What's inside that bolted door? It's the great unanswered question of a society with no imagination. Squatters pick a lock, or more likely slip in through an open window. What matters are the worlds they create after entering. A life withdrawn from rent, from waged labor, from bureaucratic control, is a rare chance to experiment with the possibilities and perils of existence. From Metelkova to Macao, from Cultures of Resistance to Cultures of Persistence, let this book be your open window to the decrepit or elegant ruins of capital, which some intrepid people call home.

Brian Holmes

Room

Making

Edited by Alan Moore and Alan Smart

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Cultural Production in Occupied Spaces
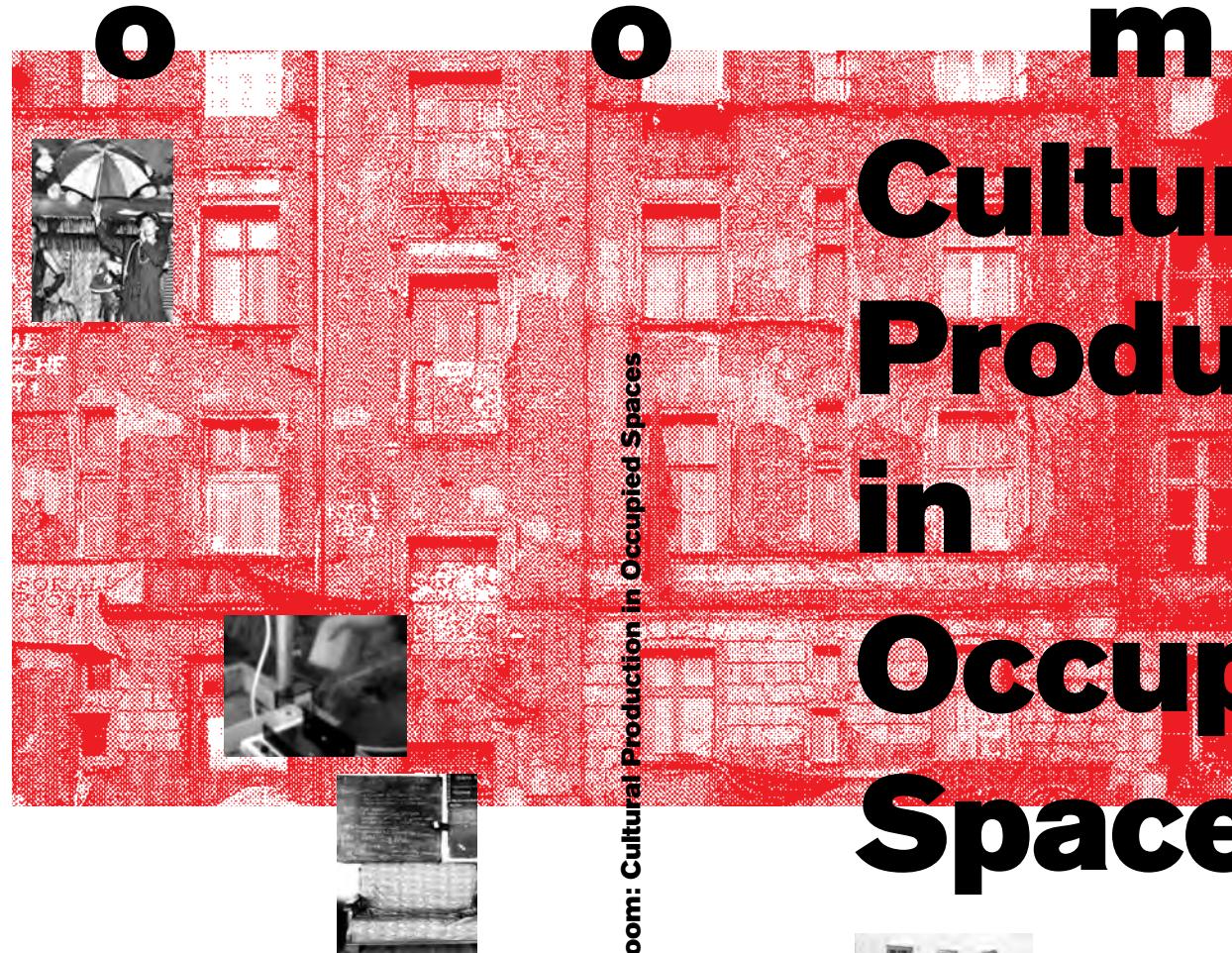
Making Room: Cultural Production in Occupied Spaces

Netherlands

Creativity and the Capitalist City

Tino Buchholz

Creativity is fancy, glamorous and desirable. Who can be against creativity? At the same time it is used selectively for normative purposes and consists of precarious and hard work. When it comes down to social and economic development the concept becomes ambivalent, involving the contrast between commercial and non-commercial innovations, creative destruction, self-exploitation, which can be summed up with the "paradoxes of capitalism" (Hartmann and Honneth 2006). In this sense, creativity and affordability are crucially interconnected. The struggle around affordability is a pre-condition for creativity; and one has to be very creative these days to be able to make a living in a creative capitalist city. The advantage is that creative working conditions are on the political agenda today—even though in need of progressive movements and radical democratization.

While the hype around the creative city began about a decade ago (Florida 2002), the discussion around creative industries is already 30 years old (Andersson 1985). After clusters and networks, creativity advanced as the dominant urban development strategy of the past decade. Nevertheless it is more of a "vehicular idea" (McLennan 2004, Peck 2012) that travels the world and may soon be replaced by another vehicular catch phrase as the emerging discourse around "smart cities" signals (Caragliu et al. 2011). Though engaging with new technology the normative potential of creative or smart development remains under-explored and serves as a "rather elastic, feel good policy that absolutely fits with orthodox development strategies" (Peck 2011).

Absent substantial arguments distinguishing creative city development from Schumpeterian creative destruction, it is not clear what is new about Florida's contribution. Creative activity today is to a large extent co-opted by an economic logic. Florida is clear: "rising inequality stems mainly from the very nature of the emerging creative economy" (Florida 2003) when re-describing socio-economic class relations in the name of creativity. In his critique of Florida's American

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dream, Jamie Peck (2011) says:

It actually provides a justification for social inequality. It says, it is the creative class who are the winning one third of the society and the losing two thirds must learn to live like the winners. And so it does nothing other than to tell the working class or the serving caste they should pull themselves up by their bootstraps. That is in the end a recipe for more of the same. It legitimizes inequality.

Legitimizing inequality via the achievement principle is one thing; reaching out for democratic legitimacy is another. For democracy, social conflicts and social movements are crucial reference points for the recognition or mis-recognition of a social order (Honneth 1995, 2003).

In this text I follow my documentary *Creativity and the Capitalist City: The Struggle for Affordable Space in Amsterdam* (2011), and address the question of creativity as a matter of struggle. In cities, this means especially the struggle for affordable housing. (All quotes, unless otherwise indicated, derive from this project, online at creative capitalistcity.org). I concentrate on two drivers of the creative city: (a) the role of urban social movements (i.e. squatting) and the co-optation by neoliberal urban policies, and (b) the role of the real estate market and the provision of temporary housing in the form of so-called Anti-Squat contracts, which replace squatters and accommodate low-budget initiatives with no housing rights whatsoever. I briefly discuss the implementation of the Dutch Anti-Squat concept, then conclude with a call to reclaim creativity from the capitalist city.

The Handbook of Creative Cities (Andersson et al. 2011) gathers key proponents of the discourse of human capital to highlight the subsequent emergence of human creativity as a stimulus for economic development. Here I draw mainly on the critique by economic geographer Jamie Peck (2005, 2007, 2011, 2012), the narrator of my film.

THE ROLE OF URBAN MOVEMENTS

The re-description of the city in terms of creativity, and the corresponding shift in policies can be studied in Amsterdam (Mayer and Novy 2009). Here, Richard Florida's story was introduced in 2003. "Everybody was a bit inspired by his book and theories. But in Amsterdam politicians and opinion leaders said: 'Interesting story, but luckily we do already'", city official Jaap Schoufour says.

The Dutch breeding place program (described at bureaubroed plaatsen.amsterdam.nl) can count as good practice, a creative flagship

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project that clearly reflects prior conflicts and later transformations, i.e., the legalization of squats. Here, people in need of affordable space have left established paths and helped themselves to housing and working space. As Jaap Schoufour, the director of the program, puts it:

The breeding place program is based in fact on the squatting movement, which popped up in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s ... In fact, these squatting groups were wiped out of the warehouses at the end of the 1990s in Amsterdam ... In these warehouses all kinds of cultural and creative initiatives settled ... [so] they addressed themselves to the city council by saying: 'well, look here, you can wipe us out. We know, we will lose this battle, but beware—we contribute to this city as well. Even economically we contribute to the city.

Today's breeding places, then, mirror the housing struggles and squatter movements of the past. The past 10 years, however, have seen the squatters' do-it-yourself logic re-articulated in the language of the creative industry. In this context, squatters do not represent a threat, but rather an asset to the political economy. Even when choosing a deviant path squatters can hardly leave the economic framework, and are likely to create alternative products and markets (Uitermark 2004).

Urban movements often play a crucial role as pioneers of processes of redevelopment or gentrification. Hans Pruijt (2013) has differentiated various types of squatters in Europe, where besides 'deprivation-based' and 'political squatters', 'conservational' and 'entrepreneurial' squatters follow different strategies. This differentiation is helpful, since squatting initiatives in Western Europe today should not be confused with revolutionary movements that seriously contest the capitalist production of space.

"There are a lot of people running around in the squatters' movement thinking they're the Spanish anarchists and they're going to win some revolution soon. I don't really have the illusion that we can change anything with direct action, but I believe that we can motivate and educate people. It's like a propaganda operation, that will as a side-effect, provide housing for the people that perform it", said Momo, an Amsterdam squatting activist.

Progressive activists, like the Amsterdam art-squat Gallery Schijnheilig ('hypocrite gallery'),[1] are aware of the struggle for creativity, and of their role and the range of their activism. For Momo, the problem of many squatters and activists is that they believe their own propaganda: "You have to be very realistic and materialistic in order to survive in such

Luxury lofts in the Kalenderpanden (Calendar Building), former site of a squatted cultural center that was evicted in 2000.

a context. If they say: you are the nice guys, because you are the artists, then you have to take their word and turn it around in their mouth: 'Of course we're the artists. We are the only real artists, you are the fakes. So give us everything, if you don't give us anything, we will riot.'"

VACANCY MANAGEMENT BY ANTI-SQUAT

Since squatting was banned in the Netherlands in 2010 (Buchholz 2009), the struggle for affordable space has shifted from a user's logic (tolerating squats when vacant for more than one year) to an owner's logic (property protection + vacancy management = Anti-Squat) and allowance for temporary use. The idea of Anti-Squat (Anti-Kraak) comes from the perspective of real estate and security agencies. They realized that 'live-in guardians' were a more effective and cheaper form of property protection than guard patrols. Buildings are maintained and secured from squatting and vandalism. Affordable housing is a temporary side effect.

While Dutch Anti-Squat guardians were paid for their services 30 years ago, today the agencies have capitalized on the shortage of affordable space in contested housing markets. They ask for rent-like payments but refuse to call it rent. This legal twist is crucial, as the Anti-Squat offers its temporary users, or 'live-in guardians', no tenant

protections or legal rights to stay put.

The permission to use opens the doors to former schools and rundown houses awaiting renovation or demolition. Anti-Squat is promoted as a creative market solution to make interim use of speculative vacancy in the housing or office market. The conditions of use are heavily restrictive—no pets, no kids, no parties, no smoking, no candles, permission required to go on vacation etc.—and can be cancelled within four weeks. Anti-Squatters are caretakers, cleaners, and security guardians but not tenants. While prior to the squatting ban 2010 Dutch squatters enjoyed housing rights close to tenant protection Anti-Squat is more of a job, which conflicts with privacy and housing rights. However, it seems to work for some 50,000 people in the Netherlands; ironically, this is also the estimate of the number of Dutch squatters from 1964 to 1999 (Duivenvoorden 2000).

So far, these agencies have been very careful with their profiling. They primarily target young people, students, artists, single people and so on. So far, conflicts are still not a major issue. Some Anti-Squatters even hold more than one site for living and working purposes.[2]

Anti-Squat started to provide temporary working space for flexible individuals (students and artists) in the early 1980s. It has developed into a serious business strategy for interim housing in the 1990s, and even more so since the squatting ban in 2010. In this sense, users demand Anti-Squat in order to enter an upscale property market. It is used as an alternative to inaccessible regular rental contracts that would come with housing benefits and tenants' rights. Market leader Camelot was the first agency to expand its services from the Netherlands to Western Europe in the early 2000s. Camelot CEO Joost van Gestel explains:

> If you look in the last five years in the Netherlands the number of these so called live-in guardians increased up to 50.000. We have 16 million Dutch people, so three out of thousand are living in a temporary accommodation. And I really feel that those numbers can be applied to England, France or Germany. Which means several hundreds of thousands of people travel between homes, schools, churches, MOD complexes and offices that are temporarily empty making creative affordable spaces.

In short, Anti-Squat is the most flexible instrument for property owners today—though it is in need of greater social recognition. Under the Camelot slogan of "make space pay ... while your property is vacant", it may count as the high point of private property-led urbanization. The right to civil squatting, on the other hand, delivered benefits to the

"Your Laws Not Ours!" A banner at the demonstration protesting the passage of the kraakverbod legislation criminalizing squatting. Amsterdam 2010.

Dutch creative field for three decades. It was a simple but fundamental difference from global business as usual. The revanchist roll-back of post-war social democratic achievements (Brenner and Theodore 2002, Piketty 2014), and the Dutch squatting ban of 2010 reverse the picture.

CONCLUSION

The instrumental conception and paradoxical effects inherent in creative class policies can be seen in numerous projects in Western Europe and beyond. For example, when the Ruhr Valley in Germany was announced as the Cultural Capital of Europe for 2010. That summer two art-squat initiatives took up the promise of creative urban renewal and appropriated abandoned spaces in Essen (freiraum2010.de) and Dortmund (uzdortmund.blogsport.de/medien/). Despite the Florida logic, they were evicted immediately.

While such repression does not come as a surprise, Richard Florida himself did support the precursor of these actions, the Hamburg art-squat Gängeviertel in 2009, arguing it would fit in nicely with a creative city strategy. Earlier, Florida also advised tolerance of long-haired hashish users who may be programmers. What's the problem?, he asked, if they do their job well (Peck 2007). Such a discussion signals an ambivalence in the normative power of the concept, and its varied implementation by left and right wing professionals and policy makers.

In the Ruhr Valley the activists later formed a Network X (netzwerk-x. org) rejecting the selective achievement principle of creative economy and its language. They have continued to take action emphasizing the grassroots of creativity and supported a 2014 Right to the City manifesto entitled 'Learning from Detroit'.[3]

In any case, the role of social movements remains crucial to the democratic legitimacy of creative urban redevelopments, as the discussion around the instrumentalization and co-optation of movements by neoliberal urban policy shows (Pruijt 2003, Uitermark 2004). "The situation we face at the present time is a sort of internal crisis of the neoliberal project but not an alternative project waiting to fill the vacuum or contesting the space in the same kind of way ... There are a thousand alternatives to neoliberalism, not just one" (Peck 2011).

It would be silly if creativity was damaged by Richard Florida and his merely economic interpretation. Creativity is not an end in itself but aims for something. That is a normative issue—to be defined. Creative upgrading processes in neighbourhoods are not necessarily the problem, if they benefit local inhabitants. The problem usually is that any

improvement is seen and functions as an investment to stimulate real estate prices, and serves property-led displacement, i.e. gentrification.

Interventions, however, always need to be a community issue requiring a wider discussion, mobilization and local democratic decision-making. The creative class can surely show commitment here, as the struggles of Gallery Schijnheilig and 'Not in our Name' Hamburg have made clear. Even further, creative people need to look for their return in this. Creativity has a lot to do with self-exploitation and self-destruction. Endless accumulation, competition and struggle are neither admirable nor healthy. In this sense, today's challenge rather is to focus critically on the selective working mode of the capitalist achievement principle (Piketty 2014, Honneth 2014), and a capitalist class movement that has been very successful at claiming property rights (Purcell 2008). Nevertheless, private property rights are "claims not trumps" (ibid.) shot through with moral expectations in their use (Heins 2009). Co-operative solutions like the new Soweto housing association in Amsterdam (soweto.nl) or the German tenement syndicate (Horlitz 2012), on the other hand, bear the creative power to rethink property relations and greater claims for redistributive justice (Honneth 1995, 2003), recapturing democratic procedures and reclaiming creativity from the capitalist city.

In Peck's words: "If we are talking about what a real strategy for cities ought to be in the present time, it clearly needs to deal with issues like working poverty, inequality, ecological sustainability and the caring economy. There is a broad raft of questions which need to be addressed urgently on a Rights to the City kind of framework or Reclaim the City for its citizens."

NOTES

1 Extra footage from the film Creativity and the Capitalist City is posted as "Schijnheilig and the right to the city" 2011, 4:13; at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGtrRKtBGgk

2 One explicit critique of Anti-Squat was mobilized by housing activists who changed locks and took back basic privacy rights. See the Dutch Union of Precarious Dwellers at: http://bond-precaire-woonvormen.nl/2012/04/inspections-no-more-change-the-locks-on-your-door/.

3 'Learning from Detroit', at: http://www.rechtaufstadt-ruhr.de/von-detroit-lernen/.

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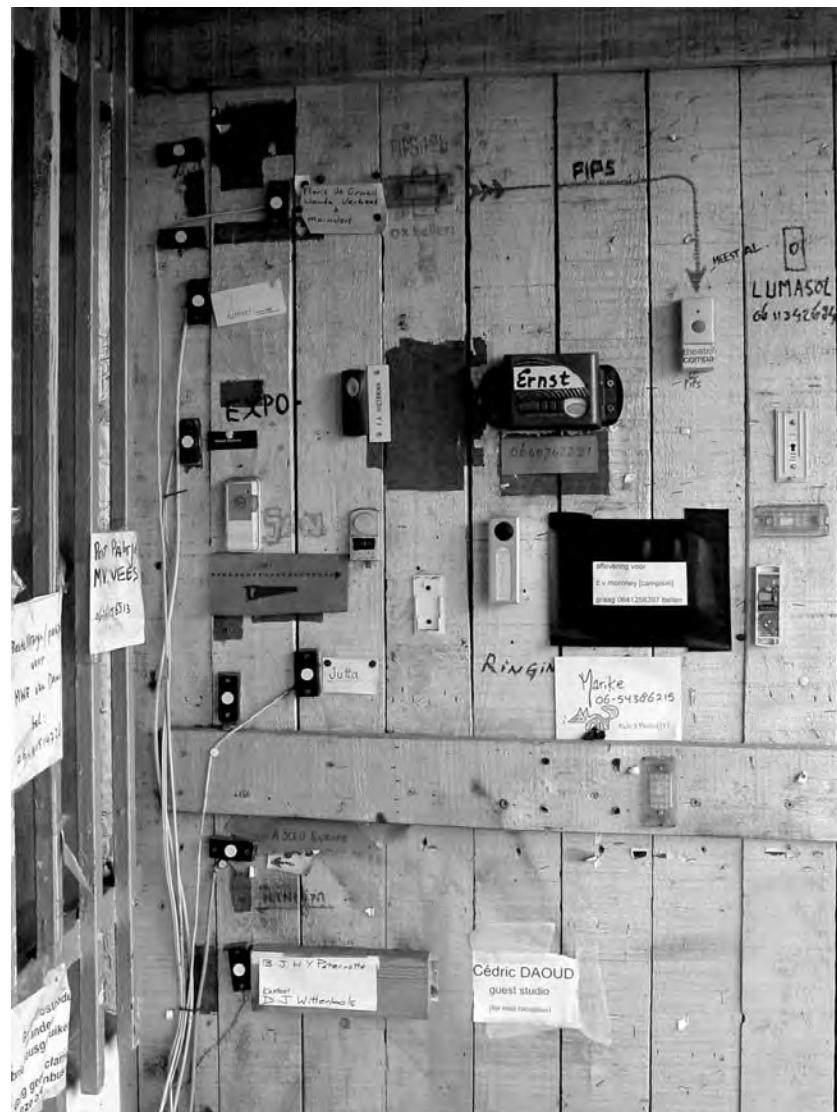
Improvised doorbells at a squatted art studio complex in Amsterdam