

Law or no Law, Squatting Will Continue?

How the Dutch squatters' movement deals with the squatting ban and a neoliberalist housing market from 1994 - 2023

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ABSTRACT

Since 2019, it has been determined that a housing crisis is underway in the Netherlands: rental and purchase prices of housing have increased dramatically. At the same time, squatting has been banned in the Netherlands since 2010. Experts claim that squatting can be an answer to the housing crisis. This thesis explores how the housing market and squatters' movement are interlinked, and how the housing market crisis came about and why squatting was banned at the same time. It then examines how the squatters' movement developed after the ban. This thesis examines the influence of the neoliberal turn on the Dutch housing market in the period from 1994 to 2023 and then how this turn affected the strategies and goals of the Dutch squatters' movement. Reaction of the movement to legislative changes that banned squatting in the Netherlands is also discussed. This is done through the following research question: In what ways have neoliberal policies implemented in the Netherlands since 1994 until 2023 contributed to the transformation of the housing market, and how has this transformation influenced the strategies and goals of the Dutch squatters' movement, particularly in response to legal changes and societal perceptions? This question is answered by looking at different laws and related debates that have influenced the housing market and squatters' movement during this time. Next, interviews with (former) squatters and social media posts from squatter collectives will be used. Qualitative document analysis will be used for the laws and debates and the social media posts, and qualitative thematic analysis for the interviews. This study found that neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, aimed at reducing government spending and stimulating economic growth, drastically changed the Dutch housing market. Major changes included deregulation, privatization of social housing and the promotion of private home ownership. This thesis shows that the shift to a market-oriented housing sector has increased inequalities in the housing market, starters and people with low incomes were particularly affected. Moreover, the new laws favored the position of speculators and foreign investors. These developments had a profound impact on the Dutch squatters' movement: over the years, the movement evolved from a means of finding affordable housing to an activist organization. After the squatting ban, the squatters' movement evolved by forming larger squatter collectives and using different tools such as social media. The new collectives stand up for different social causes and injustices, the collectives use squatting to spread their message and attract attention.

KEYWORDS: *Neoliberalism, Gentrification, Squatting, Housing Market*

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Chapter 1: Introduction and research question

On 16 October in 2021 a new squatted building was announced in the center of Amsterdam. This was unveiled by a squatter's collective calling itself Mokum Kraakt.¹ A former hotel in the Marnixstraat that had been vacant for several years was squatted. The vacant building was named Hotel Mokum. Mokum is how real and authentic citizens of Amsterdam refer to the city. Blue collar workers called Amsterdam this way already a hundred years ago.² The squatters argued that Amsterdam is losing its character, the original population can no longer afford to live in Amsterdam and is forced to move. That is the reason why the collective called the squatted building Hotel Mokum.³ The goal with the creation of Hotel Mokum was to create a sanctuary for everyone in the city. At the same time, the collective behind the squat used the squat as a way of protesting against government policies that allow buildings to stand vacant for long periods of time in the center of Amsterdam.⁴ The building that was squatted stood vacant for a few years and the owners didn't have new plans for it.⁵ According to Buitelaar and Schilder around twelve percent of the Dutch rental houses stood vacant in 2017.⁶ This percentage doesn't include empty office spaces or other buildings like former shops and hotels.⁷ The squatters collective argued that this phenomenon was caused by the government. They argued that the laws and policies that the government implemented, created and allowed this situation.⁸ The squatting action was a way to show the collectives dissatisfaction towards the government.

Prior to this action, in September 2021 the largest nationwide housing protest since the 1980s was held in the Netherlands. Thousands of protesters gathered in Amsterdam to express their discontent with housing policies of the cabinet at the time.⁹ The protesters and the organization argued that the cabinet is focusing too much on the wealthier population of the Netherlands. Vandevyvere and Zenthöfe researched these claims. According to them since the 1990s social housing is being demolished on a large scale and more luxurious and expensive houses are being built in return.¹⁰ Simultaneously, since the millennium,

¹ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 26.

² Ibid., 25.

³ Ibid., 27.

⁴ Ibid., 26-27.

⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶ Edwin Buitelaar and Frans Schilder, "Particuliere woningbeleggers en toegankelijkheid van de woningmarkt: de casus Amsterdam," *Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving* (2018): 3.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 26-27.

⁹ Marcel Wiegman, "Deelnemers woonprotest: 'Een huis kopen zit er voor ons niet in'," *Parool*, September 12, 2021, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/deelnemers-woonprotest-een-huis-kopen-zit-er-voor-ons-niet-in~b82af35b/>

¹⁰ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer. "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 3.

according to Boelbouwer and Priemus several laws have been passed that make it easier for (foreign) investors to buy homes in the Netherlands.¹¹ This led to an increase for rental and purchase prices of houses. Protests were held against these changes.¹² The first housing protest was soon followed by other housing protests in various cities such as Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht.¹³ Affordable housing is a human right and not a profit mechanism, argue the protesters. There were also demands that the squatting ban to be abolished immediately.¹⁴

The vacant homes used to be squatted. This option is currently almost no longer possible, as squatting has completely prohibited by law since 2010.¹⁵ The first law that made squatting a criminal act in the Netherlands was passed in 1993. This law entailed that a property could not be squatted if it was not vacant for less than a year.¹⁶ The squatters' movement had to adapt new strategies and goals in view of the current government policies.¹⁷ Therefore, this change is the focus of this thesis. The following research question will answer it: "In what ways have neoliberal policies implemented in the Netherlands since 1994 until 2023 contributed to the transformation of the housing market, and how has this transformation influenced the strategies and goals of the Dutch squatters' movement, particularly in response to legal changes and societal perceptions?" To untangle this, several different issues, need to be explained separately. First: the current situation and history of the Dutch housing market. Secondly the history of the Dutch squatters' movement and the different laws that affected the movement, and lastly how the movement organized itself pre- and post- 2010.

This period is chosen because 1994 is a year after the first law was passed that made it criminal to squat a property that stood vacant for less than a year. 2023 is chosen because it is the year the cabinet under prime-minister Rutte fell. The cabinets that implemented the laws regarding squatting and the housing market always involved the VVD and CDA in these periods. In 2024 none of these parties are the leader of the government. Currently it is the PVV, so therefore 2023 is chosen.¹⁸

¹¹ P. J. Boelhouwer and H. M. H. van der Heijden, "De woningcrisis in Nederland vanuit een bestuurlijk perspectief: achtergronden en oplossingen," *Bestuurskunde* 31 n1 (2022): 31.

¹² Marcel Wiegman, "Deelnemers woonprotest: 'Een huis kopen zit er voor ons niet in'," *Parool*, September 12, 2021, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/deelnemers-woonprotest-een-huis-kopen-zit-er-voor-ons-niet-in~b82af35b/>

¹³ "Het Woonprotest," *Woonprotest*, accessed March 22, 2024. <https://woonprotest.nl>

¹⁴ "Het Woonprotest," *Woonprotest*, accessed March 22, 2024. <https://woonprotest.nl>

¹⁵ Hans Pruijt, "The Power of the Magic Key. Scalability of squatting in the Netherlands and the US," In *The Squatters' Movement in Europe. Commons and Autonomy as Alternatives to Capitalism*, ed. C. Cattaneo and M. A. Martínez. (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 121.

¹⁶ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 372.

¹⁷ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 23-24.

¹⁸ Maarten Loopmans, "Stikstof, falend beleid en radicaliserende boeren," *Ruimte & Maatschappij* 14 (2024): 2.

The following sub questions will provide a detailed analysis to answer this question.

The first sub question is: “To what extent have neoliberal policies in the Netherlands influenced developments in the housing market since 1994, and how have they contributed to the current situation on the housing market?” This chapter delves deeper and explains why there was a neoliberal change on the Dutch housing market and what its effect were. The governments at the time had various reasons why they passed certain laws. These laws eventually led to the housing crisis.¹⁹ This process is the focus of this chapter. The squatters’ movement and the Dutch housing market are connected. The squatters’ movement is a reaction to the housing market situation.²⁰ Therefore, it is necessary to examine how the housing market has been evolved in this period to explain the changes within the squatters’ movement. The neoliberal laws that will be discussed are as followed:

¹⁹ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 19-20.

²⁰ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 23-24.

TIMELINE 1: NEOLIBERAL TURN DUTCH HOUSING MARKET

1994

Less Money to Housing Corporations

Reduce the subsidies given to housing corporations, which were responsible for building social housing.

1995

Gentrification

Wanted more of luxurious and expensive houses to be built especially in prestige locations in large cities.

1996

Advantageous mortgages

Favorable terms for homebuyers in obtaining loans.

2015

Housing Act

Landlords could set their own rents.

2015

Temporary Rental Contracts

This law made it possible to offer temporary leases of up to two years.

2017

Jubelton

This allowed parents to give up to 100,000 euros tax-free to their children, provided the money was used to purchase a home.

The second chapter will answer the second sub question: “How did various laws introduced between 1994 and 2023 impact the Dutch squatters’ movement’s, legal status and societal perception?” This chapter will explain how the Dutch started the squatters’ movement and what their main goals are/were and how the society viewed the movement. To understand the current movement, it needs to be known what the history of the movement is. This chapter also will explain what laws were passed that led to the abolishment of squatting. This is needed to explain in the last chapter how the current squatters’

movement operates and is organized. These laws will be discussed in the chapter:

TIMELINE 2: LAWS AGAINST SQUATTING

1993

First law against Squatting

It is forbidden to squat a property in the Netherlands if it vacant for less than a year.

2010

Squatting Ban

A general ban on squatting in the Netherlands. The squatters risk a fine or jailtime when the person squats.

2022

Quicker Evictions

Squatters can be evicted in three days instead of the eight weeks.

The third and last chapter will answer the third sub question: “How has the squatters’ movement in the Netherlands developed after the introduction of the squatting ban, and in what ways have the aims and methods of the squatters’ movement adapted to the changed legal context?” This chapter will examine how the movement operates and developed after the ban in 2010. As of 2010 it is a criminal act to squat, so squatters have to be cautious.²¹ Therefore the movement had to adopt new strategies and are using new tools. This chapter will explain these changes.

²¹ Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc and Rutger Visser. "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 202.

1.1. Theoretical Concepts

In this thesis two concepts and one theory are primarily discussed. These are: neoliberalism, squatting and gentrification.

First, **neoliberalism** is a school of thought that became a political philosophy.

In neoliberalism the government has an enabling role in the market.²² The government takes an active stand in facilitating free trade. The goal of these policies is to create a free market which in the long run will make more money for the government. The individual needs to take more responsibility in this system. Neoliberalism creates deregulation of markets, the privatization of governmental owned enterprises and more freedoms related to finances and trading.²³ The primarily goal of the government is to facilitate this. This theory also became prominent in the Netherlands in the 1970s. Neoliberalism in the Netherlands had similarities with other countries but was still different. The Dutch government privatized various sectors such as housing but still had a role in it. For instance, the government subsidized housing corporations who were responsible for building social housing.²⁴ At the same time, various expenditures in social sectors and benefits were cut. Many government officials were also laid off. But there was still a social safety net in place even though spending was cut back.²⁵

Secondly, this thesis uses the concept of **gentrification**. Gentrification is a concept which refers to the reconstruction and renovation of certain residential areas and cities. Renovating and "improving" neighborhoods is the core of this process.²⁶ The meaning and usage of gentrification has changed steadily over the years. In the 1960s and 1970s, gentrification referred to the process of renovating old industrial housing into contemporary, more luxurious homes. However, in the 21st century gentrification got a new meaning in the Netherlands after the neoliberalist turn.²⁷ Gentrification became a tool to evict the current residents of a neighborhood. This is also true in the Dutch case. In several Dutch cities neighborhoods exist where the houses were built in the last century, these homes are often of poor quality. Also, these houses are mostly inhabited by people with lower incomes. Investors and the municipality recognize that the land in these neighborhoods is worth a lot of money. Because of neoliberal policies these investors can buy up these homes and gentrify the neighborhood. The old homes are demolished, and more

²² Merijn Oudenampsen and Bram Mellink, "De zichtbare hand: een historisch-sociologische benadering van neoliberalisme in Nederland," *Tijdschrift Sociologie* 15.3 (2019): 243.

²³ *Ibid.*, 243.

²⁴ Pieter van Wijnen, "Stemgedrag en de partij-politieke context," in *Politieke veranderingen in Nederland 1971-1998*, ed Jacques Thomassen et al (Den Haag: Sdu, 2000), 169.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁶ K. Shaw, "Gentrification: What It Is, Why It Is, and What Can Be Done about It," *Geography Compass* 2 (2008): 1698.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1698-99.

expensive homes are built in their place.²⁸ At the same time, because of neoliberalism in Netherlands, a lot of social houses are being sold after 2010 to private investors. These houses are demolished, and more expensive housing are built replacing the original homes. The original owners can't afford these new rent prices and are forced to move.²⁹ Gentrification is used in the Netherlands to 'improve' neighborhoods and whilst doing this, houses in the neighborhood increase in price simultaneously.³⁰ Neoliberal policies shaped the opportunity for this form of gentrification, and this is how it is mostly studied in Dutch academic literature.

Lastly, this thesis discusses the concept of **squatting**. Squatting is one of the main topics of this thesis and therefore it needs an introduction. According to Hans Pruijt, there can be made a distinction between two different types of squatting: urban squatting and squatting of vacant land.³¹ Both types are addressed in this thesis. Urban squatting refers to the process how squatters gain access to vacant properties. Usually, the goal of this is to find a place to live. However, there are different reasons why buildings are being squatted.³² The squatters often do not have permission from the owner to enter and squat the building thus often 'illegally' enter the property. The squatters are most of the time not represented by a group or organization but are part of the larger squatters' movement. They can however form a group to squat a larger building or dwelling and live together. Or they can form a group to organize different squats.³³ In squatting of vacant land, squatters take access to a vacant piece of land and then build their own shelter and facilities on it. Again, this is usually done without the permission of the owner of the land.³⁴ The squatters' movement is often referred to in Dutch academic literature as an activist group. According to Duivenvoorden is squatting also used as a way of protesting.³⁵ Throughout its history, the squatters' movement argues that the housing shortage is caused by the government.³⁶ Squatting and activism are intertwined.

²⁸ Myrte Hoekstra, Wouter van Gent, and Willem Boterman, "Kwartiermaken als symbolische politiek in overheidsgestuurde gentrificatie," *Sociologos* 39.3 (2018): 243-44.

²⁹ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 70.

³⁰ Myrte Hoekstra, Wouter van Gent, and Willem Boterman, "Kwartiermaken als symbolische politiek in overheidsgestuurde gentrificatie," *Sociologos* 39.3 (2018): 244.

³¹ Hans Pruijt, "The Logic of Urban Squatting," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37 (2013): 20.

³² *Ibid.*, 20.

³³ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁵ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 116.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

1.2. Literature report

The subject of my thesis is the squatters' movement in the Netherlands and the changing housing market from 1994 until present day. The historiography covers sources that deal with the following three themes: the Dutch housing market after 1990 which marks the beginning of the neoliberal turn on the housing market, the Dutch squatters' movement and how activist groups emerge and evolve over time.

The historiography on the neoliberalist turn of the Dutch housing market starts in the 1990s. In this period, academic literature about the housing market primarily concerns itself with analyzing the changes from the switch; where the government had an active role in the housing market towards a housing market which was privatized. Priemus and van Kempen stated the neoliberal turn could have a negative impact on the housing market. They issue warnings but are still hopeful whilst studying these changes. Priemus and van Kempen start to explain how the Dutch housing market evolved since 1990. They argue that in the 1990s, 41 percent of rental housing in the Netherlands was social housing. As a result of this, neighborhoods were diverse.³⁷ However, since 1997, the government has implemented a new political course that focused more on the private sector of renting. One of the government's goals was to raise the prices of rental housing to generate more income. The government is distancing itself from the housing market.³⁸ The authors warn against this change. They argue that currently Dutch social housing is unique in Europe, with respect to the amount of social housing in the Netherlands, and due this new political course, The Netherlands is losing this unique position.³⁹ Priemus and van Kempen base their work on primary sources. They cite multiple government decisions and figures from housing associations.⁴⁰

Other authors who warn about the changes during this period are Feijten and Mulder. They argue that a new phenomenon can be seen in the study about the Dutch housing market, which is the concept of timing. They mention that the concept of timing is not found in studies on the subject at the moment.⁴¹ When the housing market is studied it is important that the researcher accounts for the timing of the research. The timing when the research is done could have implications for the outcome.⁴² The housing market is constantly changing. For example, The Netherlands came out of the economic crisis in the 1990s and people were able to buy higher-end homes again. This happened simultaneously with the new

³⁷ Ronald van Kempen and Hugo Priemus. "Revolution in social housing in the Netherlands: possible effects of new housing policies," *Urban Studies* 39 (2002): 237.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 238.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁴¹ Peteke Feijten and Clara H. Mulder, "The Timing of Household Events and Housing Events in the Netherlands: A Longitudinal Perspective," *Housing Studies* 17 (2002): 774-75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 791.

direction of the government. This led to an increase of the housing prices.⁴³ They base their article on primary quantitative sources. They examine what the trends are in terms of house seekers, age, gender, and link that to the housing market.⁴⁴

Just after the Financial Crisis, the changes on the Dutch housing market before the crisis were studied again. The results of the new political course from the 90s could be examined. Vandevyvere and Zenthöfe list these government changes on Dutch housing market from before the Financial Crisis in 2008. Subsequently they argue whether the neoliberal turn was successful or not. They list changes such as lowering interest rates on mortgages and providing tax benefits for homeowners.⁴⁵ They argue that as a result, more homes were built in the Netherlands for the high-end segment, meaning more expensive and luxurious homes.⁴⁶ They argue that this policy worked in the beginning with an increase in prices of houses and more houses being built. The Dutch economy flourished at that time.⁴⁷ But eventually these plans faltered, because of the prices of houses getting too high and the Financial Crisis that happened which led to an increase in houses being sold for low prices. This caused the Dutch housing market and economy to fall flat.⁴⁸ Continuing, they list options on how the government can reignite the housing market.⁴⁹ They base their article mainly on primary quantitative sources. For example, they cite data from the IMF and CPB and substantiate these found data with secondary sources dealing with the Dutch housing market.⁵⁰

Next, the historiography on the neoliberal turn Dutch housing market is written about by scholars who have experienced the implications of the different policies.

Hochtstenbach and van Gent start to argue that after the financial crisis of 2008 the government tried to get out of the crisis by making the housing market attractive to foreign investors. During the crisis, the prices of houses had fallen. Following this, the government passed laws so that foreign investors could buy homes here more easily to stimulate the housing market, which should fuel the crimpling economy according to the government. This policy has been going on for the last 15 years, the authors state.⁵¹ Currently, mainly social housing is being demolished and replaced by high-end/expensive

⁴³ Ibid., 791.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 791-92.

⁴⁵ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22-23

⁴⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 27-29.

⁵¹ W. van Gent and C. Hochstenbach, "The neo-liberal politics and socio-spatial implications of Dutch post-crisis social housing policies," *International Journal of housing Policy* 20 (2020): 156-157.

houses.⁵² This has caused rents and housing prices to skyrocket and become almost unaffordable. They base their research on government decisions and then look at how these laws were eventually implemented and what the consequences are.⁵³ Musterd sees a change in the housing market primarily in the decline of public housing. She mentions that the Netherlands once had a lot of social housing houses compared to other Western European countries. At the peak it was around 40% of the rental market. This number has decreased significantly since the government withdrew from the housing market.⁵⁴ However, she points out there is little control over the housing anymore because it is almost all privately owned. Musterd stated that because of the lack of oversight, living conditions have deteriorated enormously as a result. She argues because of problems like this the government needs to apply stricter legislation like Hochstenbach and van Gent argue.⁵⁵ She bases her work on a mix of primary and secondary sources. She also cites different government laws, studies by different agencies, and law review articles to support her arguments. She also uses multiple figures to demonstrate the changes in the housing market.⁵⁶

It can be concluded that since the 90s there has been a shift from government-controlled to a privatized housing market in the Netherlands. This led to a decline of social housing and increased privatization on the market. This transformation towards a privatized housing market has resulted in decreased affordability and accessibility. The consequences of the neoliberal turn eventually in the end backfired. Where it was first promoting economic growth and housing development, leading to unaffordable housing prices and economic instability during crises. The development of the housing market is a crucial part of this thesis; the squatters' movement and the housing market are closely linked. Like previously stated is the squatters' movement a response to the situation on the housing market. For example, legislation affecting the housing market can determine the need for squatting. A shift to a more privatized housing market creates reasons why people choose to squat. Albeit to find affordable housing or to protest this neoliberal turn.

In response to housing shortages, the Dutch squatters' movement emerged in the late 1960s.⁵⁷ Only limited literature has been written about the Dutch squatters' movement itself. Therefore, the historiography on the Dutch squatters' movement begins before the 1990s. The whole evolution that the movement went through is relevant for this thesis. Numerous scholars have written about the Dutch housing market. These scholars expanded on to the 1990s and the neoliberal turn are most relevant to this

⁵² Ibid., 159-160.

⁵³ Ibid., 170-172.

⁵⁴ Sako Musterd, "Public Housing for Whom? Experiences in an Era of Mature Neo-Liberalism: The Netherlands and Amsterdam," *Housing Studies* 29 (2014): 469.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 470.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 484.

⁵⁷ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 8.

thesis. Therefore, the historiography of the neoliberal turn begins in the 1990s. There can two main facets be identified regarding the historiography on the Dutch squatters' movement. These are:

- Historical Evolution and Context
- Motivations for Squatting

Each facet is discussed separately.

First the historical evolution and context. One scholar attempted to do research on the movement was Tromp. In 1981, he noted that practically no research had been conducted on the Dutch squatters' movement.⁵⁸ He then wrote an article on the movement. He highlights the history of the movement and what change they underwent in the 1970s. He notes that in the beginning the movement had the support and sympathy of the Dutch population. However, the movement lost this support when far-left groups joined the movement. The far-left groups used squatting as a form of protest which made the squatting more extreme and violent.⁵⁹

Duivenvoorden is the main scholar who started to look in depth at the movement. Duivenvoorden is the only scholar who mapped the general history of the Dutch squatters' movement. He wrote a book to chart the history of the Dutch squatters' movement. In his book, he did not focus on one city or specific squatter group. Instead, he wrote and analyzed key events within the squatters' movement during the period from 1964 to 1999. He emphasizes individual groups and squatter initiatives, and how they contributed to changes within the Dutch squatters' movement.⁶⁰ He bases his book mainly on primary sources such as reports on squatting, newspaper articles, photographs, and interviews with squatters. He then supports these findings with secondary sources. These deal mainly with the history of various social movements.⁶¹

Squatting was eventually banned to protect the rights of property owners. It was a difficult and long process to evict squatters. Therefor a general squatting ban was implemented to safeguard property owners for this.⁶² After the squatting ban in 2010, however, a new group of scholars emerged and began writing on the subject. However, the bulk of the articles are focused on a specific city. Where prior research mainly focused on the whole movement. The focus of current research is now primarily on the movement of a specific city. Furthermore, it is now being studied what the ideology of the movement is. People squat not only to find affordable housing. These reasons are now being explored and studied. Where for example Duivenvoorden and Tromp gave a general description of the movement and studied multiple groups within the squatters' movement, current research is more focused on a specific city or

⁵⁸ B. A. Tromp, "Kraken als actievoeren: een verkenning," *Sociologische gids* 28 (1981): 23-24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

⁶⁰ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶² Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc, and Rutger Visser, "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 205.

ideology. An example of this is Dadusc, she writes mainly about the Amsterdam squatters' movement. She has written several articles about the movement from before and after the squatting ban. In an article, she wrote after the squatting ban, she notes that the relationship between squatter and government changed with the implemented squatting ban.⁶³ She then gives a brief overview of the history of the Amsterdam squatters' movement. For example, it began in the 1960s. During this period, houses were declared uninhabitable on a large scale. As a result, they became vacant. Like Tromp, she states that the grouping became increasingly extreme in the 1970s and 1980s with the entry of extreme leftist groups into the movement. Until the 1990s, the Amsterdam municipality tolerated squatting.⁶⁴ However, squatters were evicted from squatted housing after the squatting ban.⁶⁵ She bases this article largely on primary sources. Thus, she cites interviews, newspaper articles and debates dealing with the squatters' movement.⁶⁶ In 2009, Dadusc wrote an article about the Amsterdam squatters' movement. This is prior of the ban. She also mapped out how the squatting ban affected the movement but is only still focused on Amsterdam. She argues that the Amsterdam squatters' movement is a multicultural movement consisting of people with different backgrounds and ethnicities.⁶⁷ Dadusc mentions several reasons why people join the squatters' movement, some people do this as a protest action but others because this is their only way to find housing in Amsterdam.⁶⁸ She then also addresses that there is a prejudice on the movement, namely that violence is used against "outsiders". She refutes this claim, and that the squatters' movement is open to everyone.⁶⁹ She bases her work on interviews with some squatters, people from the municipality, the police, and the Public Ministry. She substantiates these interviews with the limited secondary literature written on the subject.⁷⁰ It should be clear how the Dutch squatters' movement has changed over time. Initially, the movement enjoyed broad public support. Over time, however, the movement radicalized, especially with the involvement of far-left groups. This led to a decline in public sympathy. This development eventually led to the squatting ban in 2010. This marked a turning point in the history of the movement and its relationship with Dutch housing and property legislation. Secondly the historiography discusses motivations for squatting.

⁶³ Deanna Dadusc, "Enclosing Autonomy," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 23 (2019): 170.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 173-76.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁶⁷ Frank van Gemert, Rutger Visser and Deanna Dadusc, "Kraken in Amsterdam; dubbele observatie revisited," *Kwalon* 15.1 (2010): 31.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

As mentioned earlier, the main research focus on the squatters' movement changed after a while. Whereas at first mainly historical research was done on the movement in different cities, the main focus of research was now on the different ideologies and motives of the squatters' movement.

There have been articles written about the squatters' movement in different European countries. The reasons why they squat are primarily being researched. For example, prominent scholar about squatting, Katsiaficas who has written a book on the squatting scene in Europe does state that squatters want to take back housing from the so-called 1 percent. The 1 percent refers to the richest population percentile of a country.⁷¹ Investors buy up housing on a large scale, causing the prices to go up. Then these investors demand far too high rents. Katsiaficas argues that this is why squatters squat properties, to "recapture" these properties and to find affordable housing.⁷² He bases his work on several interviews with squatters and secondary sources dealing with the subject.⁷³

Hans Pruijt is considered one of the specialists who has published several articles on the Dutch squatters' movement. In one article, Pruijt identifies five reasons why the squatters' movement squats properties. These are: entrepreneurial squatting, squatting as alternative housing spaces, political squatting, disadvantage-based squatting, and conservation-based squatting.⁷⁴ This article is based on primary sources such as interviews and various newspaper articles. He also found material about the movement in archives.⁷⁵ Pruijt argues in another article that the squatters' movement underwent a change after the national squatting ban. From its inception, the squatters' movement has been an activist movement who do not agree with different governmental policies like the Dutch housing policy. Whereas in the first years the buildings were still squatted because they provided a place to live. Squatting became more and more politically motivated after the squatting ban. This is what Pruijt argued.⁷⁶ He bases this article on several primary sources such as newspaper articles and interviews. But now also builds on his own work, such as the previous article which has been discussed.⁷⁷

⁷¹ G. Katsiaficas, *City is ours: Squatting and autonomous movements in Europe from the 1970s to the present* (New York: PM Press, 2014), 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷³ Discussing squatters' movements in other countries is not relevant to this thesis, as it focuses exclusively on the Netherlands. Moreover, comparison with other countries is difficult. The laws in each Western European country differ significantly, and the way squatting is dealt with varies by region in different countries as well. However, many Western countries have passed legislation to limit the rights of the squatters' movement, with the aim of protecting the property rights of homeowners. Mapping and comparing other squatters' movements is too extensive of a task in the context of this study but may be relevant for future research.

⁷⁴ Hans Pruijt, "Kraken in Europa," *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor Socialistische Discussie en Analyse* 2.1 (2009): 79-80.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 106-7.

⁷⁶ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1114-1116.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1116.

After the squatting ban, the squatters' movement can primarily be seen as an activist movement. Most squatters who used to squat to find affordable housing left the movement. They risked a fine or even prison time and therefore they left.⁷⁸ Squatting after the ban was a way of protesting because squats are newsworthy and gain attention. Therefore, a small description of the historiography of Dutch activist groups is mentioned. According to Blee, an activist movement is a group of people who come together to change something in society or protect their own ideals. These can be different goals. She also mentions that each group has a different way of protesting.⁷⁹

The historiography on Dutch activist groups primarily concerns with analyzing how these groups formed and how they spread their message. The authors who write about this view that with the coming of modern technological advancements activist groups changed. How activist groups are being studied changed, more case studies are being used. However, there are only few studies done about this topic for Dutch activist groups. One of the earliest studies is from Kriesi.

Kriesi examined how activist groups formed in the 1980's in the Netherlands. He stated that with the existence of a new social class a new protest wave started. This new middle class wanted to protect their autonomy and organized themselves into an activist group. In the 1980's this was primarily done by organizing protests.⁸⁰

Hellsten and Jacobs delve deeper into the different ways of protesting. They mention how social media changed activist groups. Social media is now one of the main assets that social movements can use.⁸¹ They study how Dutch animal welfare activists use Twitter to gain support and traction. Twitter is an ideal platform to mobilize and inform a large crowd.⁸²

Concluding that Dutch activist groups have adapted over time, with for example using social media platforms like Twitter for mobilization and outreach. The study of Dutch activist groups focuses on how these groups are formed and how they protest. This is relevant for this research because, many squatters who originally joined the movement to find affordable housing left due to legal risks after the squatting ban. This shift transformed squatting into a form of protest to gain attention and challenge neoliberal policies.

It can be concluded that several authors started to write negatively on the introduction of several neoliberal policies by the government in the 1990s regarding the Dutch housing market. Whereas at first

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1114-1116.

⁷⁹ Kathleen M. Blee, *Democracy in the making: How activist groups form* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 27-29.

⁸⁰ Hanspeter Kriesi, "New social movements and the new class in the Netherlands," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1989): 1078.

⁸¹ Anke Wonneberger, Iina R. Hellsten and Sandra H.J. Jacobs, "Hashtag activism and the configuration of counterpublics: Dutch animal welfare debates on Twitter," *Information, Communication & Society* 24 (2021): 1694-95.

⁸² Ibid., 1695

several scholars trusted these plans and were hopeful, recently these decisions have been criticized. These criticisms are now the focus of academic writing regarding the housing market. The historiography of the squatters' movement moved away from historical research focusing on the general movement, towards studying separate squatters' groups in specific cities. Also, the ideologies and reasons to squat are now of interest. Lastly the historiography of Dutch squatter groups shows that almost no research about it has been done. The role and the use of social media is hardly being discussed and only applied to some activist groups.

1.3. Innovative aspects

- Linking Squatters' Movement to Neoliberal Housing Policies
- Analysis of the Squatters' Movement Across Multiple Cities
- Use of Social Media as a Tool for Activism
- Use of Primary Sources

Several studies have been conducted about the evolution of the housing market and the squatters' movement. But there is a gap in the knowledge about how the squatters' movement adapted after the squatting ban and linking this development to the rise of neoliberalism on the housing market, like argued in the previous section. Studies have been done regarding the housing market but often they do not mention the squatters' movement or address it briefly. Even though the squatters' movement and housing market are interlinked. The squatters' movement is a direct response to the situation of the housing market.⁸³ The laws that effect the housing market dictate if there is a need to squat. By linking the two fields it creates an interesting case study how activism, the squatters, respond to changes the government makes regarding the housing market. At the same time, there are hardly any articles written how the squatters' movement adapted after the squatting ban. Researched that was done about it, was only focused on a specific city like stated in the previous section. This thesis explores the relationship between changes in the housing market and the evolution of the squatters' movement. It aims to demonstrate how an activist movement, such as the squatters' movement, responds to shifting government policies. Additionally, it highlights how the squatters' movement has often been used as a scapegoat for the implementation of neoliberal policies by the government. For this it will look at the whole squatters' movement across multiple cities. This thesis will focus on how the squatters' movement itself is organizing and manifesting itself in the period from 1994 until 2023. Activistic groups can quickly adapt after a new development like new regulations.⁸⁴ This also happened to the squatters' movement. The squatting ban transformed the movement, with the rise of social media which is a new tool squatter collectives use. This tool is very useful for them because they can reach a broader group of people.⁸⁵ They can inform and mobilize people this way. Little to no research has been done on this. On how Dutch activist groups can or use social media, hardly any articles are written. This thesis will fill this gap regarding the squatters' movement. To answer the research question, it will look at various governmental decisions, interviews with (former) squatters and social media posts of various squatter collectives.

⁸³ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 8.

⁸⁴ Anke Wonneberger, Iina R. Hellsten and Sandra H.J. Jacobs, "Hashtag activism and the configuration of counterpublics: Dutch animal welfare debates on Twitter," *Information, Communication & Society* 24 (2021): 1694-95.

⁸⁵ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1114-116.

Studying these sources will create an overview to answer the research question. This is also a new methodology regarding research on the squatters' movement. Most of the time interviews or laws are being used. But often one of those two is primarily being used like argued in the previous section.. None of the contemporary research about the movement look at the role social media has on the evolution of the movement like stated in the previous section. This thesis will use these types of sources to substantiate the research question.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Source criticism

This thesis will primarily use three different kinds of primary sources to answer the research question:

- Various governmental decisions
- Social media posts of different squatter collectives
- Interviews with (former) squatters

The first source consists of parliamentary debates on passed laws that have influenced the squatters' movement or the Dutch housing market. Secondly, this thesis will use media postings from various Instagram pages of squatter collectives like Mokum Kraakt. Thirdly the interviews are from a book called *Pak Mokum Terug*. It is published by a squatter's collective called Mokum Kraakt. The book consists of multiple essays, interviews, and manifests from the squatters' movement. Several different squatters' groups are mentioned and speak their mind in this book.⁸⁶

The strengths of debates are that it becomes clear what effects the government's actions had and how they impacted the squatters' movement and the Dutch housing market. Also, quotes can be found what the political parties thought about the laws. This way it becomes clear what their argumentation and notices were about the laws.⁸⁷ This will most likely result in new insights that would be hard to get by reading secondary sources on the movement and laws. The limitations are that the persons involved in the debates are members of a political party. The political parties in question have their own opinions on squatting and the elected members follow their party's views on the matter. The speaker is defending their party's position in the Senate or House of Representatives.⁸⁸ This is not a major issue considering this thesis. The reasoning behind the laws is what is needed, not the individual opinion of the speaker. The arguments and the words chosen by the speakers reflect the party's view regarding the specific topic.

The media posts will be used to show what metamorphosis the squatters' movement underwent after the squatting ban and how they use new tools to achieve their goals. Social media posts can be used to showcase how they organize after the ban and what the reasoning behind the squats are. The squatters' movement use social media for example to spread their message or announce new squats. They share information online that otherwise wouldn't be shared or hard to find. Via analysis it can be studied how their goals and means changed overtime. Some limitations are that the posts are catered to a larger audience. It is used to spread the message of the collective and to get the support of the public.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 25.

⁸⁷ Eric Duivendoorn, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 372.

⁸⁸ Rune Slothuus, "When can political parties lead public opinion? Evidence from a natural experiment," *Political Communication* 27 (2010): 158.

⁸⁹ Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the streets: social media and contemporary activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 18.

Therefore, the information in the posts can be skewed or biased. The information that is shared in the posts must be cross checked with other posts or information about that specific event or topic. Or I will need to address the biases this way to highlight how the squatter's collective think or view a specific topic or event.

One of the advantages of interviews and manifests is that this will provide information from squatters who were affected by the ban. *Pak Mokum Terug* is published in 2023. Multiple groups speak their mind in the book and share how they organize themselves after the ban. Also, they mention the reasons why they squat and their discontent with governmental policies.⁹⁰ However, the book also has its limitations. The opinions of the interviewees can be colored and not be objective, as they are part of the movement. This is however useful for this thesis, because it shows how the squatter really thinks about the topics and speak their truth. Also, it is not guaranteed that interviewees remember everything correctly. Personal experiences influence a person's recollection of events. To overcome this, this thesis can use social media posts to showcase what really happened or to prove the point of the interviewee. Different groups speak their mind in the book. It is possible that the feelings they share may not correspond with the whole sentiment of a national squatters' movement.⁹¹ In this thesis multiple opinions and views will be shown, squatting is a tool not a sentiment. The group and collectives are the ones who form the movement and there will always be different opinions. Therefore, multiple squatter groups and collectives will be used in this thesis. Lastly the book only covers the squatters' movement in Amsterdam. To tackle this issue, this thesis will use social media profiles and news articles from squatter groups and collective that are based in other big cities.

This thesis will use a variety of qualitative secondary sources to cover a wide range of topics. For the housing market, the sources will mainly focus on explaining the relevant laws that affected the housing market and what the effects were of these laws. The secondary sources on the squatters' movement will mainly discuss the origins and development of the movement. In addition, the ideals, goals and methods of the movement will be outlined based on the work of Hans Pruijt. Finally, several newspaper articles will be used to explain recent squatting activities and provide context as to why they took place. These articles are preferred because reports from the squatters themselves are often biased and skewed. Therefore, newspaper articles will serve as the main source for background information on squatting activities.

⁹⁰ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 25.

⁹¹ Ali Alsaawi, "A critical review of qualitative interviews," *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 3 (2014): 153-155.

1.4.2. Methods

This thesis will rely primarily on qualitative sources. Primary sources will be analyzed qualitatively.

Qualitative document analysis will be used for the laws and debates and the social media posts. This is a method that analyzes primary sources that are electronic or physical documents. The debates are online in the database. The debates are transcribed. By using this method, the researcher can understand, interpret, and extract information from these types of sources. For each political party, the position on the squatters' movement can be identified by analyzing the debates. Then the underlying reasons and arguments about the laws are found and an analysis can be formulated about this.⁹²

The same applies for the social media posts. A particular photo or text is chosen. By applying this analysis, I can independently understand, interpret, and extract information from the posts and see why a certain layout or text was chosen. This may have a secondary function and help interpret why the posts were posted and what the collective's goals are with the post.⁹³

The second method used in this thesis is **qualitative thematic analysis**. This is used to analyze the interviews with squatters from the book *Pak Mokum Terug*. Using a thematic analysis looks for the overarching themes in the data but also how it is represented and disseminated. This method can be applied to collect and analyze data from texts, interviews and focus groups. In the interviews relevant to this study, there are several reasons why people squat. By applying the method, these can be found out.⁹⁴

The challenges expected are mainly in studying the interviews and debates.

A challenge for analyzing the interviews is that there are only a few interviews. There is a chance that the information relevant to this study may not be covered in the interviews. If this happens, new interviews must be found or the interviews need to be interpreted differently. For the second primary source, a challenge is to find the relevant debates. The debates are in a government online database. In the database it is possible to search for terms such as "squatting" and the names of relevant laws. Henceforth it is possible to check the debates to see if they are relevant to answer the research question. When the relevant laws are uncovered the relevant, the parliamentary debates can be scoped down by political party and research what their position was regarding that specific law. Forthcoming these quotes can support and substantiate an argument.

⁹² Glenn A. Bowen, "Document analysis as a qualitative research method," *Qualitative research journal* 9 (2009): 27-28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁹⁴ Mojtaba Vaismoradi, Hannele Turunen and Terese Bondas, "Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study," *Nursing & health sciences* 15.3 (2013): 398.

Chapter 2: The neoliberal turn in the Dutch housing market

The Dutch housing market has undergone severe transformations since the mid-1980s, marked by a shift to neoliberal policies that have changed the housing market.⁹⁵ This chapter delves into the evolution of housing policy in the Netherlands since 1994; examining how government measures have contributed to the current tight/constrained housing market.⁹⁶ With a special emphasis on various economic crises in the Netherlands. This chapter attempts to analyze the complex interaction between policy decisions and market forces that concerns the Dutch housing market.

The Netherlands was long known for its progressive social policies and historically stable housing market.⁹⁷ However, this changed with the rise of neoliberalism in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s. Neoliberalism, has an emphasis on deregulation, privatization, and market forces.⁹⁸ These types of policies influenced governmental approaches to various sectors, including housing. In the housing sector, neoliberal policies advocated a reduced role of the state and greater reliance on market mechanisms. This would lead to greater efficiency and innovation which would generate more income for the government. However, the consequences of these policies have been negative.⁹⁹ The housing market has been reformed with problems of affordability, accessibility, and social inequality.¹⁰⁰

Since 1994, Dutch governments have pursued neoliberal housing policies, steering the market toward privatization and commodification. The deregulation of the rental sector, initiated by the Housing Act of 1994 under the government of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, marked a significant break with earlier types of policies.¹⁰¹ Proponents of these changes argued that liberalization would encourage investment and improve housing quality, opponents were skeptical. They were concerned about the impact on affordability and social inequality in the Netherlands.¹⁰² One of the defining features of the Dutch housing market in the neoliberal era is the declining availability of affordable housing, especially

⁹⁵ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 7.

⁹⁶ W. van Gent and C. Hochstenbach, "The neo-liberal politics and socio-spatial implications of Dutch post-crisis social housing policies," *International Journal of housing Policy* 20 (2020): 163-64.

⁹⁷ Ronald van Kempen and Hugo Priemus, "Revolution in social housing in the Netherlands: possible effects of new housing policies," *Urban Studies* 39 (2002): 237.

⁹⁸ Pieter van Wijnen, "Stemgedrag en de partij-politieke context," in *Politieke veranderingen in Nederland 1971-1998*, ed Jacques Thomassen et al. (Den Haag: Sdu, 2000), 169-70.

⁹⁹ Lianne Hans, "Ruimtelijke segregatie op de Nederlandse woningmarkt: wie kan waar nog kopen?," *Real Estate Research* 1 (2022): 12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰¹ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Eerste Kamer 1994-1995 nr. 23," (21 March 1995): 23-956/57.
<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-19941995-23-926-977.html>

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 23-959/60.

for low- and middle-income families.¹⁰³ The emphasis on market-driven solutions has led to rising real estate prices and rental costs. Many people in the Netherlands can no longer afford these prices. The tightness is strengthened by speculative investments and the limited number of housing units in large cities.¹⁰⁴ This has created a situation where affordable housing has become a major problem for part of the Dutch population. Especially this is the case of starters on the housing market.¹⁰⁵ Starters on the housing market are individuals or households looking to buy a home for the first time.¹⁰⁶

The following sections of this chapter take a closer look at the changes by which neoliberal policies have affected the Dutch housing market since 1994. The focus is on housing affordability, housing security and social inequality. The main legal changes are cited, thereby attempting to analyze the main aspects that have contributed to the current housing crisis. This is done to the following research question: “To what extent has neoliberal policy in the Netherlands influenced developments in the housing market since 1994 and how has it contributed to the current situation in the housing market?” Quotes from different politicians during several debates in the Dutch House of Representatives will be used to support the arguments and highlight what the thinking was behind the laws of the different political parties. Several articles have been written about the process of neoliberalism of the Dutch housing market, but the ideas behind the laws are rarely looked at. Quotes or the actual laws are rarely cited. By using a mix of primary and secondary sources, this chapter will create an overview on the changes of the Dutch housing market.

2.1. Deregulation of the housing market

The housing shortage in the Netherlands has not only been a problem since the 21st century. Already after World War I, the Netherlands had a housing shortage. This had several causes which will be discussed in more detail later in chapter two. The government had an active role in facilitating housing in the period from 1945 to the 1980s.¹⁰⁷ The government under the leadership of several cabinets built many social housing units themselves and encouraged housing construction.¹⁰⁸ This process eventually led to the

¹⁰³ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 58.

¹⁰⁴ P. Boelhouwer, “The housing market in The Netherlands as a driver for social inequalities: proposals for reform,” *International Journal of Housing Policy* 20 (2020): 453.

¹⁰⁵ Lianne Hans, “Ruimtelijke segregatie op de Nederlandse woningmarkt: wie kan waar nog kopen?,” *Real Estate Research* 1 (2022): 12.

¹⁰⁶ L.Esveld and A. de Jong, “Intentie om een woning te kopen varieert sterk onder starters en huurders,” *Bevolkingstrends* mei (2013): 1.

¹⁰⁷ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, “The housing market in the Netherlands,” *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 5.

¹⁰⁸ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Eerste Kamer 1994-1995 nr. 23,” (21 March 1995): 23-956/57.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-19941995-23-926-977.html>

Netherlands having a unique housing market compared to the rest of the European countries. At its peak in the early 1990s, 41 percent of rental housing in the Netherlands was social housing.¹⁰⁹ This policy eventually caused the Dutch housing market to stabilize in the 1970s. An equilibrium was found where there was enough supply and demand.¹¹⁰ During this period, various cabinets generally pursued social democratic policies, with the government trying to generate more revenue by investing in society.¹¹¹ However, this process of the Dutch government having an active role in the housing market also caused a lot of spending. This caused the Dutch national debt to rise.¹¹² The Prime Minister during that time, Ruud Lubbers wanted to limit government spending and generate more (tax) revenue. He did this by pursuing a neoliberal policy.¹¹³ As mentioned earlier, neoliberalism centers on the view that a government supports and drives the market.

This process has been evident in the Dutch housing market since the 1990s.¹¹⁴ Whereas in the 1980s this process was mainly not yet focused on the housing market, in the 1990s the market was deregulated.¹¹⁵ The government's first step in 1994 was to reduce the subsidies given to housing corporations, which were responsible for building social housing. This resulted in housing corporations having less money to build social rental housing, for which a large share of the Dutch population can qualify.¹¹⁶ This policy caused significantly less social rental housing to be built after 1995 and the percentage of rental housing compared to rental housing in the free market decreased.¹¹⁷ The free market refers to the private rental market. Here landlords are allowed to set their own rents where for social rental housing the government sets a maximum amount of how expensive the rent can be.¹¹⁸ This decision ultimately ensured that there are not enough social housing units, causing long waiting periods and people

¹⁰⁹ Ronald van Kempen and Hugo Priemus, "Revolution in social housing in the Netherlands: possible effects of new housing policies," *Urban Studies* 39 (2002): 237.

¹¹⁰ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 5.

¹¹¹ Duco Hellema, *Nederland en de jaren zeventig* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012), 14.

¹¹² Pieter van Wijnen, "Stemgedrag en de partij-politieke context," in *Politieke veranderingen in Nederland 1971-1998*, ed Jacques Thomassen et al. (Den Haag: Sdu, 2000), 169.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹¹⁴ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Eerste Kamer 1994-1995 nr. 23," (21 March 1995): 23-926.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-19941995-23-926-977.html>

¹¹⁵ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 7.

¹¹⁶ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Eerste Kamer 1994-1995 nr. 23," (21 March 1995): 23-926.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-19941995-23-926-977.html>

¹¹⁷ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 6.

¹¹⁸ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 146-47.

deciding to look for housing on the free market.¹¹⁹ This leads to more competition in the free market, causing rents to rise.

From 1995 the government implemented several policies focusing more on the free rental market.¹²⁰ The government wants more houses to be built in the middle and high segments. This would generate income in the long run.¹²¹ The government also wanted more of these types of houses to be built especially in prestige locations in large cities, for example. This was to improve the appearance of neighborhoods and warm up investors to build and buy more homes.¹²² To achieve this, mainly cheap and in poor condition rental housing had to be demolished. These were mainly social housing or housing with low rents. The government wanted the reputation of neighborhoods to improve.¹²³

This gentrification caused expensive housing to be built instead, which original residents could not afford. This led to them having to look for other housing.¹²⁴ For example during a debate about this process of gentrification in the House of Representative (HoR) in 1995, opposition member of the PVDA stated, “So then you get the curious situation that the lowest income earners are excluded from all the neighborhoods in which the process of ‘gentrification’ is taking place.”¹²⁵ This process of gentrification eventually did not solve the housing shortage or rising rents.¹²⁶ Ultimately, this government focus on the free market caused the disappearance of social rental housing. Instead, the focus of the housing market shifted to building entire neighborhoods consisting mainly of expensive owner-occupied housing or gentrifying neighborhoods in cities.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 146-47

¹²⁰ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1996-1997 nr. 72,” (2 May 1996): 72-5136.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-19961997-5125-5162.html>

¹²¹ Ronald van Kempen and Hugo Priemus, "Revolution in social housing in the Netherlands: possible effects of new housing policies," *Urban Studies* 39 (2002): 237.

¹²² Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1995-1996 nr. 28,” (21 November 1995): 28-2093.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-19951996-28-2081-2104.html>

¹²³ Ronald van Kempen and Hugo Priemus, "Revolution in social housing in the Netherlands: possible effects of new housing policies," *Urban Studies* 39 (2002): 245.

¹²⁴ K. Shaw, “Gentrification: What It Is, Why It Is, and What Can Be Done about It,” *Geography Compass* 2 (2008): 1698.

¹²⁵ “Dan krijg je dus de merkwaardige situatie dat de laagstbetaalden uitgesloten worden van alle wijken waarin het proces van "gentrification" plaatsvindt.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1995-1996 nr. 28,” (21 November 1995): 28-2093 <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-19951996-28-2081-2104.html>

¹²⁶ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 177.

¹²⁷ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1995-1996 nr. 28,” (21 November 1995): 28-2083-84.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-19951996-28-2081-2104.html>

2.2. Advantageous mortgages

This switch of the government's approach was mainly because the Dutch economy was doing better in the 1990s. The Dutch population had more money to spend to buy homes instead of renting.¹²⁸ Starting in the 1990s, the number of people in the Netherlands looking for a so-called “long-term house” had increased.¹²⁹

Starting in the 1990s, the government tried to spread the ideology that it is better and cheaper to own a home than to rent. Money paid in rent is no longer your property and at the same time the tenant never becomes the owner of the property. Therefore, more people want to buy a house. This would generate more money for the government if more homes were bought through various taxes and would facilitate flow in the housing market.¹³⁰ Thus a VVD member stated in a debate regarding the situation on the housing market in the HoR in 1996, “New homes will then be bought and other homes abandoned. That way we will have more flow and a wider market. The prices that are now skyrocketing will then also be able to be controlled a bit more.”¹³¹ The government tried to do this mainly by making mortgages attractive. The government tried this in several ways.

The National Mortgage Guarantee system was established by the Dutch government in 1993. Among other things, this guarantee meant that homebuyers could insure themselves for a small fee against accidents that would prevent them from paying off their mortgage. Homebuyers could insure against divorces, unemployment, and unexpected illnesses. At the same time, this system guaranteed that homebuyers could borrow up to 350,000.¹³²

Liberalization of the mortgage market also created more companies that provided mortgages. These companies competed with each other. This caused interest rates on mortgages to come down and the period to repay the mortgages became longer.¹³³ This made it more advantageous to take out a mortgage than to leave the money in the bank. These conditions led the mortgage market to grow tremendously. This trend was maintained into the 21st century.¹³⁴

At the same time, it became possible during this period to use a home as collateral to obtain higher and higher mortgages. As competition in the housing market increased, house prices continued to rise.

¹²⁸ Peteke Feijten and Clara H. Mulder, “The Timing of Household Events and Housing Events in the Netherlands: A Longitudinal Perspective,” *Housing Studies* 17 (2002): 791.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 774-75.

¹³⁰ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1996-1997 nr. 19,” (7 November 1996): 19-1382. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-19961997-1349-1406.html#>

¹³¹ “Er zullen dan nieuwe woningen gekocht worden en andere woningen worden verlaten. Zo krijgen wij meer doorstroming en een ruimere markt. De prijzen die nu de pan uit rijzen, zullen dan ook wat meer beheerst kunnen worden.” *Ibid.*, 19-1382

¹³² Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, “The housing market in the Netherlands,” *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 10.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹³⁴ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 78.

Therefore, this practice could be maintained, and it was attractive to buy a home.¹³⁵ A large portion of mortgages were also repayment-free. Only at the end of the mortgage, the entire debt has to be paid at once. This, combined with the fact that house prices kept rising and interest rates were low, made homebuyers opt for this type of mortgage. In 2006, about 50% of the total number of mortgages were interest-only. Repayment-free mortgages enabled many renters to buy a home.¹³⁶ Housing prices kept rising so it was seen as risk-free. Because of this, it was seen as more financially prudent to own a home and pay off a mortgage later, rather than paying rent.

2.3. Financial crisis

This new government policy continued to go well. The Netherlands reduced the national debt and new houses were built and bought in abundance. During this period, housing prices continued to rise to record highs.¹³⁷ This continued until 2007. That's when the Financial Crisis took place. The Financial Crisis began in the United States and its driver was the U.S. housing market.¹³⁸ Neoliberalist policies took place not only in the Netherlands but everywhere in the West. Well-known examples are policies in the United States under then-President Ronald Reagan and in the United Kingdom under Margret Thatcher. In each country, neoliberal policies looked different because of the laws that were passed but the ideology remained the same.¹³⁹

There were also certain similarities between countries, one being the similar situation regarding mortgage lending. As in the Netherlands, the prices of homes for sale in the United States continued to rise because it was easy to get a (favorable) mortgage.¹⁴⁰ The housing market in the United States continued to grow like a balloon, homes were purchased with them as collateral but at some point, the balloon must burst. So, this happened in 2007.¹⁴¹

The housing market stagnated, and U.S. banks could no longer pay off their debts or take out new favorable loans. This caused the prices of homes for sale to fall dramatically in a short period of time. The U.S. government had to bail out the banks so that they did not go bankrupt. Eventually this resulted in hardly any new homes being built and existing homes were worth only a fraction as opposed to the mortgages taken out. Because this left many people in debt, they spent less money which brought the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 78.

¹³⁷ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 13-14.

¹³⁸ Viral V. Acharya and Matthew Richardson, "Causes of the financial crisis," *Critical review* 21 (2009): 195.

¹³⁹ Heikki Patomäki, "Neoliberalism and the global financial crisis," *New Political Science* 31 (2009): 435-36.

¹⁴⁰ Viral V. Acharya and Matthew Richardson, "Causes of the financial crisis," *Critical review* 21 (2009): 196.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 196.

economy to a standstill.¹⁴² The same thing happened in the Netherlands. After where the housing market only continued to grow in the 1990s, it came to a standstill in 2008.¹⁴³

2.4. Getting out of the crisis

Ultimately, the Financial Crisis lasted until 2009. To stimulate the Dutch economy, the government opened the Dutch housing market to foreign investors.¹⁴⁴ This was supposed to fuel the market and promote housing construction leading to more jobs and promoting purchasing power.¹⁴⁵

The then housing minister VVD's Stef Blok visited several foreign meetings to tout the Dutch housing market. The government was actively seeking and attracting (foreign) investors.¹⁴⁶ VVD member stated in 2014 during a debate on how the Dutch housing market could recover after the Financial Crisis in the HoR the following: “Furthermore, municipalities can do a lot in performance agreements with housing associations. They should focus on the cheapest housing for the smallest purse. For the rest, investors should have their way in this housing market, investors operating in competition with each other in that same market.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore the government at the time implemented the Housing Act in 2015. In this act the government advised investors to buy social housing. This subsequently happened on a large scale.¹⁴⁸ Simultaneously the government lowered the requirement of how expensive a social rental home could be. The government stated that social rental housing should only be for the poorest people.¹⁴⁹ This brought more housing into the free rental sector, where landlords were allowed to set their own rent. This was supposed to encourage renters to buy their homes and attract more investors because they could start charging higher rents.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² Ibid., 196-197.

¹⁴³ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, “The housing market in the Netherlands,” *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 14-15.

¹⁴⁴ W. van Gent and C. Hochstenbach, “The neo-liberal politics and socio-spatial implications of Dutch post-crisis social housing policies,” *International Journal of housing Policy* 20 (2020): 156-157.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 156-157.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 162.

¹⁴⁷ “Verder kunnen gemeentes veel doen in de prestatieafspraken met woningbouwverenigingen. Ze moeten zich richten op de goedkoopste woningen voor de kleinste portemonnee. Voor de rest moeten investeerders hun gang kunnen gaan op deze woningmarkt, investeerders die in concurrentie met elkaar op diezelfde markt opereren.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2013-2014 nr. 61,” (16 May 2014):

61-27-13. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20132014-61-27.html>

¹⁴⁸ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 174.

¹⁴⁹ W. van Gent and C. Hochstenbach, “The neo-liberal politics and socio-spatial implications of Dutch post-crisis social housing policies,” *International Journal of housing Policy* 20 (2020): 163-64.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 163-164.

With this change, a law was passed allowing temporary leases of up to two years. The idea behind the law was that the landlord could charge a tenant a higher rent after two years.¹⁵¹ There was no limit in the free rent segment that determined how expensive a property could be.¹⁵² These measures were supposed to stimulate the housing market and thus improve the Dutch economy.¹⁵³ The sale and demolition of social housing is still a problem after the millennium. For example, nearly 200,000 social housing units were sold to investors or homebuyers from 2009 to 2020.¹⁵⁴

Following these changes, Minister of Housing Stef Blok stated in 2017 during an interview with *Duurzaam Gebouwd Magazine*: “Through widely supported measures in both the rental and the purchase market and also with a housing agreement, that has been smoothened. That is of course incredibly nice and very special. Of course, the housing market is never finished, but it is now running like a charm again.”¹⁵⁵

According to Cody Hochstenbach, prominent academic on the Dutch housing market, the government listens more to the problems of rich people than poor people. He says this is especially reflected in the laws passed on the housing market that are aimed at the middle class of the Netherlands.¹⁵⁶

For the middle class that dominates the discourse in the housing market, after the Financial Crisis slowly recovering, they can now find and buy homes again.¹⁵⁷

The fact that Dutch housing policy is aimed at the middle class is reflected in several factors. The measures just mentioned benefit people who can buy houses and rent them out. This has led to homes being widely purchased as investments. In fact, in the Netherlands, mortgages may be deducted from a person's taxable wages. This person then must pay less tax.¹⁵⁸ As a result, the government misses out on nine billion euros annually and it benefits homeowners which is mainly the Dutch middle class.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵¹ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2015-2016 nr. 38,” (2 February 2014): 51-11-6.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/debat_en_vergadering/plenaire_vergaderingen/details/activiteit?id=2016A00521

¹⁵² Frans Schilder et al, “Wonen en gevoelens van onbehagen. Een verkenning naar de relatie tussen onzekerheid, controle en het Nederlandse woonbeleid,” *Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving* (2020): 27

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4

¹⁵⁴ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 174.

¹⁵⁵ “Door breed gesteunde maatregelen op zowel de huur- als de koopmarkt en ook met een woonakkoord is dat vlot getrokken. Dat is natuurlijk ongelooflijk leuk en heel bijzonder. De woningmarkt is natuurlijk nooit af, maar die draait nu wel weer als een zonnetje.” “Blok: ‘Woningmarkt draait als zonnetje’” *Duurzaam Gebouwd* February 14, 2017, Accessed 20 June, 2024.

<https://www.duurzaamgebouwd.nl/artikel/20170214-blok-woningmarkt-draait-als-zonnetje>

¹⁵⁶ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 58.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Also in 2017, the so-called Jubelton was instituted. The Jubelton meant that parents could donate up to 100,000 euros tax-free to their children if those children used the money to buy a home. This was supposed to encourage home buying, especially the wealthier layer of the Netherlands can take advantage of this because they have a ton left over to give to their children.¹⁶⁰

Government efforts and measures during this period were effective. The housing market recovered slowly. Housing was bought and built again on a large scale. At the same time, housing prices rose again as they did before the Financial Crisis.¹⁶¹

2.5. Current situation on the Dutch housing market

Only in 2019 when the prices of owner-occupied homes had risen dramatically and overbidding on homes became the norm, for the first time the term ‘housing’ crisis was mentioned. Before that, the government was satisfied with the turning housing market and economy.¹⁶²

Renters and first-time buyers began to complain that they were living in deplorable conditions and could not bid against the (foreign) investors. It is argued by different scholars like Hochstenbach and Hans that housing is a human right, but that starters and renters have no chance against the big capital of speculators.¹⁶³

Housing rents and purchase prices rose massively in the period from 2015 when the Housing Act was passed because it was attractive for investors to own real estate. The landlords now can ask more rent and get more power. Landlords can because of the temporary leases raise their rent every two years and have almost nothing to renovate. If the tenant complains, the landlord evicts the tenant after two years.¹⁶⁴ It is for landlords more attractive to buy houses. They get a bigger return on renting out a housing than leaving the money in the bank. Simultaneously it's a safe investment because housing prices keep rising. Hence, they are buying homes on a large scale, giving starters no chance.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, the Dutch economy is also improving, giving starters enough money to buy a home again.¹⁶⁶ However, not enough social housing homes are being built to meet the demand. This leads to competition causing prices to rise

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 43.

¹⁶¹ Lianne Hans, "Ruimtelijke segregatie op de Nederlandse woningmarkt: wie kan waar nog kopen?," *Real Estate Research* 1 (2022): 13.

¹⁶² Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 56.

¹⁶³ Lianne Hans, "Ruimtelijke segregatie op de Nederlandse woningmarkt: wie kan waar nog kopen?," *Real Estate Research* 1 (2022): 12.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶⁵ P. Boelhouwer, "The housing market in The Netherlands as a driver for social inequalities: proposals for reform," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 20 (2020): 453.

¹⁶⁶ Lianne Hans, "Ruimtelijke segregatie op de Nederlandse woningmarkt: wie kan waar nog kopen?," *Real Estate Research* 1 (2022): 12.

more.¹⁶⁷ The housing shortage also creates a shortage of rental housing. People live in deplorable conditions because landlords have all the power and can set their own rents during this period.¹⁶⁸

At the same time, too few social housing units are being built. Which also leads to competition in the free rental market. As a member of the D66 said during the debate about the integral vision of the housing market in the HoR in 2023: “There is also a huge shortage of affordable housing for first-time buyers and middle-income earners who earn too much for social housing.”¹⁶⁹

The homes that are being built are often aimed at the higher end of the housing market, so first-time buyers often miss out because they cannot get a high mortgage.¹⁷⁰ To build these homes, older buildings are often demolished that often have lower rents.¹⁷¹

Plots of land are bought on speculation by investors that they will be worth more in the future. When this happens, entire neighborhoods are gentrified.¹⁷² The original residents of the neighborhoods often cannot afford these prices. As a result, they are forced to move to other neighborhoods and further away from downtown, for example.¹⁷³ Property developers also try to get as many people into small apartments as possible to make more profit. Large apartments are divided into small rooms where you must share a kitchen and/or bathroom. The developers claim that these are hip living spaces, and it is the new norm.¹⁷⁴ Many housing seekers go along with the narrative because there is no other affordable alternative.

Eventually the government intervenes after public outrage and dissatisfaction with the current situation in the Dutch housing market. Rental and purchase prices reach record highs and people are dissatisfied with this and demand a new policy.¹⁷⁵ Several housing protests are then organized in 2020

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶⁸ P. Boelhouwer, “The housing market in The Netherlands as a driver for social inequalities: proposals for reform,” *International Journal of Housing Policy* 20 (2020): 448-449.

¹⁶⁹ “Er is ook een groot tekort aan betaalbare woningen voor starters en middeninkomens die te veel verdienen voor een sociale huurwoning.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 1066,” (3 July 2023): 17. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32847-1066.html>

¹⁷⁰ P. Boelhouwer, “The housing market in The Netherlands as a driver for social inequalities: proposals for reform,” *International Journal of Housing Policy* 20 (2020): 448-449.

¹⁷¹ Brian Doucet, “A process of change and a changing process: Introduction to the special issue on contemporary gentrification,” *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 105 (2014): 125-139.

¹⁷² Ibid., 134.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 128-129.

¹⁷⁴ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 60.

¹⁷⁵ Paul, Hilbers and C. Eijking, “Star aanbod en stimulering van vraag stuwen huizen prijzen in Nederland op,” *Economisch Statistische Berichten* 107 (2022): 31.

with participants demanding change. Eventually, new laws are introduced at the local and national levels to solve housing market problems.¹⁷⁶

At the local level, several municipalities such as those of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Utrecht have placed buyout protection on certain neighborhoods.¹⁷⁷ This means that homes that are currently being sold are now not allowed to be converted into rental housing.¹⁷⁸ Existing rental properties that are sold are allowed to remain as rental properties. A coalition member from the D66 stated during a debate in the HoR about the buyout protection in 2023 the following: “Buyout protection has been introduced so that starters have a better position in relation to investors.”¹⁷⁹

Another solution at the local level is that some municipalities have introduced a point system. Using a certain formula that includes several factors, such as the location and size of the house, a maximum rent is calculated.¹⁸⁰ Through these measures, the city councils of large cities are trying to counter speculators and slumlords. This is because rents are highest in large cities, making this attractive for speculators to buy homes here on a large scale.¹⁸¹

Several laws were also passed at the government level to solve the problems in the housing market. One of these was the abolition of the Jubelton.¹⁸² The aim of this law was to create a level playing field on the housing market. In the debate about this law in the HoR in 2023 a member of the coalition of the D66 said, "We abolished the Jubelton, to give people more opportunity compared to other people with much more money."¹⁸³ For the Middle Class is it difficult to buy a house because of the unfair competition on the market brought forward by the Jubelton.

Another law the government passed was the abolishment of the temporary leases in 2023. The government stated that temporary leases led to increases in rent because after a two-year contract

¹⁷⁶ Marcel Wiegman, “Deelnemers woonprotest: ‘Een huis kopen zit er voor ons niet in’,” *Parool*, September 12, 2021, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/deelnemers-woonprotest-een-huis-kopen-zit-er-voor-ons-niet-in~b82af35b/>

¹⁷⁷ Paul de Vries and Hans Lianne, "Opkoopbescherming vergroot de kansen van jonge huizenkopers," *ESB* (2022): 53.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷⁹ “De opkoopbescherming is ingevoerd, zodat starters een betere positie hebben ten opzichte van beleggers.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 96,” (27 July 2023): 96-11-24.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20222023-96-11.html>

¹⁸⁰ Esther Geuting, Erik de Leve & Joery Schouten, “Regulering middenhuur,” *Ministerie BZK, directie Wonen- afdeling Huurbeleid en aandachtgroepen* (2022): 3. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2022/11/01/stec-groep-rapport-regulering-middenhuur>

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸² Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 96,” (27 July 2023): 96-11-24.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20222023-96-11.html>

¹⁸³ “We hebben de jubelton afgeschaft, om mensen meer kans te geven ten opzichte van andere mensen met veel meer geld.” Dit verwijst naar het feit dat de Middenklasse moeilijk een huis kan kopen door de oneerlijke concurrentie op de markt die de Jubelton met zich meebrengt.” *Ibid.*, 96-11-24.

landlords have the option to increase the rent.¹⁸⁴ Tenants live because of this in uncertainty whether they still can afford their house after their lease expires. A member of the coalition of the ChristenUnie said the following during the debate about abolishing temporary leases in the HoR in 2023:

Restoring public housing and the balance between tenant and landlord is desperately needed. In fact, by definition, there is imbalance. It is necessary not only to distribute the joys and burdens of housing a little more fairly, but also to make the relationship between tenant and landlord less skewed and the imbalance more in proportion. At a time when the free sector is growing ever larger, temporary contracts are increasing hand over fist, and there is a crying need for affordable housing, recovery is desperately needed.¹⁸⁵

These measures taken should ensure that housing market prices are brought under control and do not continue to rise dramatically. People should be able to buy or rent a house at a normal price.

2.6. Other reasons for the tight housing market

Another reason why there is shortage in the housing market is that there is almost no flow through. Flow through refers to the process of which households or people move from one type of home to another. For example, people can move from a starter home to a family home. In the end when they get older to a smaller home/apartment or elderly home.¹⁸⁶ There is no inventory in the housing market but also no inventory in the rental market. Both cause prices to have risen and there is limited flow.¹⁸⁷ Starters want to buy a house but cannot find a suitable one or cannot bid against investors. As a result, they must keep renting and cannot build up their own savings account and there is no flow in the rental market.

The reason of the limited flow is for example because that the government has cut back and privatized various sectors.¹⁸⁸ One of these is elderly care. There are only a limited number of retirement and nursing homes or homes where the elderly can live more comfortable independently. The elderly generation has usually been living in the same home for years, which they either bought or kept the same

¹⁸⁴ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 56," (31 March 2023): 56-4-18.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20222023-56-4.html>

¹⁸⁵ "Herstel van de volkshuisvesting en de balans tussen huurder en verhuurder is hard nodig. Er is namelijk per definitie sprake van disbalans. Het is niet alleen nodig om de lusten en lasten van woningbouw een beetje eerlijker te verdelen, maar ook om de verhouding tussen de huurder en verhuurder minder scheef te maken en de disbalans meer in verhouding te brengen. In tijden dat de vrije sector alsmaar groter wordt, tijdelijke contracten hand over hand toenemen en er sprake is van een schreeuwend nood aan betaalbare woningen, is herstel hard nodig." Ibid., 56-4-18.

¹⁸⁶ Suzan Knipp, "Senioren gaan woningmarkt vlot trekken," *Geron* 20 (2018): 42.

¹⁸⁷ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 1066," (22 July 2023): 14.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32847-1066.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ Suzan Knipp, "Senioren gaan woningmarkt vlot trekken," *Geron* 20 (2018): 43.

cheap rent in the past.¹⁸⁹ These elderly may not be able or can't afford to move because there are no free spots in the homes, or the rents of the homes are too high.¹⁹⁰ As a result, they often live in multi-room apartments where they used to live with their families. And now they live there alone while a family could easily fit in that house. Because there is no better offer available for them, they do not move. As a result, there is also no flow through and the pressure on the housing market continues.¹⁹¹ The government is now trying to solve this by building more senior housing and encouraging people to move into them. For example, Housing Minister de Jonge said during a debate regarding this topic in the HoR in 2023, "Because when you build senior housing, it always results in throughput as well."¹⁹²

By investing into senior housing, the minister hoped that it would create more flow through on the housing market. This should then ease pressure on the housing market and provide more opportunities for first-time buyers. This solution should also help with the goal of keeping prices in the housing market under control.

2.7. Conclusion

It can be concluded that due to neoliberal legislation, the Netherlands currently has a tight housing market, where there are too few houses for the number of people looking. This has led to prices of houses for sale rising massively and there is considerable overbidding. This is due not only to the shortage of housing but also to competition. Speculators and (foreign) investors are buying up homes on a large scale, in order to make a profit on it through rent or if they can sell it for a higher selling price in the future. Rents have also risen sharply since 1994 because landlords have more power and are free to set their rents. Tenants are powerless. These changes happened because of various laws passed by the various governments. They did this to escape from different crises. For example, the housing market was privatized in the 1990s because government debts were increasing. Neoliberal policies were supposed to reduce government costs and lead to more revenue. The government put more emphasis on market forces. The government encouraged the idea of owning one's own home and had a less active role in the housing market itself. This led to less social housing being built and more houses in the higher-end segment. Also, more people took out mortgages at favorable terms to buy houses.

At first, the new policies worked to some extent since more homes were sold and built and government debts decreased. But these neoliberal changes eventually led to the financial crisis in 2007.

¹⁸⁹ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 1066," (22 July 2023): 46-47. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32847-1066.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ Suzan Knipp, "Senioren gaan woningmarkt vlot trekken," *Geron* 20 (2018): 43.

¹⁹¹ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2022-2023 nr. 1066," (22 July 2023): 46-47. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32847-1066.pdf>

¹⁹² "Zo zei minister de Jonge van Woningbouw: "Want als je een seniorenwoning bouwt, levert dat ook altijd doorstroom op." Ibid., 47.

The housing market in the United States snapped when banks asked to repay mortgages taken out because they needed the money. Many people, as in the Netherlands, had taken out mortgages at favorable conditions. The house often did not cover the value of the mortgage. When banks recalled their money, many people were forced to sell their homes and ended up in debt. This caused the economy to grind to a halt. This also happened in the Netherlands. To get out of the recession, the government at the time implemented more neoliberal policies. Thus, the government encouraged foreign investors to buy Dutch homes. To make this more favorable, the government introduced laws that gave landlords more power and thus allowed them to make more profit on their properties, for example, the introduction of temporary leases. These policies worked at first just as they did in the 90s. The government was optimistic then. But in the end, this policy created unfair competition in the housing market and rents only increased and people that earn less money are the victim of this process. Due to gentrification, they are also forced to leave their homes and they can no longer afford the new rent. Especially in cities or where houses are scarce, the prices of houses for sale increased. Eventually there was a housing crisis, and the current government is trying to undo the effects of the laws passed earlier. The government is trying to achieve this in various ways, such as protection against buyouts and the elimination of temporary leases. These solutions ease the tightness and give tenants more rights.

However, these policies do not solve structural problems such as a shortage of social rental housing and speculation in the housing market. A sustainable and healthy solution to the housing crisis has not yet been found. In the coming chapter this thesis will delve deeper how these changes are linked to the Dutch squatters' movement and how the movement and the housing market are interlinked to each other.

Chapter 3: Government policies and the squatters' movement

As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, the Dutch economy has experienced several recessions. Such was the case in the 1980s and 1990s, when government debts increased sharply, and in 2007 with the latest Financial Crisis.¹⁹³ To get out of the crisis, the government adopted a different course. This was policy based on neoliberalism thinking. There had to be more market forces, which the government had to stimulate and facilitate.¹⁹⁴ This would generate more revenue and less government spending. The government hoped that new policies would fuel the economy and thus the economy would recover.¹⁹⁵ The government then applied these policies to the Dutch housing market as well. The previous chapter highlighted various laws that the government had implemented. The effects of those laws on the Dutch housing market were also highlighted. The focus of this chapter is the history of the squatters' movement, how governments in power depicted the movement and eventually outlawed the movement.

Since its inception, the squatters' movement has been a movement that occupies vacant buildings and homes, to live there. Squatting means that squatters enter these vacant spaces and will live there.¹⁹⁶ Based on the initial success of the squats the squatters' movement defended the legitimations of the squats by arguing that squatting was legal based on the right to housing. They argued that they had the right to reside in uninhabitable or unplanned premises for a limited period of time.¹⁹⁷ This argument was initially accepted by the Dutch courts allowing the squatters to remain in the occupied properties.¹⁹⁸

The movement is a danger to the government's plans regarding the housing market. It is less attractive for an investor to purchase a property if there is a chance of it being squatted and it is difficult to get squatters out.¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, the relationship between neoliberalism and the tight Dutch housing market underlines broader tensions between government and activist groups. While neoliberal policies focus on profit and making as much money as possible, grassroots movements like the squatters' movements continue to oppose these government ideals. A core principle of the squatters' movement is the idea that housing is a human right, not a speculative investment object.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 14-15.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹⁵ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 169.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰⁰ Miguel Martinez, "The autonomy of struggles and the self-management of squats: legacies of intertwined movements," *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* 11.1 (2019): 183.

The squatters' movement is an obstacle to the government's neoliberal plans on the housing market since the 90s argued the government.²⁰¹ So, the government passed several laws from 1994 to 2023 to further restrict its rights. This will be further researched in this chapter. This will be done using the following research sub-question: "How did various laws, introduced between 1994 and 2023 impact the Dutch squatters' movement's legal status, and societal perception?"

This chapter will be substantiated veritably with quotes from different politicians to support the arguments and find out the exact reason how the government dealt with the squatters' movement. After 1994 several laws were passed that restricted the rights of the movement. This chapter will examine the motives behind the laws and highlight the perspectives of different political parties. Several articles have been written about the abolishment of the squatters' movement. But the ideas behind the laws and the link with neoliberalism are rarely looked at. Rarely are quotes or actual laws cited. By using a mix of primary and secondary sources, this chapter will highlight how the squatters' movement evolved.

3.1. History of the squatters' movement

First it must be clear how the squatters' movement came into being and what they stand for. The squatters' movement in the Netherlands began in the 1960s. This was because at that time, like today's Netherlands, there was a great housing shortage.²⁰² The housing shortage was caused by several reasons. After World War II, the Netherlands was in a period of reconstruction, with an initial focus on repairing its badly damaged infrastructure. It was not until the 1950s that the government began initiating large-scale housing projects to address the acute housing shortage.²⁰³ However, these efforts were complicated by significant population growth resulting from the baby boom.²⁰⁴ With in addition the influx of migrant workers, primarily young men from countries such as Morocco and Turkey.²⁰⁵

In the 1960s, the Dutch housing market was deregulated, giving investors free reign. They bought up homes and built new properties on speculation, with the expectation that prices would rise in the future. However, as studied by van Weesep, many of these properties remained vacant, especially in city

²⁰¹ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 29.

²⁰² Ibid., 26.

²⁰³ Hilde Heynen, "Belgium and the Netherlands: Two Different Ways of Coping with the Housing Crisis, 1945-70," *Home Cultures* 7 (2010): 164-66.

²⁰⁴ G. C. N. Beets, "De geboortepiek van 1946: het begin van Nederlands grootste babyboom wordt 65 jaar," *Demos: bulletin over bevolking en samenleving* 27 (2011): 7.

²⁰⁵ R. P. W. Jennissen, "De instroom van buitenlandse arbeiders en de migratiegeschiedenis van Nederland na 1945," *Justitiële verkenningen* 39 (2013): 9.

centers, where demand for affordable housing was highest.²⁰⁶ This also goes together with the fact that during the period, large numbers of people moved from rural areas to cities. There were better amenities to be found in the cities and more opportunity for better paid work. Dutch residents during this period wanted to improve their standard of living. To do this, it was best to move to a city where there were more opportunities.²⁰⁷ All factors combined led to an influx of many residents into cities. However, the housing market was already dire before the influx. According to Urbanologist Suzuki during the same period, luxury housing was built mainly in urban areas. Often old and affordable buildings were demolished to make way for expensive apartments. These homes were therefore unaffordable for most residents. This phenomenon led to growing discontent among citizens and resulted in squatting as a form of protest against housing shortages and speculation in the housing market.²⁰⁸

The result of these developments was a significant shortage of affordable housing in city centers, as the pace of new construction could not keep up with the growing demand. This not only caused practical problems for people looking for housing, but also created social tensions and unrest within society.

In 1969, the first official squatting action took place in Amsterdam, although several protests against housing policy had been taking place since 1964, with occasional occupations of premises.²⁰⁹ Initially, the squatters' movement consisted mainly of young people with an anti-government sentiment, who addressed problems in society, including the housing shortage.²¹⁰ According to Duivenvoorden consisted the squatters mainly of young students and the unemployed, who were at the bottom of the waiting lists for rental housing and did not have the capital to live in the new apartments. Vacant buildings and homes were squatted by these young people to get housing.²¹¹ Early members of the squatters' movement felt that Amsterdam's city council was corrupt, protecting only the interests of elites.²¹² The squatters' movement defended the right to squat since its beginning in the 1960s by arguing that squatting was legal due to the Right of Housing in the Netherlands.²¹³ In the Netherlands, according to the

²⁰⁶ Jan van Weesep, "Intervention in the Netherlands: Urban housing policy and market response," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 19 (1984): 336.

²⁰⁷ P. T. Suzuki, "Urban planning and housing policies in the Netherlands," *Habitat International* 6 (1982): 387-90.

²⁰⁸ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 26.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²¹⁰ Jan van Weesep, "Intervention in the Netherlands: Urban housing policy and market response," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 19 (1984): 345.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 355

²¹² Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 24.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 40.

Constitution, everyone has the right to housing.²¹⁴ This includes the squatters who argue that they have the right to live temporarily in squatted buildings when they have been declared uninhabitable or have no plans for them.²¹⁵ The success of the Amsterdam squatters' movement inspired similar squatter groups in other cities in the Netherlands, which emerged in the 1970s.²¹⁶

3.2. Changes within the movement

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the squatters' movement underwent a transformation towards a more activist movement. Originally created in response to housing problems, the movement evolved into a kind of free haven where everyone was welcome.²¹⁷ Left-wing extremist groups joined the squatters' movement, mainly because of disagreement with cuts to the welfare state. Some squatter actions took on political overtones and became more extreme. An infamous example was the squatter riots on April 30, 1980, in which the army was deployed after squatters refused to leave a building in Amsterdam. With increasing extremism, the movement lost public support and shifted its focus to conveying political views rather than merely addressing housing shortages.²¹⁸

Pruijt argues that the squatters' movement can be seen as a large community that often has a horizontal power structure. This means that within the movement one person does not necessarily have more power or control than another individual. Decisions are made collectively, and everyone can and may say what they want. People do not have to agree with each other, which is why within the squatters' movement you also see various collectives where people with common views can unite within the umbrella squatters' movement.²¹⁹ Also, squatter groups are scattered throughout the country. Each city has its own form of the squatters' movement and collectives.

The squatters' movement is according to Duivenvoorden a group that anyone can join. It does not matter what someone's gender, race, sexuality, or origin is. The Dutch squatters' movement became an inclusive movement where there was room for example for the branch of squatters who used squatting to find housing. But also, there was an activist branch who used squatting as a means to spread their message.²²⁰ This was the situation during the 1980s and early 1990s. This changed in the year 1993. The cabinets at the time had been trying to ban squatting for some time from the inception of the squatters' movement. However, they always failed to find a majority to pass the laws until 1993. This had several reasons such as that the squatters' movement had popular public support or that the political parties

²¹⁴ Ibid., 40.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 40.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 181.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 100.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 381.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 145.

²²⁰ Hans Pruijt, "Kraken in Europa," *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor Socialistische Discussie en Analyse* 2.1 (2009): 79-80.

wanted to ban it gradually.²²¹ Eventually in 1993 a law was passed that prohibited squatting of premises that had been vacant for less than a year.²²²

3.3. First law against squatting in 1993

This law was passed as demonstrated in the previous chapter during a period when the government passed several neoliberal laws on the housing market. One aim was to make owning a home more attractive. For example, mortgages were made more advantageous and more housing was built for the middle class.²²³

However, according to Duivenvoorden the squatters' movement is a danger to these government's plans regarding the housing market. It is less attractive for an investor to purchase a property if there is a chance of it being squatted and it is difficult to get squatters out.²²⁴ To make it more attractive to own a home, to either rent or speculate, squatting must be opposed.²²⁵ Therefore, in 1993 the government passed a first law that adjusted the rights of squatters. It became illegal to squat buildings/residences that were vacant for less than a year.²²⁶ The government at the time argued that the valid reasons for squatting had disappeared, the housing market had recovered because the largest housing shortages had been solved and disappeared.²²⁷ Therefore there was no legitimate reason to squat.

The government at the time felt that a new housing policy should be implemented in the 1990s. The housing market had slowly recovered partly because of different government policies and the new laws were supposed to make the market even more attractive. Therefore, it was time for a new (neoliberal) direction in the housing market.²²⁸ There had to be more room for (renting) housing in the free sector and higher segment. Also, as mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, the government wanted to encourage building housing for the middle class of society.²²⁹ The government withdrew from the

²²¹ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 26.

²²² Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 26.

²²³ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, "The housing market in the Netherlands," *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 7.

²²⁴ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 26.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

²²⁶ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1991-1992 18 februari 1992," 3385.
<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/0000019297>

²²⁷ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Eerste Kamer 1992-1993 29 september 1992," 70.
<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/0000019297>

²²⁸ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1991-1992 18 februari 1992," 3385.
<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/0000019297>

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3385.

housing market during this period and plans had to be financed by private investors. Therefore, this was the primary reason why squatting of premises had to be partially banned.²³⁰ The government believed that if squatting is (partially) banned, investors will have more freedom to work on these plans.

3.4. Squatting ban in 2010

As mentioned in the previous chapter, several laws were subsequently passed that eventually led to the current situation where squatting is now prohibited in the Netherlands and squatters can be easily and quickly evicted from their premises. After years of attempts, squatting was fully criminalized in 2010, after the government made squatting illegal in 1993 if a property had been vacant for less than a year.²³¹ The run-up to this law began back in 2003 when a CDA MP Van Gennep who was also in the cabinet at the time, proposed making squatting illegal.²³² At that time a majority of the House of Representatives saw no need to make squatting illegal. As a result, there was no majority to pass the law.²³³ After new elections and a new cabinet, the CDA submitted another proposal to make squatting illegal.

The political parties argued to ban squatting that it would relieve the police and thereby respect property rights.²³⁴ However according to Visser et al, the resistance of the squatters' movement to evictions or confrontations after 2000 cannot be compared to that of the 1980s. Clearances after the millennium usually proceed without problems and rarely cause police complications.²³⁵ Thus Visser et al argue that during the period the law was passed mainly to protect the interests of investors and make the Dutch housing market more attractive.²³⁶

For example, an initiator of the squatting ban law from the ChristenUnie said in 2009 during the debate in the House of Representatives (HoR) about the need for the law:

“This subject has been put on the agenda as 'so-called 'Squatting Act, but it simply concerns the Squatting and Vacancy Act, which has been discussed very extensively in the House of Representatives and the Senate. In my opinion, the content of that law is clear; namely, the law sets a very clear standard: a general ban on squatting that protects the right to property; in addition, municipalities are given additional tools to further address the vacancy policy. The latter is also necessary, because it is unacceptable that buildings remain vacant unintentionally for a

²³⁰ Ibid., 3385-86.

²³¹ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1991-1992 18 februari 1992,” 3385.

²³² Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc, and Rutger Visser, "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 201.

²³³ Ibid., 202.

²³⁴ Ibid., 205.

²³⁵ Ibid., 205.

²³⁶ Ibid., 207-8.

very long time. It is therefore quite acceptable to exert some pressure to give those properties a good destination, but this must be done in a democratically legitimized manner.”²³⁷

The initiators tried to nuance the squatting ban because they were also trying to solve vacancies in the Netherlands.

During this period, however, the Netherlands had also entered a Financial Crisis as mentioned in the previous chapter. The government saw the further neoliberalization of the housing market as a solution to get out of the crisis. Thus, they give more flexibility to investors.²³⁸ But squatters are a thorn in the side of investors. Therefore, squatting had to be abolished. For example, the ChristenUnie stated in the debate in the HoR about the squatting ban, “At the moment squatting is a reasonably effective means of action against this kind of speculator, but soon squatters can spend four months behind bars if they try to keep such a property.”²³⁹ This quote clearly shows that the initiators of the law, want to protect the interests of speculators.

Squatting has been a means of protest from its inception. The VVD, that was in the cabinet at the time, also shared this view. For example, it stated the following about when the law would be introduced in the debate in the HoR about the squatting ban: “A moment when the legislator has put an end to the encroachment on the right of ownership. A moment also when an end has been put to taking the law into one's own hands by one group in society: the squatters.”²⁴⁰ However, these are overly generalized statements; as in the previous chapter mentioned, there were several groups within the movement, each with different goals. However, the Netherlands was in the Financial Crisis and the housing market was at

²³⁷ “Dit onderwerp is geagendeerd als ‘zogenaamde’ ‘Kraakwet, maar het betreft gewoon de initiatiefwet Kraken en leegstand, die zeer uitvoerig is besproken in de Tweede Kamer en de Eerste Kamer. Volgens mij is de inhoud van die wet helder; de wet stelt namelijk een heel duidelijke norm: een algeheel kraakverbod waarmee het eigendomsrecht beschermd wordt; daarnaast krijgen gemeenten aanvullende instrumenten om het leegstand- beleid verder op te pakken. Dit laatste is ook nodig, want het kan niet zo zijn dat panden ongewild heel lang leeg blijven staan. Er mag dan ook best wel enige druk worden uitgeoefend om die panden een goede bestemming te geven, maar dat moet wel gebeuren op een democratisch gelegitimeerde wijze.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2008-2009 nr. 109,” (10 September 2009):109- 8694.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-32549.pdf>

²³⁸ Windy Vandevyvere and Andreas Zenthöfer, “The housing market in the Netherlands,” *Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs* 457 (2012): 7.

²³⁹ “Op dit moment is kraken een redelijk effectief actiemiddel tegen dit soort speculanten, maar straks kunnen krakers vier maanden achter de tralies als ze proberen om zo’n pand te behouden.” Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2008-2009 nr. 109,” (10 September 2009): 109- 8696. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-32549.pdf>

²⁴⁰ “Een moment waarop de wetgever een einde heeft gemaakt aan de aantasting van het eigendoms- recht. Een moment ook waarop een einde is gemaakt aan het recht in eigen hand nemen door één groep in de samenleving: de krakers.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2009-2010 nr. 91,” (15 July 2010): 91- 7561.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20092010-91-7559.html>

a standstill. New capital had to be found and for that to happen squatting had to be banned.²⁴¹ To achieve this, squatters had to be portrayed as criminals who do not respect property rights. This is evident in the following quote from the ChristenUnie in the debate in the HoR about the squatting ban:

“Mr. Jansen asked whether every squatter deserves punishment. He referred to what I will call the ‘noble intention squatters’. The intention of the submitters has been crystal clear from the beginning, namely, to set a clear standard. Squatting is not allowed, not even to make a statement to the government, which Mr. Van der Ham mentioned as an example. Squatting is not done; that is the norm. That norm must of course be enforced. However, it is ultimately up to the judge to determine the punishment. The criminal judge - this is not unique to squatting, it also applies to all other crimes with which the criminal judge is confronted - will always determine an appropriate punishment, given the circumstances and the person of the offender.”²⁴²

Here it is clear to see that the initiators of the law did not care what the reason for squatting was or whether the property was actually vacant for a long time. The Dutch housing market needed to become more attractive, which is why squatting was eventually banned.

Not every political party agreed with this legislation. For example, the largest opposition party the PvdA argued that the problem was not with the squatters, but with the speculators who left their properties vacant for profit. About this they said the following during the debate about the law in the HoR: “Real estate speculators who leave things as they are and allow nuisance and squalor to develop.”²⁴³ And “Moreover, it (the proposed law) gives real estate speculators free reign to leave properties vacant.”²⁴⁴ After the law was passed, squatters could be evicted from the squatted property within eight weeks following legal proceedings. The squatting ban does not solve the problems in the housing market

²⁴¹ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 169.

²⁴² “De heer Jansen vroeg of iedere kraker een straf verdient. Hij verwees met name naar wat ik maar de ‘nobeledoelenkrakers’ zal noemen. Het oogmerk van de indieners is vanaf het begin klip-en-klaar geweest, namelijk het stellen van een heldere norm. Kraken is niet toegestaan, ook niet om een statement aan de overheid af te geven, wat de heer Van der Ham als voorbeeld noemde. Kraken doe je niet, dat is de norm. Die norm moet natuurlijk worden gehandhaafd. Het is echter uiteindelijk aan de rechter om de straf te bepalen. De strafrechter – dat is niet uniek voor kraken, dat geldt ook voor alle andere delicten waarmee de strafrechter wordt geconfronteerd – zal steeds, gelet op de omstandigheden en de persoon van de dader, een passende straf bepalen.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2009-2010 nr. 14,” (7 October 2009):14-1070. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20092010-1049-1079.pdf>

²⁴³ “Vastgoedsspeculanten die de boel de boel laten en overlast en verloedering laten ontstaan.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, handelingen Tweede Kamer 2008-2009 nr. 109,” (10 September 2009): 109- 8690. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-32549.pdf>

²⁴⁴ Ibid.,109- 8690

but actually increases a problem at the market because it will lead to vacancy according to Kruize and Gruter.²⁴⁵

3.5. Quicker evictions

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were no discussions about housing crisis until 2019. The focus as cited earlier was mainly on the interests of the middle class of the Netherlands.²⁴⁶ The government had again found a scapegoat as to why there were still problems in the housing market and that was the squatters' movement.²⁴⁷

The VVD felt after the squatting ban in 2010 that action was not being taken quickly to evict squatters and that squatters could still stay in the properties for too long.²⁴⁸ This worked against ownership and creates less rentable housing.

The VVD felt that the movement was not being dealt with strictly enough and property rights were being violated as a result. As a result, they came up in 2019 with a proposal of a new law. The new law had to make it easier to evict squatters from their premises.²⁴⁹ The VVD stated in 2020 during the debate about the law that would allow for quicker evictions in the HoR "Squatting has rightly been a crime since 2010. The sooner action is taken against this, the better."²⁵⁰ And "The failure to enforce the squatting ban and thus violate property rights has been a thorn in the side of these members for some time."²⁵¹ Eventually the law was implemented in 2022. It stated that evictions must be carried out within three days. Previously, evictions could take up to eight weeks.²⁵² The period from request of eviction to court and announcement of eviction to actual eviction is shortened here to three days.²⁵³ This illustrates the government's continued prioritization of the squatting ban, despite the widespread perception that the

²⁴⁵ P. Kruize and P. Gruter, "Evaluatie Wet handhaving kraakverbod," *WODC Rapport 3278A* (2023): 27.

²⁴⁶ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 19-20.

²⁴⁷ P. Kruize and P. Gruter, "Evaluatie Wet handhaving kraakverbod," *WODC Rapport 3278A* (2023): 6.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁴⁹ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Debat Initiatiefvoorstel Handhaving Kraakverbod 2020-2021," (24 March 2021): https://www.eerstekamer.nl/nieuws/20210324/debat_initiatiefvoorstel

²⁵⁰ "Kraken is sinds 2010 terecht een misdrijf. Hoe sneller hiertegen wordt opgetreden, hoe beter" Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, handelingen Tweede Kamer 2020-2021 nr. 19," (20 November 2020): 19-2.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/wetsvoorstellen/detail?cfg=wetsvoorsteldetails&qry=wetsvoorstel%3A35296>

²⁵¹ "Het niet handhaven van het kraakverbod en daarmee het schenden van het eigendomsrecht, is deze leden al langer een doorn in het oog." *Ibid.*, 19-2.

²⁵² P. Kruize and P. Gruter, "Evaluatie Wet handhaving kraakverbod," *WODC Rapport 3278A* (2023): 6.

²⁵³ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Debat Initiatiefvoorstel Handhaving Kraakverbod 2020-2021," (24 March 2021): https://www.eerstekamer.nl/nieuws/20210324/debat_initiatiefvoorstel

housing market has serious problems. The Dutch housing market suffered from high vacancy rates consisting of properties bought on speculation at the time the law was proposed.²⁵⁴

Remarkably, the Amsterdam Triangle (the partnership on public order and security in Amsterdam: the mayor, the chief prosecutor and the police chief) in the largest city with the highest number of squatters in the Netherlands, spoke out against the law back in 2019. They argued that this law only complicated evictions and thus created more workload. The triangle stated this was the case because squatters will probably put up a bigger fight with quicker evictions.²⁵⁵ This position of the Amsterdam authorities shows that the government, in which the CDA and the VVD are represented, mainly protects the interests of investors. The government even ignored the advice of those who are experts in the field.

The VVD defended the law in the debate in 2019 by saying that if this law did not pass and stricter action was taken against squatters, the squatters will soon move back to other premises. Then the same process before the squatting ban in 2010 will start again which will take more than eight weeks. According to them, the squatting ban had been eroded.²⁵⁶ The VVD said this about squatters in 2014 during a debate in the HoR regarding the housing market: “Squatters are described as disenfranchised tenants. No, they are criminals, because we have made squatting a crime.”²⁵⁷ And as criminals, the VVD therefore thinks squatters still have too many rights if they could stay in squatted premises for two months.²⁵⁸ Before the law that would grant quicker eviction was squatting still a housing model for squatters, stated the VVD in 2021. This goes against the property rights which the government wanted to protect with the squatting ban. The initiator of this law, an MP of the VVD defended the law in 2021 in the HoR with the quote: “Squatting as a housing model comes to an end.”²⁵⁹

The VVD then substantiated the law in the debate in 2021 that it will benefit on four points; workload, position of homeowners, time savings and the position of squatters.²⁶⁰ With the position of

²⁵⁴ Brian Doucet, "A process of change and a changing process: Introduction to the special issue on contemporary gentrification," *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 105.2 (2014): 134.

²⁵⁵ P. Kruize and P. Gruter, "Evaluatie Wet handhaving kraakverbod," WODC Rapport 3278A (2023): 6.

²⁵⁶ Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Debat Initiatiefvoorstel Handhaving Kraakverbod 2020-2021,” (30 March 2021):

https://www.eerstekamer.nl/nieuws/20210330/initiatiefvoorstel_handhaving

²⁵⁷ “Krakers worden omschreven als rechteloze huurders. Nee, het zijn misdadigers, want wij hebben van kraken een misdrijf gemaakt.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2015-2016 nr. 38,” (2 February 2014): 51-11-2.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/debat_en_vergadering/plenaire_vergaderingen/details/activiteit?id=2016A00521

²⁵⁸ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2020-2021 nr. 31,” (7 April 2021): 31-6-16.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-20202021-31-16.html>

²⁵⁹ “Er komt een eind aan kraken als woonmodel.” Ibid., 31-16-3. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-20202021-31-16.html>

²⁶⁰ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2020-2021 nr. 31,” (7 April 2021): 31-6-2.

<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-ek-20202021-31-16.html>

squatters, reference is made to ending squatting as a housing model. For example, the initiator MP of the VVD stated the following: “Squatting is no longer attractive, and this will put an end to it in a relatively short period of time. This is precisely why this bill is so important.”²⁶¹

While there was a housing crisis going on in 2019, the government tried to further restrict squatters. And this law does not help solve the housing shortage. So argued the opposition. For example, the SP stated during the debate regarding abolishing squatting back in 2010 in the HoR: “that this law does not solve the vacancy and housing shortage. On the contrary, it will promote vacancy and worsen the housing shortage. This is now apparent.”²⁶² Squatting may be a solution to the housing shortage, but after 2010 squatters' rights have been severely reduced.

3.6. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the government passes different anti-squatting laws when the Dutch economy or housing market evolves/changes. Squatting has been banned in the Netherlands since 2010, which happened in steps. In 1993, the first law was passed that took away the rights of squatters. A building that was vacant for less than a year was not allowed to be squatted anymore even though buildings vacant for more than a year could still be squatted. After the squatting ban, the rights of squatters further eroded. Subsequently in 2022 a law was passed that could evict squatters in three days instead of the eight weeks it used to take. The squatters' movement originated as a response to the acute housing shortage in the 1970s, the movement has transformed over the years. Squatting can be used a way of protesting or find a house. This is possible because anyone can join the movement. It is an open movement, where everyone is welcome. In fact, there are various reasons to squat a property. This can be anarchist considerations, for example. The squatter then wants more autonomy and less government interference. Squatting can also occur because the squatter cannot find (affordable) housing. Squatting is then an option for squatting an empty house. However, the squatters' movement also has an activist side. This group uses squatting as a means of protest. Squatting actions especially after the squatting ban are newsworthy. Squatters express their dissatisfaction with the government through squatting. Because there are so many different squatters and squatting actions, the movement is often lumped together by the government. Mainly right-wing parties that are in government see squatters as criminals.

They argue that a homeowner's property right is violated by squatters. Therefore, squatting should be banned, which happened in 2010. It is striking that the laws against squatters were always passed

²⁶¹ “Kraken wordt niet meer aantrekkelijk en hierdoor zal er op relatief korte termijn een einde aan komen. Juist daarom is dit wetsvoorstel zo belangrijk.” Ibid., 31-6-1.

²⁶² “Dat deze wet de leegstand en de woningnood niet oplost. Integendeel, hij zal de leegstand bevorderen en de woningnood doen verergeren. Dat blijkt nu ook.” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, “Handelingen Tweede Kamer 2010-2011 nr. 19,” (20 December 2010): 19-2. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20102011-19-2.html>

during periods when the Netherlands was in a housing crisis and a different policy had to be implemented. In the 1990s the Dutch housing market was deregulated and in 2008 the Netherlands entered a Financial Crisis. The housing market was eroded bit by bit and in order to protect the interests of investors and speculators, squatting was banned. This is reflected in the quotes in this chapter. Squatters are immediately portrayed as criminals and the discourse is mainly about the interests of investors or the middle class in the Netherlands.. Squatting is currently almost no longer an option for finding housing. Whereas after the squatting ban a squatter could stay in the property for several months, in 2022 the legislation changed this. An eviction can now take place within three days. This while the Netherlands is currently in a housing crisis where house prices are skyrocketing. Laws are being passed as mentioned in the previous chapter to undo old legislation, but squatting remains illegal. And it is even further restricted, while squatting can be a solution to the housing crisis.

In the coming chapter this thesis will delve deeper how the squatters' movement adapted to these new laws. It will examine how they organize and are using new tools to challenge the ban and still squat properties. This will be done through different case studies in different Dutch cities.

Chapter 4: The Dutch squatters' movement after the squatting ban

This chapter is about how the squatters' movement has evolved and is now organizing itself after the squatting ban. Squatting today is illegal and can cause criminal records and high fines. The general ban on squatting was instituted in 2010.²⁶³ The squatters' movement started as a reaction to the housing shortage in the 1960s. Squatting is an option to combat vacant housing in the Netherlands. It also allows people to find affordable housing.²⁶⁴ After the ban the squatters' movement did not disappear. Like mentioned in the first chapter there were debates about a housing crisis in the Netherlands since 2019. That is because the government used a neoliberal turn on the housing market what led to this crisis.²⁶⁵

The constructions that allow people to make a lot of profit on housing is explained in the previous chapters. Despite the legal risks, squatting remains a way of protesting against these neoliberal policies on the housing market and government policies in general.²⁶⁶ After the ban the squatters' movement had to adapt, the movement had to restructure and find new means and tools to squat and announce their actions.²⁶⁷ Especially after the law that was implemented in 2022 that squatters can be evicted in three days, the movement had to be creative and change.²⁶⁸ How they squat before 2010 would not work anymore with these new laws. How they changed is being researched in the chapter.

This is studied using the following sub-question: "How has the squatters' movement in the Netherlands developed after the introduction of the squatting ban, and in what ways have the aims and methods of the squatters' movement adapted to the changed legal context?" The squatting ban from 2010 had its intended effect. People were, mostly, no longer able to squat for long periods of time hence unable to use that as a solution to a housing shortage.²⁶⁹ Squatting as an activity then transformed from one that has a base in a squat which also housed social movements to a form of activism that uses squatting as a way to protest various issues.²⁷⁰ This chapter will show the various ways that the practice of squatting has changed, and the ways people who squat understand their actions. This is done by looking at 3 main cases focused on 3 cities. Then 4 smaller instances of squatting-related activism or where squatting is done still

²⁶³ Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc, and Rutger Visser, "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 205.

²⁶⁴ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 8.

²⁶⁵ Cody Hochstenbach, *In schaamte kun je niet wonen* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 56.

²⁶⁶ Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc, and Rutger Visser, "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 205.

²⁶⁷ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1114-1116.

²⁶⁸ P. Kruize and P. Gruter, "Evaluatie Wet handhaving kraakverbod," WODC Rapport 3278A (2023): 6.

²⁶⁹ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1117.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1117.

out of necessity (AFGA, We are Here, Green Tribe and squatting as an way to combat gentrification) will be shown.

This is researched through various interviews with (former) squatters, social media posts from squatting collectives and newspaper articles about the movement. All sources together present what the current squatters' movement looks like. Interviews with squatters are rarely conducted because squatters break the law and like to remain anonymous. Academic articles on squatting often cite secondary literature on the movement or only name the laws on squatting. The use of interviews and social media posts provides a new angle in research on the movement.

4.1. Description of the movement

To begin with, it should be clear how squatters unite and operate. A squat is usually managed by a particular collective or group within the squatters' movement. This group must have clear tasks and visions if the squat is to be successful.²⁷¹

Sociologist Pruijt, who is one of the leading researchers on the Dutch squatters' movement, has analyzed several reasons why people squat. He argues in the Netherlands, after the squatting ban, squatting is mainly done from an activist perspective. Pruijt agrees that the squatters' movement is diverse and cannot be lumped together.²⁷² The activist side of the movement is increasingly becoming more prominent and is being discussed in the news. Squatting has become a means of expressing dissatisfaction with the Dutch government's neoliberal policies on the housing market.²⁷³

Pruijt describes the squatters' movement as a community that has no fixed leader. Different groups and people are in the movement. Each individual has their own reasons for squatting. Therefore, it is important to know how the squatters' movement is organized in order to understand the rationale how the movement adapted after ban. The squats that make the news are often organized by squatter collectives that squat because of activist ideology.²⁷⁴

However, Pruijt also acknowledges that there are still of 'normal' squatters in the movement, who see squatting as a primary method of finding affordable housing. After the squatting ban, not all squatters were evicted from all properties. Some homeowners are fine with squatters being in their properties.²⁷⁵ Thus, they do not have to deal with tenants or be required to fix up the property. In fact, squatters do not sign contracts with the owners of the properties and therefore have no rights for renovations. The

²⁷¹ René Boer, "Kraken in de Smooth City," in *Pak Mokum Terug* ed. Mokum Kraakt. (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 319.

²⁷² Hans Pruijt, "Kraken in Europa," *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor Socialistische Discussie en Analyse* 2.1 (2009): 79-80.

²⁷³ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1117.

²⁷⁴ Hans Pruijt, "Kraken in Europa," *Kritiek. Jaarboek voor Socialistische Discussie en Analyse* 2.1 (2009): 79-80.

²⁷⁵ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1114-116.

properties that are squatted are mainly properties that have been purchased for investment based on the land on which they are located. These properties are often of poor quality or declared uninhabitable because they are so old. For the homeowners, it then does not matter that there may be squatters in them.²⁷⁶ When the neighborhood is gentrified or apartments are refurbished, the squatters are evicted without mercy. Because there are so many different individuals and views within the movement, it is difficult to lump them all together.²⁷⁷

4.2. Change in tactics of the squatters' movement after the ban

The ban on squatting in 2010 created a changed dynamic between government and squatting. Now if a property is squatted the squatter risks high fines or even prison sentences.²⁷⁸ Many squatters left the movement as a result and squatting disappeared into the background. Squatters had to reorganize due to the ban and had to invent new methods to ensure that their squats could become successful. As a result, they formed larger squatter collectives that squatted properties together and are using a new mechanism like social media.²⁷⁹

The first two new phenomena can be grouped together which are: squatting together in bigger groups and organizing in different collectives/groups. These two are interlinked and have the familiar reasons.²⁸⁰ The first reason is because larger collectives/groups have more visibility and influence.²⁸¹ After squatting is banned, squatting is newsworthy. Squatting is mainly done as a form of protest. By forming a collective, more and new actions can be taken, and a squat can be maintained.²⁸²

Secondly, larger groups can share and utilize resources more effectively. Squatted premises now tend to be larger and often have a social purpose.²⁸³ By having more people, the squat can be better organized and maintained. If a small apartment is squatted, it is not newsworthy. Squats have grown to convey the social message and more people are needed to maintain it.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 1116.

²⁷⁷ Hans Pruijt and Conny Roggeband, "Autonomous and/or Institutionalized Social Movements? Conceptual Clarification and Illustrative Cases," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 55 (2014): 145.

²⁷⁸ Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc, and Rutger Visser, "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 205.

²⁷⁹ Hans Pruijt, "Culture wars, revanchism, moral panics and the creative city. A reconstruction of a decline of tolerant public policy: The case of Dutch anti-squatting legislation," *Urban studies* 50 (2013): 1114-116.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 1117.

²⁸¹ Dadusc, Deanna. "Enclosing autonomy: The politics of tolerance and criminalisation of the Amsterdam squatting movement." *City* 23.2 (2019): 170-171.

²⁸² Ibid., 172.

²⁸³ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 26.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 26.

Thirdly, collectives and groups are formed for security and protection. Larger groups can better defend themselves and oppose threats of eviction.²⁸⁵ There is safety in numbers because the police are less likely to intervene if there is a large group.²⁸⁶ It is also then difficult to charge a single person and the police are less likely to do so if there are more people there.²⁸⁷

The third phenomenon is that squatters try to get the people behind them by using social media to announce their squats and say what they are fighting for. This public opinion can ensure that, for example, the owner of a property does not evict the squatter if he or she does not have plans for it anyway. Squatters can also mobilize people quickly on a larger scale by using social media. They do this, for example, when squatters are evicted.²⁸⁸ With a post they can mobilize people at the squat for solidarity, or to show support during the planned eviction. At the same time if many people show up during the eviction it sends a sign to the government.²⁸⁹

The squatters' movement can be identified as an activist movement. According to Blee, an activist movement is a group of people who come together for the purpose of changing something in society.²⁹⁰ These can be different goals. She also mentions that each group has a different way of protesting. She states that the goal of each movement is to change society in some way according to their own ideals.²⁹¹ With the squatters' movement, squatting is a way to spread a message because the squats are newsworthy. This can also be seen in the Dutch squatters' movement.

Sociologic Gerbaudo delves deeper into this phenomenon of the usage of social media by activist groups. He argues that social movements, just like squatter collectives, now have greater reach and can easier spread their ideals.²⁹² He argues that social media is now one of the main assets that social movements can use.²⁹³ They can now reach people they could not have reached by protesting alone. He also argues that they can influence people more easily.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁵ Miguel A. Martínez López, "The squatters' movement in Europe: a durable struggle for social autonomy in urban politics," *Antipode* 45.4 (2013): 869.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 869.

²⁸⁷ Amarins Jansma, Kees van den Bos and Beatrice A. de Graaf. "How climate protesters perceive injustice and justify breaking the law: Qualitative interviews with Extinction Rebellion," *Global Environmental Psychology* 2 (2024): 3.

²⁸⁸ Anke Wonneberger, Iina R. Hellsten, and Sandra HJ Jacobs. "Hashtag activism and the configuration of counterpublics: Dutch animal welfare debates on Twitter," *Information, Communication & Society* 24 (2021): 1694-95.

²⁸⁹ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔪 (@Mokumkraakt), "Mokum Kraakt = een kraakcollectief van Hotel Mokum, de Kinderen van Møkum + andere kraakgroepen" June 29, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/mokumkraakt/>

²⁹⁰ Kathleen M. Blee, *Democracy in the making: How activist groups form* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 27-29.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

²⁹² Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the streets: social media and contemporary activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 18.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

4.3. The use of social media with different squatting collectives

Squatting as an activity transformed to a form of activism that uses squatting as a way to protest various issues.²⁹⁵ However few people know exactly how a squat is maintained or what squatting is.²⁹⁶ Squatter collectives can use social media accounts to inform people and clearly explain what they stand for. And what it's like to squat a building, what's involved. Updates can be given on an Instagram page, as the squatters must refurbish, clean and maintain the property themselves.²⁹⁷ By using social media, this can be shown, and people find out how it works to maintain a squat. People can learn about the movement in an approachable way.

An example of these phenomena can be seen in a squatter group in Utrecht. On the Croeselaan in Utrecht, social housing that was planned for demolition, therefore these houses were squatted when.²⁹⁸ The property was demolished with the intention to gentrify the area. The original residents of the neighborhood could no longer move into the houses after the conversion because the rents would be too high. A squatter group called the "Croesepoezen" squatted the house as an act of protest against gentrification. The squatter action received a lot of media attention in Utrecht and surrounding areas. Eventually, five properties were squatted. At the time of the squatting, the premises were empty for several months.²⁹⁹ Even while there was an acute housing shortage, and the properties were being demolished for new construction. However, the municipality planned to place status holders, (refugees) in the houses until the time of demolition. But no one was living there at the time of the planned demolition. Only when the municipality showed evidence of this plan, the squatters did leave the premises.³⁰⁰ The squatters used the squat to clarify their point and attract media attention. According to the Croesepoezen, they squatted the properties to raise the issues on the Utrecht housing market. An squatter from the collective stated, "We want to emphasize again that these houses were squatted as a protest against the demolition, sale and vacancy of social rental housing and as a protest against the Croeselaan

²⁹⁵ Dadusc, Deanna. "Enclosing autonomy: The politics of tolerance and criminalisation of the Amsterdam squatting movement." *City* 23.2 (2019): 170-171.

²⁹⁶ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 25-26.

²⁹⁷ Paolo Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the streets: social media and contemporary activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 18.

²⁹⁸ "Krakers Croeselaan willen panden pas over maand verlaten: 'Wij wijken niet voor tijdelijke huur!'" *RTV Utrecht*, August 19, 2023, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.rtvutrecht.nl/nieuws/3621191/krakers-croeselaan-willen-panden-pas-over-maand-verlaten-wij-wijken-niet-voor-tijdelijke-huur>

²⁹⁹ "Krakers Croeselaan willen panden pas over maand verlaten: 'Wij wijken niet voor tijdelijke huur!'" *RTV Utrecht*, August 19, 2023, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.rtvutrecht.nl/nieuws/3621191/krakers-croeselaan-willen-panden-pas-over-maand-verlaten-wij-wijken-niet-voor-tijdelijke-huur>

³⁰⁰ "Krakers vertrekken uit panden Croeselaan in Utrecht om plaats te maken voor andere bewoners," *DUIC*, August 30, 2023, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.duic.nl/algemeen/krakers-vertrekken-uit-panden-croeselaan-in-utrecht-om-plaats-te-maken-voor-andere-bewoners/>

demolition."³⁰¹ What also stood out is that the squatters started an Instagram account at the time of occupation. On the account, they spread their message and showed the renovation projects in the building.³⁰² As mentioned earlier, using a new method of social media is a new tool for the squatters' movement.

This was also seen with the squatter collective that squatted "Hotel Mokum". Ever since the squat in October in 2021, they have an Instagram page that has become popular. On the account called 'Mokum Kraakt', they have about twenty thousand followers. In the beginning, the account was set up to share news and updates about the squat.³⁰³ They shared just like on the account of the CroesePoesen why they squatted the building. Mokum Kraakt shared that in Amsterdam and especially in the city center a huge number of buildings are empty. This while there is a housing shortage, and rents are absurdly high in Amsterdam. The buildings are mostly empty because they were bought speculatively, and owners have no plans for them.³⁰⁴ Mokum Kraakt sees this as a problem and states if the municipality/government does not oblige the owners to do something with the spaces, they will squat it. If it is squatted, the space still has a function.³⁰⁵

The original squat of Mokum Kraakt was evicted after six weeks. After the eviction Mokum Kraakt transformed into an activist group standing up for various ideals. However, they originated as a squatting collective fighting against neoliberalist policies in Amsterdam, they now support various causes. For example, they have put a post online that they stand in solidarity with Palestine.³⁰⁶ Squatter collectives are often anti-government or against its policies. In the beginning of the account, they were mainly against vacant houses and neo-liberalism policies in Amsterdam. But now with the solidarity, they show that they are against the government on several policies and levels. The Dutch state supports Israel. For example, the collective organized a "festival" in Paradiso. All proceeds went to charities that help/support Palestine.³⁰⁷ Mokum Kraakt no longer fights only against injustice in Amsterdam regarding

³⁰¹ "Krakers vertrekken uit panden Croeselaan in Utrecht om plaats te maken voor andere bewoners," *DUIC*, August 30, 2023, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.duic.nl/algemeen/krakers-vertrekken-uit-panden-croeselaan-in-utrecht-om-plaats-te-maken-voor-andere-bewoners/>

³⁰² CroesePoesen (woonverzet_croeselaan), "Kraken gaat door, oh oh oh oh! ⚡ kinderdagverblijf de kraak kleuters ⚡," June 29, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/woonverzet_croeselaan

³⁰³ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔨 (@Mokumkraakt), "Mokum Kraakt = een kraakcollectief van Hotel Mokum, de Kinderen van Møkum + andere kraakgroepen," June 29, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/mokumkraakt/>

³⁰⁴ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 26.

³⁰⁵ Mokum Kraakt. *Pak Mokum Terug* (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 26-27.

³⁰⁶ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔨 (@Mokumkraakt), "We stand with Palestine," October 20, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyncxYAIx4Y/?igsh=MWlhMjQzdZBhZW11dg>

³⁰⁷ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔨 (@Mokumkraakt), "'Piepend en Krakend" is een terugkerend benefiet georganiseerd door jonge krakers en kunstenaars uit Amsterdam," January 26, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2kULTbouAF/?igsh=MXN2ZDUxaDUyM3czcA==> Instagram Mokum Kraakt

the housing market but are also in solidarity with other social issues such as abolishing the royal house and standing up for the climate.

Mokum Kraakt is afraid that Amsterdam's character and history is being destroyed by gentrification and neoliberal policies.³⁰⁸ For example, in 2024 they had a new squatting action in which vacant windows on the Red-Light District were squatted. The Amsterdam municipality has long been working to reduce the number of sex workers in the Red-Light District. Local residents, the sex workers and the Mokum Kraakt were against these plans. Mokum Kraakt argues that the Red-Light District is part of Amsterdam's history. The Red-Light District has existed for over three hundred years. Also, the erotic center would create unsafe situations.³⁰⁹ In recent years, the number of windows in the Red-Light District have already decreased. That's why Mokum Kraakt squatted a few windows. Here they made a meeting place for the neighborhood. However, they were already evicted within a few weeks.³¹⁰ Mokum Kraakt does not have a current base in a squat, but they are a social movement that uses squatting as a way to protest.

Mokum Kraakt squatted the windows to express their dissatisfaction with the policy of the municipality regarding the future of the Red-Light District. Squatting was yet another means of protesting. Videos were shared and made available on their social account with information on why they disagree with the decisions of the municipality. These reached many people.³¹¹ Their Instagram account is an important tool to spread their messages.

Another activist group that uses squatting as a means of protest is RATS in Rotterdam. RATS is an anarchist group that believes in connections/cooperation between citizens and that everyone should be less dependent on the government/municipality. They stand up for certain ideals. For example, they are against wasting food, which is why they organize free zero-waste dinners.³¹² They are also critical of neoliberal government policies. RATS did not originate as a squatter collective but do use squatting as a means of spreading their message.³¹³ In Pompenburg in Rotterdam, a large apartment

³⁰⁸ Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond* (Amsterdam: Das Mag Uitgevers, 2023), 76.

³⁰⁹ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔨 (@Mokumkraakt), "Meer Seks Minder Halsema," January 19, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Sxbl7ocvy/?igsh=bmI0eHVhdHNpMnIw>

³¹⁰ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔨 (@Mokumkraakt), "Hoerenhuys wordt ontruimd, onze strijd gaat door!," February 10, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C3K2_CAIJNA/?igsh=emp1bjN6djJmN3V3

³¹¹ MOKUM KRAAKT 🏠🔨 (@Mokumkraakt), "Meer Seks Minder Halsema," January 19, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Sxbl7ocvy/?igsh=bmI0eHVhdHNpMnIw>

³¹² "Deze idealistische 'ratten' koken en kraken uit protest tegen voedselverspilling en sloopbeleid," *Open Rotterdam*, November 2, 2022, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://openrotterdam.nl/deze-idealistische-ratten-koken-en-kraken-uit-protest-tegen-voedselverspilling-en-sloopbeleid/>

³¹³ Nynke Vermaat, "Woning Pompenburgflat gekraakt uit solidariteit met bewoners die strijden tegen sloop," *de Havenloods*, November 1, 2022, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.dehavenloods.nl/nieuws/algemeen/44548/woning-pompenburgflat-gekraakt-uit-solidariteit-met-bewoners-di>

building is being gentrified; and as in Utrecht, the original residents can no longer afford the rent after the renovation. Therefore, they squatted the apartments that were vacant. RATS did not use social media posts to announce the squat, but instead used banners and posters. For example, outside the apartments hung banners saying, "stop the demolition".³¹⁴

But also, one with the text ACAB on it, which stands for "All Cops Are Bastards". Among other things, this text referred to the crackdown by the Rotterdam police at the Rotterdam Housing Protest. Anarchists see police as protectors of capital and extenders of government, which is why that banner was also placed there.³¹⁵ In the Netherlands, however, it is illegal to insult an official in office. This term includes this. This gave the police cause to enter the squat and arrest the squatters.³¹⁶ Thus, this squat was ended. However, this action attracted news attention because of this.³¹⁷

Successfully squatting a property in the Netherlands for a long period of time is almost not feasible with the current legislation. Especially when it comes to squatting like that of the collectives RATS and Croesepoesen when houses are scheduled for demolition. A property is evicted if the owner can prove that they have plans for the property.³¹⁸ This kind of squatting is then done mainly to draw attention to the problem as Blee stated with social media playing an important tool.

4.4. Different organizations within the movement

Several groups can be found within the squatters' movement. As mentioned earlier, everyone is welcome within the movement. Each group has different reasons why they join or form the movement. For example, the squatters' movement is a safe space for Lhbtq+ people.³¹⁹ The squatters' movement by its very nature is a reaction against the system. Action is taken against the government by "illegally"

³¹⁴ Nynke Vermaat, "Woning Pompenburgflat gekraakt uit solidariteit met bewoners die strijden tegen sloop," *de Havenloods*, November 1, 2022, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.dehavenloods.nl/nieuws/algemeen/44548/woning-pompenburgflat-gekraakt-uit-solidariteit-met-bewoners-di>

³¹⁵ Miguel Martinez, "The autonomy of struggles and the self-management of squats: legacies of intertwined movements," *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* 11.1 (2019): 180.

³¹⁶ Peter Groenendijk, "Zes aanhoudingen in gekraakte flat vanwege beledigend spandoek tegenover politiebureau," *AD*, November 30, 2022, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/zes-aanhoudingen-in-gekraakte-flat-vanwege-beledigend-spandoek-tegenover-politiebureau~af144977/>

³¹⁷ Peter Groenendijk, "Zes aanhoudingen in gekraakte flat vanwege beledigend spandoek tegenover politiebureau," *AD*, November 30, 2022, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.ad.nl/rotterdam/zes-aanhoudingen-in-gekraakte-flat-vanwege-beledigend-spandoek-tegenover-politiebureau~af144977/>

³¹⁸ Frank van Gemert, Deanna Dadusc, and Rutger Visser, "Kerend tij," *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 54.3 (2012): 204.

³¹⁹ Lynn Owens, *Cracking under pressure: Narrating the decline of the Amsterdam squatters' movement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 145.

occupying a property.³²⁰ The squatters' movement attracts different people from marginalized groups. These marginalized groups can become part of the squatters' movement because they either cannot find a home or find a community in the movement.³²¹ As indicated earlier; the squatters' movement is against the neoliberal policies of the government. Many squatters feel that the government should make laws that no profit can be made on housing or are total anarchists.

The anarchists do not want the government dictating how they live or the laws they must abide by.³²² Squatting allows them to create their own place and utopia where the government has no say. Or they can establish a community with like-minded people.³²³ These groups create squats because they do not recognize or want to help the government in the capitalist system. Like many ordinary squatters, they believe that housing is a human right and not a profit to be made.³²⁴ Therefore, they squat certain premises. An example of such a squatting group is the AFGA.

AFGA is a feminist anarchist squatters' group. The group's philosophy is that they are fighting against the oppression of the state, with an emphasis on patriarchy. The squatter states that they do not want to wait for a hypothetical revolution.³²⁵ By forming an organization, you have a collective force. For example, a squatter from AFGA states, "When you realize that through cooperation and organization with others you can get things done that you thought were impossible."³²⁶ Through squatting, they can counter the state. At the same time, they also see the need for squatting, such as for finding housing or protesting. Squatting is not going to bring about a revolution she states. It is a solution to certain needs that the group has.³²⁷ The driven ideology behind anarchism is self-reliance and squatting fits into the ideology. The group itself does not let cisgendered men into the group, they state that they themselves want to lead the fight against their oppression.³²⁸

³²⁰ Eric Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen De Deur: Geschiedenis Van De Kraakbeweging (1964-1999)* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2000), 116.

³²¹ Lynn Owens, *Cracking under pressure: Narrating the decline of the Amsterdam squatters' movement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 145.

³²² Miguel Martinez, "The autonomy of struggles and the self-management of squats: legacies of intertwined movements," *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* 11.1 (2019): 180.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 181.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

³²⁵ Lente and Vincent, "Tegen de staat en het patriachaat," in *Pak Mokum Terug* ed. Mokum Kraakt. (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 42.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

Squatting is not only being done as a form of protest after the squatting ban. For some groups, squatting is one of the only options to find housing.³²⁹ Not everyone can find housing in the current housing market. This can be for a variety of reasons. For example, people may be undocumented and therefore this group may not have a claim to shelter or housing. Then squatting is a solution to finding housing.³³⁰ However, this is being done less and less since the squatting ban. Because the group is 'illegal' in the Netherlands and after the squatting ban, people can be arrested. This group then has the risk of being deported.³³¹

In the Netherlands, this group has come together in a squatter group called We Are Here. They no longer want to be seen as helpless or victims. They argue that the Dutch asylum system is dehumanizing. It robs the individual of influence over that person's destiny.³³² They use squatting to actually find housing they have a need for. But another important aspect of the group is that they want to make themselves heard. By squatting they gain visibility. It is a tool of protest for this group. The group has few rights in the Netherlands and through squatting they can make themselves heard.³³³ Their dissatisfaction with the Dutch asylum system is spread through squatting. There is also safety in numbers and these individuals can help each other because they are in the same situation.³³⁴ By associating within the squatters' movement, they can try to improve their own situation and express dissatisfaction in an organized way.

Another example of different groups within the squatters' movement are squatters who want to create free havens where they can maintain their alternative lifestyle. This group of squatters does not want to live by society's standards and usually want to be self-reliant.³³⁵ There, for example, they squat a piece of wasteland. Land can also be squatted not just housing. The squatters then build their own structures on the land.³³⁶

One such group is the Green Tribe. The Green Tribe is a group doing land squatting while creating their own 'society'. They squatted a piece of land in Amsterdam in 2018.³³⁷ They argue that a property can be evicted within a few months, but for fallow land, there may be no future plans for it, so it remains

³²⁹ Lynn Owens, *Cracking under pressure: Narrating the decline of the Amsterdam squatters' movement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 56.

³³⁰ Vincent, "Tien jaar We Are Here," in *Pak Mokum Terug* ed. Mokum Kraakt. (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 46.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

³³² *Ibid.*, 46.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 47.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

³³⁵ Miguel Martinez, "The autonomy of struggles and the self-management of squats: legacies of intertwined movements," *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* 11.1 (2019): 193.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

³³⁷ Lev and Boris, "De functie van een utopie," in *Pak Mokum Terug* ed. Mokum Kraakt. (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 289.

vacant. This gives the squatters a greater chance of staying for a longer period of time.³³⁸ The squatters can also make the land their own utopia and furnish it however they want. They have more autonomy. And it is more attractive to a larger group than a particular property or house.³³⁹

The goal of the Green Tribe is to create likeminded communities and to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. Anyone may suggest ideas how to develop the land. For example, one of the organizers states, “When someone comes up with something or wants to make something, it's up to that person to take care of it.”³⁴⁰ Among themselves, members help each other. This is a squatter group that has a lot of faith in each other and works together. They got together because they do not want to live according to the normal view of life. Squatting has given them a way to achieve this and because of this they have come together as a group.

There are also squatters who organize in groups to combat gentrification by using squatting. In Amsterdam there is also such a group, however they do not have a name. Two squatters from that group argue that there is a huge housing shortage in Amsterdam and that the Municipality often turns vacant buildings into "hip sanctuaries." These buildings can no longer be squatted.³⁴¹ Thus, the two squatters argue in 2023 that gentrification begins as soon as when for example artists who often use these hip sanctuaries take entrance into the neighborhood.³⁴² Squatters should actively counteract gentrification, and ‘legally’ opening hip sanctuaries works against this view.³⁴³ The two squatters acknowledge the difference between squatters who squat properties and sanctuaries/anti-squat properties where artists temporarily operate, and thus helping gentrification. Both squatters claim that squatting provide the neighborhood self-determination, and further resistance can be organized from these neighborhood spaces.³⁴⁴ Furthermore they argue that squats have an important role in society where the government drops the ball.³⁴⁵ For example, soup kitchens are held in the squats and squatting ensures that people have a place to sleep³⁴⁶ Squatters stand up for the normal people where they argue that the government mainly represents the interests of the rich, white citizens.³⁴⁷

Different groups are created within the squatters’ movement because everyone has a different reason or purpose for squatting. Because there is no umbrella organization within the movement, it is

³³⁸ Ibid., 290-91.

³³⁹ Ibid., 292.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 293.

³⁴¹ Penny, “Bezetten voor de buurt,” in *Pak Mokum Terug* ed. Mokum Kraakt. (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 355.

³⁴² Ibid., 345.

³⁴³ Ibid., 355.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 355.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 332.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 332.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 354.

natural for people with the same ideologies or plans to seek each other and organize.³⁴⁸ As a collective, more can be achieved, and you still have a community to fall back on and build upon. Not every group within the movement agrees with each other. Squatting is a tool; anyone can use it and join the movement.³⁴⁹

4.5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the squatters' movement underwent a change after the squatting ban. Squatting was now punishable; squatters therefore took a risk in squatting homes. This mainly caused "normal" squatters to leave the movement. In return, several squatter collectives have emerged. These squatter collectives use squatting mainly as a form of protest. The different squatter collectives stand up for different social issues. For example, the best-known squatter collective is currently Mokum Kraakt. Mokum Kraakt stands up against gentrification and vacancy in Amsterdam. But they also are in solidarity with the Palestinian people and organize various squats and events for them. Collectives within the squatters' movement have become more activist and are trying to reach a wider audience to spread its ideals after the squatting ban. At the same time as the squatting ban, social media has emerged. Social media is a useful tool that squatting collectives can use. The use of social media by the various squatting collectives like Mokum Kraakt and RATS has allowed more people to know about their existence. The use of social media is also effective in achieving their goals. Social media enables the squatter collectives to spread their message and gather support. For example, on Instagram pages, squatters can document their activities, share their motivations and ideals and connect with a wider audience. As squatting has become illegal and squatters are more likely to be evicted from their premises, squatter collectives must evolve with the times and circumstances. They do this smartly by recording everything online and being able to mobilize people in case of evictions, for example.

However, after the squatting ban squatting is not only used as a form of protest. Within the movement there are not only collectives but several squatter groups. These groups are formed because they join the movement for a specific purpose. This does not necessarily have to be an activist one. Squatting can still be used for finding housing. Or people are looking for a community they feel at home with. The squatting ban has also caused these groups to act differently. For example, empty plots of land are now being squatted or squatting for temporary shelter. The squatting ban has caused the squatters' movement to transform and the relationship between squatter and government to deteriorate. But the

³⁴⁸ Miguel Martinez, "The autonomy of struggles and the self-management of squats: legacies of intertwined movements," *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* 11.1 (2019): 191.

³⁴⁹ Lente and Vincent, "Tegen de staat en het patriachaar," in *Pak Mokum Terug* ed. Mokum Kraakt. (Amsterdam: Starfish Book, 2023), 42.

squatters' movement is always trying to push the limit while trying to persuade people to protest against the squatting ban and to gain support for their ideals.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

It can be concluded that the neoliberal turn on the Dutch housing market had a major impact on the current housing market. Government policy in the 1980s was based on the notion to reduce government spending and stimulate the economy by adopting a neoliberal course. This was also done in the 1990s in the housing market. This caused a significant transformation in the Dutch housing market, affecting both the market and the squatters' movement. The neoliberal turn caused deregulation of the housing market, privatization of social housing and encouragement of owning (multiple) homes. These changes led to a shift from a government-regulated to a market-driven housing sector in the 1990s until the Financial Crisis in 2008. These policies resulted in the government stepping back, building less social housing and emphasizing private home ownership and market forces. In the early period until the Financial Crisis, these changes were initially positive. The number of homes sold and built grew steadily and house prices also rose steadily. At the same time, these policies resulted in a decrease in national debt.

However, this neoliberal course eventually led to a crisis in the housing market. The Dutch housing market collapsed after the Financial Crisis in 2008. Houses were sold on a large scale because they had been bought with favorable loans that the homeowners could no longer repay. This brought the Dutch economy to a standstill. To get out of it, the government wanted to stimulate the housing market and restore the economy by attracting more capital. This was found in speculators and foreign investors. Several laws were passed to strengthen their position and make it more favorable for them to buy and rent homes. This caused speculators and foreign investors to buy up homes on a large scale. This led to rising house prices and rents. More houses were also built at the higher end of the market. At the same time, landlords were given more freedom to raise rents, resulting in an increasingly difficult situation for tenants.

The neoliberal measures strengthened the position of investors, which further increased the housing shortage and increased inequality in the housing market. The position of starters and the 'normal' population in the Netherlands was weakened during this period. They have to rent houses at high prices and are competed away when buying homes in the housing market. This law also caused more vacancy in the Netherlands, as some houses were bought up as investment for the land/location of the house. The mentioned changes in the housing market in this thesis have contributed to the crisis of the housing market as there is a severe shortage of affordable housing, with rising house prices and rents.

Since 2019, the government has been trying to solve the aforementioned problems by opposing and rescinding previously passed laws. The squatters' movement and the housing market are interlinked. For example, a tight housing market created the need to squat to find affordable housing. From this necessity, therefore the movement was born. Over the years, the squatters' movement has transformed into an activist movement. From its beginning, squatting was a response to failing government policies. Over the years, squatting has been used as a tool to express dissatisfaction towards the government on various issues.

The neoliberal turn on the housing market are also protested by the squatters' movement. This does not take away the fact that there are squatters in the movement who only squat for finding housing and have nothing to do with the activist side of the movement. The changes in the housing market starting in the 1990s and the housing crisis being talked about since 2019 have had an impact on the strategies and goals of the Dutch squatting movement. The squatters' movement has evolved from a need to find affordable housing to a diverse composition of groups pursuing different social and political goals. It has deteriorated the relationship between the squatters' movement and the government, making the movement even more activist. At the same time, squatting as a form of housing has been made virtually impossible.

However, the neoliberal turn in the Dutch government has led to laws restricting squatters' rights. In 2010, squatting was criminalized. In 2022, this law was tightened, and squatters could be evicted within three days instead of eight weeks. This law passed against the advice of the Amsterdam Triangle. Amsterdam is the city with the most squatters in the Netherlands and the Amsterdam triangle has the most experience dealing with squatters. The laws against squatting were introduced during the time of the Financial Crisis and a period of housing crisis in the Netherlands. The government tried to protect the interests of investors and speculators with these anti-squatting laws.

In response to the criminalization of the squatters' movement and the housing market crisis, three changes in the movement can be observed. These are the formation of (large) groups and collectives that work together, and squat larger premises and these collectives actively use social media. Squatting has become newsworthy after the ban. By forming large groups formed based on the same ideals, squatting is more likely to succeed, and multiple actions can be held. Several squatting collectives have formed, such as Mokum Kraakt. These groups use squatting not only as a means of obtaining housing, but also as a form of protest against (failing) government policies. The rise of social media has helped the squatters' movement to reach a larger audience and spread their message. People can learn about the movement and what is involved in maintaining a squat in an accessible way. This allows them to gain more support and sympathy for their collective/movement squatting, hoping to change public opinion and thus force the government to implement changes. Also, through social media, the movement is able to mobilize more support for example in the case of eviction and draw attention to the various causes the particular collective is fighting for. Such as, for example, the Palestinian cause regarding the case of Mokum Kraakt.

Squatting, like social media, is a tool. Anyone can join the movement and use squatting. It is not limited to a specific group. Hence there is no umbrella organization, and after the ban there is more collaborations between different groups.

Squatting was banned to strengthen investors' interests and protect property rights of Dutch citizens. But squatting was done only if there were no plans the property in the future. Squatters were portrayed as criminals. While increasingly restricted by stricter legislation, the squatters' movement continues to adapt and resist failing government policies. This is done by developing new forms of protest

and organization to achieve their goals and bring attention to social injustices such as the housing crisis by using squatting and social media.

This thesis not only answers how the squatters' movement and the housing market are connected and how they react to each other with the passing of new laws. It also tells how the government deals with gentrification and speculation in the housing market. It can be examined what role speculation and vacancy play in the current Dutch housing crisis and then link this to the squatters' movement. Throughout history, there has always been vacancy and speculation in the Dutch housing market. Using this thesis with additional research, it can be studied to what extent squatters have contributed to the debate on urban redevelopment and housing policy can be examined. The squatters' movement forces the government to act on the housing market and reflect on its own policies. As demonstrated in this thesis, the squatters' movement identifies problems in the housing market and, as a result, the movement forces the government to think about these issues.

This thesis has built upon existing but limited literature on the Dutch squatters' movement. And it has shown how the movement adapted after the squatting ban and what role neoliberalism had in it. Authors writing about the Dutch squatters' movement would agree with my thesis. This is because this thesis has addressed an evolution of the movement, and that the movement evolves with the times and uses multiple tools, such as social media. This is also what previous authors argue for other time periods. The squatters' movement is an ever-changing movement that moves with social issues of its time. It has always been an activist movement that evolves.

This thesis has several limitations. First, this thesis focuses only on a limited number of cities, and it only uses Instagram for social media. Although this is not a problem for the research of this thesis. The cities cited are the largest cities in the Netherlands with the most squatters. The squatter groups in this city represent the picture of the movement. Hence, only Instagram was also used for three collectives.. There are several collectives and several social media sites. This thesis is to limit in wordcount to use all of them. This brief selection was enough to support the arguments raised and they were most relevant to this research. Another limitation is that the public opinion of the Dutch population on the movement was barely examined. Although it is an interesting angle/research topic, it was not of great relevance over this thesis and therefore only spoken briefly about it.

For further research on this topic, this topic can be compared with case studies regarding foreign squatters' movements. How foreign squatters' movements deal with squatting bans in their countries and see if these findings apply there as well. It can be investigated if there are debates on universal values within an international squatters' movement. After all, as mentioned earlier, squatting is a tool, and anyone can use squatting and join the movement. Hence, it may be interesting to investigate whether foreign squatters' movements can be compared. For this research, this comparison was too extensive, but can be explored.

This thesis has addressed that the Dutch squatters' movement is understudied when researching the housing market. As demonstrated, the two are connected. The squatting movement is bigger than just the struggle for affordable housing. It has a large activist side that uses social media to mobilize and inform people on a large scale. These developments are interesting in the larger discourse on activist movements, which is why it is interesting to study the movement.

Also, the Netherlands has a housing shortage and a lot of vacancy. Squatting combats this but is currently prohibited. Hence, this thesis also has a social relevance. This thesis has addressed the need to look critically at the neoliberal turn and that the squatters' movement was a scapegoat for these policies. (Affordable) housing is a human right and therefore the thesis is relevant to this case study. It maps where things have gone wrong in the Dutch housing market.

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