

# **Squatting and Diversity - Gender and Patriarchy:** **In Berlin, Madrid and Barcelona**

*Azozomox*

Squatting as a political movement has been constituted against gentrification, property speculation, vacancy of buildings, shortage of flats, and redevelopments for the wealthy. In its essence, squatting can be seen as a fundamental critique of capitalism and the structure of capitalist private ownership which is protected and supported by the state. Among other goals squatting tries to create alternatives in the way of living together and developing self-organized autonomous free spaces of solidarity, mutual help, but also resistance towards an "over all presence" of capitalist reality.

The composition of the squatters varies a lot and expresses a broad diversity within the frame of anti-authoritarian, emancipatory ideas and politics as well as reflecting the influence and interrelation with other social, cultural and political movements.

As a short overview of the squatters we find people with different class backgrounds and political tendencies (anarchists, anti-authoritarians, anti-imperialists, autonomous, anti-fascists, environmentalists) as well as people of color, migrants, inter- and trans-nationalists, refugees, creative artists, workers and more, but also, autonomist wimmin<sup>1</sup> and dykes, radical queer and trans people, gays and drag queens/kings.

The new wimmin, lesbian and gay movement of 1968 worldwide had a great impact on the emerging squatting movements in (West)-Germany from the beginning of the seventies as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Feminist spelling of woman, as an expression of a repudiation of traditions that define females by reference to a male norm.

in Spain or in Catalonia from the second half of the eighties and initiated important debates over gender, sexism, trans-and homophobia, heteronormativity, inter sexuality and anti-patriarchal struggles.

Alongside the slogan "*the personal is political*", which emerged from the 1968 movement, wimmin/ lesbian have pointed out patriarchal power structures within the society - related to the structure of families, sexuality, and the "given roles" of men and women. The oppression of women is analyzed and defined: violence against women, control of their ability to give birth, commercialization of the female body in ads and media, (hetero-sexist and male-dominated) pornography, gene-and reproductive technologies, exploitation of their labor/workforce such as unpaid domestic work or less wages in their "real" work life. But it has also to be mentioned that the slogan "*the personal is political*" has been criticized by *women of color* (and not only them) as a white universal feminist perspective which does not take into consideration the privileges and benefits contributing to the reproduction of power structures in contrast to the realities of migrant women/women of color.

The "private" living spaces of mixed squats became some of the various new (battle)- fields and scenes of the renegotiation of gender relations. In particular the fields of reproductive work, the understanding of roles (behavior role) and every day sexism in all of its many facets, love-relationships as well as sexualized violence, and the right and the power of definition came to determine and frame debates and conflicts within the squats.

But the diverse feminist/gay/lesbian movements led also to the development of an independent, autonomous organisation of wimmin, lesbian, gay, queer/trans people within the squatters environment and other social movements. Apart from mixed structures and places, they squatted

their own houses, created their own social centres, book stores, publishers, newspapers, radio-, video-groups etc., organized spaces for wimmin and lesbian, queer and trans people only. The reasons toward this development have been growing out from different aspects of a patriarchal reality, which is shown in this chapter. The origin of these feminist struggles and their history goes back more than 40 years.

While one of the first autonomous wimmin living space in Berlin<sup>2</sup> had been established in the *Commune of Cosimaplatz* in 1970, the first women/lesbian occupation of a flat in West-Germany took place in 1973 in the *Freiherr-vom-Stein-Straße 18* in Frankfurt/Main. From the first big squatting wave in 1980/81, where more than 200 houses in total have been occupied, until 2013, around 20 houses in West-Berlin and Berlin have been squatted by woman-lesbian-gay-queers-trans people. Among others: The "*Houses of Witches*" in *Liegnitzerstraße 5* was the first on January 5th 1981, with a feminist women's health centre. It was followed by the "*Marianne Devils*" in *Mariannenstraße 97*, the *Naunynstraße 58*, the *Womencafe* in *Jagowstraße 12*, the *Kottbusser Straße 8* - the only occupation by migrant women (7 turkish, one german woman and 5 kids) - the *Winterfeldstraße 37*, the *Danckelmannstraße 15* with the *FFBIZ* (Women, Investigation, Information- and Education centre), the sex-worker squat (with the self-organized group *Hydra*) in *Potsdamer Straße 139* or the woman-centre *chocolate factory* in *Mariannenstraße 6*.

More squats followed in the eighties (the *first woman-wagonplace* next to *Georg-von-Rauch-Haus* in 1984) and during the second wave of squatting in 1989/90, especially in East-Berlin. Some have been evicted after a short time, including: the *Mariannenstraße 9-10* (after one day in 1989), *Erkel* (1990), *Dieffenbachstraße 33* (1990), the women-house in the *Mainzer Str. 3* or the *Tuntenhaus*

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<sup>2</sup> We refer to West-Berlin until October 3rd 1990 and about the unified Berlin thereafter.

(drag queen-house) in *Mainzer Str. 4*, but some places still exist in 2013: the wimmin-lesbian-trans-house in *Brunnenstraße 7*, the queer-anarcha-feminist houseproject in *Liebigstraße 34*, the women back yard house in *Grünbergerstraße 73* or the queer wagonplace *Schwarzer Kanal*. In December 2012 another such house has existed: the women's only space in the occupied *Refugee Strike House* in *Ohlauerstraße 5*.

In Madrid one can still find *La Eskalera Karakola*, occupied in 1996, evicted in 2005 and afterwards legalized in a nearby location of the neighbourhood of Lavapiés. Anarchist and pro-Zapatist women opened their own squat in 2009, *La Enredadera*, after a split with men in a previous squat, *La Juli*, both located in the same neighbourhood of Tetuán. *La Eskalera* was exclusively a Social Centre, while *La Enredadera* combined a Social Centre and housing. Another brief experience of a building occupied almost exclusively by women was *La Lunática*, in the neighbourhood of Latina, which lasted over three months in 2013. Most of the women squatters of *La Lunática* were involved in Social Centres such as *Casablanca* and *Raíces* where the gender issues were often debated. .

With a feminist and anti-patriachal agenda existed also the squats *Koala* (2011-2012) and *Caldo Vegano* (2010-2012)<sup>3</sup> In the metropolitan area of Barcelona we have experienced the very active squatting-group *Les Tenses* (since 1997), and various women squats: *La Morada* (from November 1997 to February 1998), *La Fresca* (1998), *La Mambo* (2006-2007), *Casa de M and I* (2008), *El sexto sentido y El quinto coño* in Hospitalet (2008), *Casa y. la trini* (2008), *La Tremenda* in

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3 *Caldo Vegano* was eventually not evicted by the police but, after an internal conflict, closed by some anarchists against the will of 5 people there. These anarchists also have been accused of physical and psychological violence against some people of the *Caldo Vegano*. edited from *Distri Maligna* in April 2013, In: *Equilibrio*, Fanzine Anarcofeminista No. 3, page 5. But see also the declaration of autodissolution without explanation , in: <http://caldovegano.blogspot.de/>

Manresa (2005-2006), or *La Gorda* in St. Andreu (2005-2008) or the *Okupa Queer* in Montgat (2004-2005). As a clear anti-sexist and feminist squat there was also *Margarida Tafanera*<sup>4</sup> (2011-2012) *La Llamborda* (since 2012), which is predominantly occupied by women and, since April 2012, the group *Kuarentena* in the *La otra Carboneria*, a space for infectadxs (infected people), bollos (dykes), transfeminists, cuir, maricas (faggots) and intersex-people ([www.kuarentena.net](http://www.kuarentena.net))

One of the important reasons towards the development of these gender related experiences has been the critique of male dominated behavior and patterns in mixed living spaces, squats or political groups where often men ignored and rejected the need for independent women's spaces. The women collective *Ligadura* which emerged in 1986 in Madrid and participated in the *Asamblea de Okupas* (Assembly of Squatters) describes its experiences:

*"...we have been a group of women occupying and joining the Assembly of Squatters. After a while we noticed that there has been established very clear roles of gender. (...) with the time we saw that we have been repeating the same roles and stereotypes again: the women were cleaning, cutting the hair meanwhile the men being at the barricades, cutting wood, vamos. (...) we wanted to meet among woman, ... but before this idea finally has been realized, passed time. The drop of water that changed everything had to do with a trip, organized by the Assembly of Squatters, to a squatters meeting in Hamburg (West-)Germany in 1987. In (West-)Germany you saw women marching separated on demonstrations, women groups of self-defense and when we came back we said: "Thats what we want". A group of woman, who stands together, is self-organized, can defend themselves and from that moment we started to meet (...)" (Gil, 2011: 79).*

A report by the working group "woman and squatting" during a nationwide mixed squatting

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4 This name *Margarida Tafanera* is a homage towards this woman, who lived in the 16th century in this house and was one of the first witches being burned during the inquisition.

meeting in Münster (West-Germany) six years earlier in 1981 had pointed in a similar direction:

*"Structural patriarchal violence has many faces and comes along sometimes more subtle, sometimes more massive in various manners and shapes."* (Frauencafe Moabit 1982: 38-39).

At that meeting women reported and explained their treatment by men, noting that they were not taken seriously, that there was a lack of respect towards autonomous women's spaces, that they were confronted with mistrust, a lack of understanding, rejection, insults, that they were sworn at and called names („men-hater“, „uptight/tensed feminists“). Such verbal attacks led to a crossing of boundaries, sexualized violence and even rape against women.

One female squatter wrote in 1981 about her bad, "lousy" experiences with men-squatters (Frauencafe-Moabit 1982: 40-42), noting that *"they are sick about the euphoric indulgence of self-adulation of the squatters and the movement"*. They spoke about *"a new chauvinism"* and criticized *"macho and aggressive behavior inside the squats that in some cases leads to beatings as well as typical roles of men and the monopoly of knowledge"*. The rough climate is well documented in another example from the *Berlin-BesetzerInnenrat* (Squatting Council) in 1981: *"Shut up your mouth, you old cunt"* shouted one squatter to another and *"300 people listened to his outburst of fury without criticizing him"*. Later someone wrote in the newspaper taz, *"that the forced discussion about the new sensibility by the womens movement of the seventies seemed to be submerged under the stones of the squatting movement."* (amantine 2011: 119).

For these and other reasons it seemed, not surprisingly, that the women of the *House of the Witches* in *Liegnitzerstraße 5* did not want to live with men: *"nobody wanted to do that voluntarily, that would have been at least one step backwards"*, explained one of the witches (taz, 26.2.1981).

Sexism and sexualized violence against woman is an ongoing phenomenon on different levels in (mixed) squatted spaces in Berlin and other cities, although it has to be mentioned, that issues of domination and sexism became (theoretically) important to work on for many squatters. But some incidents have been tremendous: one of the most terrifying cases took place in the well known squats in the *Hafenstraße* in Hamburg in 1984. One woman was humiliated, tortured and raped by three occupiers (one man and two women) for 12 hours in the basement of the house. The woman was undressed, gagged, bound and in hanged up in chains; cigarettes have been put out on her body and safety pins pierced through nipples and genitals (amantine 2011: 128).

The autonomous women's collective *Ligadura*, which emerged in the eighties in Madrid, participating in the Occupied Social Centre *Minuesa*, also criticized the power structures in mixed political groups as well as the sexism which was evident both within language and in the occupied spaces. To fight patriarchal power structures became for *Ligadura* as important and necessary as abolishing capitalism and all types of economic, social, political and cultural authoritarian institutions (Marina Marinas Sánchez 2004: 219).

Years later in 1998, the group *Les Tenses* from Barcelona published , the pamphlet "*Por que hablamos de sexismo en los espacios liberados*" (why do we talk about sexism in the liberated spaces?), which questioned the male-dominating role (Gil, 2011: 93).

*"Because we do live in a capitalist and patriarchal society, and because we want to construct an alternative to this system, as a first step to change ourselves. Towards our conceptions of life, relations, sexuality ... The difficulty is not to theorize about the way but to carry it out in practice. And thats what is not that easy. And because we do not want to liberate only spaces but also minds and attitudes."* (Les Tenses 1998)

In Madrid *Las Anacondas Subversivas* relied on the formula *Ninguna Agresion Sexista Sin Respuesta!* (no sexist aggression without response) to denounce sexual aggression in occupied places and make them public. The intervention of *Las Anacondas Subversivas* at the end of a concert from the band *Tarzan* in which they spilled paint and cola over the head of their bassist, who has raped one woman a year before, handed out leaflets and put up a banner -- caused fierce debates within the movement, a war of communications, and finally contributed to the dissolution of the group. The band *Tarzan* itself first expressed unconditional support for their bassist, which showed the male-solidarity among them, later expelled him, but nevertheless attacked the *Anacondas* of self-justice. (Mujeres Preokupando 1998, No. 2)

In *El Laboratorio I* (1997-1998) one woman, who was living there, was sexually assaulted and in another incident, during a party of the collective *Ruido*, another woman was brutally raped in the bath.

The environment of the incident, the failure of care-taking and the lack of a collective response at that party, which was neither stopped nor closed after the rape, was criticized in the statement "*Espacios Okupados, Espacios con Cuidado*" (occupied spaces, spaces with care/to watch out) by one woman from the collective *Eskalera Karakola* and ex-comrade of the *El Labaratorio* (Mujeres Preokupando 1998, No. 2). In the meantime there were some debates in the squat about the sexual assault of the woman who was living there. But those reactions and comments towards this attack had been so extremely macho and sexist, that the woman's group *Indias Metropolitanas*, who were giving self-defense classes in the social centre at that time, decided to move away to a different place (Phoolan Devi 2012: 9-34).

These sexualized assaults can not been seen isolated, but rather reflect the reality of a patriarchal

society. One woman giving self-defense courses in different squats in Madrid remembers, that "at least 30% of woman, attending their classes, had suffered numerous instances of sexual aggressions". (Phoolan Devi 2012: 32)

In the same period, in 1997, a nationwide meeting of squatters was held in Barcelona where a panel about "women and squatting" took place. One woman from the group *Dones Esmussades* (Valencia) stated there very clearly: "*The situation of men and woman in the movement is not the same and when we say this, we talk about power*" (Gil 2011: 94).

Finally, the exchanged experiences among woman on that panel about sexism and the role of women in the occupied spaces led to the idea of producing a newspaper written by women, *Mujeresyo Preokupando*, in which many groups and collectives from various areas like Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza, Valencia, Euskadi or the Canary Islands could take part. A newspaper, "as a call, for occupying women, with space for all women who can be anyone, to find out what ever might be important for her, to think together how to shatter the world" (Mujeres Peokupando 1998, No. 1). So far, from 1998 nine issues have been put out.

Karla, a feminist black lesbian migrant without documents, has collected some of the criticisms, which have been accumulated throughout the years, in the declaration "*Por que espacios solo para mujeres ? (Why women only spaces?)*":

*"..this oppression against us does not exist only in the capitalist society, but also in those liberated spaces. The repetition of old macho thinking, the same patriarchal ideology comes along in a different face, like as an intellectual, as an activist with a political anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian background...(..) The debates about sexist violence inside the social movements have been almost always pushed by women and lesbians and not because of an simply and existing internalisation of the activists who do approach the necessity of a feminist political*

*agenda while at the same time having an critical reinterpretation towards their own masculinity.  
(...)*

*It is very worrying to see the level of tolerance within the political spaces towards aggressions, the difficulty to identify the very much different ways of violence against women and the lack of the capacity to act collectively. And when the normalized violence once has left the privacy and cannot be denied anymore, (besides- negation is the most used facet)(...), justifications and excuses are put on the table. Defenses/justifications which allow to eliminate a social response. "He was drunk, on drugs, just joking, she was insinuating/making advances, he is a good guy etc"... to justify, minimize, silence or to make the sexist attitudes invisible. (...) Lets form our autonomy and put in practice the different feminist approaches. Let's struggle against the historical and daily violence (...). Let us reflect and debate collectively about the issues gender, violence of gender, sexuality, identities, racism, class..." (Mujeres PreoKupando 2008)*

The necessity of women-only spaces became evident, nevertheless women groups have always used spaces within mixed social centres or squats in Madrid, Barcelona or Berlin.

After the experience of the women-only-space within the squat *Lavapiex 15* (from April to October 1996), where they took one floor for themselves, the women's social centre, *CSO La Eskalera Karakola*, was then occupied by students, activists of the feminist movement, transsexuals, lesbians, anti-militarists and autonomous women in 1996 in Madrid-Lavapiex and became the first squatted women's social centre in Spain,. The first women's squat in the Spanish state, was likely *Amanacer*, which existed in Valencia from 1991-1993 and was used as a living space. *La Eskalera Karakola* became a very important reference point for autonomous feminist squatters in the rest of the country but also for the autonomous wimmin and lesbian movement as a whole. The women have participated in or initiated various activities, mobilisations and actions:

"*The public bedding*", when women went with their beds to the square *Puerta del Sol* and denounced domestic violence (1998); the night-demonstrations with torches against the violence against women while chanting "the streets and the night are ours too", accompanied by the campaign "*Attention, construction site. We are working against macho aggressions*" (1999); the occupation of the company *Inditex* in order to denounce the precarity and domestication of bodies in ads that used models who represented ideals that were impossible to attain for many women, and that often led to painful effects like bulimia or anorexia (1999-2002); various actions against the war in the former Yugoslavia and later against the war in Iraq (1999-2003); the realisation of the *Noise European Summer School* in Women's Studies (2001); the preparations of the state wide meeting of feminists in Cordoba (2000) and the annual lesbian-gay-transsexual-pride; and diverse actions alongside black women. They opened the *Escuela de Feminismos* (School of Feminism) or the *La Casa de la Diferencia* (House of the Difference) and started projects like *Cybercentrifuga*. The groups *Sexo, Mentiras y Precariedad*, *Laboratorio de trabajadoras* and *Precarias a la Deriva* investigated the conditions of women workers, pointed to the precarity of their situation, and developed possible strategies of empowerment and resistance to the capitalist reality. Many other diverse groups have been meeting or emerged there: *Colectivo Feministas*, *Las Gudos*, *Cazaslargas*, *La Eskina del Safo*, *Reticas de Genero* or *Grupo de Teoria Queer* (Group of Queer Theory), the *working group against racism* or *Encuentro y Contraste*, a workshop with migrant-woman or the collaboration with women worldwide like *Mujeres Creando* (Bolivia). Other important themes that were debated and discussed there, include: identities, the questioning of being woman, non- normal sexualities, the intersection of power relations and structures, the singularity of every body, the globalization and transformation of work, queer/trans-theories, new technologies and more. (Dossier 2005: 4-7, Silvia L. Gil, 2011: 86-98)

The belief that power relations are linked and influence each other had always played a key role in

their understanding and analysis of power itself. Patriarchy, racism and capitalism (among others) are power systems that conglomerate and mutually interact. Therefore they connected their theoretical approach and practical pronouncements on work and precariousness in capitalism, the war and globalisation, but also on the urban geographies and gentrification dynamics in the city and the district. They also formed groups like the *Colectivo de Mujeres Urbanistas* and organized workshops with women of their neighborhood Lavapiés to rethink and map an environment they really want and need.

After the eviction in 2005 and the relocation in two legalized buildings with a low rent, which has caused some controversies and envy among the squatters movement in Madrid (Martinez 2012: 20), the new place is now called "*Casa Pública de Mujeres*" (Public House of Women) *La Eskalera Karakola*."

*La Morada*, occupied by 5 women on November 9th 1997 in Sants, was actually the first women's squat in Barcelona, but not accepted by all of the mixed squatter-scene. For them the anti-sexist struggle was an important priority, also "*trying to break with patterns which has been internalized since the childhood for most of woman*" (La Morada 1998).

Nine years later the woman/lesbian/trans - Squat *Mambo (Momento Autonomo de Mujeres y Bolleras Osadas)* in Barcelona achieved major significance and visibility in the one year of its existence (2006-2007) and launched new and important debates. Several groups like *Les Atakas* (a feminist lesbian direct action group), *Bloc d'Accio*, *Ovarika* (group of feminist reflection), groups of self-defense (Wendo), *Theatre of the Oppressed*, *Girlswholikeporno*, *Woman-Prisoner Support Group* or women and lesbians from different countries (mainly Latin America) have met there. Besides working, exploring and performing on issues such as the relationship between art, politics and manners of visual communication, the questioning of identities, acting on macho violence or

racism; they also have been focusing on police brutality and discrimination against sex-workers in their own neighborhood, the Raval district of Barcelona, as well as initiating and hosting workshops on pornography and feminism, drag kings, sexuality and feminist theory.

In the workshop about pornography, organized by *Girlswholikeporno*, there was one part about reflecting and debating feminism, post-porno and queer theory, as well as another part about filming and producing their own videos. The idea behind it was, how one could make a porn video in a different way or with another symbolic relation between women and sexuality by not reproducing stereotypical and conventional heteronormative pornography. "*Women also like porno*" became a slogan of that time, questioning hegemonic myths of woman's sexuality (Gil 2011: 96-97) and contributing to the self-empowerment through one's own desires and fantasies in contrast to the male-dominated capitalist porn industry.

Not only *La Eskalrea Karakola* (Madrid) or *Mambo* (Barcelona), but also several occupations of lesbian/gay-, drag queens-, queer- and trans- houses in Berlin – all of which can be understood as emerging from the deconstructionist and queer-feminist discourses that, since the 1990s, has begun to question categories of sex and to break/split open the legality/regularity of given bipolarities of sex-- have made the growing criticism towards heteronormativity within the squatting scene more visible. The *new queer politics* arose from criticism against lesbian and gay identity politics as well as from the fact that bisexual and trans-genders have begun questioning such dichotomous and fixed identity concepts (Vanelslander 2006).

In this context it is important to mention that in the meantime the intersectional approach<sup>5</sup> of other

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5 Seeing gender equality in relation to other social categories such as race, class, disability, sexual orientation and age. This perspective, called intersectionality, has its roots in black feminism, reflecting both racial and gendered systems of oppression. Intersectionality is still more common as a theoretical

components of domination and existing power structures contributes to a broader concept of queer and feminist theoretical discourse.

Therefore, it is not surprising that people of color or other precarious people criticize the invisible normality of whiteness and middle-class positions, and demand greater attention to the complex character of identities. Critical whiteness, post-colonialism, feminism, anti-semitism, anti-ziganism (especially in Germany) or anarchism are just some of the political concepts and movements that have been contributing to this new understanding of complexity of power relations. (see also Vanslander, 2006)

The first *Tuntenhaus*<sup>6</sup> (house of drags) was occupied in 1981 in West-Berlin in *Bülowerstraße 55* and evicted 2 years later. It was well connected with the gay-scene and monthly meetings of the Berlin gay-groups happened there and part of the gay-film "*Anderssein*" (being different) was shot in the house.

The second *Tuntenhaus*, where 30 gays were living, was very visible, glamorous and enigmatic. It was squatted in May 1990 in the *Mainzerstraße 4* in East-Berlin, but soon evicted, just six months later and only 41 days after the unification of both Germany's, in November 1990, following three days of fierce resistance in the streets. The *Tuntenhaus* distanced itself from the mainstream and institutionalized gay-movement and came into conflict with them. During the annual *Cristopher Street Day* (Gay Pride)- demonstration in 1990, some of the radical drag queens of the *Tuntenhaus* were thrown from the stage while reading a solidarity statement of the relatives of the imprisoned

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approach within research than in policy processes.

6 The Tuntenhaus (House of Drags) is a community of gays, bisexuals, queers, drags and perverts, after their own definition, in: [www.tuntenhaus.squat.net/](http://www.tuntenhaus.squat.net/) .

RAF<sup>7</sup>-members. On the other hand they were well integrated in the left gay scene and very active inside the squatting movement. Besides a second hand bookstore with literature from East-Germany and a bar named *Forellenhof*, the *Tuntenhaus* became most famous for their *Tuntenshows* in their backyard.

In the *Mainzerstraße*, where in total 11 houses had been occupied in a row and where 200 people were living, they often played the facilitator/mediator-role and became something like a mascot or a public symbol of the whole street.

*"The Tuntenhaus, the tuntentower, the ghost house of the street, was far ahead the most beautiful, pretty, most kitsch, trash, and garish house and the biggest stumbling block for all the neighbors."*  
(Arndt 1992: 44)

The third *Tuntenhaus*, located in *Kastanienallee 86*, was installed after the eviction of the second one and has been legalized. It is more a living- and less a political project (Urinowa), nevertheless some of the inhabitants have participated in various political projects like the *Schwule-Antifa* (Gay-Antifa), the *Querulanten*, and the newspaper *Tuntentinte*. They have also actively participated in debates about homophobia, sexism and macho-behavior and joined and organized mobilisations for the *Rattenwagen* (rat-track), the *Transgenial CSD* (Gay Pride), the *Stöckeltreffen* (meetings of drags with stiletto), the *Tunten Terror-Tour*, or the *Homolandwoche* (one week-meeting of radical gays at different places once a year in Germany). Every year they celebrate their famous *Tunten-Festival* in their backyard with lots of people in drag, shows, singing and German pop music.

The queer wagon place *Schwarzer Kanal* was first squatted in 1989 as a "mixed project" and had to move two times due to gentrification measures in the district Berlin-Mitte, the centre of Berlin.

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7 RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion/Red Army Fraction) was a urban guerrilla group from 1970 to 1998.

First they had to give way to a new building of the union of media *ver.di* and in 2010 they moved again because their place belonged to the company *Hochtief AG*. The new location is now in Berlin-Treptow, further away from the centre. The *Schwarze Kanal* also plays an important role in the ex-squatting-and wagonplace movement as well as in the autonomist queer/trans-scene. They are organizing the *Queer- and Rebel-Days* as well as the annual *DIY Radical Queer Filmfestival Entzaubert*. The *Schwarze Kanal* also has taken part in broader mobilisations as the *Queer-Barrios* on the Anti-G8 Summit-Camp 2007 in Heiligendamm, the autonomous *Queerruption-Festival 2003* and is active in the (ex)-squatter and anti-gentrification networks like *WBA* („*Wir bleiben alle*“- we stay all) Campaign or others (amantine 2012,a).

The traveling radical *Queerruption-Festival*, linked well with the squatting scene, took place in 2003 in Berlin and in 2005 in Barcelona and highlighted the visibility of multiple gender- and sexual identities by questioning heteronormativity, heterosexism and gender roles. The *Queerruption 8* in Barcelona faced some repression by the authorities, when their meeting place, an occupied factory in Hospitalet, was surrounded for almost 20 hours by the police and nine people were arrested during a demonstration that criticized the capitalist gay-mainstream commercialized culture and politics in the district Eixample (gaixample). Participants in the demonstration spray painted slogans ("*no al capitalismo rosa*", "*Queremos ser gordas y peludas*", "*Vull ser marika feliç*" y "*no eurogay gris*", "*Coños para todas gratis, no al kapital*"), threw water bombs, and caused minor damage and small confrontations at some hotels and establishments (restaurant *Castro*, *Z:eltas*, *Dietrich*, \*\*\*\* *Hotel Axel*). This demonstration, called by the queerruption-organizers "to create an alternative to the commercial gay ambience, which is excluding others of being part of the homosexual collective for economic, ethnic or gender related reasons" (Queerruption 2005) has generated great discussions within the gay-lesbian-trans movement. The nine arrested people were

psychologically mistreated, beaten, insulted and threatened in a sexist, homophobic and racist manner ("*squatter and on top of that a faggot full of shit* ", "*shut up or i put my truncheon in your arse*") and tortured. They were denied water, access to lawyers or translators, subscribed medication, and had to wait 10 hours for medical attention. All the accused police officers have been actually acquitted.

As in Berlin, Madrid and Barcelona many woman-lesbian-trans-queer-gay squatters organize or participate in general LGBT activities and mobilizations like the annual trans-march in October "*Stop Trans Pathologization*" or in more radical activities critical of mainstream commercialization, like the *transgenial CSD* (Gay-pride) in Berlin or the trans-march "*Trans-tornem a/el carrer.*" (We come back to the streets) in Barcelona in 2012, organized by the assembly *Octubre Trans Bcn*, who organize various kinds of activities like talks and conferences etc.

All those discussions and debates within the women-lesbian-queer-gay-trans scenes and environments alongside and about the categories gender, sexuality and identity have finally enhanced their influence and found an entry in the heteronormative reality of the squatting movements, also throughout those squatted - or in the meanwhile legalized - places, as it be in Berlin, in Madrid or in Barcelona.

But the most decisive question from a feminist viewpoint and perspective, will be always, the question about domination, power and authority. That implies acknowledging the existing power conflicts and repetition of internalized roles within the squats and house projects. But many are aware and recognize the reproduction of gender roles and are developing an openness for self-reflection and criticism. (Mujeres Preocupando 2009). As an example, criticism arose in the *Okupa-Queer* in Montgat-Barcelona, where several conflicts, also linked with gender, sexuality

and violence, and power shifts had occurred:

*"In dealing with these problems, it became obvious that the content of the word "queer" had been understood in different ways by different people - the Okupa Queer was eventually a story of power dynamics and exclusions among different kinds of queers and other squatters"* (Vanelslander 2006).

The complexity of domination and power in relation to their sex and gender - deconstructed, categorized or not - culminates in the question of the *group X\_Y*:

*"Is the exclusion of a person according to the category sex not reproducing again bipolarity ? Would have a woman group actually much less hierarchies, like feminist approaches of difference do suggest ? Or are instead not certain manners and patterns of behavior apart from the categorized sex of a person more relevant ?"* (X\_Y 2008)

Congruously the enhanced and broadened understanding of an anti-sexist analysis and reality was proven by the workshop on *"Sexualized violence within the women-lesbian-trans context"* during the 3rd Congress of Anti-Sexist-Practices in Berlin 2009. But of course, this does not change the fact, that still primarily women – but also lesbian, queer, and trans people – are affected by the hetero-sexist mainstream<sup>8</sup>. Therefore we can state that the area of the debate ranges between the poles of theoretical deconstruction of the category gender/sex and an anti-sexist practice within a given social reality of a bipolar gender structure.

45 years after the 1968 woman-, lesbian- and gay movements, 32 years after the first woman- and gay squats in West-Berlin, and 17 and 16 years after the first woman/lesbian squats in Madrid and Barcelona, debates, discussions and conflicts about sexism and patriarchal behavior are (not surprisingly) still ongoing in the squatting-world. The women of *Mambo* (2006-2007) criticized

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8 „When my anger starts to cry ...“ Debatten zur Definitionsmacht und der Versuch einer notwendigen

the hostility towards their women's only space by other squatters, who did not hesitate to use insults like "*destructive separatism with the intention to weaken the movement*" or "*the exclusion of men is fascism*" (Torres mas grandes hemos visto caer).

The women from *La Tremenda* (2005-2007) pointed out that many mixed groups talk about gender as an isolated issue, giving it only relative importance, or do not consider gender as a basic struggle. The women of *La Gorda* (2005-2008) see a lack of critical analysis towards the hetero-patriarchy and experienced macho attitudes and discourses among squatters. (Mujeres Preocupando 2009)

For many years the ex-squat *Köpi 137* (Berlin), which also was criticized for not having clear anti-patriarchal guidelines, rejected any women lesbian parties in their space with the argument that they did not want to exclude anyone because of their, color, sex/gender, or origin from their space - with exclusion primarily meaning men. They finally agreed in 2000 to host a women/lesbian party for the first time in nine years since 1991 (amantine 2011: 144).

Also other examples seem to painfully prove that sexism and sexualized violence are ongoing. In the 2009 evicted house project *Brunnenstraße 183* in Berlin there were reports of sexist speech and behavior, intimidations, sexualized and physical violence and rape. Meanwhile, those incidents have been silenced to the outside and those who wanted to call attention and make it public were threatened with violence. The organizers of a large nationwide Anarchist Congress in 2009 in the ex-squatted (now legalized) social centre of the *New Yorck in Bethanien* had to break up the meeting prematurely, which had up to 1000 people in attendance, because they could not guarantee an anti-sexist free-space, after the group *Fuck for Forest* has several times crossed the boundaries of many people, for example by running around all the time naked (especially the men of the group), and making homophobic comments. Furthermore, many of the congress-participants expressed their solidarity with the group. Finally the organizers stated and justified the dissolution

of the meeting, noting *"that this conflict, who started with an sexist boundary crossing and provocation could not have been solved anymore in a peaceful way"* (amantine 2011: 150-152).

This showed once again, that it cannot be assumed that an anti-sexist consensus of theory and practice within the left-radical, anarchist or squatters environment automatically exists.

In Barcelona, in 2009 and 2010, two men (one living there, the other belonging to the people around) engaged in several acts of sexual aggression against at least different four women of the squat *Barrilonia* (evicted in 2012), causing major conflicts and problems between the two collectives of the house. The social centre (including the group *Barrikada Zapatista*) backed up those two men and were not willing to exclude them from further activities or to condemn the acts of sexual aggression. The collective of the living space above, on the other hand actually kicked out both men from their living-area (Assemblea de Vivenda de Barrilònia 2010). The conflict between the two groups, which, in the meantime had further become larger through other controversial issues of the house, developed into a situation of "complicated war", in which members of the living spaces were finally denied access to the Social Centre. Furthermore they have been attacked physically, insulted several times in a sexist and homo-lesbian- and transphobic manner, threatened with violence, and their living space has been entered twice with force and without permission from members of the Social Centre (Dossier Vivienda Barrilonia 2011).

Investigations of the feminist researcher Barbara Biglia in Barcelona have proven that 17,9 % of women participating in social movements have experienced different types of abuse in these spaces (Biglia: 2005).

In this respect not just a few see a patriarchal „rollback“ and demand again more „anti-sexist

standards“ in squats, social centres and autonomous, anarchist/anti-authoritarian structures despite obvious changes in 45 years of the women, lesbian movement (amantine 2011: 67).

Both as a response to sexism, violence and macho attitudes in Barcelona and as an act of self-empowerment of women, lesbian and, queer and trans people, activists have created several fanzines and booklets, such as: *Tijeras para todas* - Texts about macho violence in the social movements (2009); *La Gota, que fa vessar el got* - reflections about the sexism in social movements (2009); *Plantemos cara a las agresiones sexistas en los espacios liberados*, process of debates in the squat *la Revoltosa* (2008). They have also put out a paper, written by one man, in which he reflects on his own sexism and questions gender roles: *torres mas grandes hemos visto caer*. Furthermore, meetings and conferences *jornadas sobre aggressions* (conferences about aggressions) have taken place in two squats, in 2008 in *La Revoltosa*, and 2010 in *La Teixidora*. Other such conferences that have taken place since 2011 include the annual feminist, autonomous workshops, actions and talks "Se va armar la gorda", which are situated around International Women's Day on the 8th of March.

The "*Anti-Sexistische Praxen-Konferenz*" (Anti-Sexist-Practices Conference) has taken place since 2007 annually in Berlin and some (ex)-squats like the *New Yorck in Bethanien* in Berlin distribute leaflets at the entrance of parties, in which is explained that „*sexist, racist, antisemitic, trans- and homophobic behavior will not be tolerated - we want a party where everyone can feel comfortable*" (*AG Spaß für alle/working group fun for everyone* 2011).

Posters and Flyers are handed out and distributed at social centres that call attention to these issues; they have also circulated in Barcelona since 2004 through the *Asamblea de Género* (Assembly of Gender): *Los espacios "liberados" no están exentos de agresiones* (the occupied spaces are not free from aggressions), or *Agresión es cuando me siento agredida/o* (an aggression

exists when i do feel attacked).

Some relevant examples from Madrid and Barcelona are *Falo*, a fanzine with the slogan "liberación masculina contra el patriarcado" (masculine liberation from patriarchy), that questions gender roles, deconstructs the image of masculinity and urges the responsibility that men have in order to change patriarchal reality. *"As men we play a central role in the transformation of gender relations initiated by feminism. We should support us each other and take up the struggle against the implemented roles and sex-gender oppression as a personal commitment and as a political goal."* (Falo, 2004: 3). And *La C.U.L.O*, a degenerated feminist magazine (grew out from the feminist circle *La Manada Degenerada Feminista*), which appeared in 2009 and put out two issues, questioning with enormous joy nothing less than heteronormativity. A third one, *Anarqueer* from Madrid, is a fanzine which until spring 2013 has released four issues and discusses matters like "acracia and gaylesbiantrans-politics", "transfeminism, violence and gender", "Kuir from yesterday and today" among others.

A wide and broad debate about all types of gender, sexism and identity related issues has been developing. However, although an understanding of the dissolution of sexism in the every day- and "private" life does exist and has been generally accepted and carried through to the greatest possible extent within the autonomous and anarchist squats or house projects, it is not always reflected in practice.

Often this critique of sexism is only added on flyers but not internalized as a recognition that has to be practiced on a daily basis.

These contradictions stem from the diversity and fragmentations of actual affinity groups and squats, the lack of consistent organizations or networks, discontinuities, individualisation, the ever-recurring discussions, as well as a failure to recognize the existing knowledge. Not to

mention the lack of knowledge in general of the history of struggles, discourses and debates within autonomous woman, lesbian, gay, queer and trans people (Tijeras para todas 2009, amantine 2012).

Although the history of development of feminist struggle and theory might differ in terms of time in Berlin, Barcelona or Madrid, in reality the theoretical debates within the squatting scene related to sexism, gender-politics, trans-queer and intersex discourses do not differ in terms of significance. While the '68 woman/lesbian/gay-movements hit West-Germany straight away, its development in Spain became more complicated and delayed due to the military-dictatorship of Franco (1939-1975). In the present, these processes have been converging meaning that we can find similar debates in all the places we have investigated. They may occur in different places at different times, but the questions and the theoretical intensity of the debates are very similar -the only difference, queer terminology is less adapted and used among the squatters in Madrid or Barcelona.

The *Eskalera Karakola* in particular, due to their long existence and the great participation of various groups and collectives, played a significant role inside different feminist movements and has been a part in all of the theoretical discourses and debates about queer-trans-intersex, or the intersectionality and interrelation of class, race/colonialism and gender. They published many texts and several articles about various issues on feminism, globalisation, violence, urbanism, the district Lavapiés, work and non-work, technology, sexualities, theory queer and transsexuality. They wrote the foreword of the book *"Otras inapropiables, Feminismos desde la fronteras"* (Other inapropiables, feminisms from the other side of the borders) in 2004, and published several books and articles (i.e. *"A la deriva. por los circuitos de la precaridad femenina"*) from the group *Precarias a la Deriva*, which formed part of *Eskalera Karakola*.

While diverse squatting movements have liberated a large number of buildings, queer-trans-feminism is slowly beginning to squat the minds of a growing number of activists. But is still a long way to go. In fact, while the postulate "the personal is political" is now widely accepted within non-dogmatic, emancipatory, non-hierarchical, autonomous and anarchists environments, we are still far from making general statements or conclusions because of the diversity of these squatting movements, their contradictions, and the fragmentations of the various "scenes" and subcultural milieus.

Despite the independent organisational structures of woman, gays lesbian, queer and trans-people squats and their desires for a non-mixed conception of communal living and social activities, the major burden lays in how sexism is addressed within the rest of social centres and living spaces.

The gender identity-debates questioning gender norms, bipolarity and categories (men/woman). Besides woman lesbian groups have also emerged groups who are open to trans-, intersex- and queer people and to other "feminities".

All these feminist, trans- and queer debates and theories about identities, gender-politics and categories are contributing to the general issue of power dominance within the squatting environment as well as within the society.

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