redevelopment project, through occupying the site of development or barricading the entrances, but can also help to prefigure a different type of urban future through the celebration of the temporary, not just as a failed attempt at permanent but as a significant urban intervention for its own sake (Tonkiss 2013). If we consider the power to delay a strategy of resistance in its own right, we are able to resurrect urban movements from the dichotomy of the institutionalise-or-not debate regarding to success and consider their smaller actions, their "cracks", as legitimate marks of "success".

However temporary, sites of commonality have the power to subvert preclusions of private property and the prescriptions of the state and generate free spaces which have the power to change hearts, minds, and the development of the city, through the development of the urban actors who live within it. After all, as Lynch wrote in 1968, "the guerrillas of the future will need a base of operations" (Lynch [1968] 1995, p.780). The creation of these bases and the defiance with which they are defended and promoted are vital, not only despite, but also *because of* their temporality- for something which can pop up and disappear has the power to pop up again, to multiply, to spread cracks throughout the city. The temporary can be a tool, as well as an obstacle, and success can be calculated on the ability to frustrate and delay, as much as on the ability to achieve institutional recognition or power.

3.4. Epistemology: uniting theories for case study analysis

By combining understandings of the neoliberal urban city with those of the political nature of urban uprisings with an appreciation and analytical optimism regarding the role and importance of temporary or small-scale moments and insurrections we can begin to situate the cases under study theoretically in order to ask, and hopefully to answer, questions of their aims, achievements, and trajectories within their specific contexts. In this section I first tackle the limits to the agonistic framework laid out in radical democratic theories for an understanding of the violence inherent in urban struggles. Second, I highlight the importance of claiming public space and the urban political sphere. Third, I attempt to bring together the theories used in order to critique institutionalisation and the "success" of an urban resistance movement, to begin to comprehend how to analyse the case studies in this paper from an affective perspective. Finally, I emphasise the importance of politicisation processes, and affective, prefigurative perspectives, for recognising the significance of a moment, rupture, or crack in terms of its relationship to both neoliberal urban development and the development of a consciousness of resistance.

3.4.1. Agonism and militant struggle

Regarding squats and occupations specifically, there are limits to the agonistic framework promoted by radical democratic scholars. Whilst some scholars (Amin 2008; Springer 2016) use radical democratic theory to call for a more agonistic public space, arguing that attempts to impose order onto a public space from above initiate violent conflict with those resisting this imposition "from below", an agonistic politics that attempts to convert the "enemy" into the "adversary", does not fully reflect the experience or reality of squatting. If we recognise that conflict is a necessary part of any kind of democratic living, as any politics that aims to disavow conflict borders on authoritarianism, radical democratic theory seems unable to provide us with the theoretical grounding for such a conflictual politics. An agonistic conception of politics relies on a rough equality between adversaries contesting space (Schaap 2016). In the context of urban occupations, there clearly exists an us/them division, and one that is explicitly between individuals and the state, (or, increasingly, international finance corporations and property moguls). However, squatting represents a conflict that the state cannot domesticate because its existence is directly confrontational with a major foundation of the status quo: property. Thus, the adversarial equality necessary for an agonistic public sphere is lacking. In no instance are squatters on a level playing field with property developers, owners, security forces, or the lawyers, policemen and institutional powers which rally to defend them.

To argue against a narrative of violence in favour for "harmonious" contestation would, in this case, propagate the status quo, as the institutional imbalance between squatters and the state is not surmountable through debate within a democratic sphere, as Mouffe's model suggests, even with a platform for peaceful protest and civil disobedience.

> "[under "agonistic democracy"] .... conflict is defused and deprived from its radical potentialities, namely a radical struggle against domination that does not entail any element of communication – which is one necessary condition for *overcoming* the domination we are dealing with." (Ali Kebir pre-publication)

Mouffe's conception of agonism tends towards a pacification of the very real conflicts in which squatters find themselves (Milligan 2016). I would find it very difficult persuading anyone who has ever had their head kicked in by a security guard, been thrown against a wall by a policeman, or gone through the ritual humiliation of defending oneself in court against a wealthy institutional framework that an agonistic solution is possible, at least in the short term. Indeed, squatting exemplifies an *antagonistic* relation of violence that agonism's conceptual framework fails to capture.

3.4.2. Reclaiming the public sphere: promoting the public-isation of space

If we accept that an antagonistic politics is not only necessary, but desirable, the next step is to consider the ways in which this politics of antagonism manifests and is able to successfully challenge neoliberal urban space. In order to do this, I utilise radical democratic conceptions of public space and the reclaiming of the urban political sphere. For Springer, radical democracy envisions public space as "the battlefield on which the conflicting interests of the rich and poor are set as well as the object of contestation" (2016, p.98). Squatters understand only too well the battles over space which are wrought, whether in attempts to create a public social centre or a more private domain of living, and in struggles over definitions of ownership of space. After all, "public space can be understood as the very practice of radical democracy" (Springer 2016, p.107). Paramount to much squatting ideology and practice is the assertion that a space

does not belong to a single individual but rather to a collective, with their own self-defined limits (Barocchio Occupato et al 1995). Thus, a reconceptualization of public space has important theoretical implications for squatters, who openly challenge the public-private dichotomy and could benefit from a strong theory of public space with which to reinforce their struggles.

Further, arguments must be made not just in favour of public space and the social production of such space, but also for the *public-cisation* of space. Activities of making-public are fundamental to the practice of squatting; to take a space formerly accessible to only a privileged few and opening it up to a broader range of participants is an empowering political act (Tonkiss 2013). It is through the construction of shared spaces that we attempt to put our ideals into action as individuals and collectives as it is "in the making and *taking* of space and place that allows us to move towards a more radical democracy" [my emphasis] (Springer 2016, p.106). Public space is not just defined by its urban morphology but more specifically as a set of social *interactions* in the city, ergo making-public also has an affective disposition (Knierbein 2017, my emphasis). The definite action of taking space, of asserting oneself and one's collective ideas, is an essential element of anarchism, prefiguration, and just one of the many reasons why squatting and occupation are key elements of serious anarchist praxis. We must be actively fighting to de-privatise spaces; we must be openly critiquing private institutions, even those we benefit from; we must recognise that private spaces are paramount to borders, walls, and exclusion. Any true radical democracy must attempt to dismantle the category of exclusion as far as possible, and as such, an agonistic framework does not give adequate space for the violence sometimes necessary in claiming a space as (y)ours and the broader public-*ising* of space.

3.4.3. Institutionalisation and a critique of "success"

The third part of the epistemology section investigates how the theories laid out above can be utilised for a justification of non-institutionalised forms of urban resistance. As such, I outline an explorative alternative for conceptualising resistance that looks first at the debate over institutionalisation in the "success" literature on urban activism, before justifying a more prefigurative and affective understanding of a movement's significance and potential, recognising the importance of politicisation as an outcome of a moment, process, or rupture in the urban political fabric.

One of the debates present within squatting and activism literature revolves around the question of institutionalisation (Pruijt 2003). Caution must be applied in considering institutionalisation as a marker of achievement as, within the post-political paradigm, this can lead to disenfranchisement of the movement, a pacification of its goals, and its assimilation into a neoliberal model of development wherein "alternative" spaces or programmes are co-opted in order to promote "trendy" cities, what Tonkiss refers to as the "picturesquely countercultural" (2013, p.323).

Too often, the significance of social movements is predicated on the amount they are able to influence change from within the status quo, through institutionalisation. The institutionalisation debate is fraught within social movement studies, marxist studies and studies of squatting movements and other grassroots movements in general. But criteria of success based on the ability to produce change "from within" deserve critique. For example, many squatters in Barcelona were ambivalent towards Colau's appointment to mayor (personal

conversations 2015). When Madrid 15M and PAH activists joined Podemos, they became part of the government, which meant they had more leeway (in a certain respect) with which to achieve their aims, but in doing so their politics lost their prefigurative edge. With institutionalisation comes the need to abide by institutional rules and regulations, and perhaps to denigrate those who chose to act outside of the institutional configuration. Many squatters feared Colau's appointment would lead to a further distinction between "good" and "bad" or "legitimate" or "illegitimate" forms of occupation (personal conversations 2015).

3.4.4. Prefiguration, politicisation, and affective change

If I follow a prefigurative approach towards my case studies, I am equally interested in how involvement in these occupations changed hearts and minds, and functioned as a politicising process for those involved, allowed networks to spread and to communicate with each other, as well as in concrete political goals being achieved. If you consider Colau's appointment to mayor of Barcelona from this approach, what is significant is not that the PAH gained institutional power, but that her aims and objectives resonated with large proportions of the city's population. Thus, an affective disposition is required to demonstrate that in various ways both the politicisation processes, in terms of returning "the political" to urban struggles, and the prefigurative significance, highlighted in the anti-capitalist and anarchist literature, recognise the importance of changing "hearts and minds" as central to urban anti-capitalist struggle.

This process of change of individual and collective consciousness as well as the urban form is what García-Lamarca among others refer to as a process of "political subjectivation" (2017). However, I wish to emphasise that beyond *consciousness,* meaningful change is achieved through affective and bodily being-in-common. Affect, as outlined in Gregg and Seigworth's edited volume, is precisely located in the "midst of *in-between-ness:* in the capacities to act and be acted upon". It can be a "momentary or sometimes more sustained state or relation…. of forces or intensities" (2010, p.1). This in-between-ness, emphasising both the *moment and* the *aftermath* of an event or prefigurative change is central to acknowledging that the power of the temporary exists not just in the momentary "eruption" but also in the longer-lasting effects of such a "rupture".

> "Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by *resonance….* An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire…. It rather takes the shape of music" (The Invisible Committee 2009 p.12)

The physicality of an occupation, breaking bread, breaking doors, the *feelings* that are evoked from the concrete being-in-common are as significant to the value of a project and its possibilities regarding urban change as the *knowledge* that you are in it together. Thus, I follow scholars such as Woodward and Lea (2010) and Bailey (2014) in developing the concept of subjectivation and the importance of *space* into an affective orientation. An inclusion of affective perspectives is vital for understanding the longer-term resonance of urban insurrections and social struggles, in terms of those who engage but also those who gain encouragement or "politicisation" through observing the actions, successes, failures, and dialogues produced by the movement itself. As Spinks says, what we code as the *political* must expand to include "the way that political attitudes and statements are partly conditioned by intense autonomic bodily reactions that do not simply reproduce the trace of a political intention and cannot be wholly recuperated within an ideological regime of truth" (2001, p.23 in Thrift

2004, p.64). Understanding affective and politicising changes in attitudes and behaviours is fundamental to understanding why different political struggles took different paths, embraced different ideologies, and manifested in different forms of praxis.

4. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

4.1. Methodology: The Myth of Objectivity

My experiences as a queer woman navigating urban resistance movements across Europe influences my positionality as a researcher and my desire to understand the affective relationships present within struggles over urban space (Ahmed et al 2000). As such, my research draws heavily on my own experiences participating in the squatters' movement in London, and interactions with squatters across Europe, in Spain, and in Madrid. Further, 2014 to 2016 I was a member of the RHN, and frequently contributed to their meetings and events. As such, it is necessary to reflect on my positionality regarding my subject of analysis and how this involvement could limit or benefit my critique. Participatory observation as a method of ethnographic research has an extensive literature which seeks to elucidate the different approaches to this kind of study. I explicitly disavow the supposed objectivity of the researcher regarding their research object, recognising that true objectivity is a false assumption, and instead seek to produce explicitly politically engaged research, rejecting the divide between observer and practitioner. This research entails what Wacquant (2004) describes as not only a "sociology of the body… but also a sociology from the body" such that my own experiences are both produced by and a product of my research and political affiliations. I follow a tradition of those who turn to research as a result of their activism or political beliefs rather than the research necessitating engagement in the field.

I vehemently disavow researchers who study marginalised groups, movements or scenes who express a desire for objectivity whilst producing research which could harm those under study through exposure of their methods or defamation of their politics. This is not to say it is not possible to critique a movement one has sympathy with, or to recognise its faults and limitations. As a sympathiser with squatters I feel that I am in a position where my critiques are not dismissive of their attempts towards prefigurative living or anti-capitalist action. The myth of objectivity plagues academic research, in a manner condescending to the research subject and suggestive of the superiority of the outsider researcher. There are pitfalls associated with participatory, or insider research, but if overcome, the fruits of this involvement and familiarity have the potential to be far greater and deeper than the penetration afforded to one who identifies primarily as an academic researcher. These complexities are discussed thoughtfully and deeply in Hodkinson (2005). The term "insider research" he draws from Roseneil's 1993 article, but he points to the imprecision of the distinction between insider and outsider in any grouping, and as such how a researcher is never purely inside or outside a movement, seeing it

as a simplification of the multifaceted nature of collective and individual identities. Thus, Hodkinson uses "insider research" as a "non-absolute concept intended to designate those situations characterised by a significant degree of initial proximity between the sociocultural locations of researcher and researched" (2005, p.6). He acknowledges that a sense of insider/outsider is particularly strong among those who have experienced marginalisation as a result of their identity such as those oppressed due to class, race, or gender considerations. A strong sense of collective identity is often linked with a suspicion of outsiders, something I encountered within the squatting scene in London and has hindered my research with the Spanish PAH activists and squatters (alongside my lack of Spanish). This is why active involvement is extremely beneficial for studying such movements, as an outsider perspective will not yield deep results from people who have good reason to resent and fear being studied, not least through research previously being linked to the criminalisation of certain forms of squatting and denigration in tabloid media.

Further, my sympathies with squatters lead me to apply caution when describing squatters as "activists" as although some squatters work to restructure society, others squat simply due to homelessness. Thus, to distinguish between squatting and squatting *movements* is complicated, but necessary for analysis. "Invisible squatting", such as homeless people breaking into empty buildings to sleep is not often present in squatting literature, though many academics acknowledge the problem of codifying different "types" of squatting under the label or not. Part of this is also due to a desire not to expose vulnerable people who do not desire participation in a movement, and to not reveal their strategies or movements. For these ethical reasons, for my discussion, only those who are part of the *movement* are the subjects of study.

4.1. Methods

As such, alongside my own participatory research during my time squatting in London and participating in housing justice activism in Madrid, I have used interviews with squatters and activists in London and Madrid, informal conversations with residents of sites under conflict, analysis of leaflets, posters, websites, and other literature produced by the squatters, as well as sources such as the map of SSCs across Europe produced by the Squatting Europe Kollective (of which I am a curator),. Since research ought to create a space for the voices of those being affected by this process qualitative methods such as interviews and visiting squats and social centres, attending campaign meetings, and taking part in eviction resistances are necessary to understand the motivations and behaviours of those affected by gentrification. Sarah Glynn's "Regeneration is a Trojan Horse" uses many of these approaches alongside analysis of the economic and social effects of neoliberal ideology on housing policy that leads to the "regeneration" of inner city housing originally built for lower-income people, and this style of research and political angle has rung most true to my experiences and motivations (2009). As such, I did not pursue interviews or perspectives from housing officials, bankers, poly makers, or politicians, as their views are both propagated freely through multiple forms of media, and their insights are not relevant for my research and desire to understand the connections between activists *on the ground*; as Gonick says "those individuals traditionally left out of the scope of the standard narrative of political and urban change" (2015 p.25).

4.1.1. Madrid

The bulk of my research in Madrid was carried out from April - July 2018, with a particularly intensive period of engagement in the last weeks of June in which I visited several SSCs, conducted two of my interviews, and attended two housing justice demonstrations. My fieldwork in Madrid consisted of 3 informal interviews, during which I took hand-written notes. It also consisted of attendance at several protests and demonstrations organised by the PAH and other housing justice groups in Madrid, such as the single-issue campaign to save the residents of Argumosa 11 from eviction, and the campaign against Hotel Lavapies (Stop Hotel Lavapies 2018). I also visited several SSCs in Madrid and chatted informally with those that organised in these spaces. These experiences entail an informal ethnography, in which my understanding of their aims and tendencies is heightened through casual participation and observation of their practices. The visited spaces include: Ingobernable, EKO, La Quimera, 3peces3, La Villana de Vallecas, el Banco Expropriat, and La Eskalera Karakola. Further, I took photographs and analysed printed and online materials produced by the spaces and the groups that meet there, including online material. This involved "following" many of the social centres and the PAH housing campaigns on Facebook and twitter, paying attention to the "sharing" of different groups' events, meetings, and demonstrations, in order to understand the relationships and hierarchies between different kinds of housing justice activism. I was facilitated in this research by a Spanish research assistant who accompanied me to the different sites under study, assisted my interactions with the people who inhabit these spaces, and proof-read my in-text translations, and to whom I am very grateful. However, the limitations of time and language-barriers has inhibited my ability to have as fully-nuanced a perspective on my Madrid case study as I do in London. I hope that in my further research on this topic I will have more time, language, and financial resources to pursue a more in-depth research project.

The majority of my on-site research revolved around immersion in the SSC scene rather than with the PAH directly. This is due to my higher level of comfort with squatters and associated forms of activism due to my personal history with such movements. Further, the PAH have a large body of research revolved around their actions, motivations, and ideology, and there is comparatively little from the squatting movement. As such, I felt that my "insider status" within more counter-cultural forms of activism would generate a greater quantity of insights that other researchers have not already recorded than engagement with the PAH. This is in direct contrast to Sophie Gonick, whose PhD research on housing justice and occupation movements in Madrid centres on the PAH due to her higher level of comfort with their forms of organising than with "their more radical counterparts in other housing groups" (2015 p.21). As such my research offers a refreshing counterpart to her own investigation into similar processes in Madrid.

4.1.2. London

As discussed above, the bulk of my findings for London come from my own participation in the squatting scene and the RHN during 2014 - 2016, with particular emphasis on my involvement in the Aylesbury Occupation of 2015. My personal archive of flyers, posters, magazines and other literature alongside personal conversations and informal interviews with squatters and RHN activists in 2015 and 2018 contribute the most to my analysis. This is supplemented by literature outlined above in the literature review, and online and academic resources that provide the theoretical groundwork for my analysis, as outlined in my theoretical framework.

Finally, it must be noted that much of my research in Madrid and London occurred at different times, in London in 2014 – 2015, and in Madrid predominantly in 2018. I attempt to reconcile this by looking at general trends since the financial crisis in both cities, while I of course recognise that no relationship is fixed in time and space and is always fluid, mobile, and subject to change. While this could cause issues in comparison if I were focusing on a specific moment of struggle, my emphasis on long-term trends and developments means that this fact, although a limitation towards full comparative clarity, does not significantly inhibit my ability to answer my research questions and explicate my political stand-point.

5. CONTEXT OF ANALYSIS

5.1. MADRID

5.1.1. *Context: History of housing provisions in Spain*

Home-ownership has been the dominant housing regime in Spain ever since Franco's reign in order to bring stability to the seemingly fractured regime. The first Spanish Minister of Housing Jose Luis Arrese famously stated in 1957 "we want a country of property owners not a country of workers" (Colau & Alemany 2012, p.38). As such, the promotion of home ownership was a key ideological and material goal of the regime, accompanied by further social and economic denigration of rent and subleasing. The Francoist ideology of home-ownership was so successful that Colau and Alemany (2012) state that by the end of the 1970s homeownership in Spain was considered completely "natural" by the majority of people living there, with over 60% of Spanish people classified as homeowners by the end of his regime.

After the dictatorship ended in 1975, state-subsidised housing provisions were removed from the agenda and replaced with policies offering tax breaks for mortgage repayments, leading to the 1981 Mortgage Market Regulation Bill, which removed mortgages from the sole control of the Spanish Public Mortgage Bank and allowed private operators to enter the mortgage market. This step was crucial for the increased precarity in the mortgage market that followed in subsequent decades. This bill was followed in 1992 by a bill which allowed the use of Special Purpose Vehicles to securitise mortgages, allowing Spanish banks to "expand the financing of mortgages beyond the availability of their own bonds and deposits" (García-Lamarca and Kaika 2016, p.318). The intense promotion of mortgages throughout the 1980s and 1990s was coupled with an attack on rent, through measures such as the 1985 Boyer Decree which removed rent controls and tenant protections for new rental contracts, and a substantial decline in social housing conditions. This led to mortgaged homes being considered the most secure means of accessing housing, particularly for low-income households, who not only had few options in the rental markets, but were also increasingly offered mortgages, despite their lack of assets or secure means of repayment. By 2010 social housing accounted for less than 2% of the total Spanish housing stock (García-Lamarca and Kaika 2016).

The concrete increase in mortgages and thus "home-ownership" was coupled with an ideological attack on citizens, through both digital and physical media that argued for accessible and beneficial mortgage schemes for every situation - "the young mortgage; the easy mortgage; the free mortgage the open mortgage; the serene mortgage; the global mortgage; the paid off mortgage; the wild mortgage; the super mortgage; [and even] the revolution mortgage" (Colau

& Alemany 2012, p.66 in García-Lamarca & Kaika 2016). The apparent ease of obtaining a mortgage in a market which promised ever increasing returns and elevated social status as home-owners coupled with an expensive rental market and decline in social housing conditions, lead to even the most economically vulnerable households adopting mortgages as the sensible solution to their housing problems. Thus, in 2006, 84% of the Spanish population were registered home-owners, with over 1.3 million mortgages issues in 2006 alone (compared with 600,000 in the early 2000s). The consequences of this is that nearly every household in Spain was in debt, their labour directly tied to their homes, and thus to banks and to opaque financial institutions, which were buying up mortgages and mortgage securities; a process that escalated exponentially following the financial crisis (García-Lamarca & Kaika 2016).

This process left over half the Spanish population in debt. Thus, in the Spanish context, privatisation can be seen in the financialisation of the real estate market in which mortgage loans are bought up by international finance corporations, which lack regulation and accountability on the urban or individual scale and exploited what Slater refers to as "planetary rent gaps" through buying up and redeveloping devalued public housing and land from indebt local authorities (Slater 2017).

So, in summary, I refer to García-Lamarca and Kaika's (2016) outline of the three key developments which exacerbated the financialisation of the Spanish mortgage market since the 1990s:

1. The scale of expansion of mortgage debt: from 1998-2008 the ratio of residential mortgage debt to GDP was over 250% of its 1998 value. Between 2003-2007 approximately 1 million mortgages were issued every year.
2. The expansion of mortgage credit availability coupled with the expansion of mortgage debt securitisation, linking household wellbeing directly with fluctuations in international financial markets. By 2007, 36% of Spanish mortgages debt was securitised.
3. The corresponding increase in precarious labour and labour markets, such that between 1006-2007 30% of new contracts were for short term employment and average salaries fell by 10%.

Thus, in the wake of the financial crash, hundreds of thousands of the Spanish populace found themselves unable to pay off their mortgage repayments. Between 2008 - 2014 570,000 homes were foreclosed, and at least 250,000 families were evicted for failure to repay their mortgages. In 2014 alone, 133,000 homes were foreclosed. Further, banks were forced to sell off their mortgages to international, unaccountable financial corporations. This means that people no longer had direct access to the management of their mortgages, decreasing their ability to negotiate repayment rates or to hold their debtors accountable (García-Lamarca & Kaika 2016).

5.1.2. Responses: PAH and Obra Social

In this context the PAH emerged as a force to be reckoned with, causing an international stir in their success in challenging evictions and empowering residents, and increasing use of civil disobedience tactics, including occupations. The PAH's primary aim is the prevention of the systematic eviction of tens of thousands of debtors across Spain who have been affected by impossible mortgage repayments, but its longer-term goal is to secure the socio-economic conditions for the right to housing. Founded in 2009 in Barcelona, the PAH moved from

occupying plazas to occupying bank-owned buildings, in order to successfully pressure the banks into halting evictions of tenants. Gonick (2015) sees the PAH as one of the most emblematic movements to emerge during the last few years of mobilisations and activisms that have erupted across Spain, as they deal specifically with the new forms of housing injustice that have emerged in post-crash Spain. The PAH organise on a network-based assembly structure, emphasising horizontality, collective autonomy, and self-organisation. In Madrid specifically, following their expansion in the wake of 15M the PAH returned to the local neighbourhoods to organise around local issues, needs, and desires.

While, organisation around eviction resistance and housing struggles had been coalescing since 2009, the first eviction in Madrid successfully halted by the PAH occurred in the wake of 15M, after which the numbers of people attending PAH meetings dramatically increased. After 15M, PAH meetings grew from 5 attendees every week to over 100 (Gonick 2015). This led in turn to the creation of new internal structures within PAH assemblies in order to facilitate the concerns of vast numbers of people. The impracticality of organising assemblies of 50 people along consensus-based frameworks led the PAH to create several commissions oriented around different themes and a coordinating group which worked on longer-term issues and goals. However, despite the increasing formalisation of structure, the PAH Madrid was still orientated centrally around the assembly as the major decision-making body and site for action and exchange, which still retained a semi-informal and autonomous structure (Gonick 2015).

In December 2011 the PAH's *obra social* (social work) campaign was launched which primarily aimed to ensure that families threatened by eviction would not be made homeless and also sought to apply pressure to the public administration to guarantee the universal right of housing (Madrid squatter 2018). Their aim was to negotiate for socially rented contracts with the banks on behalf of the families. This aim was manifested through the negotiations but also through the direct occupation of buildings for housing purposes across Spain. Since *obra social*, the practice of protest occupation has become so integral to PAH praxis that they produce a how-to guide for building occupations including neighbourhood-outreach and how to access water and electricity supplies (interview with Madrid squatter).

My analysis of the PAH's insurgent practices expands that of García-Lamarca, who argues that the PAH's praxis has huge liberatory potential due to their dual effects of a. enacting equality for those excluded from the dominant system and b. having the potential to profoundly disrupt the dominant forms of the production of space (García-Lamarca 2017). Her analysis of the PAH emphasises the importance of the process of political subjectivation through the collective actions and assemblies. I expand this analysis by shifting emphasis from the *political* to the *affective* power of the PAH's collective organisation. This allows me to demonstrate the importance of the prefigurative role of occupations, assemblies, and common struggle and to emphasise the significance of engagement in squatting practices and mentalities for the PAH and housing activism in general.

5.1.3. PAH Preliminary Analysis: From Subjectivation to Affective Change

This section focuses on the role of the collective assembly as a space not only for education and organisation, but also for affective transformation through processes such as the airing of grievances and assuaging personal guilt, and the cultivation of collective anger and feelings of solidarity. While many commenters have written about the emancipatory discourse present in their assemblies and its power for collective solidarity (Colau and Alemany 2012; Gonick 2016;

Molina Allende 2017), García-Lamarca's specific analysis of the assembly as a place where "positions and identities are reconstituted…. [as] Processes of political subjectivation" is the analytical lens I seek to extend here (2017, p.3). She argues that occupying buildings owned by the banks and providing housing for indebted people both removes their indebtedness as a core aspect of their self-identification and offers a concrete political alternative to indebtedness by directly contesting the mechanisms of urban dispossession from the bottom up. I extend this argument by arguing that through engaging in occupations their dispositions can also shift, and they can inhabit alternate affective sensibilities such as solidarity, community, and mutual aid.

In their practices of consciousness-raising and their physical interventions into the spaces of capital accumulation the PAH are manifesting a politics of subjectivation. By disobeying market norms of being-in-space and constituting new ways of being together in urban space whilst concretely disrupting the processes of capital accumulation and displacement (García-Lamarca 2017). In their practices and in the sympathy and solidarity shown to them they make visible the injustices manifest under the current status quo and open up possibilities for alternatives.

The political subject is made through collective action and engagement in insurgent practices, practices that are key to urban political change precisely because they make visible the gap between the actual and the possible, the just and the unjust. By enacting the political the PAH and other forms of insurgent politics are able to demonstrate the antagonism that remains within society (Mouffe 2000), the real limits to an agonistic framework of engagement whist people are being mistreated by a capitalist urban regime *en masse*. Further, the affective role of the PAH assemblies is vital for their physical power in resisting evictions and occupying buildings. As Colau and Alemany state, the analysis generated in the assembly had several vital outcomes:

> 'First, that their problem was not individual but collective, and arose from structural causes. Secondly, owing to the latter they needed to be convinced that there was no need to feel guilt or shame. And thirdly, that collective action could transform reality and make possible what seemed impossible' (2012, p.125)

As García-Lamarca argues, the knowledge that one was not alone in facing their problems, that they could rely on support, sympathy and understanding by the collective at large, and in turn offer it themselves, was a vital reason for the PAH's success and growth. However, I would argue further that it is not simply the *knowledge* that one is not alone but the *feeling* of being together.

> "[T]o move from knowing more to valuing that knowledge requires a shift of some kind … I suggest that an affective shift must first occur to produce the struggle that is the basis of alternative standpoint knowledge and politics." (Hemmings 2012, p.157)

The assembly is a physical manifestation of being-in-common, making flesh the knowledge that may exist on an abstract level. It's a felt sensation - an affect. This process of empowerment contributed directly to the PAH practice most central for my analysis: the reappropriation and occupation of bank-owned housing.

> "The reason: the difficulty that we affected people have to speak publicly on a reality we see as a personal failure. […] Hence, one of the most important achievements of the Plataforma was to make visible a problem that is experienced individually, a problem that rarely managed to pass the sphere of the private and intimate, and transform it into a social problem." (Colau & Alemany 2012, p.16)

As García-Lamarca says "this type of insurgent practice perhaps has the highest emancipatory potential as it contests financial rent extraction mechanisms not only at the level of the

households that have been proletarianized by the financial system but also at a deeper, systemic level through physically claiming an object (a house) that is part of a publicly funded financial restructuring process that will ultimately (continue to) benefit the economic and political elite. Furthermore, the subjects of equality enact equality themselves and, through this, a process of political subjectivation can unfold." (2017, p.12).

The occupation of buildings goes further than the emotive power of the weekly assemblies or the reactive bodily strength of the eviction resistance - occupations are a clear antagonism to capitalist control of the city, demonstrating a right for housing for all and a direct challenge to the primacy of private property (Milligan 2016). Through occupations the PAH show that use value transcends exchange value regarding the right to a home and highlight the absurdity of homes being left empty for speculation while people are made homeless: actions and discourses the squatting movement has manifested for decades. Therefore, the significance of occupations occurs on two planes. One, the spatial, a physical act of reclaiming space in the capitalist city. Two, the emotive or affective sensation of uniting together against a common enemy.

However, García-Lamarca, like so many other champions of the PAH's practices, fails to explicitly relate either these forms of action, nor her analysis of their incipient political power, to the already existing and simultaneously expanding practices of resistance, challenge, and politicisation of space and each other: namely, by the squatters' movement.

5.1.4. Tensions: PAH and the Madrid Squatters' movement

Whilst many commenters have observed the increasing use of occupation by the PAH, with empty buildings owned by the banks occupied by evicted families, little research has been done on their engagement with the squatters' movement in Madrid. Similarly, the PAH are hesitant to embrace the language of squatting, despite the fact that many live in the occupied buildings for weeks or months at a time. This is exemplified in the fact that in the book written by Colau and Alemany (2012) there is not a single mention of squatting. This creates a tension between the PAH and squatters who fight for rights based on the legitimacy of squatting, rather than a legitimacy based on attempted institutionalisation of occupation (the PAH seek, among other things, to turn their occupied properties into socially rented housing).

Like the majority of the squatting movements across Europe, organised squatting in Madrid, and Spain in general, first developed in the wake of the 1968 global civil unrest. Squatting gained increased traction in the 1980s, coinciding with the decline of the neighbourhood movement across various Spanish cities. According to Martinez (2014), the first phase of the Spanish squatting movement began in 1980 with the appearance of the first squats in residential buildings that were publicly claimed as part of protest movements. Residential squatting in municipal buildings occurred at this point in cities across Spain, predominantly in Madrid and Barcelona. Unlike in the UK, squats as social centres were a bench mark of the movement from the very beginning and indeed, to this day, remain the most recognised and long-lasting form of squatting in Madrid. Although the movement began with residential squatting it quickly became apparent that social centres were the dominant force in the Spanish squatting mentality.

In Madrid, the first organised occupations began to appear from the mid-1970s, linked initially to the strong neighbourhood movements and union groups. One of the higher profile earlier occupations was that of the Tetuán Libertarian Ateneo in December of 1978 that occupied an abandoned school in the street Marqués de Viana nº 99. Despite increasing police repression

squatting and occupations increased throughout the 1980s. Many of these early SSCs were able to last several years, with some existing to the present day.
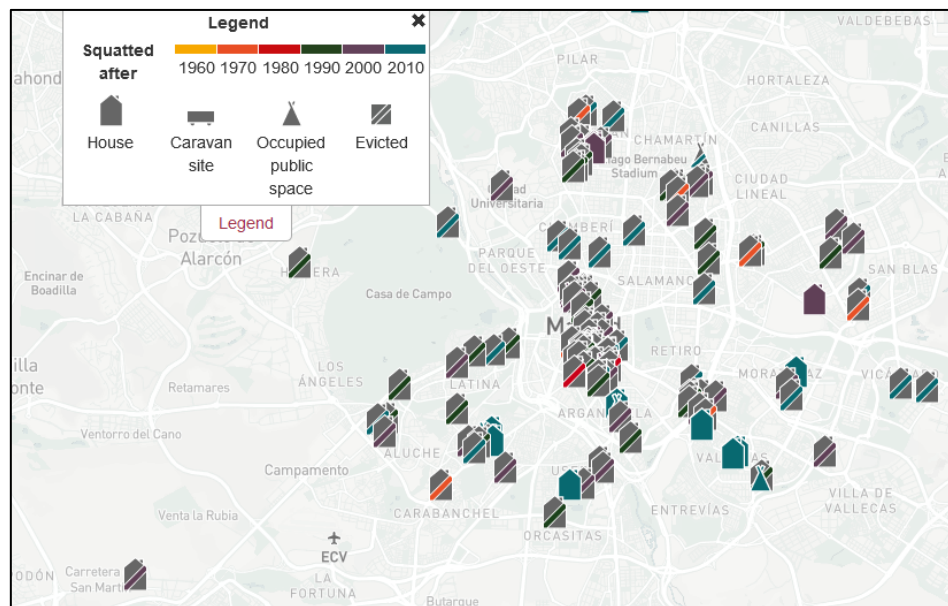

Figure 2 - Map of historic and contemporary squatted social centres in Madrid (maps.squat.net 2018)

5.1.5. *The legacy of 15M and varying activist trajectories*

The bursting of the financial bubble led to uprisings across Madrid and Spain in general in 2011. On 15th May 2011 a popular autonomous movement occupied the squares in many cities (the 15M movement) and local assemblies began to organically organise. In Madrid this manifested in a mass occupation of the Puerto de Sol in the city centre where thousands of people met and held assemblies about their grievances (Martinez and Cattaneo 2014). 15M was pivotal for the squatters' movement in Madrid, and urban resistance culture in general, mobilising people to air their grievances, to find commonalities and solidarities between different interests and to express and concretise their frustrations with the regime and the politico-economic situation (Martínez López and García Bernardo 2012).

Since 2011 the squatting movement in Madrid has seen sustained occupations in many areas across the city, from the centre to the outer districts, with both new and old SSCs attracting support and solidarity across a vast range of interests; facilitating discussion and organisation on a cross-issue basis. 15M catalysed a new wave of squatting and also, contributed significantly to the increasing acceptance of squatting by "regular people", or general leftists not involved in the squatting "scene". 15M and, later, the PAH's occupation practices "normalised" squatting, particularly in the years 2012-2014 (Interview with Madrid squatter 2018). As a PAH spokesperson said: "We consider that the PAH and, specifically, the campaign of the Obra Social, has played a key role in the "normalization" of squatting" (El Salto 2017). Many neighbours preferred squatters to buildings being left empty or blocked up with metal grates, particularly after the extent of the evictions across Spain became common knowledge.

Although 15M was a catalyst for a new wave of squatting, it was based on already existing squatting movements and a tradition of autonomy and anarchism already in place, such as in social centres Tabacalera, El Patio Maravillas and La Gatonera. These "old-school" squatters were key in the success and efficacy of the 15M movement, offering advice about organising communal assemblies, structuring the occupation of plazas, technical advice about setting up tents, facilitating 15M assemblies and mobilising and skill sharing (Interview with Madrid squatters 2018). The history of autonomy was already important to 15M's success. The key development in both squatting and housing activism on a broader scale however came as a *result* of 15M. After the occupation of Sol, 15M explicitly called for the movement to be decentralised; for local organisation rather than centring in Sol and attempting to represent the whole city (García-Lamarca 2017). The call, "Toma los Barrios" led to over 100 local "Asambleas Populares" being established across the city, all oriented along principles of self-determination, collective decision-making, and local autonomy. While these groups covered many local issues, one primary issue was housing, which was organised either within the PAH umbrella or, in some neighbourhoods under a different, autonomous name (*Figure 3*). In Lavapies the preferred name was the "Asamblea de Lavapies", and in Carabanchel the "Asamblea de vivienda". Of central importance to understanding the relationship between the housing assemblies (PAH or otherwise) and the squatters' movement is the fact that many of these groups chose to meet in SSCs. In all cases, the asambleas were oriented along autonomous lines in opposition to established neighbourhood organisations with ties to the government.
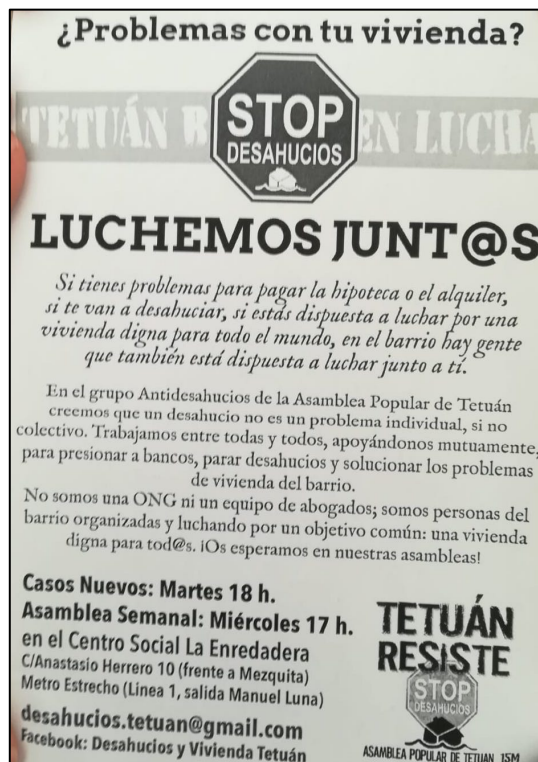
Figure 3 - Poster of post-15M asamblea meeting in SSC La Enredadera, *Tetuán* (Unknown author 2015)

While 15M helped creating alternative discourses and practices to neo-liberalism across Madrid and Spain more generally, the ambivalence of the movement rests in whether it was seeking reform or rupture (García-Lamarca 2017). This binary, however, is misplaced. I contend that a movement as heterogeneous and diverse as 15M would only ever be seeking both. And this is precisely why the return to the local had such diverse effects on its legacy.

As such, in the fieldwork section I focus on the *local* and the *affective* dimension of the relationship between PAH groups and Madrid squatters to locate and understand the points of tension and support in their relationship. Further, I attempt to untangle the differences between discourse and practice manifested by groups such as the PAH and what this means for the future of their relationship with more contentious forms of urban insurrection. I then compare these elements with the situation in London in order to make a claim for a more promising and expansive relationship of struggle.

5.2. LONDON

5.2.1. Context: History of housing provisions in Britain

The post-world-war-two British welfare state oversaw the rise of a mass state-financed social housing programme that had created 6.6 million public homes by the end of the 1970s, many in high rise blocks, which at the time were considered "villages in the sky"- an association that is a far cry from the "sink estate" stereotypes afforded to such projects nowadays (Slater 2018). These homes were directly managed by local governments and made up around a third of the national housing stock. There were also regulations in place in the private rental sector such as rent controls and eviction protection for tenants.

However, the arrival in 1979 of Margaret Thatcher's conservative government changed this narrative, leading the way for thirty subsequent years of destruction of the reputation, quality, and quantity of social housing, and increasing freedom of the free market to control the housing sector. The infamous Right to Buy programme was one of the most popular policies ever introduced by a Conservative party in the UK, allowing tenants to buy their publicly-rented properties at a discounted price. This led to the sell-off of 2.7 million previously public homes over the last 30 years (Hodkinson 2012), with little in the way of replacement, as the funds generated by the sales did not return to the local authorities from which the stock was sold. This contributed to the rise of private debt finance as the main means of funding new housing supply (Whitehead and Williams 2011). By 2008 social housing contributed to less than 18% of the total housing stock (Whitehead and Williams 2011).

Accompanying this depletion has been a re-organisation of the fund allocation for social housing, with the majority of the public subsidy left over for socially-rented housing given to Housing Associations, which are increasingly reliant on corporate partnerships, which in turn raise the rents within their stock. This process has been complimented with the wholesale of entire estates to Housing Associations contributing to an additional 1.5 million homes out of the public housing stock (Hodkinson 2012, p.510). Thus, since 1979 there has been a net loss of 1.9 million social rented homes, and a decrease in the proportion from 31% to just 18.1% of the total rented stock today. This has directly impacted the housing possibilities for people of low income and contributed directly to the displacement and social cleansing of "undesirable" residents of cities such as London. Accompanying this change has been a reconfiguration of market regulations and decline in renters' rights, and an encouragement of home-ownership through an expanding mortgage-market, financed by private companies such as Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) (Hodkinson 2012, p.510).

In the UK, PFI's have been one of the main strategies to regenerate social housing estates. PFI's are a form of public private partnership launched under Blair's New Labour government, originally promoted with the aim of ensuring a decent standard of all homes for social housing tenants by 2010 (Hodkinson 2011). However, this was a cloak for further privatisation as part of their 2000 "Urban Renaissance Agenda", aiming to bring the middle classes back to the city (Davidson 2008). This New Labour neoliberal strategizing was epitomised by Blair giving his first major speech as Prime Minister at the Aylesbury Estate in South London, a symbol of urban despair and denigrated social housing. This estate was later sold off to a private company for complete demolition and rebuilding as luxury apartments and is a primary case study in this thesis.

5.2.2. Discussion: Implications of Privatisation

All of these developments can be seen as essentially a thirty-year project of privatisation. Formerly public land is given over to private companies with the intention not of housing people but of generating a profit. The privatisation and regeneration (a cloak for redevelopment) is being forced through by a unity between the local council and the corporate housing developers against the interests of the residents who are facing eviction and displacement. The regeneration ends up being an excuse for mass evictions as the new builds are offered at above market prices and almost wholesale end up being sold to foreign investors with no desire to live in the blocks. This is part of the broader global neoliberal aim of what David Harvey terms "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2004). Expanding home ownership creates new outlets for surplus capital, such as through mortgage lending and exploiting the rent gap produced in the dissonance between a large social housing estate and the centrality of the land it is based on (Smith 1979). The new luxury developments in London which are shamelessly taking root in the exact sites of formerly public housing are exemplary of the priorities of urban governments and those who exert control over the housing market, as "undesirables" are forced out of inner cities to make way for those who can pay more, aesthetically fit the socio-economic target demographic, and embrace the elite consumption landscapes currently cropping up all over the metropolis, largely kept empty for speculative investment. The increase in corporate landlordism in the gap caused by the loss of public housing is neoliberal hegemony at its purist.

What all of these changes have led to is a large-scale process of urban dispossession, as former residents of estates, and of cities such as London, are forced out of their homes, their neighbourhoods, and their circles of solidarity. Further, processes of exclusionary displacement (Marcuse 1985) means that the same locations that were accessible to previous generations were no longer available or feasible purchase or renting options for the newer generation of residents seeking a home within the city. What was held in common and embraced as such, allowing the formation and fertilisation of solidarities, mutual support, and kinship, has been privatised, stripping its residents not only of their homes but also of the basic support structures they may have come to rely on, and the neighbourhoods where they have an affective relationship to something called "home". Forcing people either out of the capital or into the private renting market, this dispossession has led to an increase in capitalistic individualism, as former neighbours are forced to compete for properties, forced to work harder in order to afford market-based rents, and forced disciplining into the market-logic which now dominates society. Privately renting individuals are not in a position to be able to collectively bargain for fairer rents and have no direct political relationship with their local authority, thus are increasingly detached from the political system and increasingly unable to collectively bargain. Circles of trust were broken and the need for affective solidarity and mutual aid more present than ever.

Therefore, gentrification and dispossession in cities such as London has been two-fold: bottom-up as caused by Right to Buy and similar schemes which turn residents into agents of gentrification, and top-down as caused by regeneration schemes (demolition by any other name) and corporation-government partnerships, designed to "maximise the market potential of centrally located council estates" (Hodkinson 2012, p.513). By 2007, these processes largely stripped London of its de-commodified housing options, evicted lower-income residents, dispossessed neighbourhoods of the ability for solidarity and collective bargaining, deregulated and increased the power of the private-rental and mortgage-lending market, and brought the neoliberal ideology of governmentality to the everyday production and consumption of housing

(Hodkinson 2012). As such, the housing market was primed, ready, and loaded for the fall-out that was to come.

5.2.3. *Responses: The RHN and the London Squatters' Movement*

In the wake of the financial crash and housing crisis many local initiatives were set up or reinvigorated to fight for housing justice. Many of these coalesced into the Radical Housing Network, along with a new wave of large-scale squatting actions. The London squatting movement had faced a significant downturn after squatting in residential buildings was criminalised in 2012, however, beginning winter 2014, the spring and summer of 2015 saw an unprecedented wave of occupations of estates sweeping across London, in open defiance of the squatting ban and as a powerful force of resistance to the wholesale destruction of council estates across the city. Beginning with the Focus E15 Mothers who occupied the disused Carpenters estate in Stratford in winter 2014, occupation has been increasingly used as a strategy against the housing crisis. That said, like in Madrid, the relationship between squatting and occupation is ambivalent, as, like the PAH, some groups who use occupation as a strategy, such as Focus E15 and Sisters Uncut (a feminist action group) actively reject the language of squatting. Other groups within the RHN actively embrace the role of an occupation as a place to live and bond and share experiences, alongside its political resonance as a statement of resistance.
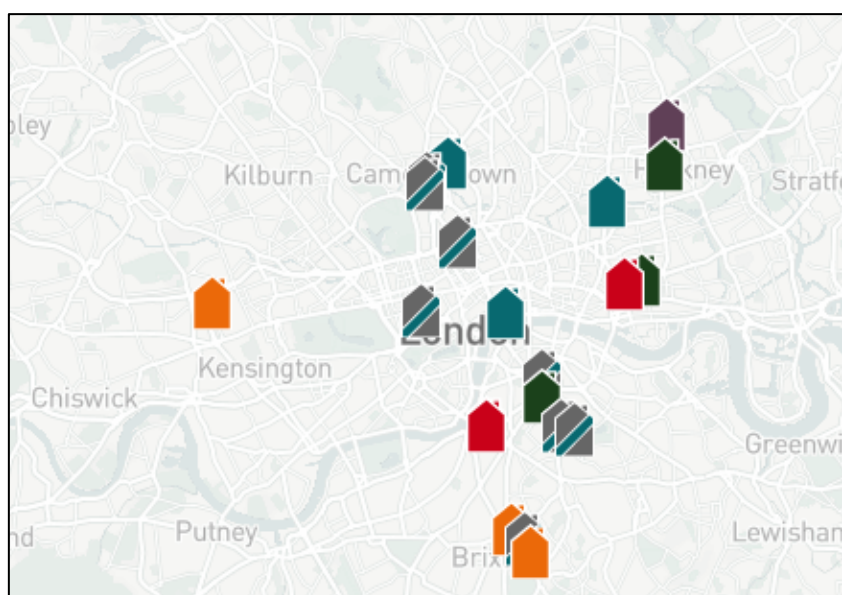
Figure 4 - Map of squatted social centres in London in 2015 (maps.squat.net 2018)

The Aylesbury Occupation of 2015 was a landmark in the housing struggle, by explicitly stating that it supported the residents *and* the squatters and will be the case study explored in detail in the subsequent section.

5.2.3.1. *The London squatters' movement*

The modern squatters' movement developed as a response to the housing crisis across the UK, particularly in London in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, mass homelessness and poor-quality housing existed throughout the country and councils did not provide housing

when needed. Beginning in 1968 as a family rehousing scheme, the squatting movement involved moving people into abandoned buildings as a direct solution to the British government and local councils' inadequate response to the housing crisis. The movement quickly diversified not only beyond the initial aim of rehousing of families, but also in demographic makeup as many different sorts of people, such as students, the unemployed, punks, and others took to squatting for many, often overlapping, reasons, from inability to find affordable housing to creating a base for political groups and projects.

The squatting movement that grew throughout the seventies and eighties originated as a movement primarily oriented towards housing those in need: the homeless or badly housed. The London Squatters Campaign (LSC) was set up by Ron Bailey in 1968 as a direct-action response to the poor conditions of accommodation for people in temporary housing or rentals (Bailey 1973). The movement gained a significant amount of sympathy in the media, for providing a much-needed response to the housing crisis that the councils appeared to be ignoring. In addition, the LSC won a number of victories in the form of licensed squats, which were squats that the council granted a formalised temporary occupation (Wates & Wolmer 1980).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the squatting movement in London went through several phases. In the 1980s the squatting movement underwent a more punk orientation, explicitly subcultural, yet still facilitating the dual purposes of housing and creating environments for subcultural, autonomous expression and organisation. Through inclusion into the rave scene in the 1990s squats were associated with large illegal raves and drug-taking however squatting for housing still persisted. In 2012 the squatters' movement in London faced a significant downturn as "Weatherley's Law" came into place on 1 September 2012, making squatting in a residential building a criminal offence subject to arrest, fine and imprisonment. However, even after this legal measure, squatting in London has remained, with the majority of squatters instead creating homes and social centres in former pubs, hotels, offices, and other non-residential properties. Although the movement persists, it can not be denied that it has faced a significant decline since the criminalisation bill and the increasingly hostile outlook towards non-consumptive uses of urban space in London.

Whilst squatting in London has been recognised as emphasising residency as a key tenet, many SSCs have emerged over the years, however with less significance to the squatting movement in general compared to in Italy and Spain. Whilst some social centres function and functioned for both residential and as spaces for groups to meet and organise, the ones that have managed to survive despite the crack-downs against squatting have been those which either do not have or do not explicitly advertise a residential function. Several formerly SSCs in London still exist such as the anarchist bookshop 56A and the feminist meeting space Crossroads social centre. These measures mean that the solidarity between squatters and broader housing justice campaigns are more vital and significant than ever.

5.2.3.2.The Radical Housing Network

The Radical Housing Network (RHN) is a broad-based coalition of struggles for housing across London that emerged out of the post-crash housing crisis context in 2014. The Radical Housing Network is a horizontal association of different housing campaigns across London, who focus on a range of issues from private renting, social housing, benefits, health, and squatting. They function as a support network for the different groups, advertising each other's campaigns,

organising, and turning up to each other's protests, occupations, blockades, and offering support in many different avenues, from legal battles and confronting local councillors or real estate officers, to more direct approaches such as sit-ins, occupations, and blockades. They recognise the need for a variety of tactics and for autonomy in the navigation of each other's campaigns and support them based on their status as struggles against the privatisation and commodification of housing in the neoliberal city. As is evident from the name, the RHN have an explicitly radical orientation, stating on their website that:

> "We feel we are not represented by mainstream politics, and seek to organise a movement for housing justice from below, across tenure, rooted in people's everyday housing needs. We support a diversity of tactics, including direct action." (Radical Housing Network 2015)

Like the PAH, the RHN recognise the need for both local and regional support in the fight for housing justice in the city. They prioritise self-determination in each localised struggle and centralise the importance of autonomy over the direction of the respective campaigns. They offer skill sharing, legal advice, practical support as well as physical solidarity. However, their assemblies lack the affective energy of the PAH assemblies as they tend to be oriented more towards practical decision-making and action planning than the assuaging of individual negative emotions and generating a sense of emotional solidarity.

They explicitly recognise that "the housing crisis is part of deeper systemic problems. Therefore, its solution will only be possible through grassroots struggle, and through systemic change." Their principles explicitly reject the marketisation of housing over recent decades, manifested in:

• rising costs of housing
• sell-off of council housing
• encouragement of profiteering – speculation and buy-to-let
• increase in overcrowding and street homelessness
• destruction of housing co-ops, and other social housing solutions
• *criminalisation of squatting*
• welfare reform policies
• reduction of security, increasing eviction and displacement
• empty homes
• decreasing quality of housing
• gentrification and displacement

 (Radical Housing Network 2015 [my italics])

The next section will look at the relationship between the squatting movement and the PAH and the RHN in their respective cities, focusing along two lines of engagement which have emerged from my research. One: the significance of local ties in conditioning the relationship between housing justice groups and squatting groups. Two: the difference between discourse and practice regarding inclusion of squatters within a group's solidarity principles and the tensions and ambivalences this evokes in terms of a political urban project. This leads me to my proposition that a closer and more mutually supportive relationship offers greater liberatory potential from an affective and political dimension than the current contradictory approach evident in the PAH's (and the RHN to an extent) current attitude.

6. FIELDWORK DATA AND DISCUSSION

In my analysis of trends in both cities two clear themes emerged, which, while overlapping at points, manifested in different ways. The first theme is the significance of the locality or neighbourhood in conditioning the ties, both physical and affective, between housing groups and squatters. It became clear that, due to the local orientation of many of the bonds between groups, the "party line", particularly for the PAH, is not as strong as I had supposed. I illustrate this with explicit reference to the case study of the SSC EKO in Carabanchel, Madrid. The second is the ambivalent attitude the "official" groups, the PAH and RHN, have towards the respective squatters' movements, particularly regarding the former groups' use of occupation. For the PAH this manifests in a difference between their discourse and practice in terms of attitude towards squatters, in the RHN it depends on the specific tactic of the local group organising under their banner.

In drawing out these ambivalences in attitude I wish to tentatively make a case for a more explicit discursive, physical, and affective embracing of squatting within housing justice groups. I do this by using the case study of the Aylesbury Estate Occupation, in London 2018, to highlight the prefigurative and affective significance of such non-contingent solidarities. By the end of this section the key differences between the Madrid and London cases will become clear and a proposition for the spatial and emotive composition of future radical urban struggle will be explicated.

6.1. The importance of the local: Case study SSC EKO, Carabanchel

Both the RHN and the PAH are organised in a network-structure emphasising the autonomy of local chapters. In the RHN these local chapters are almost wholly independent, organising under campaign and place-specific names and free to use whichever methods they wish. However, as stated above, this does lead to some groups that organise under the RHN banner from engaging in occupations and refusing to use the language of squatting, just like the PAH. However, what the local autonomy does mean is that the degree of militancy is entirely up to the local chapter, without fear of jeopardising the reputation of the RHN as a whole.

One of the most effective groups under the RHN banner is Housing Action Southwark and Lambeth (HASL) who work on a similar basis to the PAH. They organise eviction resistances and legal challenges to evictions in the boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth on case by case

basis (Interview with Ex-squatter and HASL militant 2018). The cases are brought to their weekly assemblies where they are discussed, and the appropriate form of resistance is decided (Interview with Ex-squatter and HASL militant 2018). What this means, is that the efficacy of RHN actions depends on the specific aims and methods of the local groups organising and the extent to which they choose to reach out to RHN as a whole to support their campaigns. This level of local autonomy also means that the local groups have the freedom to associate with more "criminal elements" or use more "criminal methods" as and when they see fit. This is one key reason the RHN's relationship with squatters is largely complimentary rather than fraught.

Figure 5 - SSC EKO, Carabanchel (authors own 2018)

Before I began my investigation into the PAH I had assumed that the different local chapters would be organised along similar lines, with a "party line" so to speak, guiding their actions. However, through my interviews and experiences with members of the SSC EKO in the neighbourhood of Carabanchel a different picture emerged. Following an interview with two activists from the district of Carabanchel and ethnographic observations and informal conversations at SSC EKO I came to understand that the connection between the PAH and the squatters' movement across Madrid is conditioned specifically by the importance of concerns in the *locality,* a dimension that has thus far been overlooked in the literature.

The call from 15M to return to the neighbourhoods for further political projects generated a high number of locality-based actions, however, the degree of militancy or radicalism was highly dependent on the historical legacy in a specific neighbourhood. Therefore, the local orientation is a result, not only of the 15M call for localisation, but also, importantly, the legacy of neighbourhood associations and workers movements in certain districts in Madrid. It is no coincidence that Carabanchel and Vallecas are two of the neighbourhoods with the highest levels of local autonomous activity, strongest PAH and housing associations, and greatest number of squats and social centres. Both these neighbourhoods also have historically strong neighbourhood associations and workers movements and therefore an inclination towards autonomy. Indeed, as the local police charmingly put it:

> "The majority of the 3,994 squatter houses in the Community of Madrid are located in the demarcation of the National Police (3,641), which brings together the capital (2,521) and fourteen other large municipalities, totalling around five million inhabitants. In Madrid, the biggest problems are in the southern districts: Usera (504), Puente de Vallecas (438), Carabanchel (256) and Villa de Vallecas (214). The other side of the coin is presented by the richest neighbourhoods: Chamberí (4), Retiro (6) and Salamanca (9)." (ABC 2017)

There is a clear link between presence of SSCs and south-lying districts with working class populations.

The historically strong neighbourhood workers' movement contributed to the desire for an autonomous space and the knowledge to achieve it. In Carabanchel, local people knew that the space that was to become the EKO had been empty for 15 years and therefore encouraged it's squatting. The history, mentality, and knowledge that facilitated this successful social centre (both a basis for squatters and also for the local PAH assembly) was extremely localised. What

this means, is that the EKO became a hub for many different kinds of social movements, united in the sense that they were fighting for the autonomy of *Carabanchel* (*Figure 5*).

These local ties were stronger than ties of loyalty between groups undergoing the same project but in different areas of the city (*Figure 6*). For example, a squatting group in Carabanchel was more likely to work with the local housing assembly or local community garden than with a squatting group from a different neighbourhood in the city. Although there are broader, city-wide ties between groups of squatters, housing activists, and other urban projects, and they do occasionally support occupations, eviction resistances, and other activities in different neighbourhoods, the emphasis is specifically on the local.
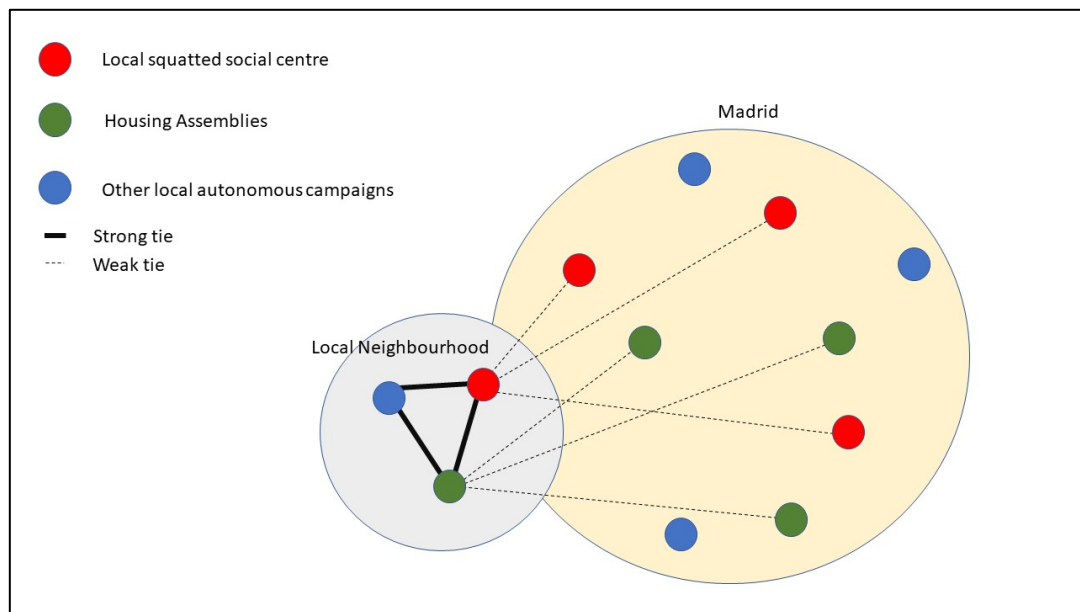
Figure 6 - Infographic of strong and weak ties between movements in Madrid (author's own 2018)

Whilst the squatting scene is localised to a degree, there *are* also city-wide services for squatters, such as a squatters' handbook, available online and in certain social centres, and a squatting office in the La Gatonera social centre, in which they offer advice (Madrid Squatters Handbook 2018). The SSC La Quimera offers a squatting advice session every Monday from 8pm – 10pm, which I attended. Non-squatted places also offer support such as tool-lending and practical skills. Further, in some neighbourhoods, the housing assemblies also assist independent (non-PAH) squatters, with lists of empty properties owned by the banks and offer support for eviction resistance and legal advice (Interview with Member of SSC EKO 2018). It became clear that the relationship between the PAH housing assemblies and the squatter's movement is contingent on the specific relationship of that locality. Although squatters are free to use the resources across the city it seemed from the interviews that the tendency was to rely on neighbourhood-specific resources rather than those in other districts.

This is the case not only in Carabanchel but also in other neighbourhoods, such as Vallecas. In 2011 a PAH assembly moved into the Centro Social Seco, in Vallecas, a SSC that was specifically oriented around organising for the needs of working class members of Adelfas and Puente de Vallecas neighbourhoods. Seco's longevity was the result of long-term negotiations between squatters' rights groups, autonomous struggles, neighbourhood associations, and more "mainstream" politics, and as such catered to the needs of any and all groups who fell under this umbrella. The relationship between PAH organising and the local and working class

orientation of a neighbourhood in Vallecas manifested by choosing to organise and meet in a historic SSC mirrors that of Carabanchel, as Gonick says "by relying on a social centre that has grown out of traditional neighbourhoods struggles, the collective allies itself to a particular historical trajectory that engages with appropriation, infrastructure, urban space, and social reproduction" (Gonick 2016, p.157). This aspect of my analysis has led me to partially disprove my initial hypothesis and also to add insight into analyses of the PAH which have been produced by academics thus far: there is clearly a closer relationship between the PAH and the squatters' movement than I had thought, particularly in certain neighbourhoods.

If some branches of PAH do not shy from meeting and organising their assemblies in SSCs and sharing their lists of empty properties this suggests a solidarity and mutual understanding of their roles in remaking the city, at least informally. Further, many social centres across Madrid are happy to advertise and promote PAH actions and groups, I observed during my ethnography, PAH posters and materials in La Canica, Ingobernable, La Enredadera, and EKO. Far from a "party line" the relationship between the squatters and PAH assemblies appears to be one based on specific local needs and desires for autonomy or organisation.

Figure 7 - Page from *The Standard Evening* detailing different housing justice movements across Europe with a section on the PAH in Spain (The Standard Evening 2018)

However, a local orientation towards on-the-ground struggle did not always mean isolation from broader issues. Both the Madrid and London squatters' movements regularly shared information about different social justice campaigns across Europe. There was an ethos of international solidarity, with regular info-talks, fundraisers, and film-screenings about other struggles. An example of this is when in my first squat in Russel Square, the Anti-Social Centre, we organised a film screening of *Si Se Puede*, the documentary about the PAH in Barcelona (*Figure 8*). Regular exchanges and visits with squatters from other cities also occurred, such as when we were invited to give an infotalk about the Aylesbury Occupation at La Enredadera SSC in Madrid in 2015 and stayed at other local squats throughout the visit (*Figure 8*).

The RHN also saw the value in supporting international struggles. When they produced a spoof copy of the right-wing daily tabloid *The Evening Standard* called *The Standard Evening* they included a segment on resistance movements across Europe, including the PAH (*Figure 7*).
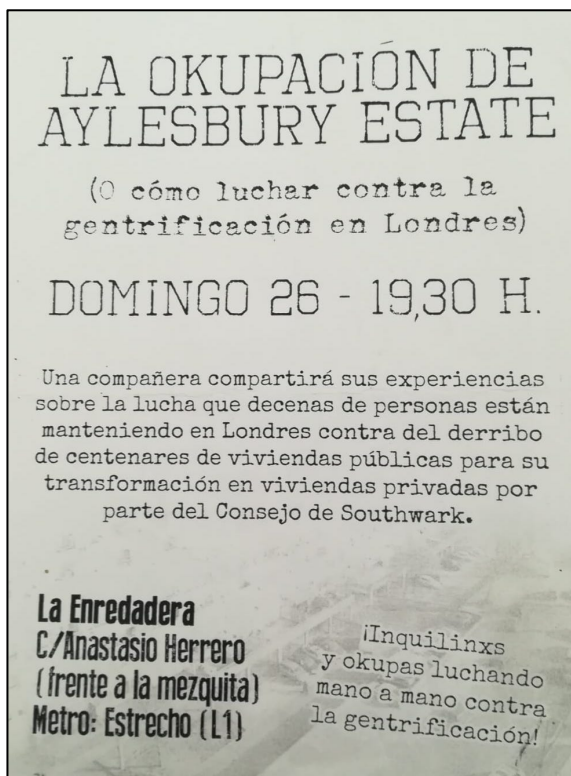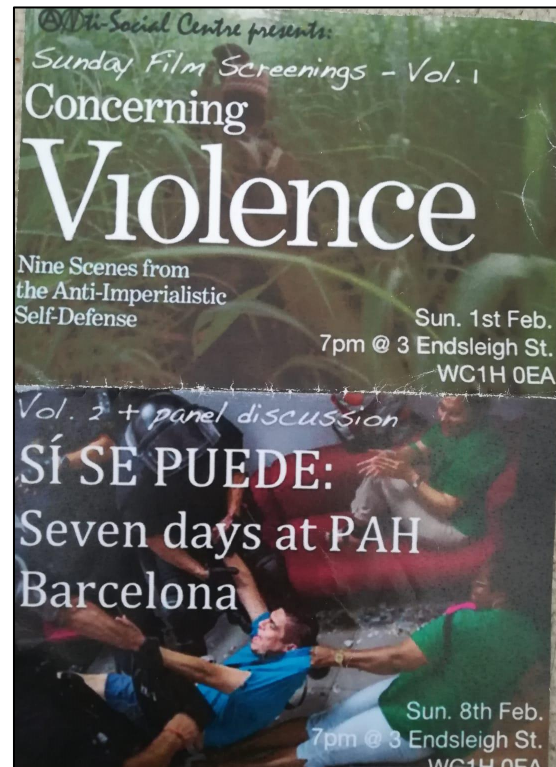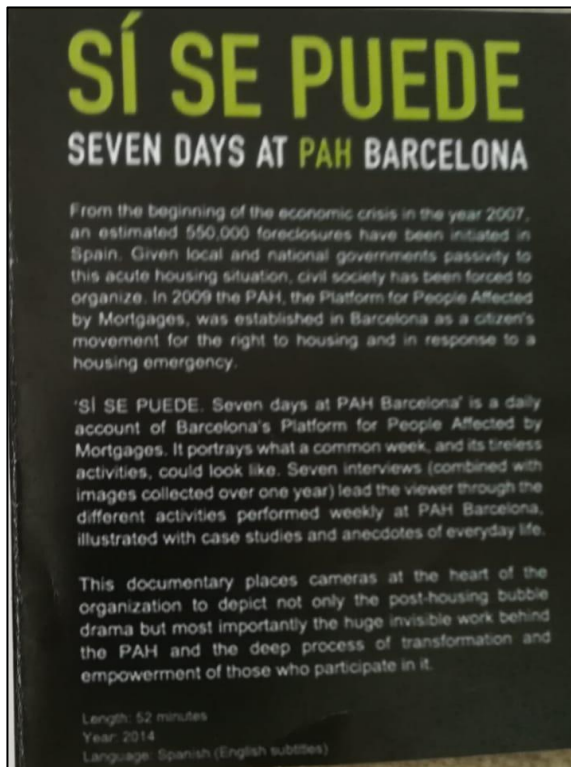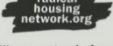
Figure 8 - (Top images) Two flyers for the screening of Si Se Puede at the Anti-Social centre squat and social centre (Anti-Social Centre 2014). (Lower left image) Poster advertising the Aylesbury Occupiers infotalk in La Enredadera squatted social centre in Madrid (La Enredadera 2015). (Lower right image) Poster advertising Squatting in Barcelona infotalk at Brixton Hill squat (Brixton Hill 2015)

6.2.Discourse vs. Practice: the inclusion of squatters

As you can see from the list of grievances, squatting is explicitly referenced as one of the realms in which the RHN seek to organise, support, and resist. By recognising the validity and interconnectedness of these different issues they help to empower residents of all description to unite against a system designed explicitly to isolate and individualise their struggles, offering a vision of *hope* and solidarity to the seemingly insurmountable challenge of the neoliberalisation of urban space. Despite the fact that some groups that organise under the RHN banner, such as Focus E15 avoid using the language of squatting, the RHN as a whole are one of very few broad-based housing struggles that *explicitly* include squatters within their solidarity framework (*Figure 9*). Many, such as the PAH, shy away from open inclusion of squatters due to attempted claims to legitimacy from the perspective of institutional frameworks, or misguided views that their rights to hold the spaces they occupy are less legitimate than that of evicted tenants. This acknowledgement demonstrates the truly *radical* nature of the RHN, unlike other groups which use the rhetoric of the right to the city or reclaiming space, but for only those with a preconceived "right" to that specific building in the form of property. By including squatters, they are explicitly challenging the premise of property rights, and acknowledging the reclaiming of public space for all.

Figure 9 - RHN principles and groups within network, including SQUASH: squatters' campaign (RHN 2015)

By including squatters, they open up possibilities for the other groups operating under their framework. Occupation is used as a strategy by many housing campaigns and few activists know more about the legal and practical requirements of opening and holding buildings against hostile property developers, landlords, or bailiffs than squatters. Indeed, many of the campaigns under the RHN umbrella have reached out to squatters to help them with locks, bars, and police aggression. The Advisory Service for Squatters and the Squatter's Handbook both aided RHN occupations as and when they were needed. This creates a space for a multiplicity of struggles

to unite and share skills, food, and mutual aid in embracing a truly universal right to the city. An example of the inclusion of squatting practices into their everyday organising is that I have been on the RHN mailing list from 2015 to the present day. In this time, 81 of their emails have been specifically to do with squatting, a further 138 about occupations, and 62 specifically about the Aylesbury Estate occupation I will discuss in the final section. The importance of the explicit recognition and support of squatters in a radical housing justice movement will be argued in the subsequent section of this analysis.

The PAH has a more fraught relationship with the discourses and practices of squatting. My investigation began with the surprising discovery that in the book written by the PAH founders and leading activists Colau and Alemany neither "okupas" nor "okupacion" were mentioned a single time despite their use of occupation as a tactic. According to Gonick (2015), between January and April 2015, the Madrid PAH defended fourteen cases of *okupacion* against eviction orders, however, they did not identify these occupations as squatting. Further, upon investigation of their Facebook postings I saw that whilst SSCs would share and support PAH activities and eviction resistances the same courtesy was not extended from the PAH to the social centres. This contrast with the fact that many PAH branches meet in SSCs and share their resources suggests that there is a disjuncture in the public discourse and practice of the PAH. I posit that this is to do with a tension between their long-term strategy of institutional access, policy change, and increased social housing, and their discourse of autonomy, right to the city, and the validity of insurgent practices manifest on the ground. Part of this, as explored above, can be explained due to the higher level of autonomy of particular PAH branches regarding their level of engagement with the local squatting scene. However, part of it requires further analysis.

This ambivalence can be further understood if we expand the traditional social movements analysis of the difference between the public and the private spheres in order to tentatively suggest the existence of multiple forms and levels of public-ness. The PAH, as a large and powerful network, has a certain level of media coverage, particularly since their close relationship with Podemos and the promotion of Colau to mayor of Barcelona. This conditions their behaviours and language on the national stage. However, their engagement with squatters and usage of their spaces is also a public sphere- indeed a reclaimed public sphere thriving on its antagonistic relationship with institutions of capital, property, and power. The key difference however can be understood if we take an affective understanding of *traces*. Any act leaves a trace. However, the traces that remain, that are *tangible* and irrefutable are those that are concretely recorded. This also means that if there is a conflict in a space and one party leaves, the space can still feel tense, still feel affectively loaded. They have left, but the trace remains.

What I am suggesting by this is that the tension between public persona and public action can be explained through the contradiction in their aims of autonomy and self-determination and their aims for concrete institutional change. If they can attempt to do both: by physically supporting squats through their presence in these spaces and their contribution towards the sustenance of autonomous anti-capitalist spaces *and* by distancing themselves in public, *recorded* media then perhaps they hope that both their aims can be achieved simultaneously. There is a tension here between the two types of traces at play: the affective one of social struggle and solidarity built between squatters and PAH members, and the one recorded online, in print, and public record. They are both traces, but one is recorded and ambivalent, whilst the other is ephemeral and supportive.

Of note, is that the PAH do openly support non-PAH organised activities, external to those organised by squatters. Whilst I was in Madrid I observed an independent protest against the eviction of several families from Argumosa 11 in the gentrifying neighbourhood of Lavapies (*Figure 10*).

The PAH shared the Facebook promotions of this protest and when I attended I saw members of the PAH resplendent in logo-d high visibility vests, among representatives from other housing groups. This suggests that they recognise and are happy to support a diversity of groups and forms of resistance beyond their own organisation, so long as these events and groups have a veneer of respectability or are likely to gain either media sympathy or at least media ambivalence. The support for evicted families soon to be made homeless is much easier to judge as reasonable than the support for young layabout drug-taking criminals illegally living in someone else's home! (Ethnographic fieldnotes of Argumosa 11 demonstration 2018).

However, this balance is not a long-term solution, indeed their desire to align themselves with local radical legacies by using spaces of autonomous organising jars with their institutional aims. And despite their attempts to juggle both, there are occasional tensions. The interpersonal relationship between PAH members and Madrid squatters has been ambivalent. One of Gonick's interviewees, Eduardo, said that the squatter-activists "accused them of perpetuating the capitalist system because their goal was to maintain their status as homeowners" (Gonick 2015, p.154). This comment demonstrates the tension between the radical politics of autonomy as seen broadly within the squatters' movement, and the agonistic engagement played out by the anti-eviction activists. Despite this antagonism, as described above, 15M and PAH would often meet and hold their assemblies within SSCs. Gonick in particular highlights the multifaceted nature of the resistances to the neoliberal government in Madrid, from those willing to engage with institutional systems to those choosing instead to organise externally, who emphasise autonomy. Gonick argues that both strategies, rather than being seen as in conflict with each other, can work together to offer a broad framework of resistance, through both agonistic and antagonistic channels, and both methods have indeed contributed to a degree of change within the city (Gonick 2015; Mouffe 2005).

As such there are several levels of tension in the squatter-PAH relationship as a result of their contradictions in discourse and practice. That which exists between digital and in-person encounters (the former arguably strategic, the latter affective and emotive). That which exists between publicly attending a protest for a specific event *as* the PAH, vs. implicitly supporting SSCs through use of their spaces and independently turning up to their events. This disjuncture is strategic, but also essentially undermines the affective relationships necessary for a fully prefigurative form of urban resistance to occur and for the truly *political* nature of their struggle to be made manifest.

Figure 10 – (Top images) Photographs of posters from Argumosa 11 resistance (author's own 2015) (Bottom images) Photograph of Argumosa 11 resistance (author's own 2018); Facebook post shared by PAH Madrid (PAH Madrid 2018)

7. SQUATTERS AND TENANTS UNITE!
A CASE FOR SOLIDARITY: THE AYLESBURY ESTATE OCCUPATION

"We are squatters, not housing activists. We are one part of this protest. We aren't here to fight on anyone's behalf but to fight in solidarity with the residents of Aylesbury… squatting was criminalised at the same time as estates were being destroyed all over London. At Aylesbury we find a struggle like our own"

- Extract from Aylesbury Occupation flyer 2015

The above sections of my analysis have attempted to highlight the key similarities and differences between the relationship between squatters and the PAH and squatters and the RHN in Madrid and London. This analysis was organised along the key themes of the emphasis on the locality and the tensions between discourse and practice in terms of affective solidarity between housing justice groups and squatters. This section of my analysis uses the example of the Aylesbury Estate Occupation of 2015 to make a case for why the inclusion of squatters *actively* within one's solidarity praxis is fundamental for a truly radical and powerful oppositional urban politics. One which moves beyond individual actions and awareness-raising towards generating a new and powerful way of being-in-common, of affecting solidarity and creating a sense of community that, while spatially locally based, does not depend only on local history and ties, nor on singular strategies or voices, in order to transcend a "moment of rupture" and return the *political* as well as the *affective* to the city.

The Aylesbury occupation of 2015 is an exemplary case study of the positive effects of solidarity between the RHN and squatters' in London. As a participant of this occupation, who lived in the occupation for the full three months of its existence my analysis is wrought largely from personal reflections and auto-ethnography, complimented by analysis of the literature and materials produced from those within the occupation and the broader campaigns oriented around the estate.

I first briefly outline the history and context of the Aylesbury Estate Occupation, before looking at the role of locality, discourse, and actions in terms of generating an affective and prefigurative disposition towards housing justice praxis.

The Aylesbury Estate, built between 1967 and 1977, was one of the largest council estates in Europe, designed to house over 10,000 residents and is located in the borough of Southwark, South London. Although housing generous apartments with spectacular views across London, in the 1980s the estate fell into decline and the demographic make-up of the residency shifted and it garnered a negative reputation along the "sink estate" rhetorical line. This made it a perfect target for New Labour's processes of "new urban renewal", a by-word for regeneration-by-eviction (Lees 2013). Rhetoric about mixed-communities and calculated stigmatisation and degeneration paved the way for first the plans of regeneration towards finally the programme of complete demolition of the estate and its rebuilding as "mixed communities" and luxury flats, a process which led to the protest occupation of the estate and Tenants and Leaseholders campaign of 2015.

In Loretta Lees' article regarding the "New Urban Renewal" of the Aylesbury, she highlights the creation of a false "consensus" regarding the regeneration of the estate through initiatives such as the Creation Trust, which she defines as a "post-political construct par excellence – a consensus-building mode of engagement and participation… which ultimately serves to legitimate policies that privilege economic growth" (2013, p.931). This is due to its role in facilitating and structuring the form of neighbourhood participation in the redevelopment plans, strictly along neoliberal regeneration lines. However, what is more interesting about her article, considering the fact that it was written in 2013, two years before the occupation and militant resistance is that she in fact does discuss the possibilities of resistance to the Aylesbury's

Figure 11 - Flyer produced by the Aylesbury Occupation in support of the other groups fighting for the estate (Aylesbury Occupiers 2015)

redevelopment, claiming that "despite its best efforts, neoliberal governance has not managed to kill local politics on and around the Aylesbury Estate" and further, she posits that these forms of local politics are exactly what Swyngedouw sees as the "antidote to the post political" (2009, p.937). This resistance, in 2013, took the form of antagonism and dissent among the tenants and local activists, including the informative blogging group, Southwark Notes, who later strongly supported the occupation. These incipient forms of resistance, present since the mid-2000s, were from a mixture of residents who wanted to reclaim their estate from the narrative of ghettos and sink-estates, local groups such as Southwark Notes who fought for urban justice in their locality, and the dissent that manifests in every day acts of resistance such as graffiti and refusal to be co-opted into faux-consensus processes such as the Creation Trust. These early acts of contention accompanied by escalating plans for redevelopment and demolition paved the way for the militancy that sprung up in spring 2015, in the form of the Aylesbury Occupation.

The Aylesbury Estate was occupied at the end of January 2015 following the March for Homes, in protest against the demolition of the estate and the broader processes of neoliberal urban redevelopment across London. The occupation occurred simultaneously with other forms of protest against the demolition organised by other groups within the Radical Housing Network, such as Defend Council Housing and Aylesbury Tenants and Leaseholders First (*Figure 11*).

7.2. Affect and solidarity

"How does seduction work? We hypothesis that seduction unfolds via three processes: *transformation, invitation, and contagion.* We *transform* circumstances, creating space for new possibilities and thus new desires to flourish; we *invite* others to participate in these new situations, to experiment with different modes of action and desire; and we *infect* others with curiosity, an insatiable desire for freedom, and the means to experiment towards it"

- Terror Incognita, date unknown

On the 31st of March 2015, a large crowd gathered, masked up, and pulled down the fences that surrounded the Aylesbury Estate (*Figure 13*). Thus ended the three month occupation of the council estate in protest against its demolition and "regeneration". So it was a failure? Well. They didn't stop the redevelopment of the estate. Neoliberalism didn't crumble. And the revolution didn't happen. Does that make it a failure? The outcomes and significance of resistance is more complicated than that. Much theorising on resistance tends to succumb to "post-political pessimism"- the idea that if a project of resistance is halted, fails to stop whatever it is protesting against, is shut down, repressed, or attacked it is deemed a failure and thus neoliberal reigns supreme and can not be beaten (Gualini et al 2016). However, this kind of analysis lacks nuanced interrogation of the affective changes that can be wrought through participation in such a resistance project, and of the many cracks that can spring up within the supposedly omnipotent, all-encompassing, leviathan that is neoliberalism. In order to see between the cracks and celebrate the temporary, the fragile, the sporadic and multiple forms of resistance we need to reconfigure how we relate to neoliberalism, whether we see it as a single colossus or as a weak, fragile, and contradictory system in which many cracks can be opened and many alternative economies, relationships, and possibilities can blossom.

At the Aylesbury Occupation, some squatted for housing need, some identified as housing activists, most seemed to fall somewhere between the two. But an awareness and effort existed to keep all these motivations working together rather than creating unnecessary divisions for the media or the council to exploit. Simply living in a squat and facing the daily repression by the state and landlords radicalises many people. Experiences of solidarity and collective action make many people realise their own capacity for self-determination and control over their own lives. Part of the collective action that squatting entails is realising that "the authorities" are not there to protect squatters and are in fact what the squatters are resisting (Milligan 2016). Self-determination and political subjectivation were often realised through experiences of mutual aid and collective action, a necessary feature of squat survival, not only between squatters but between all who resist the neoliberal redevelopment of London.

Further, living together side by side, day by day, created bonds of affinity that could not be wrought through attending meetings and blockading gateways alone. The bodily experiences of eating together, with food brought up by residents by rope when we were blockaded in, of people turning up, asking what we needed, providing literature for when we were blocked in by police and bored - all these encounters sought to highlight what is important beyond the

concrete task of delaying demolition: generating new ways of living together, of creating human friendships, of re-igniting that sense of community destroyed by capitalist urban redevelopment.

Housing activists, residents, and squatters would turn up to each other's evictions, help build each other's barricades, and offer each other aid when needed. One example of solidarity was the many supporters, from within the RHN and beyond, who turned up after Aylesbury's twitter call-out during the aggressive eviction in which people engaged in clashes with the police. Solidarity means self-determination, which often leads to a reconceptualization of one's place in society, rights, and autonomy. Connections of friendship grow between individuals who struggle together against a common enemy.
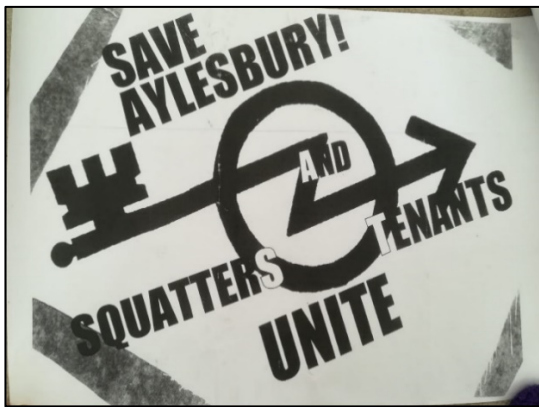

Figure 12 - Poster created by author (!) also in sticker form, distributed throughout the Aylesbury Estate and surrounding neighbourhood (2015)

Solidarity also extended to the broader housing movement, particularly through the RHN. Squatters consistently emphasised the importance of unity with tenants and residents, and the strength of a united neighbourhood (*Figure 12*). At the Aylesbury, the squatters leafleted around the neighbourhood and also held two information and fun days, with crepes, bouncy castles, and information boards in order to connect with the tenants. Working with tenants and residents on campaigns against property developers and rent hikes builds trust and is able in many cases to resist the efforts of the state to polarise squatters and tenants. This ties in to the second element of my analysis of the Aylesbury: the role of the locality.

Figure 13 – (Top image) The Aylesbury Estate £140,000 fences being pulled down by an anonymous co-ordinated group of squatters, activists, and concerned local citizens; (Lower image) The march that led towards the destruction of the fences, (Guy Smallman 2015)

7.3. Transcending the "local"

Like many of the housing resistances across London and Madrid, the Aylesbury Occupation was centred on a single site. Further, it had the support of the Tenants and Leaseholders group. However, the occupation transcended the framework of a simply local struggle. Squatters, after all, are a mobile population. If we have a "neighbourhood" it is a temporary construct only. While we may feel affinity with different localities due to experiences of living there or working there, we are not rooted. Therefore, much of the traditional discourse around neighbourhood solidarity does not apply to squatters.[2] What particularised the Aylesbury was that people from *across* London (and the world – see *Figure 8*) decided they would take a stand, decided they would fight for this estate, not because it was *ours* but because it represented the struggle across London and across Europe, the struggle against dispossession. This was significant because the ideology was not then "they deserve to keep this because its *theirs"* but that "everyone has the right to live here, even us." I argue that this is more of a revolutionary or prefigurative approach to squatting and housing action than the model which is predominantly at play in Madrid. While people, of course, fight for their locality, the idea of fighting for somewhere because you *should* or because it's *right* rather than because it's *yours* resonates more with the conception of making-public which I highlighted in my theoretical framework. Reclaiming or expropriating a space for *whoever* is far more radical than staking a claim of ownership based on legitimacy under property law.

Vital to the ethos of the Aylesbury occupation was the desire to raise awareness of the interconnectedness of the different housing struggles across London and emphasise the similarities between tenants, leaseholders, and squatters against those who sought to evict all of them (*Figure 12*). One of the ways of doing this was by evoking the lessons of the Heygate Estate, formerly up the road from the Aylesbury at Elephant and Castle, which, under the name of "regeneration" had been entirely demolished, its residents scattered throughout London and the replacement with luxury flats owned by international property moguls (*Figures 14 & 15*)

7.4. A note on discourse

Unlike the PAH, the Aylesbury Occupation were wary of the media. An acknowledgement of the way in which the media and the state work together, and the experience of incorrect and harmful representations in the media led to many squatters becoming cynical of media and its representatives. At the Aylesbury there was a "no media inside the occupation" policy and no spokespeople were nominated as the occupiers did not want to create false leaders or representatives. Instead all occupants had access to the twitter and website to update with essays, articles, or comments as they wished. Interviews were not conducted by phone, but questions could be submitted to the collective email account. While some anarchist groups shun the media entirely, what was at work at the Aylesbury was a tentative engagement conditioned entirely on our ability to represent ourselves and distinguish between individual and collective opinions, goals, and dreams for the occupation. There was anything but a party line.

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[2] I would add, this is particularly the case since 2012. Before the law changed in 2012, criminalising residential squatting, squatters in London were far more likely to stay in one building for several months or years.
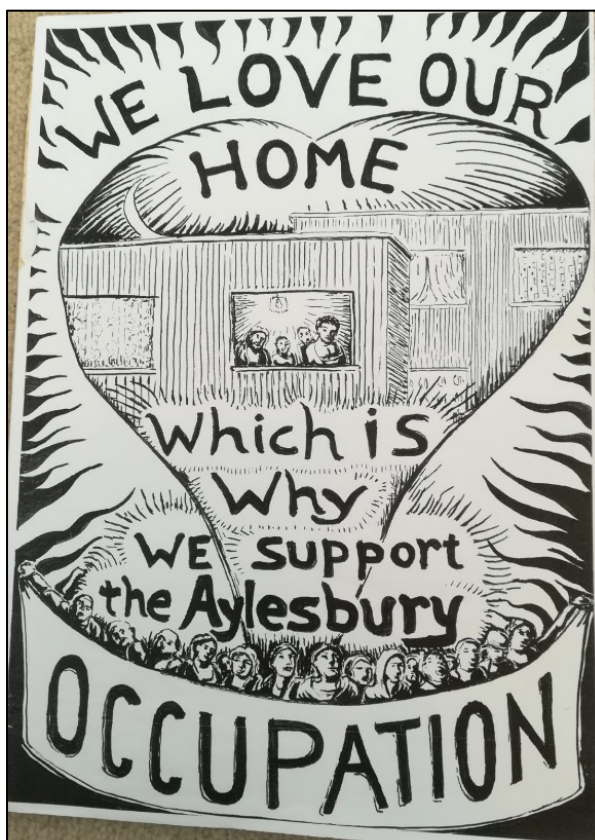
Figure 14 - Anonymous poster supporting the role of the occupation in the general fight to save the estate (2015)
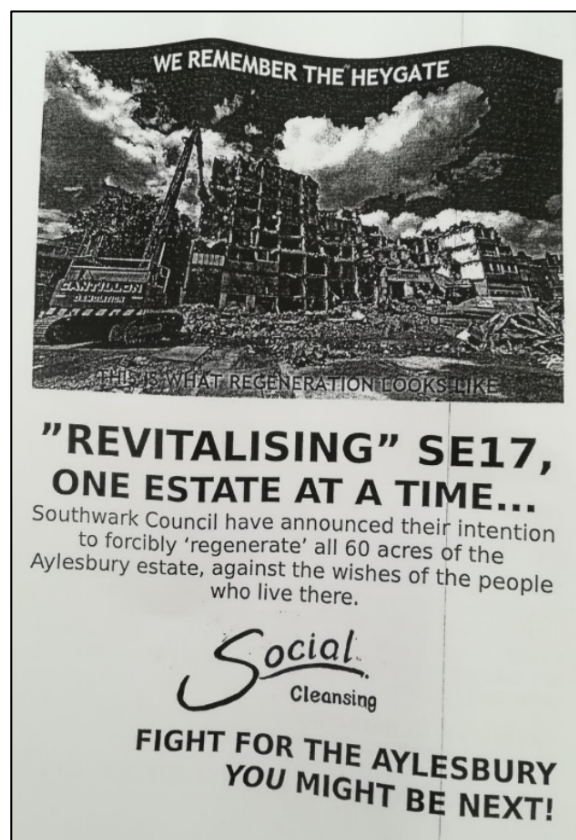

Figure 15 - Poster created by Aylesbury occupiers to demonstrate the connection between estate demolitions across Southwark (2015)

7.5.Conclusion to case study

To sum up, the radical nature of squatting needs to be reasserted and the active antagonism so often present between squatters and institutional structures needs to be celebrated and engaged with so that the radical potential of squatting, as suggested by the militancy of the Aylesbury occupation, can be unlocked. Squatting represents a conflict with the state over private property rights – this in itself is enough of a reason to take it seriously. But then squatting can also be politically and affectively transformative, radicalising people through experiences of solidarity, self-determined action, and communal living. To call the act of squatting political legitimises those who choose to engage in it for ideological reasons, as squatting should be encouraged regardless of social or economic background as a domain of resistance to hegemonic control over our homes, our lives, and our consciousness. Further, to engage in squatting acts that are not territorialised to justify their legitimacy, that are not confined within a single strategy, that are not tied but are multiple and fragmented, offers a possibility of a new way of organising politically, in solidarity and kindness and support, regardless of local, national, or international boundaries.
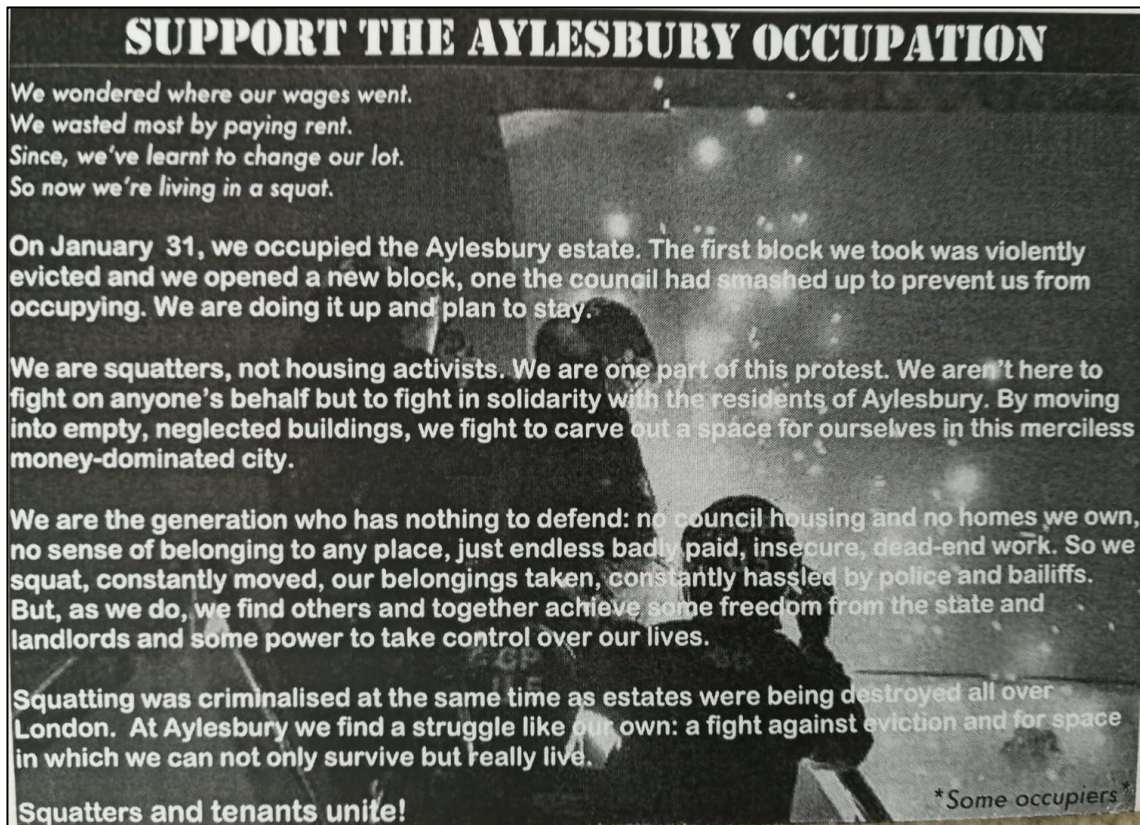
Figure 16 - Flyer produced from text on Aylesbury Occupation website detailing some of the motivations of the occupiers and demonstrating the interconnectedness of different struggles for urban space under neoliberal urbanisation (2015)

8. THE TERRAIN OF STRUGGLE IN MADRID AND LONDON: SYNTHESISING THE ANALYSIS

"Here is one possible starting point for imagining the battle to come. Against the city of control, the sterile zones of profitable development, we create and fight for cracks in their power, from a one-night riotous street party to an estate occupied, a neighbourhood made alive. Moments and spaces of wildness, difference, decentralised creativity, self-organisation – in short, of life."

‒ Some London Foxes 2016

So, in summary, the relationships between the squatters' movement and the PAH, and RHN in Madrid and London, respectively, are different. First, the form of resistance in London and Madrid is contingent on the different trajectories that neoliberal urban policy has taken in the last few decades. Mortgage-based evictions led to a predominantly mortgage-based resistance structure, in Madrid. Whereas in London the housing crisis has largely affected recipients of social housing, as such the form of resistance has more clearly manifested in resistances and occupations of social housing estates across the city. Likewise, the unprecedented wave of housing occupations that swept across London in early 2015 was directly related to the creation of the RHN in 2014, not only in terms of tangible, bodily, support but also in terms of the generation of an alternative discourse to that of neoliberalism, which, through multiple channels spread across London, inciting varied, yet powerful, responses, from Focus E15, to a new life, and militancy, to the declining squatting movement.

Second, in Madrid, the relationship between the squatters' movement and the PAH is contingent on the specific make-up of the PAH or housing assembly in the locality. This is a result of both the long-term legacy of the neighbourhood associations and movements in Madrid, and also of the legacy of 15M in terms of encouraging diverse autonomous action on a local scale. However, it is also conditioned by the PAH's media strategy and attempts towards legitimacy on a large scale. As such, while they use squatters' resources and spaces, and may support their actions on a local, individual, or behind-closed-doors level, they are prevented from publicly supporting their claims by their trajectory towards institutionalisation and mainstream legitimacy.

In London, the relationship between the RHN and the squatters' movement is more explicit. This is due to the RHN's explicitly anti-institutional and radical orientation, and the lack of mainstream legitimacy that comes with that. Further, although a few of the groups organising under the RHN banner existed prior to the financial crash, the network as a whole and its organising strategies connecting and encouraging solidarity between local initiatives are a

product of the housing crisis and as such there is a great diversity of tactics and groups who are supported. The relationship between squatters and RHN activists is also contingent by local issues, such as whether a particular campaign to save a social housing estate encourages squatting or occupations as a part of their strategy or ask for squatters help to break into buildings or challenge legal proceedings, however, as a whole, the RHN explicitly includes squatters.

In order to analyse the new fractured forms of political engagement in urban spaces and to understand the complexities of interaction, tension, and solidarity between different urban campaigns, movements, and insurrections I attempted to transcend the confines of traditional urban theory. Doing so allows an understanding and appreciation of the "contradictory and unarticulated" ways in which these new urban insurrections engage with each other and with the institutional structures of the city (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.2). It allows us to see that solidarities can go beyond the seemingly irreconcilable differences of one group perhaps striving for institutionalisation and another attempting to destroy institutional structures altogether, and to develop a nuanced articulation of the tensions *within* groups regarding their institutionalisation and what this means for extra-institutional solidarities and ties.

Recentering the urban political involves differentiating between insurgencies that attempt to impact urban policy, and those that seek a more universal disruption of both institutional structures and everyday life through a politics of affect and prefiguration. From this perspective we can see the PAH as existing in both the former and the latter categories and the squatting movement as existing in the latter, whilst implicitly, and perhaps contradictorily, assisting the first.

The process of subjectivation is ongoing. It manifests in the PAH's consciousness-raising and alignment with local radical histories and occupied spaces. It manifest when different RHN groups supports each-others eviction resistances, share skills, and openly disavow the neoliberal urban developments across London. It also concretely manifests in the act of squatting and running SSCs which declare autonomous zones and freedom in the neoliberalising city. Squatting generates explicitly liberatory sites of fracture within the post-political city. Given the importance of conflict for a democratic public sphere (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), the antagonism and impermanence inherent to the practice of squatting contributes to the necessary fluidity that constitutes society. The political significance of squatting derives from its *use value* as a site of anti-capitalist organisation, discussion, and affective re-orientation, which inhibits its assimilation into a capitalist paradigm based on *exchange value* (Lefebvre 1968).

Squatters' *discourse* of mutual aid undermines claims for capitalism's supposed omnipotence, as their *practices* of nurture and support demonstrate the limits to its economic capabilities. Ultimately, the presence and value of such non-capitalist spaces in sites of capitalist dominance, such as London and Madrid, undermine the discursive and spatial hegemony commonly afforded to capitalism and resists the overtaking of the political by the economic (Gibson-Graham 1996). These cracks in the system provide both discursive and concrete locations for what anarchist theorists call prefiguration: the reappropriation of everyday life and blossoming of possibilities for the transformation of existence.

By looking at the multiple new urban insurrections as contributing to new forms of urban politicisation, the heterogeneity of aims, demands, and demographic make-up can be seen as a powerful wave of urban discontent that has more in common with each other in terms of highlighting inequalities and demanding a new political order, than in difference. If we follow

this understanding of the inter-connectedness of struggle, it is no coincidence that both the squatters' movement and the PAH were reinvigorated and gained new traction and support in the wake of 15M. If 15M can be seen as a "crack" (Holloway 2010) or as a moment of the "politics of the extraordinary" (Kalyvas 2008 in Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2018) what is of note is that a moment of rupture was initiated which galvanised a diverse array of political mobilisation and that has had long lasting effects in Madrid. First, in terms of the physical transformation of space (in terms of new SSCs and increasing support for the already-existing squatting scene *and* in the vast number of evictions halted and people rehoused by the PAH). Second, in terms of affective sensibility, manifested in increased sympathy with squatting as a response to urban dispossession, and public and media sympathy with the PAH and their activities. The heterogeneity that emerged in activisms in the wake of 15M demonstrates the importance of centring the urban political, as seeing the city "as an immanent site for nurturing political subjectivation, mediating political encounter, staging interruption and experimentally producing new forms of democratisation that prefigure radical imaginaries of what urban democratic being-in-common might be all about" (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2018, p.3).

Therefore, there is space to understand the relationship between the PAH and the squatting movement in Madrid, and the RHN and squatting movement in London, as one based on ambivalence. We can accept that the PAH wish to achieve a level of institutional power (as evidenced in Colau's position and in their willingness to negotiate with state apparatuses). This wish conditions their desire to publicly associate with the squatters' movement in terms of publicly posting on social media or in articles that they support their actions and their own eviction resistances. However, beyond their aim of changing the institutional order towards a fairer form of housing policy they also acknowledge the irreconcilable injustices under neoliberal structures and express sympathy with the squatters behind closed doors. By holding their assemblies in squatted spaces, they implicitly code them as worthy of support, and recognise their utility in supporting *their own* struggles. Further, as evidenced through the case study of SSC EKO and Carabanchel, several branches of the PAH offer advice for squatters and are happy to point them in the direction of further resources, such as the squatters' info centre. This disjuncture between the public and private face of the PAH can thus be seen as *either* a hypocrisy, *or* a recognition of the ambivalence and multiplicity of staging resistance in the neoliberal city; a "diversity of tactics", if you will.

In London the relationship is sharper, more clearly a coalition explicitly in support of each other's strategies, aims, and political processes. The distinction with the Madrid case lies in the difference between organising through a philosophy of prefiguration, in which the way we live *now* is directly related to how we wish to live in the future and how we conceive of opposition and conflictual elements (as was exemplified in the ethics of the Aylesbury Occupation) and organising strategically to gain political power while attempting to retain a radical bent (as the PAH does).

Whether these different tendencies will support each other in recognition of their mutual desire for a fully political urban sphere or will crumble under unresolved tensions and divergence of aims in the next few years remains to be seen. What is clear, is that the relationship between semi-institutionalised forms of organising and occupational politics is far from concrete. Indeed, like the new wave of oppositional insurrectionary movements across the world, it is fractured, multiple, taut, but essentially, hopefully, mutually-supportive, and politically powerful.

8.1. Limitations and recommendations for further research

The degree of variety between different PAH branches and SSCs in terms of ethos and praxis means that an analysis that seeks to generalise across a whole city will always fall short. The richness of housing movements is precisely their diversity, their multiplicity of aims and strategies. Therefore, to extend this argument beyond the broad tendencies I have observed would require in-depth analysis of the relationship between *one* SSC and *one* branch of the PAH. Likewise, the diversity of groups organising under the RHN umbrella means that while some embrace squatters and occupation politics wholeheartedly, others shy away from more confrontational approaches to their struggle.

Further, the scope of my research question in the context of a comparative piece of work across two countries has proved challenging to fit within the remit of a master's thesis with adequate nuance. However, I hope that I have demonstrated the importance of further research in this regard and proven its worth as a PhD project, or beyond. Further research will hopefully look more closely at specific case studies and local ties. A longer-term engagement with housing activists and squatters in Madrid would also be recommended in order to understand further the longitudinal development of the PAH – squatters' relationship and the complexities of individual and collective opinions, ideologies, and praxis.

Finally, under the current neoliberal urban development, the possibilities of squatting are increasingly limited. More research that explicitly highlights the absurdity of empty buildings and increasing homelessness must be carried out and hopefully put into policy as the current status quo is untenable. Hopefully this will lead to further autonomous and insurrectionary action. Perhaps it will even lead to politicians and policy-makers actually recognising the logic of squatting as a solution to the housing crisis. But, while I will hold my crowbar ready, I won't hold my breath.

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Audio-Visual Material:

Dispossession: The Great Social Housing Swindle (2017) Paul Sng [amazon prime]. Velvet Joy Productions

Sí se puede: Siete días en PAH Barcelona (2014) Pau Faus [youtube]. Independent Production

Abbreviations:

PAH – Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca
PFI – Private Finance Initiative
RHN – Radical Housing Network
SSC – Squatted Social Centre
SC – Social Centre

Figure 16 - Flyer produced from text on Aylesbury Occupation website detailing some of the motivations of the occupiers and demonstrating the interconnectedness of different struggles for urban space under neoliberal urbanisation (2015)

10. APPENDIX I

Informal Interviews[3]

Lisbon squatter, Ingobernable, Madrid, 6 May 2018
Member of SSC EKO, Carabanchel, Madrid, 29 June 2018
Madrid activist, Carabanchel, Madrid, 29 June 2018
London squatter, East Finchley, London, 2 August 2018
Ex-squatter and HASL militant, Southwark, London, 4 August 2018

Locations of ethnography and participatory observation

London
Focus E15 Occupation, Stratford, London, September 2014
The Anti-Social Centre, Russel Square, London, September – November 2014
The Anti-Social Centre II, Endsleigh Street, London, November 2014 – January 2015
The Aylesbury Occupation, Southwark, London, January - April 2015
The Guinness Occupation, Brixton, London, April – June 2015
Monthly RHN meetings (various locations), November 2014 – June 2015

Madrid
SSC La Enredadera, Tetuán, 26 August 2015
SSC La Eskalera Karakola, Lavapies, multiple dates 2018
SC Ingobernable, multiple dates 2018
SSC EKO, Carabanchel, multiple dates 2018
SSC La Quimera, Lavapies, , multiple dates 2018
SC 3peces3, Lavapies , multiple dates 2018
SSC La Villana de Vallecas, Vallecas, multiple dates 2018
SSC El Banco Expropriat, Lavapies, multiple dates 2018
PAH housing demonstration, 15 March 2018
Argumosa 11 demonstration, Lavapies, 5 July 2018
Stop Hotel Lavapies demonstration, Lavapies, 2 July 2018

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[3] Interview fieldnotes can be made available to the reader upon request