

Unveiling Transformative Urban Dynamics: The Symbiosis of Squatting Movement and Urban Renewal in Copenhagen's Architectural Landscape

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the dynamic interplay between Copenhagen's squatting movement and urban renewal, with particular emphasis on public spaces. Drawing on architectural ethnography and historical analysis—anchored by Henri Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city—it traces the movement's evolution from addressing the 1960s housing crisis to confronting contemporary challenges. The research highlights the movement's adaptability, strategic engagement, and significant contributions to urban spatial distribution. The squatter movement emerges as both a force of resistance and a political actor, illustrating how squatters evolved from disruptors to influential participants. A historical comparison underscores urban renewal's critical impact on the squatting movement, while an in-depth case study of Folkets Hus demonstrates a tangible symbiosis between grassroots activism and municipal development. Navigating tensions around gentrification, legal frameworks, and socioeconomic shifts, the paper identifies opportunities for resilience and collaboration—ultimately envisioning a more inclusive, democratic, and sustainable urban future for Copenhagen.

KEYWORDS: squatting movement, urban renewal, Copenhagen, right to the city, architectural ethnography.

INTRODUCTION

This Study delves into the intricate relationship between the public space, the squatting movement in Copenhagen, urban renewal, and the assertion of the right to the city. The squatter movement still received particular attention in the academic arena, especially in sociology and political science. Rene Karpantschhof, a former member of the Squatter movement, had a series of research on the squatter movement in Denmark. His Study is from radicalisation (Karpantschhof 2015) and social control (Mikkelsen and Karpantschhof 2001) construct a general context (*The City Is Ours* 2014). Martinez's studies revealed the ideology (M. A. Martínez and Polanska 2020) and societal acceptance (M. Martínez 2019) side of squatters. On the architecture side, the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Germany, and Finland are starting to pay attention to this topic, from utopia (Delgado 2012), spatial practice (Boer, Verzier, and Truijten 2019), urban space to its link with cohousing (Vasudevan 2015b).

In Copenhagen, squatting evolved from addressing an acute housing crisis in the 1960s to strategically engaging with urban renewal initiatives in later decades. This paper situates the squatter movement within the framework of Lefebvre's right to the city—an inclusive, democratic vision in which citizens actively shape urban spaces. By analyzing historical patterns and a specific case (Folkets Hus), it demonstrates how squatters contributed to dynamic changes in Copenhagen's built environment, becoming a crucial part of the city's political and spatial discourse.

1.0 ON SQUATTING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE SPATIAL PRACTICE

1.1. The right to the city and squatting movement

"The word's squatters' give some reality to Henri Lefebvre's loose concept of the right to the city. 'they are excluded, so they take.'" (Neuwirth 2006)

Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist philosopher, introduced the concept of the right to the city in his book, *Le Droit à la Ville* (The Right to the City), published in 1968. Lefebvre argued that the right to the city is not merely about having access to urban amenities but also about having the power to shape the city in a way that meets the needs of all its inhabitants. He believed that cities should be places where people can live, work, and play in a way that is sustainable, equitable, and democratic. (Lefebvre et al. 1997). David Harvey, an American geographer and political theorist, has built upon Lefebvre's work on the right to the city, arguing that it is a right to participate in the production of space. Harvey believes cities are not static entities but are constantly being produced through the actions of individuals, groups, and institutions. He argues that the right to the city is a right to shape this production process, ensuring that it meets the needs of all city dwellers. (Harvey 2008)

Urban squatting in the global north is the practice of occupying abandoned or unoccupied buildings without permission from the legal owner. There are often residential squats and political squatting movements ('Squatting' 2023). Squatters typically reside in abandoned buildings and sometimes make necessary repairs to the property to make it livable. (Vasudevan 2023)

The relationship between squatting in the global north and the right to the city is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, squatting can be seen as a direct manifestation of the right to the city, as it allows individuals to take control of urban spaces and use them in ways that meet their needs. Squatters often transform these spaces into vibrant hubs of community life, providing affordable housing, cultural centres, and spaces for social and political gatherings. (Vasudevan 2015a). The squatting movement is a testament to the enduring relevance of Lefebvre's and Harvey's concept of the right to the city.

In particular in the public space, squatting is a practice of the right to the city that squatters have when redefining urban places for social needs and cultural resistance. They remind us that cities do not stand still but are constructed as dynamic landscapes through collective power and a commitment to the right of the city for all. At the same time, it is a challenge to the authorities since they interfere in the process of urban renewal development. In this paper, as we take the first steps in this exploration, the right to the city will be our guiding theoretical cornerstone in understanding how squatting is transformed into a force that sculpts physical and socio-political landscapes in the pulsating urban climate of Copenhagen.

1.2. Squatting movement in Copenhagen: a dynamic chronology

Copenhagen, somehow represented by iconic places like Christiania, floating buildings in FredensHavn, the youth house (Ungdomshuset), and the Folkets Hus, stands testament to squatting as a radical and accessible spatial practice, played a significant role in shaping Copenhagen's urban landscape and challenging the established norms of urban development. Jacob Ludvigsen, a key figure in Christiania's inception, called it a framework for "an alternative city" (Ludvigsen 2003).

Squatting in Copenhagen has evolved over the years, mirroring the city's changing social and political landscape. Its roots trace back to the 1960s, when it emerged as a response to the housing crisis, providing affordable accommodation for youth and students. This initial wave sparked the proliferation of squats throughout the city and its surroundings. (DR 2019)

The period of 1970s-1980s followed with the second wave of squatting inspired by the counterculture movement, followed by student protests against the Vietnam War. Young dissidents in a search for alternative living spaces and as an integral part of their resistance to mainstream societal norms moved in the abandoned buildings all over the inner-city neighborhoods such as Nørrebro and Vesterbro. This period actually hailed the establishment of Christiania – a free state that lives on even now.

From the 1990s on, squatting was focused on the most urgent social and political issues: refugee and immigrant rights and battling gentrification. This wave produced projects dedicated to the struggle against those pressing concerns as well, providing additional proof of the adaptability and versatility of the squatting movement.

The latest wave, from the 2000s until today, is typified by its high fragmentation and decentralization. Squatters focus on creating alternative social and cultural spaces, often using confrontational tactics to reclaim them. (*The City Is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present* / 2014) Squatter spaces, acting as transformative forces, challenge the traditional power structures in urban spaces. Danish squatters have skillfully balanced democratic procedures, dissent, and participatory democracy, maintaining a spatial-political network and a critical voice. Their spatial legacy lies in transforming vacant premises, reusing construction materials, and creating collective live-work spaces at both building and neighbourhood levels, showcasing the mediation between vacancy ownership and the right to housing (Vasudevan 2015a).

1.3. Squatting in Copenhagen's urban space.

Traditionally, in the squatting movement in Copenhagen, the Nørrebro district, known for its working-class and immigrant communities (Loveless 2019), has been the main battleground. However, at the movement's inception, Christianshavn became a frontline due to a municipal redevelopment plan targeting its abundance of 18th-century buildings slated for demolition. Faced with a housing shortage and propelled by coincidences and the municipal redevelopment plan (DR 2019), Christianshavn became the outpost of the squatting movement. After being wholly evicted around 1970, they established a new base in the Bådsmadsstræde Barrack within the same district, later known as the Christiania area.

The movement's expansion to Nørrebro and Vesterbro further underscores its ability to navigate and influence changing urban landscapes. This shift speaks to the movement's resilience and suggests a deliberate effort to engage with different socioeconomic contexts and demographics. The strategic expansion positions the squatting movement as not merely reactive but as an active and politically conscious force (Mikkelsen and Karpantschhof 2001), shaping its trajectory based on the evolving dynamics of Copenhagen's urban development.

Based on available information from the BZ website, I have mapped out the approximate spatial distribution of squatting points in Copenhagen on a map (Figure 1). Mapping squatting points in Copenhagen provides a visual representation of the movement's spatial distribution, offering insights into its geographical evolution over time.

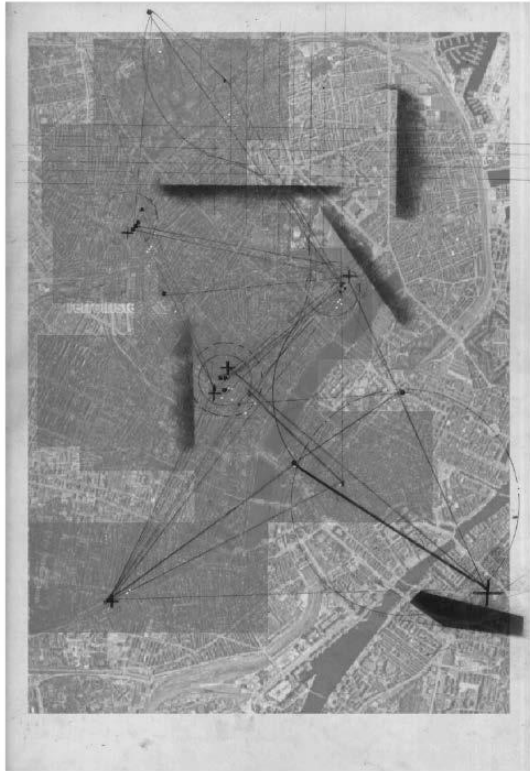


Figure 1: Mapping of squatter movement history. Source: (Author 2023, source: bzportalen.dk/)

The strategic choices made by squatters in Copenhagen, particularly in neighbourhoods such as Nørrebro, Christianshavn, and Vesterbro, go beyond mere spatial occupation; they embody a form of urban activism that challenges established urban development plans and addresses housing shortages. The selection of Nørrebro reflects a deliberate engagement with social issues, targeting a region with housing shortages and a marginalised demographic. The center stage of Christianshavn acts as a site of resistance against municipal development that claims the right to the preservation of historic urban fabric in the face of gentrification pressures. The spread into Vesterbro provides an example of adaptability that positions squatters as active agents in changing urban dynamics. The spatial choices symbolically challenge authority, disrupt conventional urban renewal processes, and mediate between vacancy ownership and the fundamental right to housing. Squatters' strategic spatial choices in Copenhagen result in an active, inclusive and dynamic urban spatial distribution, advancing an urban activism that is actively working towards the forming of the city in finding solutions to pressing issues of a complex society.

1.4 Conclusion

Copenhagen's squatting movement exemplifies a transformative spatial practice anchored in the right to the city. From addressing the 1960s housing crisis to contending with 21st-century challenges, squatters have repeatedly adapted, negotiated, and contested authority. Their influence ranges from neighborhood-based interventions to broader municipal dialogues, emphasizing how grassroots practices can foster more democratic, equitable, and sustainable urban environments.

2.0 UNRAVELING THE DYNAMICS: SQUATTER MOVEMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL IN COPENHAGEN'S URBAN LANDSCAPE

2.1. Squatter movement and urban renewal dynamics

The interaction of the squatter movement with urban renewal in Copenhagen reveals a far more nuanced story of resistance and collaboration. Once seen as nothing but destructive elements, squatters even began to make strategic decisions to occupy buildings on purpose in the "interim period" of urban development plans. The tactical maneuvering—squatting houses along the path to demolition—exemplified, in public, the way in which they could turn potential wastelands into vibrant, occupied space.

Where squatters had been passive victims of urban development, by the time the movement matured, they became active political agents in this process. Far from simply bypassing the city government, their newfound means of organizing and occupying space strategically would come to be repurposed as a valuable resource for future planning efforts. The strange dual paradoxical role that the squatters played—challenging but also contributing to the plans of the city—is quite suggestive of the complex dynamics built into the relationship between grassroots movements and efforts within municipal governments toward urban development. Squatting was a powerful means for the community to reclaim space and resist imposed city structures.

Overtaking buildings destined for demolition, squatters had the ability to fill them with life, turning empty shells into living cultural centers, alternative dwellings, and centers of political protest. The resulting BZ-lejligheder (BZ flats) came to symbolize resistance against established power, and as the active sculpting of the urban environment

itself. It demonstrates a change in the squatters from being disruptors to being political influencers, showing that their strategic actions contested not just the prevailing redevelopment plans but also, although inadvertently, resulted in a positive change for the evolving cityscape. This shows how their effects on Copenhagen's urban renewal were multifaceted.

2.2. A rapid potted historical comparison: squatting movement and urban renewal in Copenhagen

Table 1. Source: (AF RIKKE CAROLINE 2016; 'Sådan Er København Fornyset' 2003)

TIME	SQUATTER MOVEMENT	URBAN RENEWAL
<i>The 1950S</i>		The first urban renewal in Copenhagen was completed. Adelgade and Borberggade were redeveloped according to the Redevelopment Act of 1939
<i>The 1960S</i>	<p><i>February 1963:</i> The first occupation is carried out by 'Group 61.'</p> <p><i>May 1965:</i> Sofiegården an action that will last almost four years</p> <p><i>Summer 1966:</i> A nod from the Lord Mayor</p> <p><i>February 1969:</i> proclaim their home to the 'Republic of Sofiegården',</p> <p><i>27 February 1969,</i> the police moved in</p>	Parts of the oldest residential buildings in Vesterbro and Nørrebro were demolished, and renovations began on Christianshavn.
<i>The 1970S</i>	<p>1970: House occupations intensified, activists were dubbed "slum storms."</p> <p>1971: Christiania was born. ; Folkets Park' in Nørrebro is established;</p> <p>the Folketing introduced "slum storm clause",</p> <p>1973 Nørrebro Beboeraktion formed</p>	The demolition of the oldest and most worn housing construction in Vesterbro and Nørrebro continued and the redevelopment of Christianshavn.
<i>The 1980S</i>	<p>Spring 1980: The Battle of the Byggeren</p> <p>1981: Police throw tear gas at BZs,</p> <p>1982: The BZs get a youth center, Jagtvej 69, Ungdomshuset.</p> <p>1983: The BZs make fun of the police</p> <p>1986: The Battle of Ryesgade</p> <p>Later, in the 80s, the movement also targeted foreign political issues.</p>	Now, urban renewal has taken off. Decades are marked by massive demolition, restoration and reconstruction according to 1939, 1959 and 1969 redevelopment laws. Among other things. The entire black square in Nørrebro and the entire Gammelholm district. For example. Havnegade, Peder Skrams Gade and Olfert Fischers Gade.
<i>The 1990S</i>	<p>1993: For the first time since World War II, officers shoot into protesters directly in an EU vote.</p> <p>In 1994-95, the BZ movement disintegrated and continued as 'the autonomous'.</p>	Urban renewal began under the Urban Renewal Act in 1983, and 40 per cent. Of all, money was used for the action plan in inner Vesterbro. The rest was used to renovate 22 squares scattered throughout the city except Vanløse. In the 1990s, the Danish Medical Association's Housing, also called Brumleby, was modernised. The redevelopment of Brumleby is one of the most talked-about and costs about half a billion. KR.
<i>The 2000S</i>	<p>2007: The police clear the Youth House, 714 people are arrested.</p> <p>2009: Illegal Mass Arrests In the run-up to the COP 15 climate summit</p> <p>Parts of the BZ movement have been carried on by the 'autonomous'.</p>	The large, concentrated entire neighbourhoods are now over, and the future urban renewal will occur more widely. In recent years, the City of Copenhagen's investments in urban renewal have been around half a billion. DKK annually, and since 1983, almost 18,000 homes have been urban renewed

The historical comparison in Table 1 illustrates a dynamic and closely interrelated correlation between urban renewal and the squatter movement in Copenhagen. There is support for the existence of a negative correlation between the thoroughness of renewal and the vitality of the squatter movement; that is, extensive efforts at renewal help to dampen the otherwise vibrant movement. The other way around is not always the case, which in itself only illustrates the entangled and complex relationship of urban renewal moves and the squatter movement. It foregrounds, therefore, the importance of urban renewal in the vitality and survival space of the squatter movement.

The impact of urban renewal interventions, specifically on transformed public spaces and normativity, has a vital role in defining properties of alternative infrastructure within squatting spaces. These results underscore the symbiotic relationship: urban renewal affects and is affected by the squatter movement, and vice versa. Contributing to new urban dynamics in Copenhagen.

2.3. Conclusion

The quite complex story of urban dynamics in Copenhagen, through squatters and urban renewal, unfolds at least two or even more times over. Once considered as disruptors, squatters are strategic occupiers of space, hence this kind of adaptability and resilience. This recent role of squatters as participants in urban renewal points toward the very fine dynamics with municipal policymakers in shaping landscapes toward the future. Their transformative impact has tended to highlight the dynamic interplay between grassroots movements and municipal initiatives. Squatting thus became a counterforce not only in reaction, but also as a proactive element in the formation of alternative urban space and new definitions of the city-building process.

Indeed, this historical comparison in Table 1 reveals still more the dynamic relationship of urban renewal with the squatter movement. Indeed, the negative correlation of extensive urban renewal with the vitality of the squatter movement speaks highly of the intricate dance between these two forces. In any case, urban renewal designs the impact on public spaces and normativity and it is thematically very strong in the definition of the survival space and alternative infrastructure of squatter-occupied areas. This symbiosis is consistent with ongoing mutual interrelation in which urban renewal reacts and affects evolving dynamics of the squatter movement, eventually contributing to Copenhagen's distinctive urban landscape.

3.0. FOLKETS HUS, A THEATRE OF THE SYMBIOSIS OF THE SQUATTING MOVEMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL

3.1. Folketshus and Folkets Park

Folkets Hus emerged in 1971 when local residents and the slumstormer movement established Folkets Park on a disused lot in Nørrebro. After the municipality repeatedly dismissed requests for green space, activists proceeded to occupy a nearby vacant factory building—which they called Folkets Hus—to defend and complement the new park. The area was slated for demolition under municipal “bybanering,” prompting ongoing conflict between grassroots organizers and city officials.

Over time, persistent efforts—petitions, negotiations, and demonstrations—secured partial municipal recognition of Folkets Hus as a self-governing cultural venue. By the 1990s, the house had evolved into an officially acknowledged culture house, yet it retained its activist ethos by remaining user-managed and rooted in the original squatters' aims.

From the start, Folkets Hus and Park sat at the intersection of local needs and city-level redevelopment agendas. Proposed construction projects regularly threatened both the building and the green space, leading residents to form negotiation groups (e.g., Folkets Park Initiativet) that blocked bulldozers and won support from trade unions and neighborhood associations. While city authorities at times recognized the park's communal benefit or the house's cultural importance, these acknowledgments often came only after extensive public pressure and political maneuvering. The ensuing decades thus embodied a push-pull dynamic: activists asserting a “right to the city,” municipal institutions seeking regulated redevelopment.

3.2. Architectural ethnography on Folketshus

The concept of 'Architectural Ethnography' originates in the unconventional discipline of 'Modernology,' established by Japanese architect Kon Wajiro in the 1920s. Wajiro's early work, such as the 1925 survey near Honjo Fukagawa Slums, laid the foundation for the intersection of architectural analysis and cultural observation. This research methodology has gained prominence globally, influenced by folklore and ethnographic principles within cultural studies. The 2018 Venice Biennale dedicated attention to 'Architectural Ethnography,' with architects like Momoyo Bøjima and theorist Laurent Stalder showcasing two decades' worth of research results in this field. The methodology's roots in examining Western architecture through an anthropological lens, especially during the 1960s (Riggs 2015), signified a transformative period in architectural discourse. As a qualitative research approach immersing researchers in the studied community or organisation (Caulfield 2020), ethnography gains a unique dimension when applied to architecture. The reproduction of the scene allows the whole design process to give feedback to the unfiltered details. "As if" see "and" a "at the same time the general situation, based on a variety of elements, the material entity are in the form of links, Form in structure" (Kuroishi 2000)). Here, as a way of thinking, drawing makes description "characteristic of allowing self-evaluation and self-development (Tsukamoto 2003)".

This method is paramount in researching ethnography and aligns seamlessly with the ever-changing, multifunctional character of Folkets Hus. It allows for a visual and culturally sensitive lens with which one may fathom intricate dynamics. The importance of reflection and ongoing development in the research process underpins the ability of architectural ethnography to provide a self-critical medium. Here, I have carefully put together an architectural record of Folkets Hus combined with interviews, historical data, archives, and research on-site using the method of architectural ethnography. This way, there could be a detailed analysis of the building through the richer historical background of Folkets Hus within its evolution process and cultural and social impact on the community.

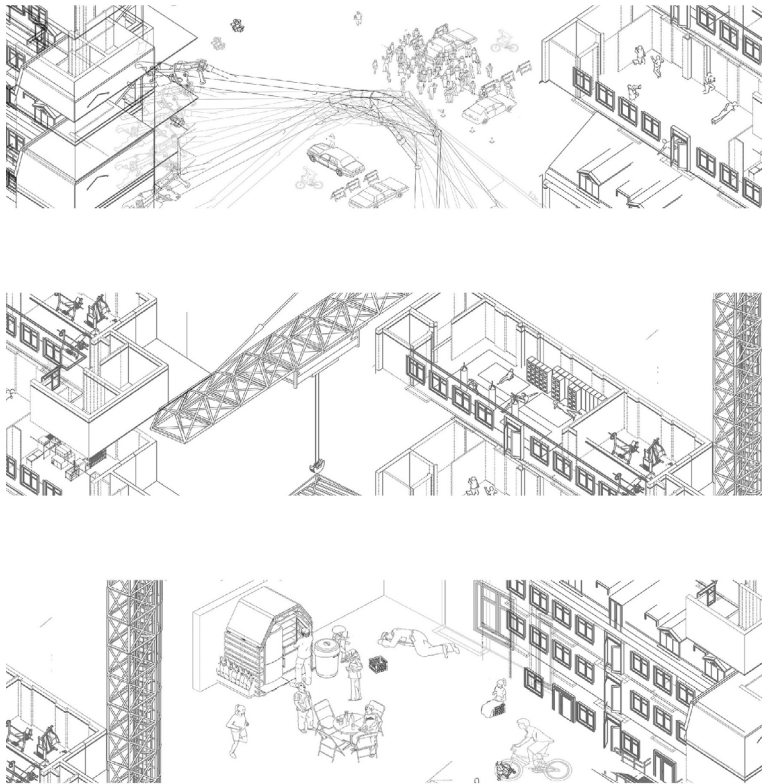


Figure 2: Architectural Ethnography on Folketshus. Source: (Author 2023)

An architectural ethnography approach to Folkets Hus helps uncover the layered symbiosis between squatting and urban renewal by documenting not only the physical transformations of the building but also the social, political, and cultural networks that interlace it. This methodology—drawing on participant observation, interviews, archival materials, and crucially, positional reflection by the researcher—clarifies multiple facets:

Through floor-plan sketches and historical photos, one sees how the factory layout was adapted over time to accommodate music rooms, communal kitchens, meeting halls, and eventually a café. Each change reflects the residents' evolving negotiation with municipal safety codes or funding stipulations.

Ethnographic observation of gatherings, maintenance days, and community kitchens reveals how the house operates as a collective: from decision-making assemblies (where users vote on changes) to day-to-day chores (carried out by rotating volunteers). These practices embody the notion that a once-squatted space can become a stable social institution without losing its grassroots ethos.

Interviews with long-term residents and municipal officials illustrate tensions around ownership, liability, and policing. Ethnography captures how the “official” city administration gradually came to accept Folkets Hus as a legitimate cultural venue—albeit with periodic conflicts that questioned the house's autonomy.

An ethnographic lens requires ongoing self-critique by the observer, recognizing that the researcher inevitably plays a role in shaping narratives. For instance, attending house meetings might grant certain trust or encourage more candid conversations, while simultaneously making local authorities cautious about sharing city-planning documents. Such reflexivity ensures that the final portrayal of Folkets Hus acknowledges both the open, participatory ideals of the squatters and the institutional frameworks that continue to circumscribe them.

Through these overlapping domains, architectural ethnography exposes a layered symbiosis: Folkets Hus exists in a simultaneously cooperative and contentious relationship with official urban renewal strategies. It thrives because municipal agencies ultimately allowed it to remain—but only after residents demonstrated its value as a communal cultural space. The house's user-driven governance aligns with Lefebvre's notion of the “right to the city,” emphasizing collective production of urban life. Yet the official acceptance also imposes boundaries, such as fulfilling safety standards or contending with short-lived attempts to privatize or redevelop adjacent parcels of land.

3.3. Conclusion

Over the last 50 years, Folkets Hus has become a hub of local political, cultural, and social activities, thus showing its versatile nature in holding a variety of activities. This rehabilitation process, as conducted through joint meetings with the group and administration called A-gruppen, managed to achieve a high degree of collaborative nature through its intricate relationship with the Squatter Movement and Urban Renewal. This is what makes Folkets Hus an academic canvas on which the narratives of grassroots resilience, cultural richness, and community engagement are written out in the different dynamics of Copenhagen's urban landscape.

Architectural ethnography of Folkets Hus gives a thorough view of its multi-complex dynamics through a visually and culturally sensitive lens. On the other hand, looking at its history, evolution, and cultural-social impact, it presents Folkets Hus as a dramatic phase in the interaction between Urban Renewal and the Squatter Movement.

4.0. NAVIGATING THE INTERSECTION OF SQUATTING MOVEMENTS, URBAN RENEWAL, AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN COPENHAGEN'S EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

The squatting movement in Copenhagen is developed in a very diverse landscape of struggles, but strong gentrification pressure, legal limitation, and very lively socioeconomic change are of prime importance. Gentrification—illustrated by rocketing property values and increased commercial development—threatens the affordability and availability of important squatting spaces. At the same time, the place is hampered to develop long-term communal and cultural squatted areas due to strict legal frameworks, including eviction procedures and anti-squatting laws, which increases the struggle regarding the right to the city. At the same time, this is further complicated through adaption to the changing global socio-economic landscape that demands flexibility to bring address towards the community demand relevant to economic factors, employment opportunities, and affordability in terms of housing. It is within this difficult context that the history of the squatting movement carries opportunities for resiliency and innovation, with their efforts being at the forefront, working proactively along with any urban renewal.

The possibilities of the squatting movement are strategic to move toward a collaborative and adaptive future. More community involvement, in the form of collective efforts and alliances, further strengthens the movement inside out and demands broader support from the rest of the community, fostering a collectivist approach to urban development. In this manner, the movement legitimizes itself and garners support by aligning with community interests regarding housing in a general sense of the term. The strong emphasis on culture and art in squatter spaces enhances alliances that, in turn, place squats as valuable assets towards the city's cultural development. Adaptive collaboration with urban renewal initiatives through constructive dialogue with municipal authorities allows the movement to contribute further to inclusive urban renewal strategies, recognizing the potential coexistence of squats within broader redevelopment strategies. Such an approach, by definition comprehensive in nature, would imply that the movement is dedicated to modern urban problems and the shaping of a more inclusive, more resilient, and more democratic urban realm.

This, in the future, requires strategic actions at the nexus of squatting, renewal, and the right to the city. Advocacy is also needed around the policy shift to ensure that squats' socioeconomic contributions are taken into account alongside reforms in restrictive laws and frameworks that undergird communal living. It would incorporate participatory voices of squatters into urban planning procedures, ensuring the squatters have a say in contributing to urban development that truly satisfies various community needs. The third dimension in which the squat is legitimized as a cultural heritage site therefore follows in this same right-to-the-city spirit: it acknowledges the different ways in which residents contribute to urban life. Platforms for inclusive dialogues, advocating for urban policies that are flexible, investment in capacity building, fostered international collaboration as well show the way for the future in which the squatting movement shapes an active Copenhagen with an inclusive, resilient, and democratic urban environment.

CONCLUSION

The squatter movement in its complex relation to urban renovation in Copenhagen is the subject of this paper. Utilizing architectural ethnography and historical research, the paper speaks to the understanding of Henri Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city and highlights the changing dynamics that are currently taking place within the architectural fabric of the city. This article builds on Lefebvre and David Harvey in understanding squatting as a materialist spatial practice of the right to the city. The squatting movement in Copenhagen that has been portrayed through a dynamic chronology shows adaptability and resilience when social and political landscapes changed. The movement is strategic in engaging with different neighborhoods, contesting authority, and contributing to a dynamic and inclusive urban spatial distribution.

In such a context, the interplay between the squatter movement and urban renewal dynamics uncovers an intricate and diversified storyline of resistance and collaboration. Though they look like disrupters at their beginning, squatters represent one more political player that will have to work in favor of the processes of urban regeneration. The complex relation between the two forces is emphasized through historical comparison in Table 1. The influences of urban renewal on the vitality and survival space of the squatter movement are emphasized.

Folkets Hus embodies, in the perspective of architectural ethnography, a theater of symbiosis between the squatter movement and urban renewal. The transformation of the former factory into a self-governing cultural centre realized the collaborative essence of grassroots activism and municipal development. The approach of architectural ethnography gives the reader a broad scope over the historical process that underpins the life of Folkets Hus, thus enhancing his or her understanding of complex dynamics.

This paper presents challenges at the intersection between squatting movements, urban renewal, and a right to the city. The challenges are driven by the pressures of gentrification and legal restrictions fueled by socio-economic shifts. Opportunities for the squatting movement lie within its rich urban history—to innovate and engage with urban renewal efforts, not as beneficiaries but as co-creators, through strategic community engagement, advocacy for affordable housing, and adaptively collaborating with urban renewal initiatives. This paper ties the need for strategic

actions toward policy advocacy, participation in urban planning, recognition of squats as cultural heritage sites, and international collaboration in forming a more inclusive, resilient, and democratic urban environment in Copenhagen.

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