

The Untold Struggles of Migrant Womxn¹ Squatters in Berlin-Kreuzberg²

The Occupations of *Kottbusser Straße 8* and *Forster Straße 16/17*

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Introduction

In West Berlin, Kreuzberg was the central district of the squatting movement in the early 1980s; almost half of the squatted houses were located there. At the same time, it was also a migrant neighbourhood. The majority of West Berlin's migrant population came from Turkey and Kurdistan and lived in Kreuzberg. Although the miserable housing situation of migrants has been narrated and analyzed through diverse perspectives, the role of migrants taking action on, initiating, participating in, and transforming the housing/urban struggles, specifically in the squatting movement, remains mostly untold. With this chapter, we aim to discuss two squatting experiences of migrant womxn from Turkey and Kurdistan in the early 1980s in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Our aim is not to add a footnote to the history of the squatting movement, but rather to ask new questions and rethink the history and the future of urban struggles in light of the following questions: How did the struggle of migrants get marginalized in this narrative of urban struggles and the squatting movement? How does the squatting of migrant womxn reveal the limits and the possibilities of the squatting movement? How does the untold story of migrant squatting change our understanding of migration and the squatting movement? In order to elaborate on these questions, we are going to first look at the strained relationship of the radical left with migration; the link between migration and housing politics; the proposal to rethink migration as a social movement and part of the squatting movement in West Germany and West Berlin.

The tense relationship of the radical left with migration

As the desire for a social transformation emerged in 1968, carried out by the student movement and proletarian and anti-authoritarian youth who realized that they needed a partner for revolution, many of them left the universities and spread into the factories to build the front line with workers; there they 'discovered' the migrant workers, constituting a large number of mass industrial workers, as *avant guard* of the class struggle. In this context we point out the example of one of the first squats in West Berlin, the *Georg von Rauch-Haus* (occupied in 1971), where primarily pupils, young workers, trainees and runaways lived. In this house, few high school students and 10 corporate company workers lived, the occupants were serving their apprenticeships or working as toolmakers, machinists, welders, bricklayers, and alike (azozomox 2014: 206).

But soon the desire to work and live differently came in conflict with the monotonous factory

¹ feminist intersectional spelling of the word women (plural, womon (singular).see also: http://www.the-standard.org/news/womon-womyn-womxn-students-learn-about-intersectionality-in-womonhood/article_c6644a10-1351-11e7-914d-3f1208464c1e.html

² This article is a product of an ongoing independent research and the names of the protagonists have been changed to protect their anonymity.

work and resulted in the dissolution of the factory action groups. The workers' strikes³ were organized by migrant factory workers, and the joy resulting from these strikes was shared by few action groups on the left, but did not diffuse to the rest of the society.

The lack of any analysis of racism within the class struggle and the racist division of labor directed the need for the initial constitution of the solidarity of German workers. The initial attempts to discuss workers' movements were not executed. Later on, when discussions were carried out on the subject of leftist politics or the role of the unions, mass industrial workers were already phasing out due to mass layoffs and the informationalization of the economy.

The factory action groups began engaging in neighborhoods. However, the attempted solidarity of the political relation between students and workers turned into a caretaker relationship with people in need. For example students turned into social workers while *avant garde* migrant workers turned into ghetto inhabitants to help and assist. An interview from the leftist daily newspaper in 1982 captured this moment.

Four comrades—one of whom was an Italian migrant—who were a part of the group *Revolutionärer Kampf* (*revolutionary struggle*) and worked as factory workers and squatted a house and collaborated together with other migrants in Frankfurt/Main in the beginning of the 1970s, came together again to discuss if migration to Germany should be stopped or regulated (*Ausländerstopp*).

As such, the crisis of the left and its inability to analyze the politics of migration and take a position in discussions on “foreigners” was further projected in the election of the conservative government. Simultaneously, the birth of an alternative movement with the *Tunix* (“Do Nothing”)- *Congress* in 1978 in West Berlin was an attempt to revitalize the anti-authoritarian left and fight together against the diverse structures of power and repressions. Initiatives for an alternative economy were taken. Squatting also emerged in this new atmosphere, both against the privatization of housing and probing into alternative lifestyles and for the self-organization of life.

The idea of not waiting for a revolution, rather revolutionizing everyday through the self-and collective management of living spaces, was exciting. The problem was to understand how extensive these ideas of collective management could be. Was it limited to left-radical self-help groups who were repressed and were now trying to get back into the labor and housing market? Or was it a political movement connecting with other movements of the wider society, such as the struggles of migrants?

Rethinking migration as a movement

³ One of the biggest wild strikes was initiated by Turkish workers in 1973 at the automobile plant *Ford* in Köln-Niehl, when around 300 Turkish workers were fired without notice, because of the unauthorized prolongation of their holidays. (Serhat Karakayali: Lotta Continua in Frankfurt, Türken-Terror in Köln, in: *grundrisse, Zeitschrift für linke Theorie und Debatte*)

To think of migration from the standpoint of “autonomy”, means to emphasize the social and subjective dimensions of migration movements. It is an attempt to argue against traditional immigration theories that depict immigrants as victims of migration trapped between state and capital. *Karakayali* underlines that the subjectivity is not free of structural constraints, but there is always the potential of an “excess” that can emerge within a field of tension, that transforms the whole field (*Gürsel* 2013:220). *Bojadzijeve* (2012), in her study on the struggles of migration in 1960s and 1970s, challenges the dominant discourse on the migration history for representing migrants as passive and defenseless victims by breaking these narratives through migrant experiences in resisting the repression at borders, in the factories and in their neighborhoods, to highlight their strengths in forming their collective and individual subjectivity.

Entanglement of migration and housing politics

After the *gastarbeiter* (guest-worker)⁴ regime ended with the halt in migrant recruitment in 1973, migration continued through family reunification. Throughout this period, migrants relocated from isolated shabby guest worker hostels to apartments in the city; during this phase, housing and urban politics emerged as one of the principle instruments to limit and control migration. The Berlin Senate of 1975, later implemented in other federal states, enforced *Zuzugssperre*, moving restrictions for migrants based on nationality, specifically referring to migrants from non-European countries to certain districts, such as Tiergarten, Wedding and Kreuzberg.

This can be taken as an example of the management of migration through urban politics and through the creation of internal borders across cities. Another instrument of control is the housing supervision law (*Wohnungsaufsichtsgesetz*), which originally protected the tenants but is now used against the family reunification of migrants since one of the clauses demands the residence permit of new migrants as an obligation to verify occupancy in a legally conforming apartment (that is an apartments with a minimum housing space of 9 square meters for each adult and 6 square meters for each child under six years). Furthermore, racism in the housing market manifested itself through explicit housing announcements such as “only for Germans” or “not for foreigners” or an illegal additional rent. In this situation, many migrants did not have any other choice but to live in shabby abandoned buildings, which were left ready for demolition and vulnerable to the speculation of corporate builders.

Squatting in West Germany and West Berlin

In West Germany, at the beginning of the 1970s, a new squatting movement emerged in the wake of the worldwide 1968 movements for radical change of society and life. Various squatting movements that spread from West Germany differed from one another, from place to place and from time to time in their intensity and their cycles. In some places, just one house was occupied, while in other places, many spaces were squatted.

For example, since the beginning of the 1970s and mid-1980s, Potsdam has experienced more

⁴ An immigrant worker, especially one who came to the former West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s.

than 40 squats, while Hamburg had more than 50 squats, and in East and West Berlin together more than 645 buildings were squatted – all together more than 1,000 buildings and hundreds of wagon-like caravans, trailers, trucks and the like were squatted.

The composition of the squatters varied greatly, expressing a broad diversity within the frame of anti-authoritarian, emancipationist ideas and politics and reflecting the influence and interrelation with other social, cultural, and political movements. Amongst the squatters, we find people with different class backgrounds and political tendencies (anarchists, anti-authoritarian activists, anti-imperialists, autonomous activists, anti-fascists, environmentalists) as well as creative artists, workers and more, but also, autonomist womxn, radical queer and trans-gender people. In addition, people of color, migrants, inter-and trans-nationalists and refugees have participated, though they have been the minority in the squatting movement.(amantine 2012: 32)

The first big squatting movement, from 1970–1974 in West-Germany in Frankfurt/Main, was against housing speculation, rent increases, demolition of buildings and gentrification and gave birth to 20 squats, which included a squat by immigrants. The occupation of *Friesengasse 5* in September 1973 was probably the first migrant squat in West Germany; it was unfortunately evicted the same day by the police. The squatting movement slowly receded by the end of 1974 with the eviction of the last squat.

The squatting movement was accompanied by large organized rent strikes from Italian, Kurdish/Turkish, Greek, Spanish and Yugoslavian migrant workers who were suffering in Frankfurt/Main under squalid living conditions and were no longer willing to pay horrendous rents. (Karakayali 2000)

In their first publicly announced strike of *Ulmenstraße 20* in 1971, they declared, that they would not pay more than 10% of their income for rent. At the peak of the rent strike, 1,500 migrants participated in it. It was also supported and organized by groups like *Lotta Continua* or *Unione Inquilini*. The rent strike extended its initial limited criticism on housing conditions towards a broader criticism on general living conditions. At the same time, in 1972, a major strike by migrant workers was organized against *Opel* and *VDM* in Rüsselsheim, near Frankfurt. But due to state repression, with 90 per cent of the trials lost due to non-payment of rent, the movement gradually abated.

The 1980s experienced the second big squatting wave in West Germany with around 400 squats in total and roughly 200 squats in West Berlin alone. This time again two buildings were squatted by migrants. In November 1980, several Turkish families, who previously lived in Forster Straße 18 under unworthy and claustrophobic conditions (like ten people sharing a room), squatted *Forster Straße 16* and *17* with the support of local activists. On February 18, 1981, probably the first occupation of migrant womxn happened with the squatting of *Kottbusser Straße 8*, which was led by eight Turkish and Kurdish womxn, one German woman, and four children with the support of the *Meeting and Information Point for womxn from Turkey* (TIO, Treff- und Informationsort für türkische Frauen).

Occupation of the house Kottbusser Straße 8

Since many families from Turkey and Kurdistan were living in overcrowded and small flats, many of them were supporting the squatters and had sympathy with the squatting movement in West Berlin. *Seda*, one of the squatters from the organization Meeting and Information Point for womxn from Turkey (TIO) in Berlin-Kreuzberg, directed the group to squat the empty house in *Kottbusser Straße 8* all together. After a short discussion, they decided to do it spontaneously without thinking it through—so eight womxn, four children, and one German comrade from the organization, who decided to join them spontaneously, met the following week in the organization's office and finally entered the house. Since there were renovations going on in the house, the presence of construction workers caused major trouble during the occupation of the building. The womxn were insulted and harassed in a fascist, racist and sexist manner, *Schemme* and *Rosenberg* narrated the following:

Those were womxn and moreover Turkish womxn that provoked them. The German construction workers, who were renovating the house, wanted to prevent the occupation by their own means. A friend of mine was strangled and choked by them, and one of these workers aimed a scraper at her. Another woman had her hair pulled so hard that she was bleeding. That was really dramatic. You do not want to work or pay rent, but you want to squat German houses, swore the construction workers. (Schemme and Rosenberg 1981: 6-9, Author's Translation)

One of the workers saw *Seda* and approached her furiously, grabbing her by the arm of her fur coat and dragging her down the stairs saying, “You should have been gased!” She fell down the stairs terrified—nothing happened thanks to the coat—and then ran immediately to the flat where the other womxn were waiting and locked the door from inside. (Celebi-Gottschlich 2014)

The construction workers gathered in front of the locked door and shouted at them to come out. They were unprepared for something like that and scared, and they did not know what to do exactly. Shortly after police arrived, the construction workers left, and the womxn could surprisingly stay in the squat. Supporters also heard about the squat and came to chant for them, to express their solidarity. As the children started to get hungry and thirsty, supporters who heard the children cry threw milk and other supplies to the balcony of the flat where the group was staying. They also tossed a purple transparent with the words “Just Courage” written on it.

After 3 hours, as the womxn were becoming anxious, a representative from the public housing company *GSW*, who had bought the house three years earlier in 1978, came to negotiate with the womxn. After telling him about their housing misery for 20 minutes, they received the house key and were quite shocked and simultaneously relieved because instead of taking them to the police station the house owner granted them access to the house.

They found out later that the representative from the housing company *GSW* talked to the *Senator for Internal affairs, Ulrich*, and the police filed a report of property damage of one door. At night, only two womxn from Turkey and their two German friends stayed in the house. For some of the squatters from the radical squatting group, it was not “revolutionary enough” to get the keys of the squatted house but against their squatting honour.

Despite the construction work, the house was still in a state of decay, and it did not have electricity, running water or toilets. Therefore the renovation of the squat was the first task in the list of things to do. The womxn received then their first donation of 5,000 Deutsche Mark (DM) from the pharmacist *Ulf*, to start the renovation of the building⁵. Not all the migrant womxn who squatted the house moved to the house. In the end there were *Seda*, one single Kurdish woman with three children and another single Turkish mother with three children who moved in, but the other squatters in the beginning were German. They formed a house-community, held regular meetings and also participated in neighbourhood assemblies and squatting councils, where all the political issues of squatting, negotiations with the state, house raids, etc. were discussed and debated.

Several reasons contributed to taking the initiative to squat an empty building. One of the reasons was having experienced racist/sexist discrimination in finding a new flat. Especially young womxn, who were separated from their men, suffered greater difficulties—the housing shortage among those womxn was immense, especially among single mothers from Turkey and Kurdistan.

TIO was trying for some time to find apartments for those womxn but failed due to their ignorance of the local authorities and landlords. One woman with four children, who was living in a one-room apartment, was thrown out by the clerk of the state housing office with the comment: “Get lost”. TIO collaborated also with other two womxn's shelter in Berlin, where more than ten Turkish womxn were looking for a flat:

It would be perfect to have a house where Turkish and German single mothers could live with their children. Because more and more Turkish families get crushed and the Turkish womxn are left alone with their kids and are hassled massively from their former husbands. In this context it would be a real protection if they could live together with other womxn and not so isolated and dispersed throughout different districts (Schemme and Rosenberg 1981: 6-8)

The harassment of womxn who decided to separate from their husbands has always been a problem. One of the migrant womxn living in the squat in Kottbusser Straße 8, who got divorced before she moved to the house, had to deal with her husband continuing to stalk her.

Therefore, some people from the squat went to him and demanded that he not harass his former family any more; over time he stopped stalking her. Another single migrant woman with their children had several other struggles, which were beyond the grasp of ordinary German people.

Both the womxn had health problems, they were working at the factory under very harsh conditions, they had to deal with the harassment of their ex-husbands, with the difficulties of lacking German language knowledge, and with the problems which their children faced at their respective schools

. They also did not have any time to join the house meetings or go to demonstrations. From time to time, there was translation provided for them.

⁵ The squatters were supported also by a nationwide initiative of entrepreneurs and self-employed. They released a press release where they appealed to the construction senator demanding an end to the evictions and showing solidarity with the goals of the squatters. In addition to this, they were also offering sponsorship as in the ad from 12. September *Tagesspiegel* with the title “Unternehmer und Selbständige unterstützen Instandbesetzer”.

Seda believes that they felt left out among the “alternative squatters” because of their language problems and the missing feeling of togetherness. The woman activist claimed that the other squatters within the house were overwhelmed with the problems of migrant womxn and did not really care much about specific problems

. Encountering

problems in a shared space on a daily basis brought another kind of challenge to working on social projects with migrants.

The option of negotiating with the Senate of Berlin in order to legalize squatted houses was a controversial topic within the squatting scene in general. In *Kottbusser Straße 8*, the migrant womxn were in favour of legalization because of their legal, social and politically precarious situation in general, but none of the other native squatters supported this because they did not want to be perceived as the traitor of the movement, as many of their friends were in jail because of activities and demonstrations related to squatting. And the main political demand towards the Senate of Berlin was clear: Without the release and freedom of the prisoners (of whom some got prison sentences of more than 1 and a half years without parole), there would be no negotiations at all.

After long discussions, it was decided that the German squatters would leave and the house would be transformed into a whole migrant legalized squat. Finally the squat got legalized under very good conditions and under very inexpensive rent contracts. After the Germans left the house, radical left Turkish and Kurdish groups used the empty flats as their offices. In the meanwhile, the original squatters had all left the house and new people, also Germans, moved in. The house still functions as a house community although the radical political agenda has transformed.

Seda left for different reasons. She believed that the last remaining womxn, who finally left the house, had to confront the pressure of the conservative migrant community and probably left alone without solidarity and support. Solidarity and non-hierarchical collaboration were not one of the strengths of the group, which was clearly illustrated through the interview of the German colleague from TIO who had joined the migrant womxn in the squatting, as she claimed that without her squatting the building would not have been that successful. In addition to this paternalistic way of thinking, she went to Turkey for two weeks, and after her return, she published a book explaining how Turkish womxn are oppressed.

But TIO itself, who supported and participated in the occupation from the first day, became a target in September 1984 when a man affiliated with the Turkish fascist *Grey Wolves (Bozkurtlar)* attacked the *Meeting Point*. The man entered the space and shot three times with his pistol, killed *Neriman*, who died later in the hospital, and critically injured another woman called *Seyran*. *Seyran* was shot in the neck and recovered slowly in the hospital. She recalls the unknown man who shot the womxn and the racist investigation practised by German police following this event:

The day I left the intensive care unit, two police officers approached me and asked me, if my father was the gunman and that I should not protect him. These policemen knew that he could have a reason to shoot because I was running away from home. I was shocked. My father just had visited me in hospital. How could they imagine that my father had

done this? (...) I said no, my father did not do it, but they grinned and persisted. The police said: I should think about it twice, it could be possible, that I am afraid to say the truth. (...) They did not believe that a political reason could be the cause of the assault (Ateş (2003)).

Finally the offender was arrested and propaganda material of the *Grey Wolves* was found in his house. Although he killed one woman, he was only charged and processed with manslaughter. And despite the fact that he was clearly identified by the witnesses as the person who shot the woman, he was acquitted in a scandalous trial due to the lack of evidence. After this assault, TIO received a lot of support from the woman's movement and community and the autonomous/left-radical political people. As an example, a taxi-collective showed solidarity and parked their taxis in front of their meeting-point. (amantine, 2011: 207)

The occupation of Forster Straße 16 and 17 in November 1980

We have tried to live together me, my husband and three children in a 36 m² flat. We have waited three years for the housing office. They have showed us flats in the outer circles of Berlin for 800–900 (DM). We did not earn that much then, and we had to send money to our family in Turkey. We could not pay this amount of rent. But we definitely wanted to live in a better place.... The building next to us was vacant. I have thought, why should we live in one room, when there are flats with 4 rooms empty next to us?

(Zeynep, squatter, from an Interview with Kreuzberg Postasi, 1980)

Zeynep, a migrant female worker from Turkey, was living with her husband in a very small flat. As she wanted to bring their kids from Turkey to Germany, she was looking for a bigger flat but failed due to racism in the housing market. *Zeynep* was baby-sitting a German child next to her factory job; upon the request of the child's mother who happened to be a friend, she started attending neighborhood assemblies where they suggested she squat two empty buildings in *Forster Straße 16* and *17*. They had organized meetings with other neighbours and talked about how to squat the building. One night, they decided to get into the house. At 1:00 in the morning, they went to the house with candles since the electricity of the abandoned house was cut off.

Immediately police came and kicked them out. They did not resist against the police and waited; then they left and went in the house again and stayed until late in the night. The students with sleeping bags, who came to support the squatting action, stayed back and suggested the migrant families sleep at their houses. The group assembled in the next morning and went to the municipality to get the tenancy agreement with the neighbours and supporters as a forceful congregate. *Zeynep* remembers the jolt on the faces of the municipality workers witnessing the large local crowd with the migrants. After announcing that they were going to renovate the building and stay there until it was demolished, they succeeded in getting a temporary tenancy agreement on November 26, 1980.

Common Ground

Throughout the squatting process, close contact was established among neighbours, but still a stable exchange or collaboration between German and migrant neighbours was missing.

Zeynep described the situation as the existence of an invisible wall—a wall that divided the street into two groups. On the one side, there were overcrowded buildings with migrant worker families, and the other side consisted of German small families of white-collar workers, or native single households.

The idea to bring these two groups together was almost like bringing children together through intercultural education, to establish a self-managed Kita, which *Zeynep* and others initiated and worked at as kindergarten teachers.

Another potential for common ground, bringing alternative and migrant milieu together, was the politics of the governing *CDU Senate* and the immediate frontal attack of *Heinrich Lummer*, *Senator of Internal Affairs* (1981–1986), aimed at both squatters and migrants at the same time. *Lummer* carried out brutal evictions of squatted houses, one of which led to the death of a young activist, *Klaus Jürgen Rattey*, who was killed by the police chasing him under a public transportation bus, in September 1981. He also issued a new decree, the *Lummer-Erlass*, also known as the *Decree against Turks*. This law aimed to deport young Turkish migrants who came to Germany during the family reunification period. The general political atmosphere was very restrictive and hostile towards migrants, expressed through the Senator's dialogue and also in legislation and laws. In 1983, roughly 1,400 migrants were deported exclusively from West Berlin.

On New Year's Eve in 1984, six detainees pending deportation died in a fire in the overcrowded deportation prison at *Augustaplatz*, which was holding up to 20 persons in one cell. And only a few months earlier, in August 1983, *Kemal Altun*, a Turkish asylum seeker, jumped out of the window of the sixth floor of the Higher Administrative Court, during his deportation trial for fear of facing torture and death in Turkey if deported, when the Junta took over the country in a military coup in September 1980. Those harsh deportation practises of the West Berlin Senate were also applied to womxn and aged migrants, like an 80-year-old Turkish woman who was deported even though her five sons were living, working and supporting her in Berlin. And in this political and historical moment, *Lummer* did not hesitate to declare freely his racist philosophies, like:

When we solve the problem of foreigners, we solve the problem of unemployment. The number of foreigners has to be reduced with all the urgency and by all means—regardless of fundamental basic rights. The Germans do feel estranged from their environment in Kreuzberg, because of all the foreigners living there and it starts with the smell of the them! (Spiegel 2/1984: 78).

This new racist legislation brought together squatters and Turkish organizations for spontaneous actions and massive demonstrations. *Aras Ören*, a German-Turkish writer/poet, was excited and surprised with the heterogeneity in these demonstrations:

All Turkish people, from the right to the left orientation, went to street for the first time together. I did not expect it. And even more, also many Germans have grasped that Berlin's migrants are more than a minority group among others and joined in the demonstration. Or stayed at home, but had finally doubts about the infallibility of decreed politics (Zitty 26/1981: 15).

Euphoria, happiness, and excitement were the common expressions that described this moment. *Zeynep*, the initiator of the first migrant squatted house, was asked if there were any conflicts in making decisions or in meetings during the process of squatting; she replied without hesitation that there were no discussions, everybody was in solidarity, and there was an “awesome joy”. Her memories are associated with the festivals they organized and the joyous experiences. She was surprised and excited with the heterogeneity of the group, who were supporting them in solidarity. As they went to the district office in Kreuzberg on foot with a demonstration in order to demand their right to stay in the house, there were 200–250 people, who joined them, even older people with their walking sticks. The solidarity was also reciprocal.

Zeynep said that they were also visiting the other squatted houses. She remembers bringing tea for the university students who squatted the old fire station. But it was not in a form migrants are doing the catering again. She says that she was going there with her husband and they were having food and drinks with the student squatters and listening to music and dancing with joy. Her nostalgic emphasis brings it to the point: “We were young back then”. As they visited the second migrant squatted house with flowers, she was very impressed and got excited and thought, “It was totally my thing, womxn are capable of doing everything”. The squatted houses had open doors, and they also had many visitors—journalists, students, professors from universities, and also people from West Germany, who came to support their case and do interviews for the media. For instance, a group of apprentices from an employment office supported them by tapping the wire to supply electricity for free for the all flats in the house so that they could do the renovation work.

The difference of the first migrant squat experience was that they managed to create a joyful collaboration. *Zeynep* mentions that they were organizing street festivals and breakfasts on the street. They were preparing everything in a collective way, and everybody was bringing something to eat or drink. These kinds of activities offered more possibility for a relaxed exchange and visibility on the street, which was a different picture than the usual demonstrations.

Forster Straße and the day care center *Kita Komsu*

The establishment of the intercultural kindergarten on the ground floors of the migrant squats played an important role in this encounter. The goal of this kindergarten was actually to break the invisible wall between German white-collar workers and their migrant worker neighbours by bringing their children together. *Zeynep's* role as the initiator and mobilizer of squatting and the kindergarten, and her role as a former factory worker with a primary school graduation degree to become a kindergarten teacher in their own self-managed *Kita*, was also crucial in terms of shaking the perception of migrant womxn in the alternative scene during a time when they could not go beyond the role of the victims. Although she was earning way more in the factory than in the kindergarten, it was her decision and wish to see all of the children playing together and doing something to achieve this to make it happen.

Intercultural education is not a recipe against racism; it is rather a learning process, wrote *Amman*, one of the teachers, explaining the concept of *Kita Komsu*, which means “neighbour” in Turkish. The basic condition for this is a mixed group of children and teachers, but in order to achieve the goal, the readiness of the teacher to get to know the “other culture” and to learn from

it is necessary. According to their concept, teachers should also learn to get along with other cultures, since children have a distinctive sense of how teachers approach each other and orient themselves according to this behavior. They have also developed an exchange system that allows teachers to visit different children groups for a self-control and awareness system.

As *Zeynep* visited a children's group, upon request of one of the teachers, she confirmed the doubts of the other Turkish-speaking teachers regarding a German teacher in the group.

She observed that the German female teacher behaved more aggressively towards the Turkish children. Subsequently they brought racism as a discussion topic to the meeting and warned the teacher about her behavior. After she continued to behave in the same manner, they decided to collectively dismiss her.

Different from other parents who initiated the kindergarten, they had an aspiration of intercultural education, equality among children and teachers, and grassroots democracy.

Klaus, who was the co-teacher with *Zeynep*, explained that it was a challenge to follow this aspiration. There were no Turkish or Kurdish teachers with training in kindergarten education; in fact, they used to be factory workers in contrast to the German teachers, who had studied and mostly were coming from middle class families.

The challenge was also distributed unequally among these structurally different groups. Whereas *Klaus* had to write concepts and official letters by himself, *Zeynep* was busy going to seminars to keep up, learning the language, working as a teacher and as an unpaid/voluntary social worker for other migrants. Additionally she was raising her own children, which meant also having many struggles with the education system and fighting against the everyday and structural racism, dealing with the health issues, domestic work, problems from the factory work, and keeping social contact with the families of the children. The idea of grassroots democracy and self-management of the Kita came to its limits at the end of 1980s. *Klaus* became the manager of the kindergarten, which still exists under his management in a bigger place close to *Forster Straße* with 30 teachers. After 19 years, *Zeynep* quit her job at the kindergarten due to health-related problems.

The texts on the migrant squats of *Forster Straße 16/17* do not provide an extant narrative of the stories or perspectives of migrants. The migrants rather remain as the background actors without any identity, although they were in reality the "leading" actors. Paradoxically they are mentioned in monolithic categories such as foreigners, Turks or Kurds.⁶ The critique is not offered in order to devalue the contribution of supporters or consider any effort unnecessary, but on the contrary their contribution offers a very important example of community organizing. However, the stories and perspectives of migrants and the production of a critical knowledge of their experiences are missing and unfortunately objectified in the available documentations of this squatting period.

Migration challenging the narratives

Prujit (2013) offers five categories of squatters; deprivation-based, as an alternative housing strategy, entrepreneurial, conservational and political squatting. Our examples of migrant squatters urge us to revise these categories. The group of migrant womxn squatters were

⁶ Except one interview with *Zeynep* in a Turkish neighborhood magazine, *Kreuzberg Postasi*.

motivated, both by deprivation but also by the desire for another form of life, a vision of alternative housing strategy, liberation from the oppressive family or husband. It was not only the urgent need for a house, which pushed migrants to squat, but it was also the urge to be part of a revolutionary moment.

This moment was contrary to existing expectations, not realized by the male leftist migrant figure, the beloved figure of the revolutionary mass worker, but by Turkish and Kurdish womxn with their children. According to Prujit's category of deprivation-based squatting, activists occupy the building for those who are in need. However, in our example of *Kottbusser Straße 8*, migrant womxn who were in need of housing occupied the building, although not intended, in the end for the political activists.

The example of *Forster Straße 16/17* is a mixture of deprivation-based, entrepreneurial and conservational squatting. *Zeynep* quit her factory job, which was remunerated with 1,700 DM monthly, and started to work as an educator in the kindergarten, getting paid only 1,000 DM, while at the same she was attending educator's seminars. She broke also with the "migrant figure", who works to save more and more money but instead held a different representation as a person who actually cares about her neighbourhood, social cohesion and children's education.

Although categories of squatting are helpful to reveal the heterogeneity of squats' motives and conflicts, squats should be also understood in terms of flows and becomings. People moving in and out of crisis and conflicts can change the direction of the squat, which contests concepts like organization and hierarchy. The squatting experience also suggests that the initial goal of squatting can change, accordingly. Therefore it is important to look at the squatting within the framework of historical transformations.

The squatting wave of the early 1980s is discussed in three phases; emergence, expansion and downfall (Holm & Kuhn 2011). The emergence phase is associated with the establishment of the citizen initiative *SO 36*, radical autonomous squatters, the establishment of the first squatting council in April 1980 and the coining of the idea of rehab-squatting. The expansion phase started after the street riots in December 12, 1980, following a prevented occupation in *Fraenkelufer 48* (Kreuzberg), and accelerated with the corruption scandal and the fall of the Berlin Senate—causing a political vacuum. As *Lummer* (CDU) took office in May 1981, as the Senator of Internal Affairs in West Berlin, his immediate targets were posing threats to "internal security" from squatters and migrants.

The downfall of the movement is marked with the death of a young squatter, *Klaus Jürgen Rattay*, who was trying to escape from the police violence. The Senator, at a press conference, in the evicted squat *Bülowstraße 89*, announced his "victory" and his declared war against the "criminal" squatters. Alternatively, the squatting in *Forster Straße 16/17* belongs to the emergence phase, in which less than 20 buildings were squatted. The squatting in *Kottbusser Straße 8*, when 79 buildings were squatted in West Berlin, marks the expansion phase.

Although the repression led by Senator *Lummer* played an important role in breaking the movement, it would be misleading to think his action led to the death of the squatting movement. Besides fordist repression techniques and post-fordist forms of control and governance, self-help

building emerged for squatters that were facilitated through IBA-international construction exhibition. Self-help funds for migrant organizations were distributed through newly appointed commissioners for foreigners, who constituted the pioneers of new forms of control and governance.

Through these techniques, the political position of two movements has been weakened, and their creative and transformative power got partly institutionalized, privatized or oppressed and criminalized.

In the period from 1979–1984, around half of the squats were evicted, and the other half were legalized; still these movements offer an important infrastructure and experience for urban struggles.

Conclusions

Today the housing struggle takes place within the much more complex field of finance capitalism and globalized neoliberalism. The district of Kreuzberg turned from a working class neighborhood of decaying buildings to an attractive district with cafes and galleries, in which investors do see more renovation and potential speculation to accumulate capital.

In the 1980s, the squatted buildings in which the migrants were living did not interest builders to renovate for capital

. But today migrants struggle against the increasing rents and threatened evictions from their neighbourhood by builders.

An analysis of the expulsion of migrants from the city centre while rethinking the categories of class, race, and gender together is possible if the history of urban struggles are rewritten from the perspectives, stories and struggles of migrants.

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