

Anonymous

Squatting

Squatting is to the real-estate business what Occupy Wall Street is to the modern economic and political systems. It has been around for much longer than Occupy. One in every seven people in the world either live in squatted houses or on squatted land. The practice involves occupying and using abandoned and unused property. In the following article, we will present a short introduction to squatting and we will give out key search words that will hopefully guide anyone interested in finding more information. These words are usually portrayed in very different light by politically biased and corporate media so we would suggest independent sources of information.

So the first key search would be: "Indy media".

Where there is excess production brought about by consumerism and property laws benefiting the rich, there is squatting. Hence, nowadays you find squats in most parts of the world including Luxembourg. But in Luxembourg people are immediately evicted even as they are squatting out of necessity and are thus not as visible for the press as the latest celebrity scandal. All the while, government is too busy marketing stability to big business to care.

Key search: "Neo-liberal doctrine".

In Luxembourg when you see a house with entrances blocked by bricks it's most likely a sign that people tried to make a home in an abandoned house, got evicted and all further access was made impossible in this

manner. This is a criminal act perpetrated by the police to deny people a safe place to sleep in, when there is so much unused space all around Luxembourg. It is a criminal act also in that it goes against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing [...]" (article 25). The crime of the police and its masters can only continue if it remains unchallenged and the matter is kept in the dark. And oddly enough most evictions take place at night, when cameras and witness are less likely to be able to record the crime.

Key search: "Capitalist state"

People across the globe take up squatting either as a means of survival or as a stand against corporate marketing propaganda benefiting an elite. Both practices are in essence a direct political act. People take direct action against the hierarchical, centralized political system that pretends to take care of its citizens when the reality is different. People also take direct action against the economic belief in property as an untouchable god when they squat the property not needed by someone else to live.

Key search: "Anarcho-syndicalism"

Luxembourg abounds in abandoned, empty buildings as well as in large property owners – be they banks, construction companies or individuals. Take the example

of the mansion on Avenue Marie-Thérèse right next to Pont Adolphe, first one to the left when coming from the train station. It has been empty for many years now and belongs to a bank. It is a historical building and for this reason it can't be demolished, but if left empty and unattended, it will crumble on its own. People could use it and maintain it. But it is left empty on purpose. Anyone can imagine that an office building in that location would bring a lot of profit.

Key search: "Real estate speculation"

Buildings are being left empty while people sleep on the street in Luxembourg, yet at the same time the government portrays the country as a heaven on earth, highest GDP, safest place in the world and so on. This contradiction is much more violent than any sort of challenge to material property one could make. Squatters are advised not to force any doors or windows to get into an abandoned building. But would such an act actually cause any harm? What of the harm caused to the person sleeping on the street exposed to the elements and abuse while hundreds of buildings stay empty?

Key search: "Autonomous communities"

When a building is demolished, any "greener" and more "sustainable" one constructed in its place will have a much higher market value. This will raise rent prices as all properties around it also gain in value.



And so when some choose to pay more for “green” buildings they unknowingly choose to kick out the folks that live in an older house next door. Or they simply partake in the wave of increased property prices that at some point reaches the poor.

Key search: “Gentrification”.

And is it benefiting the environment to destroy a perfectly good house, to transport the rubble using gasoline guzzling trucks to a land-fill where it’s dumped? Or is it benefiting plant or animal to have new materials taken from the Earth, usually just as polluting and non-biodegradable as the old house had, just for the sake of an energy label? Label which will only apply to future use of energy in the house but doesn’t take into consideration the huge energy costs put into building the old house, destroying it and building a new one where retro-fitting solutions abound. The mentality according to which new is best and old is garbage only makes sense in a capitalist system.

Key search is “Green washing”.

Keep in mind that entire communities have flourished with squatting. Take free-town Christiania in Denmark where you find many small, elegant, self built houses on a land that was formerly used as an army area. Right in the center of the city! Or take the example of the Zapatistas in Mexico who, unable to have land to provide the food needed for their families, took up arms against the state and secured enough land in Chiapas to make a living. Or of the squatted forest close to Nantes where locals refuse to leave their houses just to make way for yet another airport. To the locals’ aid many squatters showed up and are, even as you read, in open conflict with the police who use extreme violence to discourage more support from arriving.

“Solidarity” is a key word we don’t hear enough of these days!

So remember, if you plan to squat, you are not alone but in good company! You

might be evicted at some point but you will learn more about the legislation and social taboos than in any dry university courses. Not to mention all the first hand experience with practical skills of maintaining a house. It’s not a criminal offence to squat and although the owner can choose to take legal action against you, with the process being costly and lengthy, most will not. And so if you can avoid police eviction, you might just squeeze a few rent-free months of life into this planet. If you are the social type you could open the space to everyone else who could make use of it in many different ways. The space we as a group want to see develop in Luxembourg, would be a politically and ecologically aware space aiming to challenge consumerist patterns, free of money, religion, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs but also free of racism, speciesism and nationalism. We would soon like to welcome you to a free shop where no money is needed to have your needs met.

Key searches: “Free Your Stuff Luxembourg” and Free Space Luxembourg. ♦