

## Editorial

Dear neighbor,

after distributing the neighborhood letter a few days ago, we thought it would be nice to provide our own media to rectify the media distortion about squatting and the demos that were organized in Am\*dam on October 1<sup>st</sup> and in Nijmegen the next day.

We want to denounce brutal police tactics and the propaganda that comes with it, picturing the squatter as a rioter, or otherwise a parasite of society.

We want to deconstruct the "public opinion" about squatting and other local issues beyond and besides. To engage in a dialog within our neighborhood for the promotion of solidarity in civil society.

Brought to you by Ruysdaelstraat Krakers, your neighbors, on Friday, October 8, 2010.

# Para-Kraak #001 -- The Squatter as a Rioter

Most recent attention on squatters in the media has been put to draw a stereotype, some archetypal squatter with two faces: the violent rioter wearing the mask of the Black Block, and the colorful but alien and marginal punk.

This double-sided picture sends a clear message to the public: squatters are not like the rest of us, and they're scary. All that's needed to stigmatize a minority (less than one squatter per one thousand citizens in Amsterdam.) and make it a normal thing to evict people and throw them out on the street, or worse, in a jail.

"Dirty Squatters"? "Grow up!" For the last 40 years, many Amsterdamers have squatted at some point. This piece of experience of solidarity in action is part of the culture of the city. A gross picture won't grasp our diversity nor exhaust our creativity.

## Calling for Riots

The media landscape wouldn't be satisfying without some violent action occurring in the

squatting scene. Am\*dam Centrum still echoes the riots of the 80s, when the squatting movement forced the government to legalize squatting.

"Expect Resistance", one of the slogans of the anti-kraakverbod mobilization, opened the way for the manipulation the police used against squatters. If the images shown on TV display the fire, the car turned around and countless riot cops fighting the Black Block, you can find other videos showing how the police started charging from both ends of the Spuistraat, while the demo was on its way to finish at Spuiplein.

As a squatter commented on TV, the demo was for squatters and the homeless, and cops do have a home, don't they? Without riot police presence, the demo would have ended without an incident, but that would have pictured squatters as legitimate protesters.

In the next section we will detail some of the tactics used by the police during the demo to turn it into a riot, manufacturing the expected image of violence in order to gain

popular support against squatting.

## Brutal Police Tactics



During the 1<sup>st</sup> of October demo, 11 people were arrested and 15 wounded, plus 3 horses and 2 policemen.

The classical police work after a public demonstration is to disperse the crowd.

Police brutality doesn't occur by accident, but by strategy. First, it makes people react to violence and fight the police, with the consequence of protesters appearing as trouble makers. Then, if the risk is high to get wounded, the people won't demonstrate anymore. That type of police work instills fear in the citizen, rendering her powerless and unlikely to speak up against injustice.

## Running into people with a police van

Three people were chased and hurt by a riot police van, including tourist that happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. A foot was crushed and a knee broken. The driver apologized.

That is a disproportionate use of force and a tactic of terror.

## Horse charge combined with ME blockade

Charging with horses against a pacific crowd while the other end of the street is blocked by riot cops aims at making people panic. Usually, protesters can run away through the riot police belt and disperse.

But on October 1<sup>st</sup>, the riot units kept the street closed, increasing panic and provoking violent response from the enclosed protesters. Not to mention the cruel treat suffered by the scared horses.

**Beating up someone badly to scare the rest of the protesters** The mission of riot police reaches its height with this ugly tactic of picking up some random protester and beat her up. R..y had her skull cracked by excessive physical violence.

She didn't wear any protection nor was masking her face, and of course she didn't fight with the police. She just got caught in a terrible moment of History. After she started bleeding, a street medic went to rescue her: both were arrested. Within two hours her picture was all around the Dutch web. Today, R..y still is in danger, she loses consciousness and her skull is fractured.

**Unlawful Provocation** Among the 11 people arrested, 6 were provoked by bystanders drinking beer at a bar, calling them "dirty squatters" and pushing them. The slightest response would reveal the bystanders as undercover police, as they would arrest the "violent rioter".

Needless to say, police is required by law to announce itself, and probably isn't allowed to drink alcohol during service. The abuse of this secret police echoes the past and announces the years to come across EUrope.

*Para: Greek prefix for besides, beyond*

*Kraak: Dutch for squat (from: breaking inside an empty building)*

This is the first issue of Para-Kraak, a neighborhood newsletter edited by your neighbors (including yourself :) to raise awareness on the situation of the squat in Ruysdaelstraat.

## The Hygienist Society

Two visions are facing each other.

On the one hand, a strategy of gentrification by speculation. By creating a situation of scarcity, the speculator inflates the price of land and pushes up the price of rent. But the idea behind speculation goes beyond money. The consequence is a segregation by wealth, to optimize urban planning so as to host an even, homogeneous population of pacified consumers.

On the other hand, a humane and practical direct action to provide shelter to the homeless and experience solidarity as a way of life rather than delegated through monetized charity.

There is a belief that by getting rid of the symptom, the disease will disappear: if you can't see it, it doesn't exist. This is true for comfort and psychiatric drugs, you know the brands. But squatters are only a symptom, a sign that there is vacant urban space, and other ways of life and a diversity that creates.

Public attention is distracted from the root of the problem: a vision of housing as a commodity rather than a necessity, despite a long-standing failing housing policy.

This edition is one of 138 printed copies[1], that barely covers half the street, so feel free to print your own copies: the PDF file is available online.[2] You can send us your news, comment or article for publication in an upcoming issue, or pass by and post it to Ruysdaelstraat 79, or ring the bell for a cup of tea. We receive email to [ruysdael@squat.net](mailto:ruysdael@squat.net).

Squatters are recyclers, symbiotes rather than parasites, living frugally from the excess of the rest of society. We take what others don't want anymore. We strive to live a sensible life through sharing and solidarity. We spend time together.



Banning "dirty squatters" won't "clean" the city by clearing out the difference, but it will make it worse by making space for other groups such as the rising Neo-Nazis that are making their way up to the national government.

The hygienist view of society, inherited from the darkest moments of European history, states that the perfect but chimeric

consumer society, as seen in advertising, should be imposed in your daily life: beautiful, carefree, fat-free smiling people enjoying their stay on this planet thanks to consumption. If you're not one of them, you're a pathetic loser. If you oppose it, you're crazy. Still, you want to be part of the smiling crowd. For squatters, there is no way to happiness, happiness is the way.

In the hygienist society, happiness must result from conformity and submission to the consumerist ideal. Other sources of happiness (such as enjoying life for its own sake) are seen as an attack on society. Your right to happiness has to come from what you can buy, rather than what you can do.

To compete, to conform, to consume, vs. to cooperate, to inform, to create. The ideal of the hygienist society is the passive, submissive woman depicted in the 50s; a housewife, whose life revolves around serving her husband and raising her children into docile consumers. In that vision, human beings are reduced to a specific social role, within a strict hierarchy considered as essential. We reject that fascist model of society. Expect Resistance.

[1] From the article 138 of the new law relative to squatting.

[2] <http://ruysdael.squat.net/para-kraak/>