From Subculture to Lifestyle -

The Meaning of Squatting in the Life Courses Among Squatter Activists in Helsinki

Master's Thesis in Cultural Studies

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This study is an ethnographic study and explores squatting activism of the 1990s in Helsinki making use of interviews with activists, archive materials and the authors personal experiences. Eight face-to-face interviews and archive work were conducted during years 2014-2017. The primary research interest is to investigate how activists experienced their participation in squatting activism and how participating in squatting activism has influenced activists life courses and lifestyle choices.

Squatting activism is seen in this study as a subcultural phenomenom. Squatting activism has been a significant part of youth culture in Helsinki since late 1970s but is still relatively unexplored and limited amount of research has examined the experiences of activists. Theoretically the study rests on the subcultural theory and especially following concepts of Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, Ross Haenfler, Patrick J. Williams and Paul Hodkinson. The concept of lifestyle is used in this study as a useful concept to explain subcultural participation.

The results illustrates that involvement in squatting activism was an influential part of activists adolescence. In the activist stories activism provided a channel for action and participation. Squatting activism of 1990s emerged as a response to young people´s housing need and housing crisis in Helsinki. Squatting activism offered opportunities for the production of subcultural spaces and do-it-yourself -practices. What started as young people´s radical activism early 1990s in Helsinki, became a space, where lifestyle and lifestyle choices were constructed. The results resonate with debates about youth cultures, that subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last a lifetime.

Keywords: Squatting, subculture, activism, lifestyle

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Searching squatting activism of the 1990s

I have been interested in squatting activism for a long time. The story of my involvement with squatting activism emerged in the midway of 1980s when I interrailed in Europe and experienced squatting culture in cities like Berlin, Amsterdam and Hamburg. Especially the visit to Ungdomshuset[1], a well-known scene for alternative youth culture located in Copenhagen, was a remarkable experience to young traveller. When I became a squatter activist myself and participated squatting activism in Helsinki early 1990s, I did not imagine I would be some day studying this topic. In other words, I didn´t have any intention to become a researcher or to make systematic study about squatting activism when I was active squatter. However, I was "insider" in squatting scene in Helsinki many years, which gave me unique position to experience the dynamic of this action-oriented subculture.

In Spring 2014, when I started to sketch ideas to this study, I had a conversation with a squatter activist about our shared experiences in the squatting activism almost twenty five years earlier. She commented:

> "…afterwards I have been thinking how squatting was so essential part of our youth. At that time, it provided a channel for active participation and a way to feel influential and to feel that those things mattered. Squatting offered a channel for action. The issues were at grassroot level, concrete spaces, houses and local activities. My life has been strongly connected with those houses and those people who lived in them. It's formed my own way of thinking and what I consider to being good living and a good life. It had a concrete influence on my life and on my children's lives."

[1] Ungdomshuset (literally "the Youth House") was the popular name of the building formally named Folkets Hus ("House of the People") located on Jagtvej 69 in Norrebro, Copenhagen. Ungdomshuset was a popular alternative cultural center and underground scene during years 1982-2007. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ungdomshuset (seen 12.12.2016)

What raised my curiosity was her comment how participating squatting activism has been so influential and pivotal part of her youth, that it still influences her everyday life after so many years. Because squatting was also part of my "subcultural youth", I really shared her experience. Traditionally in academic literature subcultural participation is connected to youth. However, as Williams (2011) writes in his book *Subcultural Theory – Traditions and Concepts*, subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last a lifetime. After this I started to contact more "ex-squatters" and activists who were involved in wave of squatting activism of the 1990s in order to find out if they were interested to share their experiences about squatting activism.

This study is an ethnographic and qualitative study, and explores squatting activism of the 1990s in Helsinki making use of interviews with older activists, archive materials and the authors personal experiences. The primary research interest is to investigate how activists experienced their participation in squatting activism and how participating in squatting activism has influenced activists life courses and lifestyle choices. The primary research data consists of a set of loosely structured interviews of the squatting activists. Eight face-to-face interviews and archive work were conducted during years 2014-2017. The secondary data is made up from archive materials and authors personal experiences as an "insider" in squatting activism.

Squatting activism is in this study conceived of as a subcultural phenomenon. Theoretically the study rests on subcultural theory and mainly following theoretical concepts of Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, Ross Haenfler, Patrick J. Williams and Paul Hodkinson (Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Ross Haenfler 2005; Bennett & Taylor 2012; Patrick J. Williams 2011; Paul Hodkinson 2011; 2013). Following these theoretical footsteps and debates about youth cultures, lifestyle, ageing and subcultural participation the concept of subculture is in this study conceived in a broad sense, understanding of subculture as a platform and social space where cultural identities, lifestyle and lifestyle choices are contested and constructed. Drawing on the interviews with older participants,

the will to understand the nature of the concept subculture with this perspective is carried throughout the study and analysis.

Squatting has been a significant part of activism in many European cities, also in Helsinki since late 1970s. However, squatting activism is still relatively unexplored and it appears that a limited amount of research has examined the experiences of older activists. As a response to this need, the informants in this research are activists who were connected to the squatting activism in Helsinki early 1990s. As a former squatter and still identifying myself connected to squatting culture, I have sympathy for subcultures in general. As an active participant of this squatters subculture and as an "ex-squatter", I have been participant in the activities explored. I have studied squatting culture and written various analyses about youth activism in Helsinki (Peipinen 2015; Bird & Fransberg & Peipinen 2016; Berglund & Peipinen 2017). Research was inspired by the Finnish Youth Research Network Summer School, which took place in June 2015. Summer School invited students studying youth cultures to work intensively at a weeklong, live-on camp on the outskirts of Helsinki. Students from Australia and Finland were drawn together by their shared interest in subcultures and alternative cultural spaces. In the following section I will define the research questions of the study.

1.2. The purpose of the research and research problem

The utility of the concept of subculture has been much debated in recent years. In recent literature of youth studies, there has been growing interest in examining the subcultural experiences of older participants (see Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Haenfler 2005; Hodkinson 2013.) It appears that limited amount of research is done about the experiences of older participants in relation to squatting and radical activism. In their book *A European Youth Revolt. European Perspectives on Youth Protest and Social Movements in the 1980s* (2016) Andresen and Van de Steen suggest that the diverse squatting activism in European cities can be summed as "youth revolts". This perspective is also relevant in this study, because the activists of the 1990s were young, but

I consider this kind of conceptualizing as problematic since it leaves the experiences of the older participants unnoticed.

In recent literature there has been growing interest towards the investigation of the experiences and contuinity of participation in "youth cultures" also among older subcultural participants, but the relationship between subcultural participation and ageing is still relatively thinly mapped (see Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Hodkinson 2011; 2013). As Hodkinson (2011) writes, "rather than simply growing up and out of the scene completely, many participants continue their participation, balancing it with a desire to conform to societal expectations for appropriate adult behavior". Following these debates I will explore in this study older participants´ subcultural experience in the context of squatting activism in Helsinki.

Squatting activism is in this study conceived of as a subcultural phenomenon. The concept of "lifestyle" is used in this study as a useful concept to explain subcultural participation in the context of squatting activism. Furthermore, looking at squatting activism as a subcultural "lifestyle", illustrates how identity is a reflexive process and the concept of lifestyle applies to wider choices, behaviours and attitudes. As I will dscuss, subcultural lifestyles and lifestyle choices can also be oppositional to the mainstream culture and seek wider social change (Haenfler et al 2012; Bennett 2011a; see also Chaney 1996).

The empirical analysis of this study is based on three perspectives, each of which considers the experiences of activists from a different angle. Each of the themes are reflected with lifestyle theory debates and mainly following theoretical writings and concepts of Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, Patrick J. Williams, Ross Haenfler and Paul Hodkinson (Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Ross Haenfler 2005; Bennett & Taylor 2012; Patrick J. Williams 2011; Paul Hodkinson 2011; 2013.) Firstly, I explore how squatting activism of the 1990s emerged and how participants experienced their subcultural identity. Squatting activism can be characterized as an oppositional, relatively radical and action-oriented subculture and the act of occupying empty buildings is in general

unlawful[2]. In this context I am interested in how participants experienced the challenges squatters were subjected to.

Secondly, I will explore what kind of subcultural spaces squatting activism produced. I am interested in how abandoned spaces became a platforms for activism and how squatting activism became a strategy of collective action. Urban space is a subject of control and subcultures right to make use of urban space is a core question in cities, also in Helsinki. Much of this activity comes back to alternative definitions of the city, how youth cultures can exist and flourish in urban space. Reflecting debates about subcultures, I will explore how squatters were also actors of their social environment, whose choices contributed to maintaining conditions in the city and in which they lived in.

Thirdly, the study examines how participating in squatting activism has influenced activists life courses and lifestyle choices, and how activists experienced their changing relationship to activism when they became older. Usually in academic literature the concept of subculture is connected to youth and the experiences of older participants have been neglected (see Bennett & Taylor 2012; Hodkinson 2013). As I will discuss, subcultural participation cannot be defined only as a youth phenomenon. As Williams (2011) writes, subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last a lifetime. I am interested in how the experiences of older activists are positioned in this debate and meaning up to which point activists consider that they can influence their lives by making choices and how these choices have influenced their life courses.

As a summary, research questions are the following:

RQ 1: *How activists experienced their participation in squatting activism?*

RQ 2: *What kind of subcultural spaces squatting activism prodeced?*

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[2] Squatting is criminalized in most countries in Europe.

RQ 3: *What is the role of the squatting activism in the life courses and lifestyle choices among the activists?*

Study is constructed in the following way: In the Chapter One I have introduced my research interests and defined the research questions of the study. In Chapter Two I review how squatting activism has fared as a part of urban activism in Helsinki and explore the discourse of squatting activism in recent research literature in Europe to give perspective to my research topic. Chapter Three defines the theoretical framework of this study and gives an overview of theory, debates and concepts from which this study develops. Chapter Four is central on methodology and the research process and introduces the ethnographical work, data used in research and presents how the analysis was done. In Chapters Five, Six and Seven I will explore the research questions and the results of this study. Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by summarizing the key findings, reflects the reliability of my observations and paves the way to my future research.

1.3. Squatting activism of the 1990s in Helsinki

Squatting activism arrived to Helsinki and squatting came first time in the spotlight in late 1970s. The occupying of an old warehouse later known as Lepakkoluola ("Bat Cave") was a turning point.[3] Bat Cave became an important and visible scene for alternative culture, from its cellars and venues activists together "fought against apathy" (see Rantanen 2000.) Bat Cave was a successful facilitator and venue for alternative culture in the 1980s Helsinki. Occupying this old and robust warehouse was a starting point to a wave of squatting in other bigger cities in 1980s in Finland, and in many cases, squatters succeeded to create cultural spaces also in other cities. The history of Bat Cave is quite well documented in the book of Miska Rantanen (2000) and

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[3] Lepakko or Lepakkoluola ("Bat Cave") was a cultural center and important venue for independent youth culture in Ruoholahti district. Lepakko was an old warehouse and was occupied by young artists, musicians, punks, students and left-wing political activists. Lepakko was a remarkable venue and facilitator for alternative cultural life in Helsinki in 1980´s and 1990´s. Lepakko was functioning from 1979 to 1999 before it was demolished.

many other un-academic sources and has earned its place in the history of youth cultures in Helsinki, but there are still gaps remaining in knowledge about squatting activism in Helsinki.

Another key event was squatting of an old wooden house called Arkki ("the Ark") located in Pihlajanmäki suburb in the beginning of 1980s. This tiny wooden house was squatted by students, artists and environmental activists, and despite of its modest location in the suburbs "The Ark" became an influential meeting point for artists and young activists in Helsinki during 1980s. The house was finally torn down 2003. During 1980s there were several individual squats in Helsinki and in 1986 squatting of the house called "Freda 42" started a wave of squatting which raised young people´s housing problems to public debate (Tuominen 2008)[4]. The first wave of squatting during 1980s was much related to environmental issues and took much of its inspiration from squatting activism in Berlin, Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Wien. As has been the case in other European cities, squatting activists were mainly young people, students, artists, left-wing political activists and punks who adopted "green" and alternative lifestyles (see Andresen and Van de Steen 2016.)

The second wave of squatting began during the economic crisis in Finland in the beginning of 1990s and peaked during 1990-1994. On January 10, 1990, a group of young squatters occupied abandoned three wooden buildings at Intiankatu in Helsinki, in a historical housing district near city center. Squatters held the houses for a couple days, raised public debate about the lack of affordable housing in the city and finally were evicted by the police. This was a starting point to a new wave of squatting activism of the 1990s in Helsinki. Early 1990s was in many ways an exceptional period in Helsinki, in particular for young people. The main reason for this was the political and economic crisis which was triggered by the fall of Soviet Union, which had enormous political, cultural and economical impacts in Finland. Followed by the housing crisis,

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[4] Freda 42 -movement took its name from an empty old church which was occupied in 1986. The church was located in the center of Helsinki, the address was Fredrikinkatu 42 (Fredriks Street 42). The church was sold and renovated as a nightclub, until it was turned back as a church in 2014.

youth unemployment and a rising number of empty buildings it gave fruitful conditions for squatting activism.[5]

A key event took place in January 1990 when a group of activists occupied three abandoned wooden houses in residential suburban area, Intiankatu, sparking activism in Helsinki and other bigger cities in Finland (Peipinen 2012; 2015). Another key event was occupying of empty industrial plot in May 1990, called Kookos Factory in Sörnäinen. Significant squat was the occupying of an old gas station in Meilahti, in an old industrial area, in June 1991. The house was called "Putkinotko", and was turned to gathering place for squatters and alternative cultural center, with youth café and concert hall. "Putkinotko" had intense life during 1991-1993 before the building was demolished. Squatting activism of the 1990s can be characterized as a first actual squatting movement in Finland. This wave of squatting activism peaked during years 1990-1994, and was a siqnificant part of youth culture history in Helsinki. However, this period of youth activism is still relatively unexplored and drawing on the interviews and experiences of participants I seek to fill this gap in this study.

1.4. Contemporary discourse of squatting activism

Squatting is an unlawful occupation of abandoned buildings or urban space with the intention of using occupied dwellings for living or other cultural purposes. As Hans Pruijt (2013, 19) defines, squatting is "living in – or otherwise using – a dwelling or empty buildings without the consent of the owner". In this study squatting activism is understood as a subcultural phenomenom.

From time-to-time squatting empty buildings or urban spaces have received attention in Helsinki and emerges public debates about the policy how such activism should be treated. As Haenfler (2013, 19) points, subcultural activism

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[5] Development in Finnish unemployment early 1990s was an exceptional episode in the economic history in Finland. For most of the 1980s, the unemployment rates were around five percent, similar to the other Scandinavian countries. In just four years, beginning in 1991, the unemployment rate hiked to close to twenty percent. Source Erkki Koskela & Roope Uusitalo (2002). The Unintended Convergence: How the Finnish Unemployment Reached the European Level.

can be for outsiders strange, or "sometimes even dangerous and mysterious". As we see in the history of squatting activism is often seen negatively and public debate is often focused on negative impressions of such activism. My argument is that studying youth activism – also its radical and oppositional forms - and their history offers a counter-force to the negative impressions and broadens the knowledge about youth cultures in general.

Research is an attempt to better understand the history of activism in Helsinki. While activists were telling me about their experiences about their involvement in squatting activism, they were also building up a picture about the history of alternative culture in Helsinki. In recent years there has been an emergent of academic interest in examining youth culture history (see Feldman-Barrett 2015a; 2015b; 2018). However, as Catherine Feldman-Barrett (2015a, 1) writes in her book *Lost histories of Youth Culture* still "more attention continues to be paid to contemporary youth cultures rather than to the young people from decades and centuries past". The local history and dimensions of youth culture should not be forgotten.

Drawing on interviews with older participants the goal of this study is to enrich perspectives of the topic in the research field. As Feldman-Barrett (2015a, 7) writes "it is challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of youth worlds the further back in time one goes". Although some studies have evaluated squatting culture in Helsinki in the past years (see Tuominen 2008; Mikola 2008; Salasuo & Stranius 2012), there are still academic "blind spots" which need to be fulfilled in research. As Feldman-Barrett (2015a, 2) notes "there are many histories and narratives that either emerge over time or are lost to the recess of the past". Also, the English-written research literature has had limited attention on squatting activism in Finland or does not exist at all.

In recent years there has been an emergent of scholarly interest in examining the history of squatting activism in European cities (see Pruijt 2013, Andresen & Van de Steen 2016; Mayer 2013; Kadir 2016; Van de Steen, Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014.) As Christine Wall (2017, 82) writes "new generation of historians are now beginning to examine the squatting archive". As scholars have pointed, squatting activism has influenced youth cultures within cities,

sometimes playing an important role in local protest movements and at times gaining national or international significance (van der Steen & Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014, 19).[6]

Occupying dwellings or abandoned spaces has occurred in many different circumstances and is a diverse subculture in Europe. (see Mayer 2012, 2; Pruijt 2013, 17-18; Cattaneo & Martínez, 2014, 2). Squatting activism has its historical roots even in 1920s and after World War II but the actual rise of squatting activism and the rise of squatting movements is situated in the early 1970´s in cities like Amsterdam, Copenhagen, London, Berlin, Bristol, Wien and Frankfurt. (see Andresen & Van de Steen 2016; Van de Steen, Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014, 11; Pruijt 2013, 19.) In 1981, in Amsterdam it counted more than 206 squatted buildings, housing more than 1300 activists. In early 1980´s in West Berlin it counted 284 squats. (Van de Steen, Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014, 2).

Squatting activism of the 1970´s and 1980´s has received most of the academic attention and the most documented are the histories of squatting activism in European "squatting capitals" like Amsterdam, Berlin, Wien and Copenhagen. (see Andresen & Van de Steen 2016; Mayer 2013; Kadir 2016; Van de Steen, Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014). This has also raised criticism, because the focus of research has been on cities in Northern Europe and limited attention has been paid to squatting activism in other cities and countries. The most prominent perspective in research has been to identify squatting activism as social movement, another term used is urban movement (Pruijt 2013, Martinez 2007). Squatting activism began to grow in European cities like Berlin, Brighton, Copenhagen, Zurich, Hamburg and Wien from the late 1960s and early 1970s onwards. (see Andresen and Van de Steen 2016; Pruijt 2013). Still, squatting activism has been a marginal topic in research, also in research related to youth studies. As Margit Mayer (2013, 7) underlines, "mainstream research has paid scarce attention to the unfolding of squatting movements, their dynamics, their differences and their transformations, let alone their new challenges".

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[6] Squatters movements in Berlin early 1990s or in Amsterdam in 1980s are examples of squatting activism which have gained international significance, also in academic research (see Andresen & Van de Steen 2016; Van de Steen, Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014, 11)

Hans Pruijt (2013) has grouped scholarly literature on squatting activism in three main categories. The first category underlines politicization of public space and the act of squatting. Some research has put focus on the causes of squatting activism and relates the emergence of squatting to increased economic inequalities in the cities. Some studies have focused on the dynamics of squatter´s subculture. In her book *The Autonomous Life? Paradoxes of hierarchy and authority in the squatters movement in Amsterdam* Nazima Kadir (2016) focuses on hierarchy and authority within the internal dynamics of the squatter´s subculture. As an anthropologist Kadir critically examines the squatter´s subculture with ethnographic methods and examines the ideological radical left community. Also Lynn Owens (2009) has used ethnographic methods in his book *Cracking Under Pressure. Narrating the Decline of the Amsterdam Squatters´ Movement*.

In her article *Sisterhood and Squatting in the 1970s: Feminism, Housing and Urban Change in Hackney* Christine Wall (2017) has examined how gender has been present in squatting activism and explores the origins of a community of women who squatted in Hackney during the 1970s. Through oral testimony, it uncovers the historical importance of squatting activism to wider feminist politics in London, and the significance for women of taking control over their immediate built environment. Squatting Europe Kollective[7] has been active in the field: *Squatting in Europe: Radical Spaces, Urban Struggles* (2013) is a collection of articles and investigates the history of squatting activism over the past four decades in Netherlands, Italy, Spain, France and England. *The Squatters' Movement in Europe – Everyday Commons and Autonomy as Alternatives to Capitalism* (2014) includes articles which highlights the role of squatting activism as an alternative to capitalism in the cities. Both books offer views and articles on the squatting movement in Europe, its ideals, actions and ways of life. *The City is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present* (2014) is a compilation of histories of squatting activism in eight cities and paints a diverse picture of squatting in Europe.

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[7] SqEK is a transnational collective of academics and activists working in a variety of fields. The website of Squatting Europe Kollective https://sqek.squat.net/ (seen 6.1.2017)

There are several studies that has focused on the legal circumstances around squatting activism (see O'Mahony, O'Mahony & Hickey 2015). As a result of restrictive legislation, squatting has become increasingly criminalized in Europe and squatters are occasionally in conflict with the criminal justice system. In *Moral Rhetoric and the Criminalisation of Squatting: Vulnerable Demons?* (2015) Lorna Fox O'Mahony, David O'Mahony and Robin Hickey include a collection of critical essays that consider the criminalization of squatting in Britain. In summary, squatting in European cities has received attention recent years and generated scholarly literature. Transnational comparison of the squatting culture in European cities aims to understand the cycles of evolution of squatting activism. However, there is still a gap in research because the english-written research literature has put a limited attention to squatting culture in Nordic countries or does not exist at all.

Some definitions about the terms. In Germany the terms *hausbesetzer* (squatter) and *instandbesetzer* (a combination of the terms *hausbesetzer* and *Instandsetzer*, that is, renovator) were soon replaced by the term *autonom*. This happened as early as 1982, when the massive wave of squatting in West Berlin came to an end (Van de Steen, Katzeff & van Hoogenhuijze 2014.). Also in Spain the term squatter was used before the term autonomous and after that the term *okupa* became standard. In Denmark, the term *besætter* (occupier) has been dominant throughout the 1980s but also the term autonomy is used (ibid. 2014). In the Netherlands, the term *kraaker* (squatter or housing pirate) has been dominant, but also the term *autonomous* has been used. The term *kraaker* refers to the Second World War period, during which resistance groups used the term to refer to illegal sabotage actions (ibid. 2014). There were also cities where the term *squatter* or *autonomous* never became common. In Athens, for example, the squatters movement was called *wild youth* and later claimed the term *anarchist*. In Nordic countries, the English terms *squatter* has been dominant. In Finnish context the terms squatter (talonvaltaaja) and squatting (talonvaltaus) have been dominant ann this study the terms squatting and squatting activism are used throughout the study.

2. DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

Squatting activism is in this study conceived of as a subcultural phenomenon. The utility of the concept subculture has been much debated and is used in many ways to describe young people´s social groupings and actions in urban space (see Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Bennett 2011.) Theoretically study is based on subcultural theory and follows the theoretical interpretations and concepts relevant to this study mainly through works of Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, Ross Haenfler and Patrick J. Williams (Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Ross Haenfler 2005; Bennett & Taylor 2012; Patrick J. Williams 2011; Paul Hodkinson 2011; 2013). The concept of "lifestyle" is used in this study as a useful concept to explain subcultural participation in the context of squatting activism. Following these theoretical footsteps and debates about youth cultures, ageing and subcultural participation the concept of subculture is in this study conceived in a broad sense, understanding of subculture as a platform and social space where cultural identities, lifestyle and lifestyle choices are contested and constructed.

2.1. From subculture to post-subculture

Observing youth cultures has its roots at the University of Chicago where urban sociologists started to observe the city's young hobos and gang members during the 1920s. Researchers at the University of Chicago focused on studying on specific subgroups of young people in urban environment who were particularly marginalized and possessed values and cultural practices that were different from the mainstream. This early literature relies heavily on assumptions that subcultures were the result of poverty and weak social conditions. The term subculture was used to describe delinquent gangs and the problematic social groupings of youth, which were seen consequences of rapid migration and youth unemployment, and caused social problems and street crimes in the city. As Frederic Thrasher (1927) writes in his work *The Gang: a*

study of 1313 gangs in Chicago: "neighborhoods in transition are breeding grounds for gangs".

Social class and structural factors played an important role in the explanatory frameworks among the subcultural theories. Researchers saw that social conditions, such as urbanization, homelessness and rapid influx of immigrants play a role in producing crime and other urban problems (see Wirth 1938; Anderson 1923). These early waves of subcultural work were based on fieldwork and participant observation and seeked to understand of from what social circumstances subcultures emerge. However, the Chicago School researchers focus on crime, social disorganisation and delinquency produced significant amount of ethnographies about youth but saw youth subcultures more social problems than diverse social spaces of youth cultures (see Haenfler 2014, 23-24.)

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (later CCCS) at the University of Birmingham emerged in the middle of 1960s in post-World War II Britain. CCCS published studies of the post-war youth subcultures, such as the teddy boys and the punks, in the late 1970s and early 1980s (see Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979). Like Chicago School, CCCS theories recognized the importance of social context in the formation of subcultures and social class became the main theme in CCCS subcultural theories. Subcultural theories were developed in response to the emergence of class-based youth cultures in the 1960s that created concerns among adult society, which were labelled "moral panics" (see Cohen 1973). Studies among Birmingham scholars were based on the assumption that working class youth in Britain developed various forms of resistance to the oppressions and cultural contradictions they experienced and were influenced by Gramsci´s (1971) marxist-based notion of cultural hegemony. CCCS scholars saw subcultures as class-based and suggested that what brought young people together was a collective resistance to hegemonic, mainstream cultural values. (see Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jeffersson 1976). CCCS researchers claimed that such resistance manifested itself most clearly in the group members' spectacular styles and rituals: style was a central symbolic form of resistance to dominant social relations (see

Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jeffersson 1976) and media created an over-reaction to subcultural "threats", which were called "moral panics" (Cohen 1972.)

During the 1990s and early 2000s, numerous criticisms was targeted of the CCCS approaches to theorizing subcultures, which argued that the concept of subculture, as this had been applied to study of style-based youth cultures, had become reduntant as a conceptual framework (see Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004). Critics pointed out that subcultural research suffered from several weaknesses. As Bennett & Kahn-Harris (2004) note, class-based theory gave simplistic picture about youth cultures, it failed to take into account young females involvement, ignored race, culture and locality and focused too much on age category 16 to 21, rather than seeing "youth" as state of mind. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, feminist researchers (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Griffin, 1985) were shifting the subcultural focus onto girls. At the time of the emergence of subculture theory, young women tended to be marginalized from spectacular subcultures and instead spent time together at home or engaging in more modest and less confrontational leisure activities. Despite of the criticism and problems the concept of subculture has been strongly linked to CCCS tradition (see Bennett 2011; Williams 2011; Haenfler 2014).

2.2. Post-subculture theory debates

The rise of rave and dance cultures of the late 1980s raised new perspectives to investigations of youth cultures (see Redhead 1997; Thornton; Muggleton 2000) Reflecting their postmodernist bent, researchers critiqued the idea of stable and recognizable subcultures, and suggested that youth formations are fragmented and fluid, better described as "scenes" (Straw 1991), "neo-tribes" (Bennett 1999, 2000) or "lifetyles" (see Bennett 2011a, Chaney 1996). The impact of this "post-subcultural turn" on youth cultural studies was significant and on contrast to the subcultural theories of the CCCS, subcultural studies moved away from structural and class-based accounts of young people's experiences. Influenced by elements of late modern theory (see Giddens, 1991), post-subcultural theories focused on how youth reflexively move

between loosely bounded groupings in increasingly uncertain, individualised consumer society where the fixed and stable categories of social class were being replaced by more shifting and fluid identities. The central claims of post-subcultural researchers based on the premise that youth cultures are fragmented, giving rise to a variety of styles that are mixed individually and collectively, depending on the locality (see Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004).

Post-subcultural theories argued that youth subcultures are fluid and free-floating identities of their members and claimed that in an increasingly interconnected world, people have more freedom to pick and choose what subcultural identity they want. This freedom means that subcultural identity and participation is fluid rather than stable and subcultural participation was more a *matter of choice* than a structurally determined social position. (see Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004; Bennett 2011a; Williams 2011; Haenfler et al 2012). As Bennett (2011a, 28) writes, culture is not regarded only as a product of structural circumstances or forms of inequality, thus post-subculturists see "culture as a dynamic and participatory process through which social actors play an active role in shaping their eceryday sociocultural environments" (see also Bennett 2005).

However, also the post-subcultural approaches to subcultural theories has generated critical debates among youth cultural theorists (see Bennett 2011b; Williams 2011; Haenfler 2014.) As Bennett (2011b, 494) writes,

> "post-subcultural theory contributes much of our understanding of the cultural dynamics, informing young people´s everyday appropriation of music, style and associates objects, images and texts. Although at one level establishing the basis for a new paradigm in youth culture research, post-subcultural theory has by no means supplanted subcultural theory as basis for youth research".

Following Bennett (ibid, 494), there are several weaknesses which has raised criticism. Firstly, the theoretical basis of post-subcultural approach is claimed to be too loose and does not offer a consistent theory of youth culture. Secondly, post-subcultural theory exaggerates the role of cultural industries shaping the identities and lifestyles of youth. And thirdly, the claims concerning the decline

of class-based youth identities underestimates structural inequalities which still shapes young people life chances and the individualistic approach of post-modern theory "depoliticizes" youth culture and underestimates the relationship between youth cultures and broader social structures (see Shildrick 2006.) To summarize this following Bennett (2011, 494), the tensions between subcultural and post-subcultural theory has remained unsolved, but as Bennett point, "future research might combine critical tenets of both subcultural and post-subcultural theory".

However, post-subcultural literature on subcultures implied a shift in perspectives, viewing young people more as competent social actors than victims of the structural circumstances in society. This paradigm change reflected a development in the understanding of subcultural participation, where the subjective subcultural experiences became central (Williams 2011; Haenfler 2014; Hodkinson 2011). As Ross Haenfler (2014, 30-31) writes in his book *Subculture: The Basics*, "new generation of scholars came of age in the 1980s and 1990s as many subcultures – punk, metal, goth, riot grrl, rave, hiphop, skating and so on – were emerging or undergoing a resurgence of popularity". These scholars were often participants in youthful scenes themselves and brought new perspectives to subcultural analysis. Haenfler (2014, 30-31) summarizes:

> "bound neither by CCCS focus on class and marginalization nor by the post-subculturist notion that distinct, coherent subcultures may not exist, these scholars seek a deep understanding of subculturists´ experiences *from participants´ subjective point of view*, studying via participant observation what subculturists actually *do.* While often sympathetic to subculturists´ efforts to "resist" the mainstream, they also offer critical analyses of the contradictions and inequalities reproduced in scenes. Moving beyond on exclusive focus on social class, they often explain how participants challenge and reinforce social norms surrounding gender and sexuality. Subcultures become *strategies,* sets of micro-level practices embedded within social structures" (ibid. 30-31)

Following Haenfler (2014, 31) contemporary work on subcultures does not constitute a coherent "school" of thought, but draws upon the strengths of previous scholars. It seems that the way in which subcultures are seen that has

changed, but also how the research on them is done. Recent literature has drawn attention to the increasing diversity, complexity and longevity of youth and seeing subcultural participation more as a matter of lifestyle choice. Researchers are also more sensitive to using methods that aim to reach the ways in which subculturalists understand their experiences. As Haenfler (2014, 32) writes this perspective pays attention to participants´ subjective understandings of their activities, often through ethnographic or interview studies, focuses on nuanced and multiple meanings members of subculture construct and pays "increasing interest in disconnecting subculture from youth and instead examining subcultural activity across the life course".

2.3. Subculture as a lifestyle

Lifestyle is a set of routine choices an individual makes and this is what Anthony Giddens (1991: 5) has called the "reflexive project of the self". Following Giddens (1991, 214) life politics is a politics of life decisions. I see that the concept of "lifestyle" as a useful concept to explain subcultural participation in the context of squatting activism. Furthermore, looking at squatting activism as a "lifestyle", illustrates how identity is a reflexive process and the concept of lifestyle applies to wider choices, behaviours and attitudes. Lifestyle can also be oppositional to the mainstream culture, and lifestyle choices can seek wider collective and individual social change (Haenfler et al 2012; Bennett 2011a; see also Chaney 1996; Miles 2000).

Following Giddens (1991, 53) self-identity has become a reflexive project that we continuously work and reflect on. We create the story of who we are, and how we came to be where we are now. In this perspective self-identity is not given from outside, it is a person's own reflexive understanding of self. Giddens asserts that everyone in modern society has a possibility to select a lifestyle, although different groups and individuals have different possibilities. It is noteworthy, that this perspective does not exclude consideration of structural inequalities. In youth studies lifestyle is used to describe young people's relationship with social change and how lifestyles play an important role in

individualized world characterized by postmodern fragmentation, risks and globalization (see Bennett 1999; Miles 2000.) Subcultural lifestyle choices can also be oppositional to the mainstream culture, and aim to wider social change where actors can have active role in shaping their social environment (see Haenfler 2005; Bennett 2011a, Williams 2011).

Following these perspectives, subcultures are not coherent, easily identifiable groups with stable membership and clear boundaries, but rather a set of diverse meanings and practices that change over time (see Haenfler 2014, 55.) Seeing subcultural participation more as a matter of lifestyle choice is an alternative to the static and abstract categorization of subcultures. Haenfler (2014, 16) defines subcultures as *"relatively diffuse social networks that have shared identities, distinctive meanings around certain ideas, practices, and objects, and a sense of marginalization from or resistance to a perceived 'conventional' society"*. This definition reflects a broader perspective in the understanding of subculture. Patrick J. Williams (2011, 39) in his book *Subcultral Theory* proposes a broad understanding of subculture and defines subculture as "culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who come to share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects and practices through interaction". These definitions of subcultural participation are relevant with my own attempt to rework subculture in relation to ethnographic work on squatting activists.

In this study the concept of subculture is conceived in a broad sense, understanding of subculture as a platform and social space where cultural identities, lifestyle and lifestyle choices are constructed. Through investigations of squatting activism of the early 1990s I will explore how participating in squatting activism has influenced activists lifestyle choices and how young squatters were also actors whose choices contributed to maintaining conditions in the city and in which they lived in. This approcah focuses on the intersection of individual and collective action and where young people are not passive but motivated actors in a society. This is a way understanding activism and I am interested in how squatting activism and the experiences of activists are positioned in this debate and meaning. The will to understand the nature of the concept subculture with this perspective is carried throughout the study and analysis.

2.4 Youth culture and ageing

Usually in academic literature the concept of subculture is connected to youth. Following the recent debates about subcultures, the term youth culture cannot be defined only as a youth phenomenon or age-spesific category. In recent literature there has been growing interest towards the investigation of the experiences and contuinity of participation in "youth cultures" also among older subcultural participants (see Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Bennett & Taylor 2012; Hodkinson 2011; 2013). As Hodkinson (2011) writes, "rather than simply growing up and out of the scene completely, many participants continue their participation, balancing it with a desire to conform to societal expectations for appropriate adult behavior". Following these debates I will explore older participants´subcultural experience.

As I will discuss, participating in subcultures is not age-limited or age-spesific, and in recent years, there has been growing interest in examining the life courses of ageing participants of subcultures (see Bennett & Hodkinson 2013). As Williams (2011) writes in his book *Subcultural Theory – Traditions and Concepts*, subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last a lifetime. As Hodkinson (2016, 640-641) writes: "developing research of ageing and youth cultures offers perhaps the closestcurrent example of the contextualisation of affiliations to particular cultural and subcultural groups within broader lives and biographies." Following these perspectives I see subculture as a space and platform of *lifestyle* choices, in that they represent ways participants can get together and debate social issues, produce alternative practices, and create spaces for alternative poltical forums. And as I will discuss, the impacts of these lifestyle choices can have long-term effects.

3. INTRODUCING THE METHODS AND RESEARCH PROCESS

This study is an ethnographic study and explores squatting activism of the 1990s in Helsinki making use of interviews with older activists, archive materials and the authors personal experiences. In this Chapter I will explain how I got in contact with "ex-squatters" to do this study. In the following sections, I will present the research process and explain how I used ethnography as a research tool to make the interviews and to collect research material from archives. Research material is based on interviews with participants of squatters movement who were active in the squatting activism early 1990s in Helsinki. I have used also autobiography as a research method because the experiences and "subcultural memories" of the author are one source of this study.

3.1. Urban ethnography and the field work

On January 10, 1990, a group of young squatters occupied three abandoned wooden buildings. Squatter´s flags were hanging on the windows, young squatters cleaned up the house and put heat on the old owens to keep the cold outside. Since the buildings had been unused for several months, occupying the houses was the young people´s confrontational response to the ongoing housing crisis in Helsinki early 1990s. Squatters held the houses short period, raised public debate about the lack of affordable housing in the city and finally were evicted by the police. Squatting of Intiankatu was a starting point to a new wave of squatting movement in Helsinki in the early 1990s, which I have defined as a second wave of squatting activism in the Chapter Two.

Squatting of Intiankatu was a starting point to my actual participation in squatting activism. I was a just graduated youth worker, but at that time I was unemployed. When I joined the squatting movement in Helsinki early 1990s and became a squatter myself, I did not imagine I would be some day studying this topic. In other words, I didn´t have any intention to become a researcher or to

make systematic study, or participant observation when I was member of the movement. However, I was "insider" in squatter´s scene in Helsinki, which gave me unique position to experience the dynamic of such action-oriented collective action. These experiences and "subcultural memories" are the one source of this study. The use of autobiography in youth culture histories does similar work to the 'insider research' popularized by sociologist Paul Hodkinson (2005). As a self-identified goth, Hodkinson (2002) wrote his PhD about the subculture he belonged to and knew best.

Research material is based on stories and interviews of older participants who were active members in the squatting activism early 1990s in Helsinki. Although squatting activism has been a visible part of youth culture in Helsinki from late 1970s, the stories of the actual participants are those that usually go unheard. This study will give them expression. I have done this by collecting the stories of squatters who were connected to the movement. Interviews were collected during years 2014-2017. Following Murchison (2010, 4) urban ethnography is a "research strategy that allows researcher to explore and examine the cultures of the urban spaces that are fundamental part of human experience". Or as Kay Cook (2008, 148) writes, "ethnography is in a unique position to examine power-laden social and cultural processes within particular social sites". An ethnographer can give voice to marginalized groups. Also Muncey (2010, 8) explains that ethnographic research can "shed light on the silent majority of people whose individual voices are unheard".

Although my research field is located mainly in Helsinki, I have visited other cities during the research to broaden the historical perspective to my research topic. According to Huerta & Venegas (2010, 2) urban spaces are different from other research spaces and therefore deserve a more nuanced approach. Also later on, inspired by my experiences, I have in recent years visited occupied dwellings, squatter´s clubs, cafés and events and have observed squatting culture in Helsinki and in other European cities both as a member of squatter´s culture or just as a "curious tourist". During my study I had possibility to visit occupied dwellings and squatting culture in Helsinki, Hamburg and Berlin. Although my research interest was the history of squatting activism in Helsinki, visiting contemporary activism broadened my perspective to my research topic.

Murchison (2010, 4) writes that, "unlike many other research strategies, the ethnographer is not typically a detached or uninvolved observer. The ethnographer collects data and gains insight through first hand involvement with research subjects or informants." Murchison underlines that this involvement can take "many forms, from conversations to and interviews to shared rituals and emotional experiences". (ibid., 4). And because of the "position as participant-observer, the ethnographer becomes the primary research instrument through which information is collected and recorded. (ibid., 13)

3.2. Interviews with activists

The starting point to my study was a conversation with ex-squatter in Spring 2014. After this I started to contact more "ex-squatters" in order to find out if they were interested to meet me and share their experiences about squatting culture and this particular period of squatters movement of 1990s in Helsinki. When I started to contact ex-squatters, I hesitated if they really wanted to meet me and share their experiences with me after so many years? People grow up over the years, and some people might not like the idea to think back their youth. After few calls and e-mails I soon I realized that my fear was unfounded. All the informants I contacted were willing to have a conversation with me, and on the contrary, some were at first surprised, but after a while wanted to join my study. It was easy to me to enter the field and take first contacts to informants because they knew my history and involvement in squatting activism.

The interview data for this thesis was collected from eight informants, including five men and three women. All except one interview were conducted in the fieldwork period from February 2014 to July 2017 in Helsinki. One interview was in in St. Petersburg, because on of my informants lived there. This interview was conducted in Spring 2015, and the interview language was in english. Other interviews were conducted in finnish, and were translated into english. The format of the interviews was qualitative and face-to-face. The duration of the interview varied depending on the informants. On average, the interviews lasted from 1 to 1,5 hours. I recorded the interviews with a small record player. I

met the informants in different places, but for the interview I tried to locate places which were connected to the history of the squatting activism of the 1990s. This caused also difficulties, some of the locations did not exist anymore because the buildings were demolished. For example one interview was made in a Nepalese restaurant in a new-built dwelling, but which was located in the same spot where young squatters occupied a building early 1990s

The informants were at the time between 40-46 years old. The interview material, which I also quote in this thesis, consists of eight interviews. For quotations, I refer to these interviews with codes. To protect the anonymity of the informants I don't give any detailed information about the background of the informants, since the number of activists in the squatting movement is relatively small which makes it difficult to protect the identity of informants. Anonymity is also important because squatting is criminalized in Finland, although my research is focused on activism that has occurred in the past. The informants were a heterogeneous group of activists, who were active members of the squatting scene. I chose to interview activists who had been active members of the movement and has had long term commitment to squatting activism. These people, due to their experience, had much knowledge about the movement and they were also willing to share their experiences.

Research questions were a set of loose and non-formal questions regarding activists participation in squatting activism in Helsinki (see Appendix 1). During the interviews I used a collection of photographs and newspaper articles to "feed the memory" of my informants. This helped both me and the informants to remember the historical events, which framed the topics we wanted to discuss about. Understanding the acts of individuals and structural constraints in ethnographic research means also understanding the context of space and the history of the community. (Huerta & Venegas 2010). According to Thomas (1993, 1) "ethnography is a way of applying a subversive worldview to the conventional logic of cultural inquiry". Thomas underlines that it "offers a more direct style of thinking about the relationships among knowledge, society, and political action. The central premise is that ethnographic description offers a powerful means of critiquing culture and the role of research within it". (ibid, 1) Study is also a journey to my personal history and has influences from

autoethnography. As Ngunjiri et al (2010) writes "Autoethnography as a research method is an extension of researchers' lives. Although most social scientists have been trained to guard against subjectivity (self-driven perspectives) and to separate self from research activities, it is an impossible task." Following this, research is connected to my personal interests and experiences.

3.3. Researcher in the archives and the process of analysis

My research process began in Autumn 2013, when I wrote my first thesis proposal for my master research seminar. I was interested in subculture theory in general as a starting point and had some ideas how to more deeply analyze squatters subculture. Not having yet a clear research question, I proceeded with the interviews to help me narrow the focus of my thesis plan. The first interview took place at February 2014. In the first place at the core of the research was to map the history of squatting activism in Helsinki. As Feldman-Barrett (2015, 7) writes "it is challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of youth worlds the further back in time one goes". This means, while any research cannot be exhaustive, not to mention research that examines happenings and incidents in the relatively distant history, it must be critically evaluated *what* have been included and excluded.

During the study I needed to check facts and dates. This is why research required interdisciplinary research methods and multidimensional process of analysis. Significant part of my research took place in The People´s Archives.[8] The archive is the central archives of the Finnish left-wing labour movement and civil society organisations, where most of the archive material of the squatting movement in 1990s is located. The material based on squatting activism of the 1990s was collected largely by myself and was delivered to People´s Archive in Spring 2012, but was still unorganized. With the great help and professional

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[8] Kansan Arkisto (The People's Archives) maintained by the Social Archives Foundation is the central archives of the Finnish left-wing labour movement and civil society organizations The People´s Archives is located in Helsinki and the archives' collections are at the disposal of researchers and the public. http://www.kansanarkisto.fi/in-english/ (seen 22.2.2017)

guidance of the personnel in the archives I arranged the photos, texts and documents, old posters and other material in order to be useful both to my research and to the archives.

My first visit to the People´s Archives was on April 2015. I started to organize data located in archives already in the beginning of my research. I had possibility to work in the Archives several periods, from short visits to longer periods. The longest period was three days period, when old paper photos were arranged, and digitalized to the use of the photo archive of the People´s Archives. Some of these photos and newspaper articles were used during the interviews to feed the memory of informants. The most useful material were newspaper articles, which I arranged in chronological order. Although interviews with participants was the primary research material, archive material gave me possibility to check historical dates and to place the "story" of the squatting activism in some chronological order.

During this process the research questions and purpose of the analysis became more clear. As Murchison (2010) argues, in ethnography the analysis of data cannot be a separated stage but it is included in the whole process. Data collecting and the analysis should have an interactive relationship that is carried out with reflexivity. During the field-work period the analytical ideas develop and change, and it is often only in the middle of the research process that the researcher comes to understand that the research actually is about something else than his initial research problems. (Hammarsley & Atkinson 2005, 180, 205.) I also experienced this and felt that my research questions were constantly re-shaping and looking for their final form.

Recorded interviews were used as the primary source of data alongside with data collected in People´s Archive. This means that both have been analyzed, while the archive material are to enrich and illuminate the points gained from the interviews. It also served as a tool to evaluate the validity of what the informants had told, since at times there was a contradiction between what the informants told and or what was told by somebody else. For example I needed to check some important dates from the archives and digital sources. The analysis of the data is done within this framed method of operationalizing concepts and

components which is derived from the theoretical framework of Chapter two. My textual research material consists of transcribed interviews and the incidental field notes I wrote notes during the research. The research diary and notes which I held both in a hand written form in two notebooks (one held in 2015 and one held in 2016) and in a word file in my laptop. These notes made together 10 pages of handwritten text and few pages of text in a word document.

Ethical concerns are especially relevant when it comes to research on squatting activism. During the research I was asked if my informants knew that I was a researcher. I was happy that I was asked this question. For me it felt unethical to use ethnographic methods without informing my informants about my research subject. With that in mind, I have followed basic ethical principles of research in the humanities and social sciences. This research project is based on trust, respect and a meaningful dialogue among all possible participants and informants. As Thomas (1993) writes, "the culture of ethnography is a culture of people studying, writing about, thinking about, and talking to other people". There are a several of ethical premises that should be taken into account. At the core is the need not to harm participants. In practice, it means that as a researcher I have obtained consent from informants, minimized the risk of harm them, protected their anonymity and confidentiality, avoided using deceptive practices and I have given participants the right to withdraw from my research.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF SQUATTING ACTIVISM

On January 10, 1990, a group of young squatters occupied abandoned three wooden buildings at Intiankatu in Helsinki, in a historical housing district near city center. Occupying the empty houses was a activists response to the ongoing housing crisis in the city and was a starting point to a new wave of squatting activism in Helsinki. In this Chapter I explore how squatting activism of the 1990s emerged and how participants experienced their subcultural identity. Squatting activism can be characterized as an oppositional, relatively radical and action-oriented subculture and the act of occupying empty buildings is in general unlawful[9]. In this context I am interested in how participants experienced the challenges squatters were subjected to.

4.1. Squatting of Intiankatu

Early 1990s, young people in Helsinki faced a grim housing situation and reasonably priced rental apartments were hard to find. An economic slump, coupled with a severe housing shortage, bogged down the city. Youth unemployment was one of the critical challenges the city faced. However, because of the economic disaster early 1990s and followed by housing crisis, the city was full of empty buildings. The first squat was on January 1990, when three old wooden buildings located in Kumpula were occupied. Houses owned by state were empty and waited to be demolished. One of the activists describes how they got idea with others about squatting activism. Her story brings alive the emergence of the squatter´s movement.[10]

> L: "If I remember the time just before the squatting of Intiankatu, so we visited another squat in Käpylä. This is how we obtained the entire idea that the houses can be squatted. I was probably sixteen at the time, I was sitting in a bus and we

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[9] Squatting is criminalized in most countries in Europe.

[10] Interview was made in summer 2015. Translation from Finnish to English made by author.

passed Kumpula with my friend, and we saw from the window empty wooden houses that had been empty for a long time. That is how we got the idea that they should be squatted, like residential, for living in, and we wondered why they are there empty?"

When L joined the squatting movement she was sixteen and studying at high school. Despite her young age she was one of the central activists in the movement. As she describes, in the beginning of the movement the activists were young, mainly under eighteen years old, and also remarkable amount of the squatters were young women. What drew young people together was the housing shortage, squatting felt like the only effective means of influencing the ongoing housing crisis. For them the solution was simple and straightforward, if housing was not otherwise forthcoming, one possibility was to squat.

L: "I was in a high school and there was a lot of spare time between lesson, and we sat a lot in Eliel, a cafe in Railway station. And then there were the others and we developed the idea of squatting. When it was decided that we go to squat, we talked it to school friends to come along, tomorrow morning we go. Some came from the nearby school also and then we met at the railway station. We had gears, mattresses, rugs and all kind of systems. Well, then we walked in there and then came all the other also. It was a quite cold because it was winter. That's how it all started."

As all squatters know, finding an empty building is generally easy. Early 1990s the Helsinki city was quite full of empty buildings ranging from almost destroyed shells to perfectly livable places that had nothing wrong with them. Intiankatu wooden houses were in relatively good condition, although the apartments had been empty for few months. Squatters held the Intiankatu houses only one day, and after the eviction twenty-two squatters were brought to police station at Pengerkatu. As L describes, squatters under eighteen were not arrested but the police took their names and addresses. After the squat the housing shortages facing young people received visible publicity. At the time, the squatters continued to assert questions linking the lack of affordable housing in Helsinki

with the necessity to squat and how the intention to squat was to create housing not to commit crime.[11]

In activist´s stories squatting of Intiankatu was never meant to be the basis for a large-scale movement. In the beginning, the intention was to make individual squat, and somehow get a chance to rent the apartments and live there with friends.

> K: "We planned occupying the buildings with friends and there was several discussions about squatting the houses. The question was about housing, to get an apartment with friends, and to organise housing together. I was there when we started to bring things to Intiankatu from railway station, it was quite cold, sleeping bags and all kind of things. Those who were more enthusiastics stayed there at night".

In activist stories housing was the primary focus young squatters had, although there was some attempt to "get organized". During the occupation the squatters articulated several demands to the city and asked why publicly owned houses remained abandoned while there was a housing crisis in the city. The squatting activism emerged as a grass-roots, spontaneous response to young people´s housing need and what started as a small-scale youth activism and act of individuals became a public and also political issue, and was a starting point to a larger movement.

4.2. Squatting as a response to housing crisis

Squatting Intiankatu was the starting point which triggered squatting to spread to all larger cities in Finland, like Turku, Jyväskylä, Tampere and Oulu. In addition to being a demand for housing, actions were fundamentally also a comment on how old buildings and the urban environment were treated. Young activists preferred to tackle buildings owned by the city or the large construction firms, left derelict to wait for demolition or dilapidation. I met one of the activists

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[11] Occupying of Intiankatu was visible in the media few weeks after the squat. I collected 18 newspaper articles in several newspapers, which are available on People´s Archive.

in Autumn 2015. As all my interviews, I begun the conversation asking how she got involved with squatting.

> M: "I didn't participate happenings at Intiankatu but I was active in squatting later that same year. My age (16) was such that joining the squatting was topical for me, I was thinking of my independence, and where to find the apartment."

As she describes, squatting of Intiankatu was a direct consequence of housing crisis in the city followed by the economic depression. Followed by this, the city was full of empty buildings. An economic slump, coupled with a severe housing shortage, bogged down the city. Youth unemployment was one of the critical challenges the city faced. In activists stories squatting offered young people a channel for activism and participation. However, small scale urban activism became a movement, and following Haenfler (2014, 56) we can trace the emergence of squatting activism as a "strategy participants use to respond their social surroundings". The experience of squatting of Intiankatu exposed how young squatters created space for activity and creativity. This resonates with what Haenfler (ibid., 56) writes:

> "If our "self" is a project and a performance, a work in progress, then subcultures become ideal strategies for crafting identities, achieving distinction, and having fun. Subculturists are not necessarily alienated or marginalized, although they may be. Subculturists do not simply or automatically respond to structural changes and social problems such as modernization in predictable, predetermined ways. Rather, they bring a degree of agency and creativity to their participation. Rather than focusing on subcultures relatively homogenous class- and style –based groupings (á la the CCCS) or fluid consumption-based scenes (post-subculturists), our focus should turn to the *substance* of such groupings. What do participants *do*, and what do they think about what they do?"

Following Haenfler (2014, 55), explaining the emergence of subcultures is not easy. Subculture does not objectively exist, they are not coherent, easily identifiable groups with stable membership and clear boundaries. Again, a subculture is not a "thing," not an immediately recognizable "group," but rather a set of diverse meanings and practices that change over time. In his book *Subcultures: The Basics*, Ross Haenfler (2014, 16) defines subcultures as

"relatively diffuse social networks that have shared identities, distinctive meanings around certain ideas, practices, and objects, and a sense of marginalization from or resistance to a perceived 'conventional' society"

4.3. Squatting as collective action

> L: "After that we went to friends to discuss about the happenings. Police organized interrogations at Pengerkatu police station, people who were under-aged took their parents with them, I had mother with me. After the squat we had meetings all over, we didn´t have any particular place, so we gathered where it was possible, we had big meetings with lots of people, we tried to get organized, and quite soon after that came new squats in the spring."

Following Haenfler (2014, 16) subcultures have relatively little or if any of formal leadership, formal membership, or any explicit organizational structure (Haenfler 2014, 34). The concept of collective identity also helps to explain why subcultures emerge and why people join them. In both subculture theory and social movement theory identifies collective identity, but as Cherry & Williams (2011, 171) points, collective identity has replaced class consciousness as a foundation for mobilization. What is important here, is that this politicized definition of collective identity is useful for understanding oppositional subcultures like squatting. As Cherry & Williams (2011, 172) underlines:

> "This means generally two things to subcultural theory: first, subcultures may be politicized, but not necessarily along class lines; and, second, collective identity may hold politically conscious subcultures together. This implies that members of a group perceive themselves – and are seen by others – as a force in pursuit of social change. Further, this collective identity is not something that a group simply possesses: it is created and maintained through a process".

The importance of collective identity can be seen in many subcultures, also in the squatting movement. Sharing collective identity allows the members to attach positive meaning to subcultures and participants in the subculture are bonded by a common identity as they seek to change broader society´s culture. Subcultural participation is more a matter of choice and a toolkit for constructing

collective identities with co-members of the subculture as well as negotiating oppositional relationship with non-members (see Hanfler 2014; Bennett 2011.)

> T: My sister was involved with the squatting movement, she had participated squatting of Intiankatu, also squatting of the old factory in Spring 1990. She was sixteen, she invited me, or maybe I invited myself. It was exiting, I was thirteen and I came to the squatting with bus from the suburbs, where we lived. I had feeling that it was possible to join the squatting.

Occupying of Intiankatu was also a starting point to my participation in squatting activism. I was a just graduated youth worker, but at that time I was without regular work. Participating squatting activism was attractive and I certainly endorsed the values the movement had. As I see it, as an "insider", although the occupying the buildings was on outsiders view young people´s confrontational and radical response to the ongoing housing crisis, it raised rational and practical concerns about the unfair development in the city. As a response to this, young activists were charged with criminal offenses. As I saw it then, and still see, the response of the authorities – even if expected - was a disappointment to the activists.

> K: "Police came on the second day, we knew they will come, but anyway it was disappointment"

As a result of the occupying of Intiankatu activists managed to draw attention to ongoing housing crisis and youth unemployment. Collective action was driven by values and principles the actors shared: a common experience of uncertain future, job insecurity and difficulties to access to housing.

> A: "We were evicted with police force from Intiankatu, but however, our actions led to saving those old buildings from being demolished. The houses were renovated later on as youth housing and some of us had even a possibility to rent affordable housing from the buildings the next summer. It was important that the occupying of Intiankatu succeeded, it became a community which gave continuity to the movement".

These circumstances operated as starting points for the emergence of the larger movement. Squatting Intiankatu certainly was young people´s active resistance in advocacy of social justice or something young people felt unjust and unfair (see Hollander & Einwohner 2004). However, young people suffering from affordable housing were not only victims of the ongoing urban crisis in the city. They were also actors whose choices contributed to maintaining conditions in the city and in which they lived in. Following Haenfler (2014) squatting empty buildings was "subcultural rationality" when young squatters took over abandoned and disused buildings and made publicly demands of reasonable housing to the city.

> T: "After the first squat I was involved in squatting activism many years. Several more houses were squatted later, the old factory of Kookos and Putkinotko in the summer 1991. Putkinotko was our own place. We went to squat after concert in Bat Cave where we used to hang in concerts. In the summer we didn´t have much to do, and it felt nice to hang around with squatters. Afterwards it feels strange, and now when I have own family, that I was involved in squatting, I was only thirteen!"

4.4. Squatting and criminalization

Squatting activism can be characterized as a radical and action-oriented subculture and the act of occupying empty buildings is in general unlawful.[12] Public space is both an expression of power and a subject of control. Subcultures right to make use of public space is a core question in cities, also in Helsinki. Urban space is a primary platform for subcultures to emerge and flourish and the question of the relationship between public space and youth cultures is a core question also in debates about subcultures. (see Malone 2002; Williams 2011; Bird, Fransberg & Peipinen 2017). Occupying empty buildings and squatters unauthorized presence in urban space is an attack against the regulated norms of urban space (see Hou 2010, 1-17).

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[12] Squatting is criminalized in most countries in Europe.

L: "In the morning there were quite a few of us but when school day ended in the afternoon, then came more people. At some point media got information about the happenings. Police came in the evening, and some official representatives, maybe those city officials, who told us to leave the building. Police then carried us out, they were all right. Some of us found themselves in lockup, squatters under 18 were not taken, they asked our home addresses and so on..."

The questions of resistance has been a core theme among subcultural studies. As Ross Haenfler (2009, 32) points out, resistance to the mainstream is presented in most subcultures, not less in squatting activism. Many researchers has challenged the ideal of "heroic subculture" resisting the "hegemonic system" and the ideal of fluid subcultures which are focused more on style, taste, and personal fulfillment than on politics and social change. According to Haenfler (2009, 34), if resistance is defined only in terms either of fashion or of the potential to overturn the social class structure, "the outlook from a participants´ point of view is indeed grim". Hollander & Einwohner (2004) propose that there are two basic, essential elements that define resistance: action and opposition. Action is the idea that resistance is not a quality or state of being, but active behavior done in opposition. Opposition means, broadly speaking, that resistance is against someone or something that is seen unjust or unfair.

Reflecting this through post-subcultural debates, the emerge of the squatting didn´t happen through class-lines and the participation was more a matter of choice and in this sense a logical act. (see also Cherry & Williams 2011, 172; Haenfler 2014; Hodkinson 2013). In activists stories, what happened in Intiankatu was a activists confrontational statement to the ongoing development in the city. In this sense squatting reflected resistance by young people, who largely felt to be disenchanted by the political system. Involvement in the squatting activism, as informants expressed in their stories, provided a channel for participation and to actively resist something young people felt unjust and unfair.

In most European countries occupying empty buildings and property is a unlawful act[13] and squatting activism is seen a radical subculture (see Pruijt 2013; Mayer 2013.) On January 10, the mood at Intiankatu was electric and squatter´s flags were hanging on the windows. Squatters raised concerns about the lack of affordable housing in the city and at the forefront of the young squatter´s arguments and public debate were questions concerning the right to squat while houses stay empty or abandoned.

Among subcultural research it has been many times noted that the "mainstream" culture feels often uncomfortable with oppositional subcultures and the tolerance is put to a test when something unexpected happens (see Malone 2002; Williams 2011; Haenfler 2014.) These "moral panics" have been core theme in subcultural studies since 1970s (see Cohen 2002 (1972)). As Haenfler (2013, 19) points, subcultures can be for outsiders strange, or sometimes even dangerous and mysterious. As we see in the history, youth cultures are often seen negatively and media is often focused on negative impressions of subcultural phenomenon. As Hall & Jeffersson (1976) writes in their essential book in subcultural studies *Resistance Through Rituals*: "This is the origin of the ´moral panic´ - a spiral in which the social groups who perceive their world and position as threatened, identify a ´responsible enemy´, and emerge as the vociferous guardians of traditional values: moral entrepreneurs".

Squatting of Intiankatu demonstrated how young activists contested the boundaries of the law and regulation of property. Followed by the squatting of Intiankatu, squatters were charged with *criminal tresspass.* The Criminal Code says: [14]

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[13] In recent years the squatting activism in Europe have faced legal challenges and squatting is subjected to different legal regulations. In most European countries squatting is considered either a crime against public order or a violation of private property rights. (Dadusc & Dee 2015, 141) In both England and Wales and the Netherlands, squatting has recently been criminalized. As Dadusc and Dee (2015, 141) write the aim of the law is outlawing the practice of squatting as such. As a result of restrictive property legislation, squatting has become increasingly criminalized and squatters are occasionally in conflict with the criminal justice system.

[14] The Criminal Code concerning unlawful occupying of property changed in 1990. Criminal Code of Finland (Ministry of Justice, Finland) Chapter 28 - *Theft, embezzlement and unauthorised use* (769/1990) Section 11 – *Criminal Tresspass* (769/1990). An English translation of the Act was used by the author. The translation includes a disclaimer that the document is legally binding in Finnish or Swedish only.
http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039.pdf (seen 12.10.2017)

"(1) A person who without authorization

…

(3) takes possession of land or a building or a part thereof that is in the possession of another, shall, unless a more severe penalty has been provided elsewhere in law for the act, be sentenced for *criminal trespass* to a fine or to imprisonment for at most three months. (2) However, an act causing only minor inconvenience is not deemed to constitute criminal trespass."

In the case of Intiankatu twenty one activists were charged on the "criminal trespass", and the squatters were condemned to pay to the owner of the houses twelve thousand finnish marks.[15] The central idea of the law is to criminalize the unlawful use of private property and to surround the activity of unlawful occupation by criminal sanctions. Occupying Intiankatu houses - abandoned and publicly owned property - raised important questions in public debate. As O´Mahony and O´Mahony (2015, 15) points out "the criminalisation of squatting can be understood as part of a broader governmental agenda which has increasingly extended the use of criminal law, to deal with individuals who are viewed as 'problematic' and with 'social problems". In this sense, "criminalization is viewed as a tool by which the state can act directly to discipline those marginal populations perceived to be 'socially deviant' or exhibiting ´anti-social behaviors´ through punishment or the threat of punishment". (O´Mahony & O´Mahony 2015, 74). Squatters not only questioned why houses remained abandoned several months while there was a housing crisis in the city, they also contested the ownership of property and legitimacy to keep houses empty while there was a housing crisis in the city.

4.5. Conclusion

I this Chapter I have retraced how participants experienced the emergence of squatting activism in Helsinki early 1990s. Activism emerged as a grass-roots, spontaneous response to young people´s housing need and although there was some attempt to "get organized", squatting activism was more as young

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[15] 12.000 finnish marks is about 2000 euros.

people´s small scale activism. However, it was a starting point to a new wave of squatting in Helsinki and other bigger cities in Finland. The social context for the emergence of this activism was the political and economic crisis early 1990s.

Abandoned spaces became a platform for subcultural activism and squatting activism became a strategy of collective action. Emergence of squatting activism reflected resistance by young people, who largely felt to be disenchanted by the political system. Reflecting this with theoretical debates about subcultures, the emerge of squatting activism didn´t happen through class-lines and the participation of the act of squatting activism was more a matter of choice and in this sense a logical act (see Cherry & Williams 2011, 172; Haenfler 2014.) In activist stories squatting activism offered a channel for participation and to actively seek for change in urban development and resist something activists felt unjust and unfair. However, young people suffering from affordable housing were not only victims of the ongoing urban crisis in the city. They were also actors whose choices contributed to maintaining conditions in the city and in which they lived in.

5. PRODUCTION OF SUBCULTURAL SPACES

In this Chapter I will explore what kind of subcultural spaces squatting activism produced. I am interested in how abandoned spaces became a platform for subcultural activism and how squatting activism became a strategy of collective action. Reflecting debates about subcultures, I will explore how squatters were also actors in urban environment, whose choices contributed to maintaining conditions in the city and in which they lived in and how squatting activism produced subcultural spaces for grassroot politics and alternative culture.Urban space is a subject of control and subcultures right to make use of urban space is a core question in cities, also in Helsinki. Much of this activity comes back to alternative definitions of the city, how youth cultures can exist and flourish in urban space. In activist stories key events were the occupation of an old Kookos Factory in Sörnäinen at May, 1990, and the occupation of an old taxi drivers garage and gas-station at May 10th 1991.

5.1. Squatting of Kookos -factory

Old Kookos factory was located on a prominent corner plot near the industrial waterfront in Sörnäinen. The empty factory was owned by Haka Oy, the construction firm, which was planning to demolish the plant and replace it with a new building for its own headquarters. Public and political debate about saving the old factory was already going on. Helsinki city council voted in April 1990 to adopt a new plan allowing the demolition. The aim of squatting the Kookos factory was to prevent it from being torn down. On May 3rd 1990, activists occupied the old factory. The squatting lasted a week, with hundreds taking part, mostly young city residents and some passers-by.

> A: "If I remember right the third of May 1990 was a fine and sunny Spring day. Plenty of sweat on our cheeks as we waited for the word "go" on the Haapaniemi sports field. We were chatting with friends. A little after three we set off for our destination: the old soap factor on the corner of Sörnäistenrantatie

and Haapaniemenkatu. The owner, Haka-company wanted to dismantle it from under its new HQ. A handful had already been there to clear away the shit and open the way in. It was hot but inside the building it was lovely and cool. We hung banners from the windows and took our places… "

During the occupation squatters organized concerts, art exhibitions, public discussions and opened a café. Plans began to be made for all kinds of activities in the building: space for alternative culture, workshop spaces, small businesses, flea market, youth hostel, café and concerts. Kookos began to be seen as a venue for a new kind of urban culture and as a public space that might have a special role for youth cultures. The squat was visibly in the media, and approximately hundred people slept there every night. One of the young squatters describes his involvement:

> T: The occupying of Kookos factory lasted a week and after it was evicted we continued the protests on the street. I hanged with the squatters, I didn´t know anybody and I was quite young. But I felt I was welcome. Alternative culture and those kind of things interested me already then."

On the eighth day of squatting, the action came to an end with a police operation requested by the owner, Haka. The eviction started in the afternoon, and it took several hours from the police to empty the building.

> A: "Some of us strapped themselves on the doorsteps and climbed on the roof. But we didn´t give up, after the eviction we continued to campaign by sleeping nights in front of the building and by lobbying city council party groups. Occupying Kookos-factory was tougher case for us than previous squats because the adversary was a big business and the largest construction firm in Finland."

5.2. Production of subcultural space

Kookos factory became a venue for self-directed grassroot action in urban space. The visibility of the squat itself provided an opportunity to critique the current urban development but also gave possibility to alternative activities. Squatting abandoned space, in this case the old Kookos factory, for alternative

use allowed activists to explore and develop a form of collective self-governance, which I call production of subcultural spaces.

> K: "I think anarchist ideas are in many ways linked to squatting, We didn´t manifest that we are anarchists or nothing like that, it was more like a common idea who were involved. We didn´t ask who you are, what was anarchist was the direct action, the common idea to do something together".

Kookos factory became a strategic urban space for young people where squatters developed self-directing grassroot politics and do-it-yourself culture, where young people themselves actively participated in improving the shared environment. Squatting empty factory created space for alternative politics and offered possibilities for self-directed practices. (ibid. 2014, 13-14.) Haenfler (2014, 57) remarkably points:,

> "Most importantly, and perhaps contrary to conventional wisdom, subcultural participation is, by and large, *rational*, that is reasoned and intentional. Subcultures offer strategies to overcome the meaninglessness of post/modernity. They enable subculturists to join with likeminded others to carve out "safe", affirming spaces in which they can find solidarity and share their interests Subcultures can be strategic places for people to experiment with identities not necessarily accepted in other contexts."

Following Haenfler´s writing, occupying of Intiankatu was rational and practical response to the ongoing housing crisis and it raised concerns about the unfair development in the city. Following the squatting of Kookos-factory, fifty one activists were charged. Of those charged, twenty three activists were under eighteen years old. However, an unexpected turn was seen in the court, when the lawyers of Haka Oy announced that the company was withdrawing its demands for compensation and dropping criminal proceedings. The speech prepared by the squatters' lawyer, Matti Wuori, was thus never given, but it can be found in the archive. Here is a snippet from the speech:[16]

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[16] Matti Wuori (1945-2005) was a lawyer specialized in human rights and environmental issues. Wuori was a member of European Parliament 1999-2004 and chairman of the international Greenpeace 1991-1993. https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matti_Wuori (seen 20.1.2017)

"If anyone is guilty of vandalism and recklessness in this case, it has to be the owners of the building and their backers. My clients by contrast have acted responsibly in a way that underlines national values. The motives of all of them have been most acceptable and socially reasonable. To perceive their actions as contrary to justice is in itself a most strange and noteworthy approach. In practice, the taking and squatting of the building have meant avoiding the threat of irreversible destruction of an irreplaceably precious building until such a time as the values it represents could be neutrally and honestly surveyed. By this comparison of interests, their actions were at the same time both necessary and – given the futility of other tried methods – the least powerful possible way of achieving this objective. Accordingly, the defendants had begun to clean and renovate the building…"[17]

Although squatters didn´t achieve their goal to keep the old factory (which was predictable also among squatters), activists succeeded in their goal to preserve old Kookos factory. In 1997 renovation works began to turn it into Helsinki's Theater Academy, which was opened in 2000.

5.3. Do-it-yourself –culture and urban activism

In activists stories the experience of both squatting of Intiankatu and Kookos exposed how squatters produced space for grassroot activism. Yet the activists succeeded in their aim to have the building protected. Although occupying Kookos was a protest against to the city's destructive planning policies for old buildings, it was also example of a global trend in activism, away from protesting against political parties. Rather than engaging with a broken political system, activists looked to direct action to find new ways of living.

M: "If I think from the beginning, we had this idea that we should not be forced to think that everything was based on overconsumption and nothing is possible outside this capitalist system. All the rules and all kinds of control has effected people´s minds, and if you want to do something you need think what it costs and is it allowed. So what we need is freedom and not be scared and we need to believe that we are right. We should not be alienated to this kind of attitude and give the power to capitalist thinking".

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[17] Matti Wuori 1991. Translation from finnish to English Eeva Berglund

As Vasudevan (2017) writes "squatters did not simply repair, they also reconfigured the buildings they occupied, creating spaces which reflected both the new purposes they were put to use for: meeting spaces, gig spaces, sleeping spaces etc. Squatters not only occupy space, they produce it".

> K: "...that everyone has the possibility to get their voice heard, and participate. Squatting was channel for action. This should be possible in large scale in society. It was a dream about a space outside the system where you can thionk and do what you want and make youre dreams come true".

The alternative space created by the squatters in the old Kookos Factory altered how this particular property and urban space was perceived. After occupying the building abandoned space came visible. The squatters revealed how everyday actions, cleaning the house, opening the space for public, organizing debates and concerts had a potential to make abandoned urban space culturally significant.

> M: "Well of course there are concrete issues that unite them and that they're always in a way borne in certain kinds of buildings that have been somehow forgotten or neglected and been bypassed by the development or those kinds of parts of town that although they've been in really key parts of the city they've always been sort of at the edge of it all."

In activist stories occupied factory became a space where activists experimented with new identities and collective living and a certain place where activists could share ideas of an alternative city. As Vasudevan (2014, 132) underlines, "to squat is to make a spatial commitment to producing a new set of affective and autonomous geographies of attachment, dwelling, and expression". What Vasudevan points out can be framed as do-it-yourself – politics. Do-it-yourself, also known as DIY, is the method of building, modifying, or repairing something without the aid of experts or professionals. In the case of squatting it involves repairing, and taking care of an old building or urban space so that it can be enjoyed by others.

M: "That's the important thing that they've always managed to answer the needs of those people who were using the space or the building like it's been really unpredictable what happens there and what the atmosphere will be like. All those spaces and actions were important for me. In the beginning the act of squatting itselg was important and experiences we got. The movement was kind of young people´s civil obedience movement which raised local and core questions about resistance and squatting.

The squat was visible in the media, the house was cleaned and approximately hundred people slept there every night. Kookos began to be seen as a venue for a new kind of urban culture and as a public space that might have a special role in changing city sphere.

5.4. "a place where we can do ourselves"

Subcultures right to make use of public space is a core question in cities, also in Helsinki. Urban space is a primary platform for subcultures to emerge and flourish and the question of the relationship between public space and youth cultures is a core question also in debates about subcultures. As new enthusiasts joined the squatting movement, its scope was expanded more widely into cultural activities and alternative housing strategies. In May 10th 1991, a key event was squatting of an old taxi drivers garage (called squat "Putkinotko"). The house was turned into a cultural center. L describes what motivated young squatters:

L: We went to squat after concert from Lepakko (Bat Cave). Many shared the idea about an own place, for parties and a cafe, then we had the idea of youth hostel, a place where we can do ourselves and run things."

Late in the evening about 50 concertgoers and activists occupied an old garage and the demand for alternative youth center was a fact. The next morning the City major called to start negotiations and the City Council decided to let squatters stay for two years at that spot. Occupied old gas station became a meeting-place for cultural activities

T: "Putkinotko was an old garage, after occupying the building we started to renovate the building, opened up a cafe and a concert place, we had even a summer hostel. It was direct action. I worked in the café, it was open also during the night. People who hanged there and new people came in. We started to organize technoparties with friends"

M: "Putkinotko was important place for me. Those spaces and houses where people can organise actions themeselves offer really important alternative in the city. Skatta was that kind of place too, after that I didn´t spent much time at Hertsiga, there was changes in my life, studying, family and other things"

After the first alternative cultural center period (1990-1993), squatters knew they had to leave the old gas station.

J: "when the house was demolished, it was a disappointment. Although, it was maybe allright that things changed. We continued to organize cultural activities, gigs and clubs and same time campaigned about housing. We had a temporary space at Suvilahti, a garageclub. We developed new ideas and temporary happenings".

Soon after they left the gas station, squatters occupied an old warehouse in Katajanokka (called Skatta) in September 1994, near harbour area. This was a more complex situation, because this act made it visible for the public authorities that this squatters movement was not temporal. Principal questions arose in the City Council how to deal with this movement. After three months of uncertainty and lots of lobbying, the Council decided that they could stay in the old warehouse and that the Council would finance the rent, and a new cultural center and phase started from that moment on.

U: "I spent lot of time at the house, and lived there for a while, because I was homeless a short period. Always I couldn´t sleep because bands were playing in downstairs and sleeping bag wasn´t enough. It was a special kind of community. There was also kids which were prohibited to go city youth houses. Sometimes I felt how we can survive with this… but nothing never happened. I think everybody had certain kind of respect for the place. Theater and other activities collected also talented young people, others were interested in theater and music, others were interested in acting."

The movement became well known and besides the housing interests, the cultural center attracted a lot of visitors as a breeding ground for DIY -culture. It contained a theatre, a café, concert hall and it served as a autonomous cultural house that staged concerts and performances. From that moment on, the movement also hosted activist groups within the Helsinki region, in different cases, for concerts, activities, vegan cooking and other alternative activities.

> J: "My first visit to was to see a concert. I was almost 18, we drank beer in the bus stop and entered the concert. Somebody had told that you cannot be too drunk and we had fear that somebody recognizes that we were drunk. We went to see lot of gigs and played also ourselves, I played in the band. We were enthusiastic, it was the best band in the world. We were in the high school, and my friend was in the secondary school, then I suddenly was member of the band, and somebody organised a gig at Skatta."

"Skatta" established as a performing space for creative subcultures and music scenes to stage their ambitions and potentials.

> J: "… there was this basic pattern that bands organized gigs themselves, it was the best practice. I remember many good concerts. Some band became famous. Punk and hardcore gigs had a lot of audience, and punk scene was very active. In the club there was all kinds of genres and bands."

Participation in squatters subculture was rational choice for the participants. Squatters movement provided channel for action, cultural spaces and youth cultural "free zone" outside commercial circuits. Kookos Factory and occupied cultural spaces became a place of young people´s social struggle in urban space and place of self-directed grassroot activism.

> T:"Working in the cultural center was my firs actual job. When schools begun in Autumn, we started to organize parties nad cultural events, movie nght and so on. In garage we had music sessions. It was time before internet. The richness was that the space connected all kinds of subcultures, and the space offered a channel to do your own things. There was reggaepeople, punks and others. Grunge was hot then. Also Rocky Horror Picture Show was hot and it had its own crew".

The emergence of squatting activism in Helsinki early 1990s showed similarities to the developments in other European cities. Although it was relatively small on an international scale, it was nevertheless defining on a local level. The movement began to be a production and consumption site for alternative cultural expression. Therefore, squatting activism can be termed as a cultural facilitator or aggregator, staging urban youth cultures in a subcultural arena.

5.5. Conclusion

In this Chapter I have explored what kind of subcultural spaces squatting activism created and how activist experienced the occupation of urban space. In activist stories key events were the occupation of an old Kookos Factory in Sörnäinen at May, 1990, and the occupation of an old taxi drivers garage and gas-station at May 10th 1991. Squatting activism produced subcultural spaces for grassroot politics and alternative culture. Activists occupied abandoned buildings and turned these urban spaces as a subcultural venues. Occupied spaces became a platform for subcultural activism and squatting became a strategy of collective action.

Squatting activism created space for grassroot politics and alternative culture. In addition to being a demand for housing, actions were fundamentally also a comment on how the urban environment was treated. Additionally, young squatters hoped to bring attention to the city's destructive planning policies for old buildings. When the old factory was occupied, the previously empty house became a space of activity and a key site for spatial struggle on the local political level. Activists developed skills to organize and manage autonomous culture and alternative spaces. Activists were combined with a counter-cultural values and occupied spaces gave opportunities to lifestyle experimentation. Activists developed a type of autonomous and self-directing politics and a urban do-it-yourself culture, where activists could seek social change and actively participate in improving the shared environment.

6. SQUATTING ACTIVISM AND LIFESTYLES POLITICS

In previous Chapters I have explored how squatting activism of the 1990s emerged and what kind of subcultural spaces squatters created. I have discussed how squatters were also actors whose choices contributed to maintaining conditions in the city and in which they lived in. In this Chapter I will the study examines how participating in squatting activism has influenced activists life courses and lifestyle choices, and how activists experienced their changing relationship to activism when they became older. Usually in academic literature the concept of subculture is connected to youth and the experiences of older participants have been neglected (see Bennett & Taylor 2012; Hodkinson 2013). As I will discuss, subcultural participation cannot be defined only as a youth phenomenon. As Williams (2011) writes, subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last a lifetime. I am interested in how the experiences of older activists are positioned in this debate and meaning up to which point activists consider that they can influence their lives by making choices and how these choices have influenced their life courses.

6.1. Changing relationship to activism

We go back to In Spring 2014. When I started to sketch ideas to my study, I had a conversation with a former squatting activist about our shared experiences and history in the squatting movement over twenty years earlier. She commented:

> "…afterwards I have been thinking how squatting was so essential part of our youth. At that time, it provided a channel for active participation and a way to feel influential and to feel that those things mattered. Squatting offered a channel for action. The issues were at grass root level, concrete spaces, houses and local activities… My life has been strongly connected with those houses and those people who lived in them. It's formed my own way of thinking and what I consider

to being good living and a good life. It had a concrete influence on my life and on my children's lives."

What raised curiosity here was her comment how participating squatting has been so influential and pivotal part of her youth, that it still shapes her everyday life after so many years. Because squatting was also part of my "subcultural youth", I really shared her experience. As Hodkinson (2011) writes, "rather than simply growing up and out of the scene completely, many participants continue their participation, balancing it with a desire to conform to societal expectations for appropriate adult behavior".

> L: "I was involded in squats in Kumpula and Putkinotko, then was a squat in Kirkkonummi, something in Turku and Jyväskylä, and then came Kookos Factory. So much happened, I don't remember right the dates. I was involded when Skatta and other spaces were occupied. Putkinotko was demoslished in 1993. The squatting came to the end when Skatta was squatted in 1994. At that time I took more responsibility about things in the movement, like housing projects, I had more age, which gave more responsibility, I suppose. From Kumpula we got more houses, we built solar panels, thought a lot ecological things, and thing was organised, we started housing projects and even employed young people to work in the projects, many got possibility for housing."

As L describes, she continued her involvement in squatting activism, but the relationship to squatting activism changed. In this we can see the changing roles of older subcultural participants, where subcultural identity is a process and the aging process moves subcultural participation to perhaps more conventional or socially expected trajectories. Following Haenfler (2014, 141) aging activists adopt an "internalized code" that is reflected primarily in lifestyle choices. (Haenfler 2014, 141).

> L: "I still live in Kumpula, most of the original habitants have moved out, and new young people have moved in. We have been committed to the principal that the apartments are for young people, when you move in ypu need to be under 25, so the community stays vibrant. Kookos-factory and squats influented a lot, I got more courage and belief that we can influence things. It gave me a more positive picture about society, what I had when I was younger, and what I was growing in.

In personal level the influence has been strong, the possibility to live in communal way and to belong in a community like this. I have been involved with the movement 25 years, almost my hole youth and adulthood. My career choices and profession was based on these experiences, I work among homeless people ja do community work."

According Hodkinson, the ageing process moves subcultural participation to more conventional or socially expected trajectories. In activists stories all participants continued their involvement in squatting activism is some way, but the in many cases activists adopted more conventional ways of involvement in activism. One if the interviewees moved to Amsterdam and continued his involvement in squatting activism there. These observations underpins recent debates about youth cultures, that subcultural participation cannot be defined only as a youth phenomenon and as Williams (2011) writes, subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last longer and even a lifetime.

6.2. Squatting activism as a lifestyle

Recent literature has pointed out that more and more people experience their "personal politics" in terms of "personal lifestyle values" (Haenfler, Johnson & Jones, 2012) and no longer organize their lives around traditional group identifications, such as social class or political parties. This approach can be described in the broader term "life politics" (Giddens 1991). As Haenfler, Johnson & Jones (2012) highlight, recent literature has also pointed out that "more and more people experience their personal politics in terms of personal lifestyle values".

M: "Squatting and this movement became important to me and it was a long-term commitment, one thing was probably that society and the whole world was in a big change at that time."

As Portwood-Stacer (2013, 2) argues "when individuals who desire social or political change are compelled to shape their own personal behaviours and choices toward the ideals they envision", this is known as lifestyle politics.

> J: "Then you can recognise those effects in your own life. That I've been involved in such activities with the movement and seen those kinds of things and that stuff can be done and that we can achieve something and that's the right kind of attitude and somehow that kind of trust in that you're right and that you're not censoring yourself but that you can think that we can achieve something together and that's affected me in many ways in my personal life. I've tried to export that kind of attitude elsewhere too, be it to my working life or civic activities that I've participated in."

Following Portwood-Stacer (2013, 2) some of the most significant effects of lifestyle politics are personal and cultural, and may not be recognizable within narrow understanding of the political and many personal needs served by lifestyle politics within contemporary society mean that this form of activism cannot be dismissed as simply ineffective for radical movements".

> K: "Anti-consumption was kind of important, a space where you can spend time without money. I was interested in punkscene and anarchism and I had friends that shared the same ideas. It was the music and political ideas that interested me in anarchism, punk and stuff like that…."

Relying to this argument lifestyle is a major site for the constitution of identity and community among squatter activists. Thus to understand squatting as an identity, goal, and tactic in activists everyday lives, I use Haenfler, Johnson, and Jones (2012, 2) definition of lifestyle as "movements that consciously and actively promote a lifestyle, or a way of life, as their primary means to foster social change." Following Haenfler, Johnson & Jones´s (2012) definition squatting can be seen as a lifestyle choice through which promote anti-consumerist and self-directed lifestyle outside commercial circuits. As Potwood-Stacer (2013, 5) points out, histories of activism show that participants make connections between their political ideologies and their habits of everyday life.

M: "It's another question that perhaps that kind of culture and activity can only form at the fringe and at the periphery. At the center of economy and wealth it's not going to foster very much creativity or new stuff because there's no need for that. Then there's just complacency".

The practice of occupying abandoned buildings and urban spaces for alternative activities produced space also for more personalized experimentations and seek for alternative lifestyles, and as activists described in their stories, towards a society that relies on fewer rules and regulations, and more on an ethic of sharing. I argue that while urban activism attracted those who wished to protest the lack of affordable housing or the negative effects of urban development, it also offered opportunities where alternative practices and also more individualized forms of participation and lifestyle choices was produced.

6.3 Continuity of subcultural participation

After the initial phase of squatting buildings squatters in the movement shifted their activities towards a different mode of action. Buildings were no longer squatted, rather the activists took the initiative by renovating old buildings and using them to develop self-directed urban cultural practices and residential use.

As Bennett and Hodkinson (2013, 1) writes, theorists have drawn attention to the apparently increasing diversity, complexity and longevity of youth.

D: "After a while I moved to Amsterdam and joined local squatting activism. There the squatting culture and local squatting networks were big compared to Helsinki. They had their own spaces, cafees and restaurants and spaces for housing. You could live there cheaply and eat almost for free. It was kind of lifestyle, you could live as a squatter and activist."

Following Haenfler (2014, 17) subcultures have shared distinct meanings. Members of subculture not only share an identity, they also share values and practices. As subcultures emerge, distinct meanings form to define the scene's unique practices and cultural objects as well as to distinguish the subculture

from mainstream culture. These meanings continuously grow and change as participants of subculture debate existing meanings and create new ones. Additionally, meanings are both created and learned through social interaction. As Portwood-Stacer (2013, 2-3) argues, when writing about radical activism, "lifestyle is a major site for the constitution of identity and community" and this is also true among older squatter activists.

> K: " When I was 11 I became a vegetarian and started to hang out at gigs, a few years later I started to have my own bands. As a teen I felt that the classic punk stuff like drinking and stuff was a part of it but perhaps it's part of teen life without the punk. There were rap and techno gigs and all that. I have hanged around squats since I was a teenager, only now I´m I have been active in the squatting movement from the beginning. Vuoritalo was the first squat I visited, I was thirteen."

Recent literature has pointed out that more and more people experience their "personal politics" in terms of "personal lifestyle values" (Haenfler et al. 2012) and no longer organize their lives around traditional group identifications, such as social class or political parties. As I will discuss in the context of squatting activism, these *lifestyle choices* can depart from the mainstream and can include alternative ways of thinking about society. As Portwood-Stacer (2013, 2) argues "when individuals who desire social or political change are compelled to shape their own personal behaviours and choices toward the ideals they envision", this is known as lifestyle politics*.*

Following Ross Haenfler (2009, 32), resistance to the mainstream is presented in most subcultures, not less in squatting as an action-oriented subculture. Resistance is a complex social phenomenon that can include a broad range of behaviors and actions. A cornerstone for many of subcultures is the act of resisting the "system" and living in a way that contradicts what the population as a whole agrees upon to be "normal" and "polite." (see Williams 2011, Haenfler 2014). Subculturalists resist the norms and values of a culture they see as exerting ideological and coercive control over their lives. Through their resistance, subcultures undermine the hegemonic social meanings and power relationships that influence our actions in many ways (Haenfler 2014). Fifth

element is the sense of marginality. As Haenfler (2014, 34) points, subcultures share a degree of outsider status and many subcultures are not structurally marginalized but rather in a sense "choose" their marginalization and rather than causing problems, subcultures often provide solutions for participants in the form of meaningful community. (ibid. 40)

Squatting activism and occupying public spaces or wastelands can be seen as a radical form of lifestyle politics. As more and more youth engages in a "search of ethical consistency" in which their everyday actions and practices match their ideals. I seek to extend this literature on social movements and lifestyle activism to include young squatters engaged in what are known as lifestyle activism and focusing less on traditional political mobilization and more on people´s everyday lifestyle choices (see Bennett 2012, 22; Cherry, 2014; Haenfler, Johnson & Jones, 2012).

> M: "If I think from the beginning, we had this idea that we should not be forced to think that everything was based on overconsumption and nothing is possible outside this capitalist system."

Recent research has pointed out to the rise of socially conscious consumption and "lifestyles" that focus on changing one´s everyday lifestyle choices as a form of protest. (see Cherry, 2014; Haenfler, Johnson & Jones, 2012). At the same time, however, there is ample evidence suggesting an exchange of ideas, repertoires and mentalities throughout Europe. Punk, for example, was remarkably successful in transferring oppositional ideas and mentalities of non-cooperation beyond the Iron Curtain. Thus, punk rock became a lively youth subculture in Poland and Slovenia. Amsterdam squatters travelled to Barcelona in 1980 to inform sympathizers about how to organize a squatters' movement.

Among the activist groups in Helsinki squatting movement gained a unique position where the organization performed an activity of applied discussion, acting as an example of parallel and manifested counter culture. Without loosing too much impetus or force when being institutionalized, the organization moved forward, expanding and evaluating its methodology. Squatting should be seen in a larger context of a possibility and strength in supporting youth

cultures. And as Malone (2002, 167) points out, instead of asking: "How can we alleviate space use conflict between adults (or contemporary cities) and young people?", we should be asking: "Whose needs and values are priviledged in the architecture of our city streets?"

6.4. Squatting as a lifestyle

Scholars have commonly drawn sharp distinctions between social movements and lifestyles, conceptualizing movements as organized, change-oriented collective action, and lifestyles as more diffuse, internally focused, style-oriented groupings driven by consumption and popular culture (see Haenfler, Johnson and Ellis 2012, Cherry 2014). According to Haenfler, Johnson and Ellis (2012, 2) this divide has created "a scholarly blind spot concealing the intersections of private action and movement participation". Even though there are formalized squatting groups and organizations around squatting and squatters have created also organizational structures to achieve their goals, squatting movement transcends typical organizational structures and the political collective identity in the movement is not necesseraly tied to social movement organizations.

> M: "we should not be forced to think that nothing is possible outside this capitalist system. All the rules and all kinds of control has effected people´s minds, and if you want to do something you need think what it costs and is it allowed. So what we need is freedom and not be scared. We need to believe that we are right"

Usually in academic literature the concept of subculture is connected to youth. As I have discussed, subcultural participation cannot be defined only as a youth phenomenon. As Williams (2011) writes, subcultural affiliation is most likely to begin during adolescence, but it´s significance can last a lifetime. Following Anthony Giddens (1991, 214) life politics is a politics of life decisions. These lifestyle choices can depart from the mainstream and can include alternative ways of thinking about society. In this sense the concept of "lifestyle" is a useful concept to explain subcultural participation in the context of squatting activism.

Furthermore, looking at subcultures as a "lifestyle choice", illustrates how identity is a reflexive process and the concept of lifestyle applies to wider choices, behaviours and attitudes. This resonates with activists stories, that lifestyle can also be oppositional to the mainstream culture, and lifestyle choices can seek wider collective and individual social change (see Bennett & Taylor 2012.)

Following Giddens (1991, 53) self-identity has become a reflexive project that we continuously work and reflect on. We create the story of who we are, and how we came to be where we are now. Self-identity, then, is not given from outside, it is a person's own reflexive understanding of self. Giddens asserts that everyone in modern society has a possibility to select a lifestyle, although different groups and individuals have different possibilities. The term lifestyle applies to wider choices, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. It is noteworthy, that this perspective does not exclude consideration of structural inequalities. On the contrary, subcultural lifestyle choices can also be oppositional to the mainstream culture, aim to wider social change where actors can have active role in shaping their social environment (see Haenfler et al 2012; Bennett 2011).

In recent literature there has been growing interest towards the investigation of the experiences and contuinity of participation in "youth cultures" also among older subcultural participants (Bennett & Taylor 2012; Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Hodkinson 2011; 2013). Following these debates, and resonating with activists stories, participating in squatting activism was not age-limited or age-spesific, although activists relationship to activism changed. Following these perspectives squatting activism became a social space and platform of lifestyle choices, where participants produced and created spaces for alternative practices. In some stories the impacts of these lifestyle choices had long-term effects. Subcultural identity is a repeated process of engagement and the aging process in some cases moves subcultural participation to perhaps more conventional or socially expected trajectories.

6.5. Conclusion

In this Chapter I have explored activist´s experiences how participating squatting activism has influenced their life courses and lifestyle choices. I was interested how activists continued their involvement in squatting activism. Following debates and theories about youth cultures, ageing and subcultural participation, in activists stories squatting activism became a platform for lifestyle politics. At same time activists committed to action on behalf of their city and squatting activism became as a platform to self-directing politics and a urban do-it-yourself culture, where participants had possibility to improve their environment. The practice of using abandoned buildings or urban spaces for alternative activities allowed squatters to explore new possibilities and opportunities where alternative practices and lifestyle was produced. In recent literature there has been growing interest towards the investigation of the experiences and contuinity of participation in "youth cultures" also among older subcultural participants (Bennett & Taylor 2012; Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Hodkinson 2011; 2013). Following these debates, and resonating with activists stories, as activists became older their relationship to activism changed. Following these perspectives squatting activism became a social space and platform of lifestyle choices, where participants produced alternative practices, and create spaces for alternative forums. In some stories the impacts of these lifestyle choices had long-term effects. Subcultural identity is a repeated process of engagement and the aging process in some cases moves subcultural participation to perhaps more conventional or socially expected trajectories.

7. SUMMARY

In this studyI have seeked to increase my understanding about squatting activism in Helsinki. Limited amount of research has examined the experiences of older activists and in this study I have sought to fill this gap in literature. This study has explored the experiences of squatting activists making use of interviews with older activists, archive materials and the authors personal experiences. Eight face-to-face interviews and archive work were conducted during years 2014-2017. Focus of this study was on squatting activism which emerged early 1990s which I defined as second wave of squatting activism in Helsinki. The primary research interest was to investigate how activists experienced their participation in squatting activism and how participating in squatting activism has influenced activists life courses and lifestyle choices.

The empirical analysis of this study was based on three perspectives, each of which considered the experiences of activists from a different angle. Each of the themes was reflected with lifestyle theory debates and mainly following theoretical writings and concepts of Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, Patrick J. Williams, Ross Haenfler and Paul Hodkinson (Bennett & Hodkinson 2013; Ross Haenfler 2005; Bennett & Taylor 2012; Patrick J. Williams 2011; Paul Hodkinson 2011; 2013.)

Squatting activism of the 1990s emerged as a young people´s radical response to housing crisis, youth unemployment and the negative effects of urban development. In the activist stories involvement in the squatter´s subculture was an influential part of their youth and provided a channel for participation. Squatting offered opportunities for the production of cunter-cultural spaces and do-it-yourself -practices. In activists stories participants experienced the occupation of urban space as a rational act and created spaces where diverse cultural activities had a possibility to flourish.

The results and observations resonate with recent debates about youth cultures, lifestyle, ageing and subcultural participation. Following observations

of this study, squatting activism became a platform where lifestyle practices and lifestyle choices were made. Squatters subculture was also space for playful urban culture, which provide opportunities for gathering and socializing as well as protests and demonstrations. As I have discussed, much of this activity comes back to alternative definitions of the city, how subcultures can exist and flourish and how urban space is used in creative ways.

Although squatting was radical and straightforward action, it became an important site for *lifestyle* choices. Central conclusion of the thesis is that, what started as young people´s radical activism early 1990s in Helsinki, became a subcultural space, where cultural identities, lifestyle and lifestyle choices were constructed. Following theoretical debates, and resonating with activists stories, as activists became older their relationship to activism changed. Squatting activism became a social space and platform of lifestyle choices, where participants produced space for alternative and subcultural practices. In activists stories the impacts of these lifestyle choices had long-term effects. This resonates with debates about youth cultures and ageing, that subcultural identity is a repeated process of engagement and the aging process in some cases moves subcultural participation to perhaps more conventional or socially expected trajectories.

The observations of this study will also pave my way for my future research. Research was a journey to the history of squatting activism in Helsinki and while activists were telling their experiences about their involvement in squatting activism, they were also building up a rich and diverse picture about the history of youth cultures in Helsinki.

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Legislation

Public Order Act 2010 (Finland)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Haastattelukysymykset

Kerro hiukan taustastasi talonvaltaajana, miten se alkoi?
Miten ja milloin tulit itse mukaan toimintaan?
Miten osallistuit, olitko mukana talonvaltauksissa vai oliko muita tapoja osallistua?
Mitä talonvaltaus ja aktivismiin osallistuminen merkitsi sinulle?
Mitä kokemuksia ja muistoja sinulla on talonvaltausaktivismista?
Mitä teet nykyään, onko sinulla perhettä?
Miten osallistuminen talonvaltaukseen ja talonvaltausaktivismiin mielestäsi vaikutti myöhempään elämääsi?
Mitä ajattelet talonvaltauksesta nuorisokulttuurina?
Onko sinulla kysymyksiä tutkimuksestani?

Interview Questions (Translated from Finnish to English)

Tell about your background as a squatter, how it started?
How and when did you participate the movement?
How did you join squatting activism, did you participate in squats or was there another ways to participate?
What squatting and participating activism meant to you?
What experiences and memories you have about the movement?
What do you do nowadays, do you have family?
How participating squatting and squatters movement influenced your life later?
What do you think about squatting as a youth culture?
Do you have any question about the research?

Appendix 2: *Consent Form*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Vesa Peipinen, from the Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Tampere. The results will be contributed to a Master Thesis in Social Sciences, Cultural Studies.

Procedures and Confidentiality

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a set of questions regarding your personal history and your participation in squatting activism in Helsinki. The interview will take place at Helsinki and will last from 1 to 1.5 hours. With your permission, the discussion will be recorded solely for the purpose of transcribing the interviews. The information obtained in this study will be kept confidential.

Potential Risks and Benefits

This study involves minimal risks to you. The only foreseeable risk lies in the nature of the study topic, which may touch on some aspects of your life. There are no direct benefits or payments to you for participation in this study. Keep in mind, however, that the information you reveal to this study will be used for a research project that aims at urban activism and youre participation in squatters movement in Helsinki.

Rights of Research Subjects

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. You may withdraw your consent at any time during the study. You may also refuse to answer any question. Should you have any question concerning the research, please do not hesitate to contact vesa.peipinen@gmail.com.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation described above, and I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Subject:
_____

Signature of Subject:
_____

Date:
_____