Creating Time and Space for Other Ways

Sustainabilities of Squatted Dwellings in Oslo

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__I dwell in Possibility__

I dwell in Possibility –

A fairer House than Prose –

More numerous of Windows –

Superior – for Doors –

Of Chambers as the Cedars –

Impregnable of eye –

And for an everlasting Roof

The Gambrels of the Sky –

Of Visitors – the fairest –

For Occupation – This –

The spreading wide my narrow Hands

To gather Paradise –

-Emily Dickinson 1890

A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.

-Virginia Woolf 1929

Abstract

This thesis surveys knowledges about sustainable dwelling in Oslo. Crises of homelessness, displacement, extermination, and extinction are unjustly affecting, hurting, and killing humans and non-humans all over this planet. Sustainability can mean many different things, but if sustainability is about covering the needs of all that lives today, tomorrow and in the futures further away – that calls for radical change. It can be challenging to imagine something radically different beyond dominant languages, ways of organising, or what is accepted truths or knowledge. With a long line of scholars suggesting looking towards social movements and grassroots in the search for different imaginations of sustainability and what is possible, I theorise squats and 'Urban Ecological Pilot Projects' (UEPPs) as spaces for different imaginaries and alternative visions, both as autonomous and institutionalised, both as material spaces and spaces of imagination.

Squatters often contest how dwelling is organised and who gets to participate in shaping and changing cities. Today, there are more institutionalised squats, often named 'Urban Ecological Pilot Projects' (UEPPs), than not institutionalised squats in Oslo. I ask what alternative possibilities of sustainable dwelling derive from squatting in Oslo and how such knowledges align with or differ from dominant discourses about sustainable dwelling and change in Oslo. To explore this, I use feminist theory with its expertise in questioning hegemonies and its focus on the emotional, relational, care, and community. I show that the knowledges of squatters, x-squatters and UEPP residents differ from municipal knowledge about sustainable dwelling in recognising that to have time, communities, and spaces to dwell in other ways, one needs fundamental changes of language about sustainable dwelling, of who gets to participate, who is understood as resourceful actors in the city, of the organisation of housing, of the acknowledgement of care and community, and of what a good dwelling is.

I suggest adding a feminist perspective to research of squatting. A feminist lens contributes to recognising that squatters and residents of institutionalised squat not only dwell within economic and technical specifications and architecture, but in groups, with histories, with their hands and imaginations who have been taught and inspired by others and with feelings of something being off. The participants of this thesis' ways of knowing, and the spaces and situations they know in, stem from social movements, squatting, and counter cultures challenging dominant ways, and this cannot be created separated from them.

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1. Introduction

> *Historically, only the Left has been concerned with environmental politics because it is closely connected to growth or non-growth - that is, economic growth. It is only the radical Left – or not only the Left… but I guess the autonomous Left have had some sense of ownership over wanting to live and dwell in very environmentally friendly ways. This has not been seen in many other places than on the radical Left, and it is also there, on the radical autonomous Left, that one uses house occupation as a tactic.* (Glenn, 2022, my translation)

Whether visiting the floating saunas of Oslo Sauna Association, seeing a concert at Blitz, or enjoying the view from 'Føflekken'[1], you have already spent time in a place founded by someone taking and using urban space without being allowed to do so. The initiators of these spaces all wanted to create something alternative because they were critical towards something current, and they did so, despite it being illegal. What they wanted varied, but they did not rely on public instances or market actors to solve their concerns. A well-known example of such ways of claiming and taking urban space is called squatting or house occupation. This thesis surveys knowledges about sustainable dwelling in Oslo and theorises squatting and 'Urban Ecological Pilot Projects' (UEPPs) as creating space for different imaginaries and alternative visions, both as feminist and masculinist spaces, both as autonomous and institutionalised, both as material spaces and spaces of imagination.

The above quote is from an interview with one of the participants[2] of this research. Glenn lives in a UEPP in Oslo and described why such projects are closely connected to squatting –how house occupation, criticisms of profit orientation, and environmental friendliness are entangled. One of squatters' main criticism of Oslo's urban governing and development has been directed towards the many abandoned buildings owned by the municipality. Through the slogan 'Houses Need People, and People Need Houses', squatters have criticised not housing people who need a home and allowing buildings to decay simultaneously. Squatters have demanded to participate in contributing to doing something about this by using tactics not approved by Norwegian Law or established urban planning. They have imagined other ways of dwelling and organising housing, of who gets to participate in urban planning and who gets to decide, and demanded to dwell in these abandoned buildings. Glenn's home is one of the few squats that eventually became legalised and institutionalised. In that dwelling, they now live lives based upon the

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[1] Føflekken – literally the mole or beauty spot. 'Føflekken' is open to the public and won a price for 'the garden of the year with focus on environmentally, social and economic sustainability' in 2021 (Oslo kommune 2023d), a price awarded by the municipality of Oslo.
[2] See appendix 1 for a list of interviews cited in this thesis.

squatters' imaginaries in combination with what ways of living are allowed by the municipality (the owner of the buildings and fellow organiser of the UEPPs).

Squatting in Oslo

Squatting in Oslo peaked in the 1980s when it posed criticism of housing politics, urban planning, and police treatment of youth at the centre of its cause. Occupants have mostly chosen municipal or state-owned property to shed light on issues of their politics – as an activist told me, municipal property is there to benefit the community, not to decay. Squatters have therefore refused to leave them empty to rot, and a few of these occupied buildings have become institutionalised and called UEPPs. Squatting in Oslo has a long history of criticising and collaborating with the municipality of Oslo. As squatters frequently aim to co-create new UEPPs with the municipality, the relationship between them and the municipality is essential in shaping all spaces explored in this thesis.

In Oslo, there are now two UEPPs and an 'Urban Ecological Area' that all started with squatting and that can be called institutionalised squats. These projects are appreciated for "testing the sustainable solutions of the future" (Plan- og bygningsetaten 2022, my translation) and "the City Council wants more housing with, among other things, collective housing, self-build and urban ecological projects." (Oslo kommune 2023a, my translation). This was stated about the publication of a municipal booklet which aimed to create a common language about urban ecological housing and inspire more urban ecological dwelling in Oslo. A problem with making more urban ecological housing, a common language, and learning from the pilot projects in Oslo, however, is that *how* the UEPPs in Oslo were created is close to ignored in municipal descriptions of them. Squatting is illegal, so it took illegal activities to create the UEPPs. Moreover, squatters are almost always evicted, so the empty buildings they try to maintain and dwell in are mostly left decaying. Although there are no examples of UEPPs that did not evolve from squatting, this foundation of squatting is left in the background. Municipal documents about urban ecological dwelling barely mention squatting and not how their legalisation and institutionalisation happened. Whether new urban ecological dwellings can be created by other actors or without recognising the radical critique and history of squatting embedded in the current ones remains undiscussed. However, as all UEPPs were founded by squatting, it is possible that there is something about squatting that is indispensable for urban ecological dwelling in Oslo.

Squatting is associated with the Left in the above quote by Glenn. Still, although there is no doubt that some roots of the typical Norwegian squat go back to anarchist and Marxist ideas

that are typically associated with the Left, squatting is not necessarily connected to political ideologies or parties. Squatting is using property over time without being allowed to do so, and "the history of squatting dates back to the very beginning of human existence" (Polanska 2019, 1). Still, squatting is often understood as reacting to certain liberal developments of cities. Polanska argues that squatting is anti-capitalist by nature, and Mayer describes how squatting "focuses action in a way that is prefigurative of another mode of organising society and challenging a paramount institution of capitalist society: private property" (Mayer 2013, 2).

While it is not surprising that squatting is often connected to ideologies criticising capitalism – and although most scholarship is focused on outspoken political and critical squats – it is important to note that for many, squatting is not a choice. Today, as many as a billion people are squatting worldwide (Manjikian 2013). Squatting happens to cover housing needs and as a means of collective struggles and is often connected to both. They may also be used as a tactic by "a variety of different social movements (including right-wing movements)" (Mayer 2013, 2), so we cannot talk about squatting as if it is one thing, nor its different aspects as if they are not connected. However, it is the urban form for squatting that is connected to critical social movements in Oslo – historically linked to both Marxist and Anarchist ideas and openly critical towards growth-oriented liberal urban developments, particularly market-driven housing politics – that is the focus of this thesis.

Commodification of Housing in Oslo

Squatting in Oslo flourished in line with fundamental changes in urban dwelling in Norway during the last decades. The changes can be understood in the broader context of the rise of global neoliberal politics in the last decades of the 20th century, meeting the Norwegian regulated and social democratic welfare state. In the 1980s, deregulatory policies started shifting home ownership from something one could not profit from to eventually becoming quite the opposite. The economic value of Norwegian dwellings subsequently escalated, making it seem like everyone who owned a home benefited significantly. This also made it increasingly expensive not to own a dwelling. As dwellings became commodities and eventually also assets, differences between owners and tenants increased.

That most of the Norwegian population were and are homeowners, supposedly becoming richer from the increased economic value of their dwellings, might have been part of a depoliticisation of housing (Kjærås & Haarstad 2022). Nonetheless, issues of housing eventually also became seen as more of a technical issue rather than a political problem, and today, "contrary to the

image pertaining to the Scandinavian welfare model, Norway is often described as having one of the most liberalised housing markets in Europe" (Kjærås & Haarstad 2022, 2). Homeownership is the ideal; public or non-commercial housing barely exists, and the rental market is nearly unregulated. The weak public support of housing stands out among the other Nordic countries, and the lack of a non-commercial dwelling sector is unique in a Nordic and international context (Holt-Jensen 2013). The deregulation, commodification and eventual financialisation of Norway's housing sector, making housing a commodity rather than a social good, have created a hostile urban environment for many who struggle to afford housing.

However, Kjærås and Haarstad (2022) argue that, lately, housing has become re-politicised. Developing a 'third dwelling sector' – a different sector beyond the existing private and municipal sectors - is a goal and a promise of the current city council of Oslo, which would "provide 1000 third housing sector units within 2023, with the long-term goal of making 20 per cent of housing in Oslo affordable" (Kjærås & Haarstad 2022, 5). Nevertheless, they are struggling and nowhere near reaching such goals.

In the 1980s, when squatters loudly and clearly demanded space in Oslo, they were not just reacting to the liberalisation of housing; they were responding to modernisation, streamlining, consumerism, growth-oriented politics and development, police violence, highways and how all of this not only made it more challenging to dwell but also an overall more hostile urban environment. The deregulation of housing goes hand in hand with politics favouring a liberal market because that works well for generating growth, and as Glenn argued, questioning growth is intrinsically connected to environmental politics. To squatters, housing stayed political.

Radical Alternatives and Responses to Crisis

The neoliberal changes in dwelling and city life, and the economic growth-oriented politics and policies connected to it, are not just unsustainable in terms of these increasing differences between owners and renters within Oslo. There is a "critical connection between the social reproduction of everyday urban life and broader environmental concerns" (Jarvis et al. 2001, 126), and modern life is intrinsically connected to cities and capitalist logics. As the economic growth paradigm dominates modern politics and policies (Schneider, Kallis, and Martinez-Alier 2010; Schmelzer 2016), increased consumption, exploitation, emissions, and changes in landscapes follow, causing loss of biodiversity and harm to ecosystems (Pörtner et al. 2021). Crises of homelessness, displacement, extermination, and extinction is unjustly affecting, hurting, and killing humans and non-humans all over this planet. It is not just the inhabitants of

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Oslo who suffer and will suffer from continuous growth and faith in the liberalised market solving our environmental, social, cultural, and climate problems. Even though there is a narrative of emerging technological solutions solving these issues, preaching that economies can continue growing while decreasing ecological and environmental consequences, there is a lack of empirical evidence that supports 'green growth' promises of decoupling economic growth from increased resource use and carbon emissions (Schneider, Kallis, and Martinez-Alier 2010; Parrique 2019; Hickel & Kallis 2020).

'Green growth' belongs to a type of politics that differs significantly from the one of the radical autonomous Left described by Glenn. While Glenn purports growth as a central issue of environmental problems, the 'green growth' narrative proposes that it is part of the solution. Although environmental and climate crises are very much on mainstream political agendas of today, their green growth solutions do not have much in common with the alternatives presented in this thesis.

'Sustainability' means many different things, but if sustainability is about covering the needs of all that lives, today, tomorrow and in the futures further away, that calls for radical change. I borrow from Anna Tsing to say that this thesis "is not a critique of the dreams of modernisation and progress that offered a vision of stability in the twentieth century; many analysts before me have dissected those dreams" (Tsing 2015, 2), instead, it looks for alternatives and to responses that break with such dreams. As suggested above, there might be something about squatting that cannot be decoupled from the current UEPPs and what makes them ecological or sustainable. The fact that they have disrupted the status quo and questioned the law and private property was necessary for today's dwellings. Their ways of understanding and doing sustainable dwelling radically differ from the dominating ones, making them examples of sustainability solutions outside the framework within which dominating sustainability practices are made. As a premise for this thesis, green growth and other solutions that do not question the dreams of exponential and eternal growth cannot do what is needed regarding the many crises we find ourselves in today, despite promises. Instead, I listen to the many scholars who call for radical change (Alberro 2021; Brightman & Lewis 2017; de la Cadena & Blaser 2018; Kothari et al. 2019), and in line with this, I look towards radical differences and alternatives.

Another way of phrasing the aim of this thesis is that it concerns responses to experienced issues with a site in crisis; and how the dreams and knowledges of these responses collide with dominant ones. As Latour emphasises, "all field studies are studying devastated sites in crisis" (2017, 45). In the search for alternative visions, dreams and imaginations, I survey knowledges,

imaginations and reactions and ways of managing living in and with such crisis. As an intent of creating cracks in thoughts and expectations of growth, progress, and modernisation – narratives that are so dominative that it is hard to imagine anything outside it (Tsing 2000), and ways of thinking that brought us into these crises – knowledges, histories, or practices which derive from reacting to and experiencing consequences of such hegemony are surveyed and shared in this thesis.

Radical Alternatives of Squatting

This thesis hence looks towards alternative knowledges of sustainability that break with the knowledge about the world embedded in such 'modernisation and progress' dreams. To disturb the thoughts and expectations of growth, progress, and modernisation, I will take seriously the narratives, knowledge and practices that derive from reacting to the consequences of such hegemony. I will share stories of those who have imagined dwelling in Oslo differently, because by telling and sharing stories, imaginations are shared and opened, and new ones can come into form. In the search for alternative visions or dreams of sustainability, I explore:

> What alternative possibilities of sustainable dwelling derive from squatting in Oslo.

> How knowledges about sustainable dwelling deriving from squatting align with or differ from dominant discourses about sustainable dwelling and change in Oslo.

By exploring the relationship between squatters' perspectives and municipal discourses, I hope to understand more about how dominating and alternative knowledges are entangled in the search for sustainability. To explore participants' knowledges about sustainable dwelling, their imaginations of what is possible and how they seek and act on these imaginations, I use feminist theory, with its expertise in questioning hegemonies and its focus on the emotional, relational, care, and community. The rest of his thesis is structured in the following way: Chapter 2 reviews existing academic literature on squatting and UEPPs in Oslo, as well as squatting in Europe and resident participation in Oslo. Chapter 3 then presents a theoretical framework that places the search for radical difference, alternatives, and imaginations at its core. Chapter 4 concerns methodology and methods, explaining how I did the research and why it was done that way. This chapter also presents the locations and participants of the thesis. Afterwards, the thesis presents, analyses, and discusses the research findings. Chapter 5 concerns three aspects of the alternative dwellings that stood out as necessary to the participants: lower dependency on paid work, community and sharing, and DIY – being able to do, create and affect things oneself.

Through chapters 6 and 7, I compare knowledges about sustainable dwelling among the participants with the ones of official municipal discourses through three themes: urban ecology, resident participation, and combining universal standards with alternative initiatives. Chapter 8 is the conclusion of this thesis. It is a summary of what the participants knew about and how they imagined sustainable dwelling in Oslo, how these knowledges differ and align with municipal discourses, and it discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

I chose to share stories of people living in dwellings founded by squatting because I wanted to write about something positive. I write about something and someone, stories and imaginations, that I believe have a place in the search for sustainable change and other ways. The grassroots, social movements, and countercultures have been the driving force of many changes of which we enjoy the fruits today. However, this thesis is not a campaign for squatting; studying these imaginations and responses is not the same as searching for *the answer* – instead, it is an intent of unsettling dominant narratives which pretend to have it.

2. Literature Review – From Squats to UEPPs

A vast and varied critical transdisciplinary scholarship examines the plurality of social movements, activists, and grassroots responses to urban issues. Within the social sciences, such research often intersects anthropology, social geography, political sciences and more (Grazioli 2021). However, the absence of research on squatting has been attested by several researchers (Mayer 2013; Cattaneo & Martínez 2014; Vasudevan 2015; Di Feliciantonio 2017).

House occupation in Oslo can be seen in a broad geographical and historical context, as ideas and people have travelled among squats across national borders (Småge 1997). This chapter therefore first reviews literature on squatting beyond the context of Oslo. Thereafter follows a presentation of literature on Svartlamon in Trondheim, a famous historical squat and the first to be institutionalised into an urban ecological project in Norway. Supporting the researchers mentioned above, there is not much literature about squatting in Oslo, and the scholarship consists primarily of master's theses. These and a few other texts are introduced before the following part presents scholarship on UEPPs in Oslo (again, mainly master's theses). Squatting has always been problematic for nation-states, as they disturb orders of organising people and property. Through becoming UEPPs and leaving the contentious role of being squatters, they now fit in this organisation as accepted exceptions. The final part discusses research on citizen participation in Oslo. Whether recognised as parts of urban planning and/or political actors or not, squatters have participated in shaping Oslo.

Squatting in European Literature

European urban squatting, of course, varies greatly, as do cities and nations squatted in. One reason for limiting this first part of the review to research on European squats is that there have been European squatting networks throughout the last four decades of the 20th century (Piazza & López 2018), leading to shared ideas, knowledges, and tactics (SqEK 2014). This is not to say that squatting beyond Europe's geographical borders is irrelevant, or that the Norwegian context is like other European contexts.

Cattaneo and Martínez argue that "the scholarly literature on squatting is highly fragmented and not easily accessible" (2014, 11) and Vasudevan that "the place of the squatter in the history of housing is far more significant than is usually realized" (2015, 340). To do something about the lack of scholarship on squatting and to create a collaborative knowledge production about squatting, 'Squatting Europe Kollective' (SqEK) was created. This activist research network

has since published several books (SqEK 2013, 2014, 2018), which among other things, argue that squats are important spaces for challenging neoliberal market logics. They discuss how knowledge has been spread among squatters, communal living, non-hierarchical power structures, using squatting to disrupt- and participate in urban planning, and squatted spaces as places for social movements to grow and organise.

One academic trend is discussing squats as spaces of *urban commons*, for instance, done in a special journal issue edited by Martínez and Polanska, who define urban commons as "the collective self-management of resources, spaces, services, and institutions located in urban settings which are deemed essential for social reproduction" (2020, 1246). In it, several scholars explore how squatting can be related to practices of commoning[3] and survey what kind of practices and interactions this applies to. Contributors found that knowledges, skills and experiences were commoned in squats. In a concluding piece about Sweden, the editors argue that there were many practices "in direct contradiction to the individualism, top-down planning/governance, and competition-based markers the squatters found in Swedish society; and directly in line with our understanding of commoned space and commoning practices" (Martínez & Polanska 2020, 1369).

Recently, similar aspects of squatting have been related to degrowth visions, as

> *a radical societal transformation enhanced by a change of (the decolonisation of) the imaginary, citizenship re-politicisation, democratisation of decision-making via non-hierarchical assemblies and consensus decision-making, and the enhancement of bottom-up processes stemming from grassroots movements*. (Cattaneo 2018, 47)

Cattaneo relates less time spent in the labour market to lower contributions to the capitalist economy and to reordering wealth differences. In the squats, he found more communalism, more direct democracy, and more autonomy, all allowing for ways of dwelling and imaginaries outside the dominant growth-based one. Understanding squats as spaces of practising urban commons and degrowth visions have many similarities. The commons and degrowth are both concepts that oppose capitalist ideology and organisation, arguing that it hampers efforts to secure the well-being of all living beings (including humans).

Another much-discussed theme of research on squatting in Europe is what happens when squats are legalised (Aguilera 2017; Pruijt 2003; Martínez 2018). Neoliberal urban (housing) policies in Europe are making squatting and oppositional politics increasingly challenging, and in several European countries, the criminal persecution of squatting has increased (Dee 2013). The

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[3] Commoning – collectively owning, sharing, and cooperating in meeting needs in communities. Often posed as an opposite to capitalist organisation.

squatting wave in Europe in the 1980s made states develop more organised responses, sometimes legalising squats to pacify them (Rossini & Debelle 2018). Such "repressive or containment strategies of the state often force the movements to 'choose' eviction or some form of legalisation" (Mayer 2013, 3).

Rossini et al. argue that this resulted in a hostile environment for squatters who did not want to engage in legalisation processes and that through them, squatting has been "harnessed into the 'creative city' urban development policies and city marketing discourses" (Rossini & Debelle 2018, 264). Mayer (2013) similarly explains that for cities to become attractive to tourists and global investors,

> *squats and self-managed social centres, have taken on new functions as they mark urban space as attractive. They charge them with cultural capital, which in the scheme of 'creative city' policy then becomes transformed into economic capital. Clever urban politicians harness the cultural production that goes on in squatted centres as branding assets that contribute to the image of 'cool cities', 'happening places' or sub-cultural magnets.* (Mayer 2013, 4)

The former squatted area Svartlamon is described as «one of Trondheims' most interesting neighbourhoods" (Visit Norway 2023) on Norway's official travel guide, and squatted Christiania is considered one of the most popular tourist attractions in Copenhagen (Faltin 2016). While such appreciation of squats might enhance conditions for some squatters, they might also end up advertising against their will, unwillingly supporting a capitalist economy.

"The dilemmas between institutionalisation and radicalisation usually end up with decline of the protests and movements" (López 2017, 8). Still, López emphasises that this is not the only outcome. While it offers challenges in terms of taming the most radical aspects of squatting, there are also benefits in providing social infrastructures for social movements, groups, and practices that are not institutionalised (Piazza and López 2018).

Scandinavia is seldom the focus of research on squatting. Polanska's book contextualising squats in the political landscape in Sweden stands out. In it, she explains how squatters are perceived as a threat because they disrupt the idea of how Swedish democracy should be practised and that their "consensual and democratic ways of doing politics" (2019, 100) must be protected from squatting. A reoccurring negative discourse of the Swedish authorities and media characterises squatters as a national security problem and is used to legitimise repression and violence against them. Dee and Debelle also relate dominating discourses to increased criminal prosecution and argue that "mainstream media discourses often present a negative stereotype of squatters which […] facilitated repression" (2015, 117).

Polanska's book concludes that squatting "has fundamentally questioned the image of a 'well-developed' Swedish welfare society and the prevailing idea and self-image of Sweden as a fundamentally equal and democratic society." (Polanska 2019, 175). This claim is based on the ways they have been treated, the hidden power relations that have worked as legitimising such treatments and Swedish squatters unveiling and highlighting such oppressive structures.

Svartlamon Becoming the First Experimental Urban Ecological Area in Norway

As for scholarship on squatting in Norway, Svartlamon has received a fair amount of academic attention. What started with occupied dwellings and protests against eviction eventually became "the first experimental urban ecological area in Norway" (Svartlamon 2023, my translation).

In the legalisation of Svartlamon, the term 'experimental urban ecological area' was used to "unite the opposing views in the regulatory process" (Lundberg 2009, 130, my translation).

> *[T]he historical context and the site-specific conditions at Svartlamon are therefore an essential prerequisite for understanding the current cooperation around the experimental project in the district, which takes place at the intersection between the residents' flat structure and grassroots organisation and the hierarchical municipal planning system (2009, 10, my translation).*

Lundberg further describes that this partly can explain the vast variations in residents' and bureaucrats' understandings of urban ecology and sustainable development. Her interviewees expressed that such variations can be constructive in opening for diverse solutions like direct democracy, self-government, resident participation, and social inclusiveness instead of uniform and centralised solutions. Still, residents criticised the municipality for not paying enough attention to their untraditional understandings.

An anthropological master's thesis (Hammer 2018) explores the Svartlamon residents' experiences being evaluated by the municipality through measurable factors. The residents emphasised that their ways of dwelling could not be reduced to numbers and that the evaluations of the municipality, therefore, did not represent them in a way recognisable to them. Still, they were forced into legitimising their existence according to these technical and quantitative premises. Being institutionalised did not make them feel safe, as their contract only got renewed for a few years at a time. Although by other means, in different ways, they continued fighting against being evicted, on the premises and in the language of the municipality.

In these theses, the history of occupation is portrayed as necessary for what Svartlamon is today. However, including occupational history to survey the dynamics of the area has not always been the case. Narvestad and others (2022) discuss participation, social mix, and social

sustainability at Svartlamon without ever mentioning its history of occupation. Others have argued that the role of occupation has not been as important as often portrayed. Sager argues in an article about Svartlamon that "squatting is another tool of resistance straining activists' relationship to municipal planners and local politicians" (2018, 450) and that it gets too much attention in planning literature because they do not use planning as a strategy, and squats seldom turn into intentional communities. He explains the history of Svartlamon like this:

> *The first wave of new inhabitants occupied some houses in 1987, but most of them soon obtained legal contracts with the municipality without outbreak of conflict. Svartlamon Residents Association was founded in February 1990, which is here seen as the start of the intentional community (Sager 2018, 459).*

Sager's retelling of this story differs from other accounts of Svartlamon's origins, which describe years of fighting, a fight that was not over before the municipal decision of a legal tenancy came in 2001 (Hammer 2018; Ditlefsen 2003; Lundberg 2009). Inhabitants of Svartlamon also emphasise a more contentious history than the one portrayed by Sager: «It started as occupied buildings, after enormous efforts and mobilisation we won the fight against the commercial powers and against the municipality" (Svartlamon 2023a, my translation).

Youth Rebellion and Handling Squatting in Oslo
Scholarship on squatting in Oslo primarily concerns the wave during the late 20th century, when young squatters were treated as a problem needing to be sorted out. Krogstad's well-known anthropological survey of symbols among youth rebellions in Oslo from 1985 describes that much escalated because of police violence. However, "if you try to track down a uniform ideological and political foundation of this rebellion, it presents difficulties" (1985, 9, my translation). They were not so much for anything unified, and "they do not compete for ideological purity" (11, my translation). However, while unorganised, they did have united demands concerning the lack of places to be and affordable housing. Squatting eventually became the unified expression of their protests. Krogstad explains how squatters could respond to criticism of violent tactics by pointing back to all the accepted violence in the world - saying that they did not have to live acceptably in an unacceptable society - and their unwillingness to contribute to society with it being corrupt. The media and authorities used this rhetoric to support claims of squatting youth being narcissistic and the 'me-generation'.

Holm & Kvaran (1989) were concerned about such attitudes towards the youth and declared that they hoped their book, a project that received economic support from The Child Welfare Services' offices in Oslo, would contribute to erasing some myths and prejudices about the

group. It was supposed to concern city youth and their issues with housing and work, and the project soon led them to so-called 'Blitzers' (people who hung out at Blitz - a youth house that was first occupied and later allocated to them for symbolic rent in 1982). They ended up surveying youth and their relation to those in power - police, politicians, and the media, and their power to define them. Based on interviews, questionnaires, observation, and analysis of news coverage, the authors claim that the youth were discriminated against based on looks and aesthetics and described as lazy, egoistic, dangerous and a threat to democracy at the same time. By citing a journalist of Aftenposten,

> *It might be that the whole Blitz problem can be solved without us and the rest of Norway having to change to the unrecognisable, but with them being forced to change. They simply have to learn to live like people. The first meeting with a society making such demands must necessarily be a shock. But even more educational, then.* (253, my translation)

Holm and Kvaran point to how such statements reject other ways of expression than the ones familiar and argue for trying to take the experiences of the squatters seriously. At a time when squatters were described with stigmatising words who justified bad treatment, Krogstad, Holm and Kvaran understood the youth beyond such oppressive discourses.

Haugstulen's master's thesis in history (2009) surveyed what happened in Hjelmsgate 3 during the same period. He names the milieu connected to the house the 'collectivists' and describes them as countercultural, against both Western capitalism and Soviet communism, and searching for alternatives for a better world. However, beyond cultivating their alternatives, Haugstulen concludes that they did not lead to changes in society but that this perhaps was not the point, as they had lost faith in the authoritative model being capable of allowing such ways. The house was where the first number of the eventually established paper 'Gateavisa' was printed in 1970 (Haugstulen 2009, 38). Back then, it was a zine consisting of four pages describing empty buildings that were "ready to be occupied" (Haugstulen 2009, 38, my translation), including a long list of addresses in Oslo, and a declaration of the state, the municipality, real estate speculators and banks as enemies. Even though the original collective was eventually dissolved, Gateavisa lived on, Hjelmsgate 3 continued to house countercultural groups, and Haugstulen argues that the increased tolerance for alternative ways of living of today is partly a result of the countercultural trends of then.

Another master's thesis in history (Solli 2019) also emphasises the importance of 'Gateavisa' and the collectives in Hjelmsgate 3 for the occupation movement of the 1980s in Oslo. In it, he explains how oppositional youth and clashes between them and the police culminated when 200 youths occupied Skippergata 6/6b in Oslo, followed by youth occupying buildings in other

cities in Norway. He connects the youths' occupations in the 1980s to a more extensive social movement – the fight against remediation, demolition, gentrification, and modernisation, was fought in many neighbourhoods and among various people in Oslo. The squatters were not isolated in their demands and worries, although the fight took another face through occupation.

Solbakken's master's thesis in history explores a youth action at 'Vaterland skole' (a school previously in the centre of Oslo) in 1969, more than a decade before the mentioned squats. It was a time with a lot of hope and feelings of being able to create change and influence, not just among youth but in the society of Oslo as a whole. Solbakken situates the youth rebellion and squatting in broader social movements and general concerns among inhabitants of Oslo at that time, and this seems to be before the rough police treatment and discourse of the youth started. The action was called 'A Place to Be' and was a reaction, critique, and alternative to the commercial event 'Teenage Fair' and the remediation of the area. They wanted a healthier, uncommercial alternative to inspire social engagement instead of mass consumption and succeeded in eventually stopping the 'Teenage Fair' from happening.

Back then, "Ideas about total remediation characterised the urban planning in 1960s Oslo. Old clutter had to go, and space had to be made for cars and progress. A multi-lane motorway was planned across Slottsparken." (47, my translation). A group of architects, which eventually were joined by psychologists, teachers, sociologists, and others, supported the youth in their fight for 'A place to be', against the plans to build more offices and stores in Vaterland, and against economic forces governing the urban development. Solbakken explains that this inspired a debate in the municipality of Oslo that asked: "What kind of city do we want, and who gets to decide what kind of city we want?" (49, my translation). When the school burnt down in 1970, many of its previous residents went on to occupy new dwellings.

Helle and Matos (2017) reason the rough treatment youth experienced from the police and others this strategy with the state's struggle to include the 1970s and 1980s youth movement(s) into the corporatist state structures, as they had succeeded doing with other contentious movements. Squatting became increasingly widespread, and "what had started as a youth protest movement over increased policing had fostered a nationwide self-determination and squatter movement" (265). The youths' absence of organisation made it hard to tame. They argue that this, "paired with the fact that authorities were presented with demands particular to youth, caused the protests to be treated as public disturbance cases rather than political protests" (Helle & Matos 2017, 263). Although the youth did have social and political demands, they were met with policing, arrests and teargas. Helle and Matos describe how the squatting

continued throughout the 1990s but that there has not been much contentious youth politics in Norway after this. Nowadays, "youth mainly express their demands and politics through the established youth parties, which are closely connected to their mother parties, and public financed youth organisations, which leaves almost no space for contentious politics" (267). However, they also point to a stable amount of autonomous culture venues in Oslo deriving from the squatting wave, such as Brakkebygrenda, Hausmania and H40. Still, their text describes the situation up until 2015. Since then, Brakkebygrenda, which was occupied from 1999-2008 and from 2010-2014, is now empty after the last eviction (Sigurjonsdottir 2015), and the municipality has sold H40 to private owners (Løken 2019, 11).

Squatters' fights were disorganised and about many things, such as housing being too expensive and not having places to be without spending money, and about – together with others – reacting to and protesting a life and antisocial urban planning and development. Perhaps the stigmatising discourse about squatters – describing them as unserious and a threat simultaneously – was part of creating a barrier between them and other social movements in Oslo. Squatters had to be included in the organisation of the state or accept being described as problems and having to learn to live like people and being repeatedly forced to leave. They were met with discrimination and police violence, or institutionalised, like when Blitz became a youth house. Whether it was the Norwegian state succeeding in taming them, or other factors, the squatting wave eventually declined at the end of the century. Still, occasionally a new squat appears, although it seldomly stays long, and Blitz, Hausmania and the UEPPs, which can be described as institutionalised squats, are parts of Oslo. The next part goes into research about the UEPPs in Oslo.

UEPPs in Oslo

In Oslo, the urban ecological dwellings, the urban ecological area Hausmania, and Blitz were all once squatted but are no longer defined as such because of the legalisations. However, although they are no longer actively squatting, they are no less founded by occupation. The following literature describes UEPPs, or post-legalisation squats, in Oslo.

Riise's (2013) legal study of municipal rental to occupants surveys the UEPPs in Oslo. Her thesis discusses the complicated question of whether squatting is legal or not. House occupation and municipal rental to occupants are in a grey area, and it has some acceptance as civil disobedience. Still, in the end, she concludes that it conflicts with Norwegian law. There are no Norwegian laws protecting squatters. Her final concluding paragraph quotes an article named

after the housing activism slogan 'Houses Need People and People Need Houses'. While illegal, she explains that occupation remains helpful in throwing light on issues of housing politics, as well as pressuring owners to do something about their empty buildings, and concludes that,

> *"the right to private property makes it illegal to occupy another man's property. But it should perhaps be just as illegal to let listed buildings stand and decay year after year until they have to be demolished." House occupation is and will be a politically disputed issue that has not been settled.* (Riise 2013, 59, my translation)

In her thesis *They Have Demanded Their Place and Taken It* (2019)*,* Løken studied urban ecological dwellings as spaces of urban commons in Oslo. It is based on empirical studies of four alternative dwellings, where three are urban ecological projects founded via house occupation. She researched how alternative housing projects could create "systemic and social transformation towards a more sustainable and democratic urban development" (Løken 2019, 4, my translation). Although the focus on participation processes to some degree enabled more democracy within these alternative projects, Løken found that the respondents lacked trust-based arenas for participating in political decisions and actions.

There was a strong community in the urban ecological dwellings, which she connected to years of residents working together on a joint project. This community contributed to a markedly better quality of life, especially for single parents (99), who got much support. She concluded that "the alternative housing projects, as expressions of urban commons, break with a hegemonic housing and urban development practice by acting in line with an alternative value paradigm" (104, my translation) and that there were differences between the ones that were founded by occupation and the one that was not. She found that,

> *The non-commercial aspect is much more evident in the three housing projects that are founded by squatting and defined as urban ecological pilot projects, in that the allocation of housing in the community does not take place on the premises of the housing market, which makes access to the homes possible for low-income groups. Friis' gate 6, regulated as a housing association in the market context, challenges the consequences of an antisocial and competitive housing market to a much lesser extent.* (Løken 2019, 72, my translation)

One of four cases of a master's thesis on neighbourhoods and neighbourliness (Engelstad 2022) is Enebakkveien 37 (E37). In it, Engelstad explains how E37 is preoccupied with inviting neighbours to participate and join activities and events such as working in the shared garden and that they focus on reuse and sustainability, which she argues influences and inspires people beyond the residents. However, she claims that a clear limit of the neighbourhood is important because one needs clear lines between the residents and 'the others' to have good relations, and feelings of belonging, and that E37 does not have this. Instead, "they try to erase the border and be a gathering place for those around them. This may be connected to the fact that E37 needs

confirmation and recognition to a much greater extent than the other neighbourhoods because they are part of an urban ecological pilot project" (Engelstad 2022, 66, my translation). The residents' openness and care for what surrounds them are explained by their dependency on being anchored in their surroundings. Additionally, because the building structure is worse in E37 than in the common rental market, it is more demanding to have housing stability (95). To summarise, E37 does "not facilitate a rich social life" (73, my translation) and it is an issue that the place is not designed for community.

Engelstad's claims are not backed by empirical examples, however. Indeed, in all four discussed neighbourhoods, informants explain that living in a community is sometimes challenging. However, the fact that the community in E37, and the lack of border between them and others, make the social life poorer is not brought up in the informants' quotes. Her arguments for designing specialised buildings to create community could be connected to the fact that her employing company Asplan Viak AS, one of Norway's leading consulting companies within planning, architecture, and engineering, facilitated her thesis. In an article published on the webpages of the business, she states that "we see a strong market trend in that many people are looking for new ways of living" (Engelstad in Ditlevsen 2022, my translation) and that her thesis supports this need for building new buildings allowing this. What Engelstad writes about needing architecture and the right physical surroundings to strengthen the community also contrasts with what is presented by Løken (2019), who found that the shared project created a strong community despite buildings not being designed for community.

Grassroots Participation in Urban Planning and Politics
The mentioned article by Sager (2018) is an example of understanding intentional communities, here Svartlamon, as parts of urban planning. Christiansen (2020) has compared two planning initiatives for new non-commercial housing in a municipal building in Oslo that was left empty for over ten years – Hagegata 30. One is a grassroots initiative by Tøyen Boligbyggerlag (TBBL), and the other is an initiative by the city council of Oslo. She found that the city council's plan for the building was way less socially inclusive than TBBL's plan and points to the state politics and legal system creating a narrow leeway for municipal non-commercial initiatives. Still, "the municipality could have facilitated local cooperation and organisation, but I have found no signs of any plans for that" (Christiansen 2020, 119, my translation). The city council does not question the ownership ideal, and "this means that one of the purposes behind non-commercial forms of living, namely collective forms of ownership with limited possibility

of profit on resale, disappears." (Christiansen 2020, 122, my translation). She concludes that the hopes for a non-commercial dwelling sector lie in political mobilisation on the grassroots level, such as with TBBL, which she found practising a way of organising dwellings driven by solidarity, managing to diverge from the focus on profit. The UEPPs are examples of such grassroots initiatives, and similarly to Løken, she argues that the absence of profit ambitions has been crucial for their social inclusiveness.

Another article emphasising the lack of involving local cooperation in urban planning in Oslo found that municipal employees were very busy and that "the work with resident participation came 'on top' of everything else" (Vasstrøm & Paaby 2021, 106). The municipal employees also emphasised that working this way was new to them, that their systems and routines were not adapted to it, and that they needed more knowledge about their role and room for acting. As Christiansen (2020) similarly argues, the municipal organisation has a narrow leeway for non-commercial alternative housing. Vasstrøm and Paaby conclude that citizen initiatives can contribute to sustainable change, but on a limited scale. Concerning the present situation in Oslo, they were worried that 'the green shift' in Oslo was not actually leading to any changes in power relations and that resident participation functioned mainly as "green icing and celebratory speeches" (123, my translation) because citizen initiatives are often dismissed, while economic interests still run city planning. They call for 'opposite participation', based on and deriving from inhabitants' initiatives instead of municipal actors inviting inhabitants to participate in particular projects on their premises.

Pløger(2021) similarly asks how public participation is ruled in Oslo and argues that even though the public has a right to participate, "the powerful deliberation is when capital, landowners, co-operative interests, and investors meet and agree on the operative frame of the land-use plan and the planning process defined in the 'plan programme' (what is to be done, how, when, by whom)" (437). The public was only allowed to participate in specific pre-decided themes of the case:

> *The planning law in Norway does not – and will not – secure an open democracy. It is used to secure political sovereignty to choose landowner interests as their 'partners' instead of being a platform for weak or critical voices. Public participation thus becomes a process of suppressing meaning that is not within the interest of capital, politics, and planning authorities.* (Pløger 2021, 427)

To him, planning is an 'equipment of power'. Like Vasstrøm & Paaby, he calls for less predetermined participation processes in Oslo.

As mentioned in the intro, Kjærås and Haarstad (2022) understand the recent re-emergence of the third housing sector in the municipal program of Oslo as part of a broader re-politicising of housing in Oslo, initiated by urban actors beyond the established political terrain. They describe how such actors are now throwing attention towards failures of housing in Oslo and mention 'Leieboerforeningen' (The Tenants' Organisation) and the grassroots campaigns 'Boligopprøret' (The Housing Rebellion) and 'Min drittleilighet' (My Shitty Apartment), as examples of organisations and activists working to enlighten issues with housing in Oslo.

Calling it depoliticised decades can make it seem like the years between the 1980s and 2015 were devoid of housing politics. But the 'new' political actors and their causes did not come out of nowhere. There are direct links between squatters and the mentioned social media-based campaigns, for example, through the slogan 'houses need people and people need houses'. The UEPPs in Oslo were created, and several house occupations[4] occurred during this supposed drought. 'Leieboerforeningen' was started in 1933 (Leieboerforeningen 2023) and has been active throughout this period; they have also been connected to squatters and have been more radical in periods. Squatters are not part of what Kjærås and Haarstad describe as actors outside the established political terrain, and squatted spaces are not discussed as relevant for creating alternatives. They mention formerly squatted Hauskvartalet as a 'controversial housing quarter' (7) but not as "mobilising housing alternatives" (6). The UEPPs are not mentioned either, although they are very similar to how the authors explain third housing sector alternative dwellings. Like Sager did not think the squatting of Svartlamon was interesting for how grassroots plan and create intentional communities, Kjærås and Haarstad do not consider squatters and UEPP residents actors participating in housing politics in Oslo.

Squatters and UEPP Residents as Radical Participants
While many have argued that scholarship on squatting is deficient, in the last decade squatting in Europe has gained academic attention as creating urban commons and practising degrowth visions within capitalist systems – as creating sustainable spaces in unsustainable cities. Vasudevan argued that the role of squatting is downplayed, and some have emphasised the importance of squatting for what Svartlamon is today. Still, the literature about squatting in Oslo seems to rather discuss it as isolated groups and events, except for Solbakken's and Solli's theses placing squatters as part of broader social movements. They are categorised as radical,

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[4] See Appendix 5 for overview of squats in Oslo

Left, punk, and youth, and other than as historical backdrops of UEPPs, they do not belong in the category of urban ecology, sustainability, neighbourhood, a third dwelling sector, politics, and perhaps the more mature. The latter category is taken seriously as contributing to sustainable change, and the UEPPs are part of this category, maybe because they have become distanced from their history as squats through institutionalisation.

While the literature on squatting in Oslo described prejudices, discrimination, violent police treatment, and a culture of understanding squatters as disturbances rather than protesters, the UEPPs are freed from this. The institutionalisation of the current UEPPs in Oslo seems to have separated the UEPPs from what did not fit in. The Aftenposten journalist wanted squatters to change and learn to live like people. Through institutionalisation, this is perhaps what they have done. European scholarship on squatting has discussed institutionalisation as a problem but also as creating opportunities, and it might be that UEPPs in Oslo also enable other possibilities. Although they fit in, it is as expiations. And how much of their radical imaginations of other possibilities remain in the UEPPs is yet to be known.

It is not only the UEPPs squatting does not fit into. Squatters were not mentioned as political actors by Kjærås and Haarstad, and do not seem to fit into the category of citizen participation, either. Generally, their actions and what they have led to are not considered part of the city today, whether as political actors, participants, or sustainable grassroots initiatives. Research on citizen participation in Oslo focuses on institutionalised situations where the municipality, state, scholars, or companies have invited and brought residents' opinions into planning processes (Lorenzen et al. 2020; Vasstrøm & Paaby 2021; Schmidt et al. 2011). Vasstrøm, Paaby, and Pløger argue that there are obstacles to facilitating citizen or grassroots participation in Oslo, partly because the municipal organisation is not built for it and is built for prioritising economic interest.

Løken (2019) found fundamental differences between the alternative dwellings that were once squatted and the one that was not. The UEPPs had supportive and strong communities and an alternative value paradigm more in the direction of urban commons than capitalist individualist organisation. Still, her thesis did not explore what squatting had to do with these other values; why such difference occurred was only explained by them not being founded on market principles. Both Løken and Christiansen understood the non-commercial aspects important for creating alternatives. And Vasstrøm, Paaby, and Pløger all described financial interests as getting in the way of citizen participation in urban planning. However, the radical difference and alternatives of the UEPPs should not be understood exclusively according to a profit/non-

profit binary. The UEPPs cannot be understood as alternatives only in being non-commercial, as the non-commercial evolved out of illegal actions and social movements with a long history of grassroots organising. They had to break the law to initiate the non-commercial alternative dwellings and to gain the degree of participation the UEPPs have today.

Squats and UEPPs are spaces where residents participate in shaping the city and their dwellings. They have demanded participation in urban matters by making abandoned buildings dwellings and participating in political conversations by criticising how the city is organised. In this way, the UEPPs can be understood as the results of what could be called radical participation. The word 'radical' derives from the Latin *radicalis,* meaning proceeding from or relating to a root, and is often used to describe something very different or supporting comprehensive changes in what is perceived as usual or customary. Radical participation can refer to radically different ways of participating, radical groups participating, and grassroots, or the people on the bottom demanding participation.

We have seen that squatting created room for radical difference – of not respecting private property or authoritative organisation, of non-commercial places where youth without money could be, of messy organisation and without a unified ideology. They participated in changing Oslo in alternative ways, demanded space, and questioned mainstream for-profit expert urban planning. As Haugstulen argues, squatters increased tolerance for alternative ways of living.

Through this thesis, I will take squatters and UEPP residents seriously as actors and participants in the city, despite their detested ways and histories. I also contribute to understanding squatting and UEPPs as parts of the same story. The UEPPs did not necessarily become completely separated from squatting as they were legalised, many of the same people live there, and their communities, ideas, knowledges, and critiques originate from this history. By doing this, I am not arguing that the institutionalisation of squats does not change them. Instead, I am trying to challenge a divide and two categories that often appear far away from each other, squatting and UEPPs. In Oslo, they are connected to the same radical social movements, mutually dependent on each other, and even though squatting does not get much focus in studies of the UEPPs, it is part of what they are today. The UEPPs derive from a long history of counterculture and opposition, opening for radically different ways of dwelling. The next chapter explores how challenging dominating stories open for imagining other possibilities.

3. Radical Alternatives, Imaginaries, and the Possible

There is a pressing need for alternative visions of urban life
-Morrow & Parker 2020

The future, in function, is a metaphor.
　　A metaphor for what?
　　If I could have said it non-metaphorically, I would not have written all these words,
informing me, and you, rather solemnly, that the truth is a matter of the imagination.
　　-Le Guin 1969

What it all comes down to
is that the way of looking at the city must change
- BEA

A Brazilian activist told me that our neoliberal world means that the principles of liberalism – and oppressive structures justified by this ideology – have occupied our minds. Therefore, my friend continued, we struggle to think thoughts that are not formulated in the same language and based upon the same logics. How then, to imagine something outside such logics? And how important imaginaries are if they either constrict or open for alternative possibilities.

The above quote from a science fiction novel by Le Guin describes the future and the truth as metaphors and matters of the imagination. Haraway (2015) argue that claiming to know what the future will be is a way of thinking embedded in the logics that got us into this mess in the first place. The modern obsession with understanding the future reinforces a mindset that strengthens ways of knowing unable to tackle the current crisis. Thereby, creating sustainable alternatives must entail being open to not knowing the future and it being very different from what is now. It must be critical towards accepted truths narrowing down accepted reactions and alternatives to the now, and open for other imaginations of what is possible.

Sustainability concerns the future. The other above quotes claim that it must be different from what is now. They describe that it is 'visions' and 'ways of looking' at the city and urban life that must change – we thereby need new imaginations and metaphors to create another city. Graeber (2007) wrote that the one does not have to give power to the imagination but recognise the power that imagination is. If "[p]olitical struggles are animated by visions as much as by practicalities" (Harvey 2012, xvi), then imagining other possibilities – while recognising that we cannot know what they will become – is an essential part of struggles for alternative sustainabilities. If we could use a different language, different logics, and think other thoughts, we could perhaps imagine and practise something else.

If there is something more that makes dwellings founded by squatting different than not being founded on the premises of the housing market, how to find it? The latter chapter showed that there was room for radical difference – of demanding participation, taking space, non-commerciality, messy organisation, strong community, and support of each other within them – among squatters and in UEPPs in Oslo. Their imaginaries, deriving from a long history of counterculture and opposition, and their dwellings and ways of participating in the city becoming of these imaginaries disturb dominating ways and open for other possibilities.

This theoretical framework discusses different imaginaries and alternative visions. It also discusses making room for questioning accepted thoughts and how different ways of knowing exist side by side, entangled in each other. To do this, theories evolving from social movements built on experiences of oppression – making them well-equipped for viewing oppressive logics from the outside – will be used throughout the chapter. Anthropologists, post-development, and feminist scholars are critiquing the uniform story of the world and what is possible or not in terms of change. In their ways, squatters and UEPP residents do too. Therefore, they lead me to include theories with expertise in other possibilities.

Alternative Sustainabilities

After the concept 'sustainable development' came into fashion with the publication of the Brundtland Report "Our Common Future" (WCED 1987), the sustainability project has been dissected by post-development scholars pointing to the development project increasing differences, passing on colonialist relations, and aiming for exponential growth. It has been criticised for imposing a project based on specific ways of understanding the world, on all life (Banerjee 2003) and Eduardo Galeano famously argued that "[d]evelopment develops inequality" (1973, 3). While the Brundtland report emphasised a type of development which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987, 16) and strived to pose development and environment as one single issue, there is "no consensus over the goals and visions of the future associated with this concept" (Adloff & Neckel 2019, 1015). Many have criticised that the word 'sustainable' is used for greenwashing and as a "rhetorical cloak for environmentally and socially undesirable policies" (Connelly 2007, 260). The definitions of sustainable development have been criticised for both being too vague (Bartelmus 1994) and too narrow. Not surprisingly, making one plan for meeting the needs of all, now and in the future, proves to be complicated.

'Sustainability' can also be understood as calling for radical change, as Tsing describes,

"Sustainability" is the dream of passing a liveable earth to future generations, human and nonhuman. The term is also used to cover up destructive practices, and this use has become so prevalent that the word most often makes me laugh and cry. Still, there is reason to dream—and to object—and to fight for alternatives[…]. Rather than criticize the word, then, I'll take it seriously, repurposed as a radical argument in the face of hegemonic practice. (Tsing 2017, 51).

Not compromising the needs of future life on earth and meeting the needs of current life on earth calls for radical change. While not dismissing the criticisms, I also use the word to talk about what works in favour of covering the needs of all that lives today, tomorrow and in the futures further away. This entails acknowledging a wide variation of needs, working against hegemonic practices imposing own understandings onto others, and disturbing the thought of one sustainability fits all. It takes imaginations that break with hegemonic practice to open for such other sustainabilities.

A sustainable future can be imagined in many ways, from wanting radical transformation, to green growth, to increased control, resting one's faith in technical solutions or resilience (Adloff & Neckel 2019; Delanty 2021). Imaginaries of sustainability are part of deciding how contemporary societies change and what type of change they are open to. "It is to collective imaginations that we owe the futures of sustainability, i.e. our current images of the possible futures to come" (Adloff & Neckel 2019, 1016). Delanty agrees that we do not know what the future will be like, and in refusing the assumption that the future will be much like the past, the future can be imagined entirely differently. He also argues that answering how modern societies change "will require more attention to social struggles" (Delanty 2021, 292). To understand the knowledges and possibilities created by squatter movements entails "acknowledging their 'world-making' efforts." (Di Feliciantonio 2017a, 430). Di Feliciantonio argues that "this approach to economies and social organizations emphasizing plurality and counter-tendencies within hegemonic models […] has received little attention within the housing literature" (2017b, 42). Therefore, he surveys squatter's alternative dwellings, imaginations, and ways of knowing and understanding the world.

Escobar studies responses to "the steady worsening of planetary ecological, social, and cultural conditions and […] the inability of established policy and knowledge institutions to imagine ways out of such crises" (2015, 451), and similarly poses alternatives deriving from social movements as important. They can provide an excellent grounding for rethinking sustainability and "the knowledges they produce might be particularly relevant for the search for post-capitalist, sustainable plural models of life" (Escobar 2017, 239). Standard sustainability

frameworks and practices are, in his opinion, only able to reduce unsustainability, because they do not challenge any larger world order or vision.

The book *Anthropology of Sustainability, Beyond Development and Progress* (Brightman & Lewis 2017) is filled with contributions that looks towards social movements for rethinking sustainability. Several authors emphasise how a dominating ontology destroys possibilities for sustainable now's and visions of the future. Barbosa de Almeida writes that the best way of supporting sustainable development is "supporting diversity of practice and knowledge associated with ontological diversity in the widest possible sense" (278) and Escobar, that "by resisting the neoliberal globalizing project, many indigenous, Afrodescendant, peasant, and poor urban communities are advancing ontological struggles" (245). Refusing dominant narratives and knowledges of reality is posed as opening for other sustainabilities.

The Pluriverse Instead of the Universe or One-World-World

> *Many words walk in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds are made for us. There are words and worlds which are lies and injustices. There are words and worlds which are truths and truthful. We make true words. We have been made from true words. In the world of the powerful there is no space for anyone but themselves and their servants. In the world we want everyone fits. In the world we want many worlds to fit.* – Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1996

Oppressed groups have a long history of criticising the monopoly of knowing and claiming one objective truth, and of fighting for the recognition and respect of their knowledges. A famous example is the Zapatista fight for "a world in which many worlds fit" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional 1996). The Zapatistas are a group who have fought to get back indigenous land in southern Mexico and today control autonomous areas in that region. Similar thoughts are also found among European social movements, for example in the territorial struggles of the Zad and NoTav in France and Italy which "fight for diversity in all its form, only capitalism thinks making the world uniform is useful and necessary – for the rest of us, it is simply frightening" (Mauvaise Troupe Collective 2018, 35).

Post-development scholars are discussing various social movements as creating alternatives to the one (straight and up) path of 'development'. Kothari and colleagues (2019) advocate that development as progress is unable to meet the current and future crisis, and therefore presents many alternative ways that challenge dominant processes of development in a post-development dictionary. They suggest imagining a 'Pluriverse' instead of one universe, which, as emphasised in the above quote, has room for many ways of being in and knowing the world.

Allowing worlds to exist side by side must entail questioning dominating thoughts pretending to know all needs, and how to meet them. The pluriverse aligns with narratives resisting what sometimes called the hegemony, or what Law (2015) has named the 'One-World World' (OWW) model. Law argues that challenging the assumption of the mononaturalist OWW, also in the north, is politically important because if we do not live in the OWW, one overarching logic make no sense anymore. This "opens up a whole field of intellectual inquiry that is at the same time a field of political intervention" (Law 2015, 128).

Stengers is interested in reclaim-movements in this search to allow different knowledges to exist, because such movements both try to take back and heal. She argues that the healing part is something Marxism missed with its critique of capitalism, which only focused on exposing the lies of the ideology. She describes capitalism as sorcery and says reclaim activists resist its global analysis, and writes, "we have to recover, or reclaim the capacity for formulating our own questions and not accepting the ready-made ones" (Stengers in Latour et al. 2018, 590). Healing is here connected to creating alternatives to the dominating/ hegemonic ontology or OWW. 'Reclaim the streets' movements are examples of such movements in an urban context. She reminds us that Capitalism also leads to alienation, and quotes Tsing explaining alienation as "a being separated from what makes you alive, a condition in which you also stop thinking, imagining, and noticing particular beings and relations." (Tsing in Latour et al. 2018, 590).

Feminist Approaches to Other Possibilities

> *...they need to challenge the deeper patterns of heterosexist Western capitalism founded on colonialism, racism, and exploitation of nature. This requires not always taking modern and Western concepts and analytical tools as points of departure.* (Mehta & Harcourt 2021)

Feminist, indigenous and decolonial critiques have been influential in challenging dominating imaginaries and ways of understanding the world(s). For discussing feminist scholarship, it is important to note that it was "*not* the result of academic efforts, it did *not* arise in research institutes, it was *not* invented by a few gifted women scholars" (Mies & Shiva 1993, 36). Although this is not to say that universities have not been entangled in feminist fights – as academic thoughts have also been entangled in Zapatista fights and other social movements – it is to say that it did not start with apolitical academic thoughts. Instead, it builds on experiences of fighting and objecting exploitation, domination, violence, oppression, and the status quo. Comprehending what sustains domination have opened for imaginations of other possibilities, and much critical thinking was born by the feminist creativity and exploration of them.

These legacies are not only helpful in criticising dominating hegemonies and obvious oppressors, feminist and decolonial perspectives have contributed to social movements and scholarships that are themselves critical towards dominating knowledge. As Strengers argue, Marxism missed an essential aspect in its critique of oppressive structures. Healing is connected to emotions, which feminists have protested being ignored, also in more critical approaches.

A currently popular critical concept is 'degrowth', which imagine possibilities outside the growth paradigm. It embraces many anti-capitalist and environmental movements and thoughts arguing for degrowth instead of growth. As mentioned in the previous chapter, degrowth has been connected to squatting (Cattaneo 2018), and feminist critique of capitalist urban politics creating a hostile city for living beings could align with visions of the degrowth scholarship, as overall less time in waged work would release more time for care, community and commoning.

Scholars promoting degrowth visions have been criticised by feminists for being caught in economic, standardised growth logics by not paying enough attention to emotional and social needs. Mehta & Harcourt therefore tries to contribute to the scholarship by adding a feminist focus on emotion and non-material values, such as time, care, and community. They argue that such focus can help shift the attention away from the "negative downscaling of production and consumption" (Mehta & Harcourt 2021, 1). Taking emotional and relational aspects seriously can help 'degrowthers' think outside the fixation on rationality and missing aspects like how "the scarcity of time is a pressing problem for many people in high- and middle-income settings, and many people suffer due to the scarcity of love, happiness and care" (1). Decolonial feminisms have also been helpful contributions to the degrowth scholarship, for stressing how race, gender and labour are interconnected with dominations of capitalist systems, and hence needs to be apparent in analyses of how to challenge such systems (Abazeri 2022; Mehta & Harcourt 2021). Abazeri argues that "capitalism as a complex system of power, while about economic relations, cannot be reduced to the economy or labour" (2022, 5). Discussions on less growth must also be mindful of different lives and different needs in them. If not, they are in danger of not challenging the oppressive dynamics connected to masculinist, economic and standardised logics of growth. Some things should grow, thrive, sprout, blossom, and bloom.

Squatters are not immune from reproducing oppression either. Although they are a vulnerable group and occupied with the home (a feminine space), squatting is often "shrouded in masculine ideological rhetoric about struggle" (Martínez et al. 2013, 15). Squatters sometimes perpetuate values part of what they try to challenge, and they, as well as critical social movements or scientists, are not immune from passing on aspects of what they try to create alternatives to.

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DIY urbanism is "unauthorised, grassroots, and citizen-led urban planning interventions that are small scale, functional, temporary, creative and place-specific; are focused on reclaiming and repurposing urban spaces; and take place outside formal urban planning structures and systems" (Heim LaFrombois 2017, 426). Heim LaFrombois uses a feminist intersectional perspective to explore it and finds that that the urbanism appreciated by policymakers and scholars that become celebrated, formalised or legalised, have in common being masculinist, connected to getting the space back into an economically productive state and creating an image that "aligns with a cool and creative, even edgy, PR riddled narrative" (2017, 431). When illegal forms of activism become accepted, it is often because they do not challenge anything too hard to swallow. The authorities are "maintaining an essence of control over such interventionist urban activities" (Heim LaFrombois 2017, 431). On the other side of these appreciated illegal uses of urban space, she identifies living in public urban space, or other activities done by vulnerable groups to meet their basic needs. They are not categorised as DIY urbanists by scholars or seen as critical actors in the city by authorities although they also use urban space in an informal way and are response to urban social issues.

> In this sense, many practices of DIY urbanism rely on social privilege, in that city authorities choose to ignore, but also may adopt/ adapt into policy and practice, more 'creative' forms of DIY urbanism, despite its illegality, because it aligns with desired images of a liberal and creative city and the actors are seen as non-threatening. (Heim LaFrombois 20175, 428).

Squatting homes is commonly not recognised as DIY urbanism, and Heim LaFrombois 2017 does not discuss it in her article either. But as previously mentioned, squatting has been connected to creating cultural capital and promoting cities as cool and trendy (Mayer 2013).

Feminist Responses to Masculinist Urban Development

> *Utopian feminists and urban reformers began with the home, but they did not end there. The imagination of home they cultivated cut across multiple geographic scales and practices*
> (Morrow & Parker 2020, 612)

This quote speaks to how feminists of the 1970s and 1980s demanded that the home should not be dismissed from conversations about urban change – it should not be understood as isolated from the urban, the political, or the economic. Urban planning and urbanism, particularly the kinds of urban activism accepted by authorities, have been preoccupied with masculinist perceptions of urban life (Morrow & Parker 2020; Heim LaFrombois 2017). As opposed to research, social movements, and politics concerning urban development, which did not include the home as part of the urban landscape and used masculinist or systematic metaphors of machines in their search for other ways of urban life, feminists put the home at the centre of

their conversations and analysis about urban landscapes and life. Feminist critique of 'urban visionaries', whether referring to academics, urban planners, or activists, also criticise their visions for focusing too much on privileged human men's lives.

Feminists argued that a reason for not recognising the home as part of the urban landscape was that it was categorised as private while the urban landscape was conceived as concerning the public spheres and spaces. In similar matters, work outside the home was understood as public and political, while left "ignored are the unpaid, private, reproductive activities that take place in and support cities, and how they are bound in 'space'" (Heim LaFrombois 2017, 426). The isolated and apolitical home invisibles domestic work (Morrow & Parker 2020, 609) and reinforces the perception of this work as private, feminine, and separated from the economy.

Feminists were therefore challenging categories of feminine and masculine work and trying to move domestic work out of the private sphere. Morrow and Parker emphasise the importance of care work and the dwelling as starting points for imagining better living in cities. As a critique of the current individualised cities, they, in line with many other feminists, critique the "devaluation, erasure, and isolation of care in the cities" (Morrow & Parker 2020, 607) and propose commoning of care work as a solution. These suggested alternative ways are inspired by intersectional[5] feminist imaginations and particularly the work of urban historian Dolores Hayden, who wrote about feminists' "demand for homelike and nurturing neighbourhoods" (Hayden 1982, 5). This had to involve bringing domestic and care work in private households into discussions and into the city. Not including spaces and activities happening within the home in urban planning strengthens the division between the public and private, political, and apolitical, masculine, and feminine. And not including these activities in visions of a better city leads to a vision that reinforces oppressive structures.

Morrow and Parker describe how squats have been spaces where care work has been commoned, for example, by having common kitchens instead of private ones. Squatter and activist Pat Moan also emphasised squats as arenas for feminist struggles. Here is how she describes it in a text called *Learning to Learn*:

> *Because we spend less time at jobs we can spend more time taking care of our own needs which in turn saves a great deal of money. You couldn't work a 40-hour week and scrounge, mend motorcycles, build, paint, make your own music, clothes, jam, etc. In fact, you're lucky if you can do more than collapse. My daily life has been totally transformed. When you are no longer impaled on a 40-hour work week trying to pay the rent and indulging in expensive weekend, escapist*

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[5] Intersectionality - The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise. (Oxford English Dictionary)

diversion, what you are left with is time. Time to do things, time to make things, time for yourself, time for others. We have time to get down to the business of living. (Moan 1980, 181)

Squatting has been a tremendous influence on the lives of many women. And vice-versa. Free Space in which grew, and still grow, women's houses, women's communities, refuges for battered women and women's centres. Not having to pay rent freed women to start up presses, art places, bookshops – none of which would have happened if we'd had to pay rent. A wave of women plumbers, electricians, carpenters, mechanics, activists, musicians and artists came out of the squatting boom (Moan 1980, 183)

While, as mentioned in the former part, squats can perpetuate masculinist values and logics, as Parker, Morrow and Moan describe, they can also create spaces and time to disturb gendered inequality, common care and domestic work, prioritise needs and learn and share skills.

Making Room for Different Imaginations of the Possible

Why are squatters interesting for sustainability? As we have seen in the former chapter, they are criticised for being egoistic and a threat for democracy. Still, popular or unpopular, they have made room for other ways. Occupying to create alternative ways of dwelling can be a way of healing and create space for commoning, thinking, imagining, and noticing what has been oppressed. With many other scholars presented in this framework, I suggest that the search for solutions to current crisis could benefit from looking towards social movements' alternatives and other ways of imagining what is possible. While squatters' intentions are not always 'green', they have challenged dominant ways, and sustainability is not only about what is green.

Feminism is not only about gender either. This framework circled in on feminist thoughts, not because questions of gender played any significant part in this thesis, but because I found feminist theories good tools for thinking about and with the participants' stories. This was mainly thanks to the feminist interest in the home and its critique of ignoring traditionally female spaces and practices in mainstream urban development and in critical urbanists' visions, and their critique of a masculinist hegemony in general. As my Brazilian friend said, it is hard thinking thoughts that do not perpetuate oppression, but feminists are experts in it. The theories helped to study alternative dwellings as opportunities for learning about other possibilities.

If there are many truths, or if, as Le Guin's quote suggests, the truth is a matter of imagination –recognising that can help open imaginations for new sustainabilities. Whether it is through the thought of the Pluriverse or feminist critique of a masculinist hegemony, the theories presented in this chapter tries to widen the imagination and open for other possibilities.

While some have anticipated "the end of neoliberalism's heyday" (Enright & Rossi 2018, 8), within dominant ways of knowing, it might be "easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" (Jameson 2003, 73). Latour, Stengers and Tsing discuss that one should be careful with comprehending capitalism as a fixed, all-encompassing, and stable structure, because this might strengthen the thought of other possibilities being impossible (Latour et al. 2018). This does not mean that social movements imagining capitalism as a common enemy and oppressive structure for them to work against, are doing it wrong. Many use this common enemy to collectively imagine, fight for and believe in other alternatives that are not oppressing them. As squatters did not accept the rules of capitalism and private property, they might also have opened for imaginations of other possibilities beyond capitalist logics.

When squatters reject private property and other fundamental ways of organising Oslo, they might be perceived as more of a disturbance than less critical DIY urbanism projects. Still, some squatters have been accepted and institutionalised. They have become entangled in the ways of organising and knowing that they criticised. Upholding their imaginations and ways might be challenging in cooperation with governing institutions. Still, without this acceptance and institutionalisation, the dwellings and communities of the UEPPs might not have existed in any way at all. In the UEPPs, the knowledges of squatters and of the municipality have become entangled, they have created a common sustainability project, where their imaginations of other possible ways of dwelling have merged or collided. Either way, they relate to each other in other ways than before institutionalisation.

This thesis surveys knowledges about sustainable dwelling in Oslo and theorises squats and UEPPs as creating space for different imaginaries and alternative visions, both as feminist and masculinist spaces, both as autonomous and institutionalised. It surveys how residents of alternative dwelling projects understand sustainable dwelling and how this knowledge is related to the ones of the municipality of Oslo, and to academic knowledges. We all try to produce, mediate, or retell knowledge and stories in our ways, and in this thesis, some of these ways of knowing are gathered. Squatting is refusing the dominating rules and laws – enacting one's own visions and other ways of doing and knowing, and knowing in a community in a squat is different than knowing as an employee in the municipality. The next chapter explains how the knowledge in this thesis is produced and why I chose to do it that way.

4. How I Studied Knowledges about Sustainable Dwelling in Oslo

We seek not the knowledges ruled by phallogocentrism (nostalgia for the presence of the one true Word) and disembodied vision. We seek those ruled by partial sight and limited voice-not partiality for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible. -Donna Haraway 1988

"I'm not sure. I'm exceedingly ignorant-"
The young man laughed and bowed. "I'm honoured!" he said. "I've lived here three years, but haven't yet acquired enough ignorance to be worth mentioning". -URSULA K. LE GUIN 1969

The famous anthropologist Malinowski wrote that before starting a fieldwork, the scientist should acquire the "knowledge of the most modern results of scientific study" (Malinowski 1922, 9). He explained that "[p]reconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies" (Malinowski 1922, 9). Through these, a man should find many problems to bring with him on his expedition. When the man on an expedition in Le Guin's novel tries to excuse himself for not knowing anything about where he has arrived, however, he is surprised by the answer. That ignorance is something to acquire is unknown to him, and he is left worried that he has been bragging. Whereas Malinowski vouch for acquiring the most modern academic knowledge for creating new knowledge – an accepted appreciation of the newest, most developed knowledge– this expeditioner is confronted with something different, and the entire notion of knowing equalling positive is questioned.

Malinowski's description of men on expeditions is a reminder of academic knowledge production changing. I am not a man, I do not go on expeditions, I cannot read all relevant most modern results of academic work. Still, his notion of 'foreshadowed problems' explains what I felt like starting this thesis. A shadow can be vague and misunderstood – it is not the thing it shadows, but it is not nothing, either. However, the problems I brought with me in my fieldwork were not exclusively revealed through theoretical studies. They were also based on the participants' experiences – I tried to learn *about* and *from* them. Emotions were also part of the foreshadowed problems. Mine and the participants' feelings of something being confusing or unfair were cues of there being something of interest to study connected to those feelings.

How, then, to study radical alternatives within the capital of a, in many ways, successful modern state and cherished social democracy? In Oslo, there are radically different understandings of sustainable change, for example apparent in how Glen described environmental politics as either for or against growth. Following scholars presented in the former chapters (Escobar 2017;

Di Feliciantonio 2017a; Christiansen 2020; Delanty 2021), arguing for paying attention to social struggles, countertendencies within hegemonic models, and groups resisting the neoliberal globalising project for understanding sustainable change, I survey knowledges about sustainability deriving from squatting in Oslo. What the participants know about sustainable dwelling and change is also in relationship with and connected to dominant knowledges. Surveying their knowledge therefore also led me to survey the relationship between them and the municipality.

I use a qualitative methodology to approach questions of the knowledges of squatters and UEPP residents – no generalised models are used, and no one knowledge is produced. In this chapter, I will first explain the methodology, that is the theory behind and reasoning for how I have chosen to do the research the way I did. The way I did it, the methods, tools, or techniques are presented in the latter part of the chapter.

Methodology

When I first read about 'the feminist curiosity' (Åhäll 2018), I realised that the emotional also played a part in deciding what I wanted to explore in this thesis – what problems I brought with me. Linda Åhäll calls for a methodology that sparks what she calls the feminist curiosity (2018, 50) by using affect as a tool. Citing Hemmings, she argues that affective dissonance is "the judgement arising from the distinction between experience and the world" (Hemmings 2012, 157, in Åhäll 2018, 44). Uncomfortable feelings can be clues and entrances to discovering oppression of knowledges or worlds, and power structures that are otherwise well hidden. This methodology section is a combination of feminist and decolonial approaches to knowledge and knowledge-making, again, because they are experienced in questioning dominant knowledges.

Situated Knowledges

> Since social (and natural) science investigations interfere with the world, in one way or another they always make a difference, politically and otherwise. Things change as a result. The issue, then, is not to seek disengagement but rather with how to engage. It is about how to make good differences in circumstances where reality is both unknowable and generative. (Law 2004, 4)

Haraway uses feminist academic scholarship to discuss questions of objective knowledge. She argues that instead of discussing whether knowledge can be objective, asking what objectivity is and from which position an object is perceived is more fruitful. What is seen and known – the knowledges – are always situated, and vision should never be understood as passive. As

objects are created, boundaries around them are too, thereby, objects are boundary projects. The location from which the object is seen is also limited, and the limits of it should be considered – only partial perspectives promise objectivity. Each way of seeing makes a "wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organising worlds" (Haraway 1988, 583).

Therefore, claiming one true knowledge, what she calls the 'God trick'; seeing everywhere from nowhere, creates irresponsible and unlocatable knowledge. It is irresponsible because it cannot be held accountable when it is unlocatable. Haraway further argues that there is "good reason to believe vision is better from below the brilliant space platforms of the powerful." (583) because the subjugated have experienced the one World not having room for their knowledges, unable to fit with their experiences. They often know that knowledges come from somewhere – that they are situated – and that there is more than that one World. As argued by Hemmings, they know the distinction between their experiences and the world. This must not be confused with any innocence of subjugated positions or used for romanticising them. And as discussed in the latter chapter, the recognition of different ways of knowing deriving from those who have experienced oppression can also be valuable contributions to other subjugated knowledges.

Box A. (In)visible remains of a dump 27.09.2022
In the garden of a squat in Oslo lies a massive pile of old tiles; they are heavy, so heavy that they have not been tidied. I have previously lived in this squat for a month, but I did not notice them before someone mentioned them to me during the fieldwork. I might have been mistaking it for soil.

I added this Box as a reminder that sometimes we do not see what is right in front of our eyes, we cannot see everything at once, and if we are looking for something or someone tells us that something is there, it is easier to see it. Recognising that any machine or person creating objective knowledge is coming from somewhere calls for a methodology that acknowledges the act of observation and the place from which the observation is done, that does not pretend like there is no observer and a methodology that does not only take one type of knowledge into account. It tries to acknowledge connections and not create static divides and boundaries. Social

realities are instead seen as patchy, only partially coherent, heterogeneous, continuous, and unable to be modelled into an emergent whole (Law 2004).

Understanding knowledges as situated, partial, dynamic, and continuously changing vouch for dynamic approaches. Law (2004) argues that it is reasonable to approach research of complex and even diffuse or messy social phenomena with being open to the research process being messy. Beuving and de Vries's concept of 'Naturalistic Inquiry' (2015) provides a metaphor for such a way of doing ethnographic research. They imagine the research process as a spiral, where one goes back and forth between foreshadowing problems and asking questions, doing fieldwork, analysing, and explaining. Although they also note that distinguishing stages is artificial (23), their point is that the process should not be linear. They therefore argue for using mixed methods and that 'Naturalistic inquiry' is a contrast to social research methods that have been influenced by standardisation and modernisation. While modernisation has efficiency as one of its prime goals, science about social reality should not work that way. Streamlined methods are poor for understanding complex social situations. Being critical towards a hegemonic vision of modernity while still using the methods developed in this spirit; squared; numbered; clean; fast; tidy, is problematic. As argued by Haraway, things are entangled and connected, so social reality is not easily boxable.

Decolonised Knowledge Production and Questioning Who Knows

"Modern science was established on the same universalist framework as colonialism" (Alonso Bejarano et al. 2019, 27). Challenging the political aspects of knowledge production in anthropology calls for considering that the making of a united *us* compared to the exotic *others* is part of the colonialist legacy of anthropology. While keeping in mind the damaging and oppressive history and potential of this dualism, using anthropological tools can also be helpful in challenging this very separation. Looking for radical difference within this *us* can be used for acknowledging the many different world-makings that exist, and as a contrary to the OWW. In line with this, it can also be helpful to question the dualism between valid academic science and other knowledges and to challenge the "academic guardians of what they call rationality" (Stengers in Jensen & Thorsen 2018, 3). The following citation suggests a research process focused on the relation of researchers and researched (colleagues):

> *If what we want is democratic knowledge production that serves not only those who inquire and their institutions, but also those who are inquired upon (and appeals to "knowledge for the good of all" do not cut it), we must soften that boundary erected long ago between those who know versus those from the raw materials of knowledge production are extracted. Part of doing this*

is broadening the conceptual field ... It is also helpful to think creatively about the research process as a relation-building process, as a professional networking process with colleagues (not "subjects"), as an opportunity for conversation and sharing of knowledge, not simply data gathering. Research must be conceived in less linear ways without necessarily knowable goals at the outset. (TallBear 2014, 2).

In line with this, Participatory Action Research (PAR) in anthropology vows for social scientific knowledge production connected to social realities. It rejects understanding science as objective production of universal thought (Alonso Bejarano et al. 2019, 33). PAR is, among other things, drawing on ideas of Paulo Freire, who criticised the domination of one type of knowledge that often was not relevant in the lives and situations of students. It understands and strives for non-academic colleagues or comrades to be part of the knowledge-production process and questions the category of expert knowledge. Aspects of collaborative ethnography and activist anthropology, in the sense of including the fieldwork subjects in the planning and conduct of the research, are used in creating the methods of this thesis. Inspired by the ethics of the 'Politics of Possibilities' by Gibson-Graham (2006), Di Feliciantonio (2017a, 2017b) suggests that critical scientists learn from the alternatives to dominant politics created by social movements. In Di Feliciantonio's opinion, a participatory methodology means spreading the knowledge of the subjects and the possibilities connected to this, and that the researcher herself is open to being transformed by their alternative ways of understanding.

Gibson-Graham (2006, XXX) argue that to find new possibilities and create new political imaginaries, one needs to recognise forces that undermine and constrain alternative possibilities and "deny these forces a fundamental, structural, or universal reality and to instead identify them as contingent outcomes of ethical decisions, political projects, and sedimented localized practices, continually pushed and pulled by other determinations" (Gibson-Graham 2006, XXXI), as well as paying attention to the practices that break with the dominating ones. They use feminist and queer theorists' analytical tools usually used for dissecting patriarchy and heterosexuality for dissecting neoliberalism and argue for a participatory research process, where languages, practices and communities which break with the hegemonic *capitalocentrism* are understood as creating possibilities for other politics and ways of being.

Methods

It is going to be pretty hard to find a non-capitalist place, but non-capitalist value systems are everywhere! What makes those non-capitalist value systems so interesting for anthropologists, among others, is that they show us that there are other possibilities
-Anna Tsing in Latour et al. 2018

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, I started this project with vague questions and feelings, and months of reading what other scholars knew about squatting, urban ecology, sustainable change, resident participation, hegemonic knowledge, and other topics. In line with including non-academic colleagues in the process, I asked them how they understood sustainable change and dwelling in Oslo, and I continued going back to them throughout the process – to check if my analysis and theories made sense to them and fit what they knew.

> **Box B. Diary entry 19.08.2022**
> *Am I looking for something that does not exist? Most of the once occupied spaces are not really squats anymore, but urban ecological projects. In February, the municipality posted a booklet on sustainable housing in Oslo called urban ecological. In it, they mentioned only spaces that started out being occupied in Oslo, so there could be a connection between occupation and 'ecological' living.*

The first conversations of the research happened over Zoom, due to the pandemic, in the autumn of 2021, while most of the fieldwork took place between March and October 2022. In addition to interviews, I attended and observed events concerning housing activism and did around ten more casual conversations with people I met there and in squats and UEPPs. As the research led me to wonder why squats turned into UEPPs, I started spending time on the website of the municipality of Oslo. There, I observed their official discourse on UEPPs, sustainable dwelling and sustainable change. The diary note of Box B presents a moment of doubt and new directions; what they published made me sure that I wanted to include UEPPs in the project.

Interviews, Conversations, and Observation[6]

The questions I have asked[7] have continuously changed. I started with relatively open research questions, so the questions I asked in the semi-structured interviews and conversations, one-to-one and at meetings, followed this. I let the conversations be led by a combination of what I thought was important and interesting to study, and what the participants thought was important and interesting. If generalised models are unfit to meet complex situations, using one set of interview questions with every participant would not allow considering the different

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[6] See Appendix 1 and 2 for list of cited interviews and overview of fieldwork and conversations
[7] See appendix 3 for interview guides.

perspectives and opinions of the participants. I was also as open about my goals and thoughts as I managed, and I asked for their opinions and updated and changed questions.

As the quote by Tsing starting this chapter says, anthropology can be useful for imagining other ways of doing things. The anthropological tools, ethnography, go close and take differences seriously. After the first conversations, I could narrow my focus areas while widening the places where I looked for stories. I asked some of the participants if I could spend time with them in their daily life, but never with the goal of them forgetting that I was doing research. New nuances to what we had talked about in the conversations or interviews came up as we spent more time together.

I also went to some public events about housing in Oslo only as an observer because I wanted to see what directions the conversations took without me interrupting, and how people talked about sustainable dwelling, squatting and UEPPs. At the same time, I was following what was published about squatters and UEPP residents on the municipality's website, in newspapers and on social media. Still, due to this project's short time, the analysis focuses mainly on what was said in the recorded interviews and written on the municipal website – it focuses on the words. All citations from interviews with participants and text from the municipal documents are translated from Norwegian to English, by me. I have included some observations presented in Boxes throughout the chapters. All other stories and knowledges are retellings or direct quotes of what was said and written. This is not to say that what was said in interviews is not affected by my being there, and could not have been said differently, nuances being lost in translation, context, or lack of tone, or that I cannot interpret what they said incorrectly. However, focusing on the words has the advantage of being able to present the exact words that were recorded and written as part of this text, so that the reader can be close to the stories and read for themselves.

Texts, Images, Things

Texts, images, and things have been part of the research. As Beuving & de Vries wrote, "People do not only interact and speak, they also make things" (2015, 113). They interact by making things – through text, images, and different types of art – on pamphlets, spray-painted on walls (stereotypic) and shared on the internet. I looked into open-access letter exchanges between UEPP residents and the Agency for Real Estate and Urban Renewal (EBY), posts on social media and journalists' texts about squatters and UEPPs.

As Goffman has argued, much communication is a representation of self (1953, 1956). Beuving & de Vries writes that "what has been written, let alone printed, stays" (2015, 116). Then, what

has been written and posted on the internet, really stays. It is often written for the whole world to see, it will be saved on servers, legally or illegally, floating around on the abstract internet, for an abstract amount of time. It therefore makes sense to assume that the text represents an independent reality, a part of history, unless there are reasons to assume otherwise. "The best approach is to read documents on two levels simultaneously: as histories, reports, descriptions on a presumed reality, *and* as stories, transactions, efforts aimed at bringing something about" (116). If they are created by a social movement or by a municipal agency, it is reasonable to assume that they are created with a goal in mind. Sometimes, they might say more about who wrote it than what they wrote about.

The research is both geographically grounded, and not. I have not physically travelled outside the limits of the municipality of Oslo, however, the internet and the participants do not exclusively exist within these limits. Increasing amounts of human life are spent on the internet, which is partly a geographically unspecific space. Both the concept of city and the concept of geographically grounded research invite us to imagine the city or the fieldwork as having borders around it – separated. This is, of course, fictional. Ideas, people, and webpages are connected to and travel beyond the borders of Oslo. Social movements, knowledges or world makings are not necessarily geographically grounded or easily geographically limited, either. Geographical specific sites are one way of containing one's research, however, one of many.

The Participants

The people I refer to as 'the participants' and quote throughout the thesis – the people I have interviewed, had conversations with and spent time with – are people who used to live in squats, who currently live in squats, and who live in UEPPs. They have shared the ways they understand, imagine, and practise(d) their imaginations of other ways of dwelling in Oslo. Helle, Bea, Trude, Glenn, Valter and Roger are synonyms and not based on gender. I do not use gendered pronouns either, to further conceal their identities. Some have done or are doing illegal activities, and many experienced prejudices, so concealing their identities was critical.

I met the first participant in a public meeting discussing squatting Brakkebygrenda for the third time. 'Helle' was not currently living in a squat but had lived in several squats between 2004 and 2013 and was engaged in hosing politics and activism. They wanted to help me find more participants and asked their friends if anyone were interested – that is how I met 'Bea'. Bea had lived in squats between 2004 and 2008 and was no longer involved in squatting but engaged in problems of housing and citizen participation in Oslo. I got to know 'Trude' by visiting a squat

I had previously lived in. Trude lives there today and has done so on and off, mostly on, ever since they participated in squatting it in 2014. It was a coincidence that we had not met before.

It was when I decided to involve UEPPs in the research that I got to know 'Glenn'. I got in contact with them by talking with a journalist who had written several cases about squatting in Oslo. Glenn currently lives in a UEPP and has done so since it became that, in 2007. The journalist also gave me contact info for a friend of theirs who lived in another UEPP since 2019, which I have called 'Valter'. I met 'Roger' at an event in that UEPP, as they gave us a tour of their garden. Roger had lived in that UEPP for the last 15 years.

Two participants moved in after the squats became UEPPs; one squatted their dwelling and lived in it as a UEPP. Helle and Bea had squatted countless times but had always been forced to leave and eventually given up. Trude still lived in the squat they took part in squatting.

The Municipal Documents

One of the contexts or situations in which the occupied spaces and UEPPs exist is within the municipality of Oslo. They are physically within the area governed by the municipality, which also owns much property in Oslo, is responsible for housing the inhabitants of Oslo, and is responsible for the UEPPs (in cooperation with the residents). They are also the ones the squatters often critique by taking municipal property. The following documents have examples of official municipal discourses about urban ecology, urban ecological dwelling and UEPPs.[8]

A document described as the "overarching environmental politics of Oslo" (Oslo kommune 2011) was approved by the city council in 2011 and is called *Urban Ecological Program for Oslo. 2011-2026.* The city council of Oslo agreed on eight priority areas that the municipality shall focus on to reach "a more environment-friendly and sustainable urban development and management" (Oslo kommune 2011, 2). Among the priorities, two touches upon sustainable dwelling and resident participation. Topic three states that "Oslo shall have a sustainable urban development with environment-friendly construction- environments and urban spaces" (2), and topic seven, that "Oslo shall work together with the inhabitants, business/private sector and the state for a better environment of Oslo" (2).

The webpage presenting this overarching politics (Oslo kommune 2023b) also provides a list of documents that are strategies and 'action plans' for the environment and climate work. The subtitle on this webpage is *Governing Documents for the Environment- and Climate Work.* In

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[8] See Appendix 4 for a list of the municipal documents.

addition to the Urban Ecological Program, I have read three others that seemed most relevant from this list – ones that mention urban ecology: *Action-plan Environment and Climate 2013-2016* (Oslo kommune 2013), *The Green Shift- Climate and Energy. Strategy for Oslo* (Oslo kommune 2015) and *Climate Strategy for Oslo towards 2030* (Oslo kommune 2020).

The above documents are tools and pointers for the municipality and municipal employees. In February 2022, however, the municipality published a new document called *Theme Booklet for the Project New Dwelling Qualities: Urban Ecological Dwellings and Areas* (Plan-og Bygningsetaten 2022). This project was directed more outwards – to inhabitants and developers of Oslo. It resulted from a project created by the Agency for Planning and Building Services (PBE) called *New Dwelling Qualities,* because the "city council wants more housing with among other things collective housing, self-build and urban ecological projects" (Oslo kommune 2023a). An article on the municipality's web page introducing the pamphlet about urban ecological dwellings and areas was also published, called *Urban Ecology, Testing the Sustainable Solutions of the Future* (Toth 2022).

I use these documents in chapters 7 and 8, which focus mostly on the words that are said or written. I have translated all documents' titles and citations from Norwegian to English myself. These documents are understood as presenting an official discourse of the municipality and should not be understood as reflecting the opinions of individual municipal employees. As discussed above, the documents are a way of communicating with the ones who read them, representing the municipality, and agreeing on goals within the municipality. They might say more about the municipality and their goals, than about what sustainable or urban ecological is.

Positionality, Biases, Ethics, and Limitations

In 2015, I would sit on my roof terrace in Barcelona, observing something curious happening in a building down the street. More and more people kept arriving with their things, they were cooking outdoors, and there was always much activity. It stood out. This became my first introduction to squatting. Later, I joined a cooperative in a squatted social centre in Barcelona, receiving leftovers from bakeries and fruit stores to eat and give to others, I was fascinated by all the spaces and activities created by squatting. The year after, I moved to Trondheim, where something similar was happening. At Svartlamon, they had a community kitchen where they dumpster-dived food and cooked together. It was packed with people. As I had felt in Barcelona, I was intrigued and confused about this space. Some years after that again, I lived in one of the squatted spaces discussed in this thesis. I have also spent some weeks living with Zapatistas in southern Mexico, who taught me that they did not want people to come to try to fix their

problems, but instead start in our corner of our world. We were all fighting the same global oppressive systems, and the best way of showing solidarity was trying to confront such systems – which were often described as neoliberalism, capitalism, and patriarchy – in our corners.

I am a queer woman who grew up in Norway. I have been involved in activism concerning indigenous rights, feminism, and environmental issues for the last ten years. Related to this, I have attended activities in squatted spaces. Therefore, I am researching a group of people with whom I already have some experiences, and preconceived expectations and thoughts about. I shared some opinions with most of the people I met during fieldwork, although their views varied greatly. This could be challenging because the participants were aware of my experiences. I wrote about biases and preconceived expectations in my diary throughout the project to meet such challenges and try to obtain some self-reflexivity. I was also open about them with the participants, and in several instances, we discussed this and how it could influence the project. I asked them to be honest and not mind what they thought I wanted to hear. This had various effects. I had at least one experience where I suspected that the participant instead tried to say what they thought I did not expect to hear because in later, more casual conversations, some viewpoints were moderated.

Most, but not all, participants have political goals related to their squatting practices or lives in UEPPs. I know this affected at least two conversations because they told me they did not want to say anything negative about squatters in Oslo, as they did not want to harm squatters' movements. To meet their concerns and wishes for this thesis, I have left out what they asked me to. Additionally, I avoided reaching out to people who squatted out of necessity, although I was told such places still existed. Because of their presumed vulnerable state and my being a student doing this for the first time, I was uncomfortable asking them to participate.

Box C. Diary entry 06.09.2022
I get scared that the people I talk to will feel used. Even if writing this is important to me, it is more important to refrain from using people. I want to offer to help in return. Apple cake?

Diary writing has been an essential part of my fieldwork, primarily to reflect upon my doubts, position, and biases. In my research plan, diary writing was a weekly chore to make the process more reflective. Taking biases seriously meant finding my obvious biases, like my personal relationship to squatting, and other, more cultural ones. An example is that while occupants might do something illegal, I cannot take for granted that this illegality means morally wrong.

I used Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) guidelines for managing the story collection connected to interviews and conversations. I recorded some conversations and interviews to use

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citations from them, these were immediately transcribed, and audio files were deleted afterwards. I emphasised that the participants could leave the project whenever they wanted and tried to reassure them about this. The group of people I have been interviewing is diverse regarding genders and sexualities, but as mentioned, I chose to anonymise this about them. Based on the same reasoning, I have left out most personal information, such as age and where they are from. Their professions are mentioned in general terms for some participants, as it played a significance in describing their situations. Due to the vulnerable state of particularly the squat that is not public and has not been legalised, its name or exact geographical position is not described. The UEPPs are both public about their projects, and will be recognisable, something that the participants approved of. Nevertheless, I chose not to name them further, and have included a few citations without connecting them to any of the participants, to make sure that it is not clear which participants belong to each space.

My relationship with the participants was less collaborative than I would have wished. This is mainly due to the short period of the project. Most wanted to participate because they thought it was important and appreciated my writing about it. Still, if I had more time I would have wanted to give back in some way and do a second round of conversations or other more collaborative research. While doing the analysis, I focused on some themes and would have needed more time or space to include every aspect of interest. As the study became more directed, I have often wished to go back to discuss these themes further, in depth, and with more people.

The discussion of knowledge is a political one, and scholars have used it to question the objectivity of science and oppression recreated in science. Independently of what is and what is not, it invites us to challenge who knows and criticise the one knowledge without room for others. If dominant sustainability practices are trapped in their own logic, we must go beyond questioning how people see, act and are being in the OWW and also discuss the continuous creations of different objectivities in different situations. Arguing that 'what is' is not objective in one scientific or hegemonic way can work as a tool to bring in a research process – to look for, understand and take what differs from the one truth seriously. Therefore, this thesis discusses how knowledges of sustainability differ and collide in Oslo. This might mean unlearning some things, questioning what knowing is, where it comes from, whether new and academic knowledge is the most real knowledge and being open to radically different ways questioning the status quo real knowledges.

5. Creating Time and Space for Other Ways

The squats and UEPPs explored in this thesis became the participants' dwellings in unusual ways. They were not bought, rented, or inherited. Today, four participants live their everyday lives in the dwellings founded by squatting, whereas Helle and Bea live in for-profit dwellings, so their descriptions of how it was living in squatted dwellings are more distanced, from the past. The following box is my description of some glimpses of the squatted dwelling of Trude.

Box D. Slim power cables and recycled metals 27.09.22
The autumn light makes the moss look intensely green in contrast to what it is growing on. Plants and fungus are covering tall stacks of old scaffoldings and piles of car tiles sown together - trash that has been untouched for at least the last eight years, ever since the space was occupied. The story says that the squatters got to stay there because the property owners had used it to dispose of garbage illegally and feared getting caught. The new residents have driven countless times to the garbage dump, and are still working on it, to get rid of it all, but some things are too heavy for them to move.
Inside Trude's dwelling, the walls are covered with shelves and a large tapestry. The colours are earthy, and the warmth makes me lean back into the chair. They tell me they must use tiny chunks of firewood, not to overheat. They always knew they did not want to rely on electric heating, so good stoves and insulation have been necessary. Although they have not had a problem renting electricity from their neighbours, they still only use a thin cable that they have not considered changing for a thicker one. This is just the way it is, Trude says, and it works, so why would they live in a more energy-dependent way, which would only mean getting a new cable and paying more? It is a point being able to live there without having to pay high bills.
Hanging among their other kitchen knives, a huge machete knife attracts my attention. They tell me they got it from a friend who made them from leftover metals. They were like smiths, using their fires and wood stoves to forge. These knives are only some of the many things they have been making here. There is also a shed built little by little by many different hands, the punk cabin that is everything but square but works for its purpose, and their walls constructed by themselves, which still have grey pencil lines and will never get skirting boards around its windows. Trude explains that making things is a crucial part of everyday life and community there in the squat – it makes them what they are.

In this chapter, I present and discuss experiences with living in dwellings founded by squatting – whether they are defined as squats or UEPPs today – and their knowledges and practices of sustainable dwelling. Sustainable dwelling concerns the dwellers' needs and how they affect other beings' (including humans') needs – now and in the future. As Tsing (2017) explained, sustainability can serve as a radical argument against hegemonic ways. Following her, I also understand dreaming, objecting, and fighting for alternatives as important in the search for sustainable ways. Further, I use feminist theory to discuss how the lives in the dwellings challenge and serve as examples of alternatives to hegemonic knowledge of sustainable dwelling in cities.

To reiterate the first research question, I ask what alternative possibilities of sustainable dwelling derive from squatting in Oslo. This chapter is organised according to three aspects of the dwellings that were important to the participants throughout the fieldwork. First, I go into

how the low housing costs and increased independence of waged work affected their everyday lives. The next part surveys communities the commoning of certain aspects of their everyday lives. Finally, the third part explores a concept commonly called DIY (do-it-yourself), related to taking matters into own hands and simply making things with one's own hands.

The Costs of Expensive Housing, and the Perks of Not Paying Rent

Paid or unpaid, individual or collective, rewarding or not. Work is many different things. Affording a dwelling in Oslo demands a certain amount of waged work for most inhabitants. In the squats and UEPPs, as a result of the participants' low or no rent or mortgages, the standard 37.5-hour work week was not the standard. Still, they all had paid jobs or were students – most of the people I met were in social care or creative professions and were dependent on doing certain other types of work. This part presents and discusses participants' knowledges about how expensive housing and work are related to possibilities for how one can dwell, and how dependency or independency of working 37.5 hours is connected to freedom, engaging politically, and creating alternatives.

Being trapped half-dead inside hamster wheels

As the participants described issues with the standard working week and expensive housing, they painted claustrophobic dark images. This citation is an example:

> *I think that you become sort of… trapped in it, because it becomes like a rat wheel, a hamster wheel? You somehow cannot get out of it. You earn just enough to live and to survive.* (Helle)

Such claustrophobic spiral was similarly described by others too:

> *The day is incredibly short, eat and then you're tired, then you have to go to bed, and then you have to go back to work again.* (Roger)

Roger also explained it as repetitive, like the hamster wheel. There is not much time left in that 'incredibly short' day, no time to do anything else than these activities you must do to live - or what Trude compared to death - "I do wish for a place where it's possible for people to not live themselves to death". Valter also emphasised not being able to choose:

> *I think… I grew up in Oslo… So, I am familiar with, I know how the rental market has been and how that decides how one can live, but also the direction it is taking.* (Valter)

Valter emphasised that one is forced to live a particular life to afford housing in Oslo. Overall, the participants worried about the lack of time for 'life' following expensive housing in Oslo.

Non-Commercial Alternatives

These dark images were important factors of what the participants wanted alternatives to and expensive housing in Oslo was blamed for forcing people into such lives. Helle explained that creating non-commercial alternatives is tricky because "that is probably what the capital does not want… less focus on earning money" (Helle). Nevertheless, though non-commercial dwelling was explained as essential for *allowing* alternatives, for creating time and room for other things, their alternatives must not be reduced to only concerning economy. Valter clarified that the cheap rent was one reason for wanting to live in a UEPP, but further that "I'd say it was the totality of the political project, and that I knew how the house was like, where it was located, and knew people who lived there" (Valter).

Valter, who knew that conventional housing in Oslo 'decides how one can live', described how their dwelling could be used for learning about other possibilities of organising dwelling.

> *I think it is extremely important to… the stuff about the third dwelling sector and such. That one looks more at such types of solutions and thinks more about how one… can live. And this project is very concrete, and kind of a demonstration of what that can look like and how it can work.* (Valter)

They emphasised a new dwelling sector allowing alternative ways– if one did not want dwellings in Oslo to restrict people – a new one was crucial. Their UEPP could be a model for this, as their way of living did have room for alternatives. Although Valter here called it a 'third dwelling sector', most people I met during the fieldwork emphasised the importance of not calling it that. Instead, they proposed calling it a non-commercial sector to ensure that the sector could not become corrupted and commercialised, which in their opinion, was incompatible with what they wanted this sector to be. A non-commercial sector could allow low rent, and the low or no rent brought along other possibilities.

> *The rent is very cheap. That also gives a lot of freedom, both to do things… change how one lives, but also in life, in general, I would say. How much people pay varies a little, it is based both on income and kind of, how many people share the apartment, and if one has kids and so on.* (Valter)

Trude was also preoccupied with cheaper dwellings and wanted more dwellings where others could also avoid living themselves to death.

> *It's clear that this is also a reason for me living as I do, being able to live for free… it does make my life a whole lot easier. I wish there could be built some municipal housing that… I don't know… there* must *be built more dwellings where one can regulate the price to a larger degree.* (Trude)

Just like Valter, they wanted a new dwelling sector that was not driven by economic gain but that instead was regulated. Living for free made life easier, and feeling free was something Trude appreciated highly, as they were "a little anarchist by heart" (Trude).

Trude had worked full-time as an engineer for one year after finishing their education, but it made them unhappy. They now worked part-time as a nurse, and as for unwaged work, that was about daily chores, fixing things, and creating or building something according to their priorities and needs. Even though their everyday life depended on many of these activities - gathering wood, building, maintenance, and driving countless trailers of trash to the dump - Trude never expressed that it was a harmful dependency. They enjoyed it, although they knew they could not continue living like that when they got older – when their bodies could no longer handle the physical work. However, for now, it made them happy. At the time of the year in the situation described in Box D, winter was approaching, and as they exclusively heated their dwelling with firewood, Trude now spent weeks preparing everything for winter. They enjoyed gathering wood– it was meditative to carry and stack the wood, and it was seasonal, repetitive in periods but the periods were changing, so it did not bother them. And it was outdoors.

> *I like living close to the woods. The forest is such an integral part of my life and everyday life. I go on many hikes in the forest. I mean, it's not the forest because you do hear the road clearly, it's not exactly wilderness. And the social activities are very connected to bonfires, which is the trademark of this place. Other than that, it's just another place to live. People also have normal jobs and normal lives here. (Trude)*

During the time we spent together, they often expressed appreciation and the importance of doing work one appreciated while also emphasising that they all had regular, paid jobs too.

Roger also worked in the health sector and pointed to similar outcomes of being less dependent on money, - "you don't have to be so stressed about getting all that money in every month. It gives people a little more breathing space" (Roger). This freedom allowed them another type of wealth. Roger explained that,

> *It's insanely enjoyable when we have fun together and work on projects together. We have worked on isolating the attic, and when we have arranged concerts in the basement, and, of course, it is that you do things together, or if someone needs help, if someone is sick or something, you can go shopping for that neighbour. [...] It's terrific to have low rent so that one can do projects, whether it is a hobby or politics, it gives people a quality of life.* (Roger)

They often emphasised how much they enjoyed all the work they did in their garden,

> *We have had the small garden all the time, but the vegetable garden out there, it's only a couple of years ago that we made it so systematic and nice. We've worked a lot out there.* (Roger)

In general, maintaining their dwellings in the sense of trying to take care of things so that they could last as long as possible and cultivating plants in the gardens was talked about as meaningful work by the residents. Glenn emphasised how important it was to have low consumption and maintain the dwelling in an environmentally friendly way. Therefore, they "isolated the floor slab in the basement and got to throw a permaculture course in the garden" (Glenn). However, they also often struggled with getting allowed to conduct environmentally

friendly projects by the municipality. This will be further discussed in the following chapters, but as being able to dwell sustainably – respecting own and other living beings' needs – was experienced as being made difficult by current politics, having time to engage politically was important to most participants. The dwellings explored in this thesis were ongoing projects in the sense of maintaining old buildings and in the sense of working for getting to stay as long as possible and trying to have a political impact.

Time to Engage Politically

> *Housing politics is my job, my hobby, and my life* (Glenn)

The described freedom was also a political goal for the participants, and the freedom from 'not getting in all that money' made working towards this goal possible. Whether it was political work or activism, they were trying to create change beyond changing their dwellings. For Bea, criticising the current politics and having a voice was a fundamental part of the work they did as squatters,

> *Well, we… many were homeless UFB[9] kind of, so it was a point for us to keep the dwellings for as long as possible, hmm… and that time also allowed us to work politically with the things we wanted to get through.* (Bea)

The squatters who were always thrown out of their dwellings, like Bea, spent much time 'working politically' when they were not busy finding somewhere new to squat. Much of their work was directed at creating media attention. Creating attention to and spreading knowledge of issues of housing politics in Oslo was both a point in itself and could contribute to making people more sympathetic to squatting, potentially increasing their chances of staying longer and doing more political work.

As Roger explained that their cheap rent in the UEPP released time to engage politically, Bea's situation also allowed them to be involved in politics and activism. In both UEPPs, they sometimes organised public events, which were about anything from politics to learning about cultivating food. Valter emphasised how "it is a project that aims to change the housing market through… through how one lives. That makes it like… direct action" (Valter). And it was not only about housing activism,

> *So, for me, and that goes for many in the house, we're many who are politically engaged in other areas as well, and who work on these issues anyways, so it makes sense… to connect that to everyday life and how you live. And then it, of course, has a lot to say, like, I work freelance, I do theatre, kind of freelance artist, and then it's very… it's pretty precarious. The income can go up*

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[9] UFB, uten fast bopel, without permanent residence

and down, so it's clear that living this way gives possibilities. It's also in our interest that the housing market changes in that direction over time. (Valter)

Connecting political engagement – whether housing politics or other causes – to everyday life accurately describes the participants' ways of living. As Glenn explained, housing politics was their life. Both as they lived their alternatives and as these alternatives created room for engaging politically. They spent much time discussing "municipal housing politics and how it can become more social, sustainable, and write opinion pieces sometimes in media and… I know I have a voice. And I collaborate with many". Roger similarly explained how the UEPP allowed them to spend all their time on political activism when they were younger: "We almost constantly worked with activism. We had an office in here" (Roger). Challenging current politics was understood to be an inevitable part of trying to create change.

From Hamster Wheel to Time

The participants' dark metaphors of life in for-profit dwellings resemble Pat Moan's writing about being lucky if you can do more than collapsing from the 40-hour workweek (Moan 1980). Like her, they were critical towards expensive housing, forcing people into a 'dead' life. The time the participants of UEPPs and the squat did have, allowed them to challenge this, as well as pursue other aspects of what they understood as sustainable ways of living. As Moan wrote, they had time to "get down to the business of living" (Moan 1980, 181) and explore and live other possibilities.

The name of the '37.5-hour work week' can give the impression that only paid work is work, which feminists have criticised for decades. They have emphasised the importance of household labour and care work–typically gendered work – also being defined as work. Defining it otherwise has been essential in fighting oppression. By doing less paid work and considering maintenance work as part of the rent in the UEPPs, the category of work was unsettled among the participants. The way they used their gardens as spaces for spreading knowledge of cultivation, creating community with the neighbourhoods, and spaces where insects could thrive, made gardening a respected and important type of work. Understanding political work or activism as important work also contributed to disturb paid work as real and important work. For the participants, as for Moan, not being forced to pay for expensive housing in Oslo laid the foundation for increasing the emphasis on- and respect for other types of work.

The point of this discussion is not to divide between good and bad work, with paid work being of the bad kind. As Roger explained, they used to spend almost all their time doing activism,

but now they enjoyed spending it in their paid job in the health sector and working in their garden. The participants claimed that not being forced into working a certain number of hours or in a certain well-paid job – engineering in Trude's case – freed them from being trapped in a life without time for community, political work, fixing things themselves and feeling good.

Schor similarly describes how less time spent in waged labour enables social relations and democratic participation.

> *In the work-centric societies of the Global North, family, community, and political life suffer as people do not have sufficient leisure for social activities. Social relations are time-intensive; long working hours reduce investment in social connections and produce higher television viewing and exhaustion. Similarly, short working hours are essential for robust participation in democratic governance.* (Schor 2014, 96)

Schor here points to long working hours making people watch more tv, an escapist activity reminding of the escapist diversion mentioned by Moan. Moan, Schor and the participants describe how the exhaustion of working long hours gets in the way of aspects of life necessary for own well-being, political participation and indulging in sustainable practices.

As explained in the literature review, it has been argued that the deregulation of housing contributed to a de-politicisation of it. However, all participants of this thesis understood housing as a political matter and had done so throughout the de-politicised decades described by Kjærås & Haarstad (2022). Their dwellings resulted from squatters and social movements working on throwing attention to issues with housing in the middle of this proposed draught. Moreover, their dwellings continued to be arenas of housing activism and politics. Scholars have also emphasised how the time, communities and space in squats enable participation in political activities, such as feminist struggles: "Squats delineated a spatial framework for the women's liberation movement in the 1970s, providing for women's centres, refuges from domestic violence, workplaces, and nurseries as well as homes" (Morrow & Parker 2020, 618).

Cattaneo (2018) also describes precisely what the participants explained as their experiences; doing less paid work freed time for squatters to engage in diverse political activities, often directed towards critiquing growth-minded politics. Cattaneo has further argued that less time spent in the labour market contributes less to the capitalist economy. Therefore, squatters can contribute to degrowth goals (Cattaneo 2018). He also points to it reordering wealth differences, as it avoids the people who rent and have less money paying to those who own and get richer (Cattaneo 2018). According to Cattaneo then, squatters contribute to degrowth goals in several ways. As emphasised by Helle, the ones who profit from the expensive city depend on people earning and spending money. Challenging this way of organising the city could lead to less

economic growth and decreased differences in wealth. However, as the following part addresses, the communities and the emotional were also important aspects of what was enabled in the squats and UEPPs, which, as argued, should not be reduced to only being about economy.

Most participants connected the freedom they got from low or no rent to the possibility of cultivating community, other interests, and political activism, maintaining, as well as not choosing a profession based on wage. If one is working oneself 'to death' in a paid job to pay rent or mortgage – time for community, organising or protesting might not be available. Even though there are differences in the dwellings of the participants, they all allow for this in different ways, and they all had the freedom to use their time to cultivate what they wanted, gardens, social relations, and political engagement alike.

A building full of people without the standard 37.5 hours of paid work makes a different way of living together possible. There is more time to share, give, and organise. It can seem like the 'extra time' inhabitants of the UEPPs, and squats have, is an essential factor in their communities. As Schor argues, social relations demand time. Both doing other projects – political or not – and being social is easier when you have more of that. The next part explores how the participants explained the communities in their dwellings. People need community and relations to feel good, share things, knowledges, and skills, and be politically engaged.

Community and Care. "We are a Really Good House"

Box E. A private interview in a not-so-private community 09.10.2022

I stop the voice recorder, again, because someone suddenly enters the apartment, again. The other times it has been to borrow or deliver something – by now I have become an expert in reaching for the stop button before anyone who has not signed a consent form gets to say anything. This time, the two people who enter have open eyes and speak fast, discussing and organising some support concert for tonight.

As they close the door behind them, they excuse themselves for smelling like smoke and quickly propose that we should also go and check out the bonfire because of the atmosphere. But it has not been quiet there all day, so now they need a break.

All I can think of now is where this place is and what is happening there. They are too busy preparing for tonight to answer all my confused questions, but what I gather is that the support concert is against an eviction. The evicted residents live in a building similar to this one, and now they are refusing to leave – it sounds like a new squat.

I repeat the directions in my head all the way there and hope the smell of bonfire and sound of occupants will be my guiding star.

As described in these observations from an interview, people kept casually coming by. The living room we sat in did not feel private, although it was not defined as common space either.

Roger, whom I was interviewing that day, told me they thought the monthly house meetings in different living rooms were one of the factors making the dwellings more collective.

You meet each other… and the fact that the house meetings take place in different apartments, suddenly you have been in everybody's home, then it's easier to come back or pop in and ask something. Here when I'm tired after work… you get a lot for free, you don't have to organise, you just go downstairs in the garden in the summer, people are there, or, I can hear that there is a good atmosphere in the apartment next door, so I can knock, that's what it's like here. (Roger)

Valter also emphasised the importance of house meetings for the community:

But then there's also, like, a community in the house then. We do have the meetings once a month, like general assemblies in different apartments in the house and… yes then you get to spend time in the other apartments and you do get to know your neighbours pretty well, so it is very like, social, in that sense. (Valter)

These participants both emphasised being physically inside each other's dwellings during house meetings contributing to the community. They also explain that many of the residents have lived in several of the apartments in the building, making it feel even more like the whole building is their home in a way, not just their apartments.

As mentioned, they often brought forward the shared bathrooms as a unique feature of their dwelling. However, it was not only the bathrooms that were shared; it was also the stairways, the garden, the attic, the concert space in basements, and occasionally the apartments.

The fact that people have more common rooms or more common areas – places to meet, I think it can be good for many, not to sit inside their apartments and be isolated. [...] When there was a pandemic and people were in quarantine, we were really nervous about how it would go with sharing a shower, do we all get sick? And, at the beginning when we didn't know, now we are all in isolation… can anyone go grocery shopping? That brought out a really nice side of us. Then we are a really good house, I think. When people have.... then it's very nice to live together here. (Roger)

Valter emphasised that they thought that "it's part of the idea of urban ecology that we, for example, have more common space here. Not everyone needs to have their own storage, like… not everyone needs to have their own tools, then". Roger similarly thought that "it's positive if we can share things and use as few resources as possible. Try to consume little and share things. That we don't have, I mean, we're not fantastic either, we have two bathrooms and one washing machine that we share, but I don't think that's revolutionary". They also explained that it is not just material things that are shared; it is also maintenance work, gardening and organising events in the basement. It is time and experiences, space, life, and dinners:

There are periods when we have shared dinners, I think it is enormously nice to do such social things together. When there are many children in the house, they keep coming to visit, it's nice to live in a house where everyone really knows each other, this results in it being a very short walk to the neighbour. (Roger)

Roger laid pressure on *very short* – they do not just live physically close to each other, they also know each other well and are used to spending time together. They were smiling when they described how they supported each other:

I think it's a very good place to grow up. I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to live here, life would be different if I had rented some apartment. You get a lot for free from living here, in terms of being social, and having good relationships and, I have made friends here that one might not have met otherwise, good neighbours who support you when you need it. I think many people would have benefited from living like this, like the patients I work with, they are lonely. I had to ask one of my neighbours to drive to Ammerud and buy firewood, I couldn't carry a single sack, but it's in the attic now, that's how it is to live here! (Roger)

Bea also explained how the community in their former squats made them content with their life,

being part of a group like that is almost everything that make life worth living, in a way. Because you have a community and a group you feel like you belong in. And you work together towards clear goals, and through having those common enemies that, that the municipality, and the state, and to some degree the police were… so one becomes very gathered, then. (Bea)

I experienced the way we worked as a group as very good because… we were a group of people who were very engaged and wanted to do things… and who actually got things done. That was a motivation in itself. (Bea)

These communities are alternatives to the mainstream way of living, with nuclear families or singles divided in each own dwelling. When maintenance work and economic expenses were shared, some often individual responsibilities become commoned. Valter expressed ideas about being open to alternatives other than living with the nuclear family.

So, it's a thing that very much is focused on getting settled as fast as possible, and there's something about this type of model, and then one can kind of establish it as a possible way of living. And in the future, I think it would've been a good thing to also think a little more open-minded about how to live, saying… to be able to create a housing stock for various types of needs according to family structures changing, and… some perhaps don't want to live only in the nuclear family. (Valter)

Here, Valter asked for more open-mindedness about what types of communities there is room for in dwellings. They argued for thinking differently about housing and paying more attention to various needs instead of forcing people into isolated nuclear homes. As mentioned earlier, they adjusted the rent according to income and living situation, so that their differences are acknowledged and those who can contribute the most, do. This secured that the freedom described in the former part was available for all residents, regardless of the situation – also economic aspects were handled more communally.

"I Have Lost My Will to Be a Charity Project"

But we have had a round in the conflict council to talk things out… it's not idyllic, it hasn't been all the way here, far from it. What were we arguing about? Well, we have. (Roger)

The participants also experienced challenges with the communities in squats and UEPPs. Community and commoning did not come about without difficulties. As Roger explained, they had needed to work on them in the past. Although the participants did not describe there being any conflicts in their dwellings today, most of the participants had gone through different conflicts in the past.

Several participants mentioned that squatting sometimes attracted people who had drug issues, struggled with mental health, or in other ways. This had become problematic at times, making it challenging to ensure that everyone, including young and vulnerable, felt comfortable and safe. On the other hand, squats could also help people who struggled and needed a place to stay, a community and something to work towards.

> *However, at the same time, part of what attracts people to squatting, for example, is essentially the same thing that makes people do illegal things. Meaning, that these are people from low-income households who have social problems, who have experienced poverty, drugs – in other words, some of the things that are problematic for people. So… in that cohesion and the strong group feeling and sense of purpose, it's also, people's destinies, kind of, different starting points, that are easier or harder to live with. I believe that, in a way, being allowed to be part of that group has contributed positively to people's mental and physical health…* (Bea)

Bea explained both the positive aspect of being a space that can be of help to people who need it and touched on the aspect of squatting attracting people who could be hard to live with. Being a social work student, passionate about young people who struggle, they shared their frustration about there being few spaces where young people can be without spending money. Bea also explained how their growing up was difficult and that being part of the group and working towards a goal together, gave them everything they needed to live good lives.

Glenn explained that for them, at some point, when they got older and people had kids, they could not be a 'social project' anymore. They had wanted to be open to everyone, but in the end it became too chaotic, and they did not have the energy. As much as they did not want to exclude anyone, to be a good place for themselves and others who were less able to contribute, they needed a certain part of people who could.

Trude shared similar frustrations. They talked ambiguously about the importance of being able to contribute. They wanted to be a space for everyone in theory, they had been in the past, but in practice, this had not worked. They often told me they felt egoistic because they had lost the energy or will to take care of people who needed much help. When explaining how it was decided that two new people are moving in, they say

> *This is our, our home. I have lost my will to be a charity project and help God knows who. If new people move in that I must help with all kinds of stuff all the time, then… I'm a bit tired of that. If new people move in now, it's people that we know from before.* (Trude)

Trude referred to a previous conversation when they explained their relationship to someone who moved in and lived next to them; the neighbour would knock on their window every day, asking for help. It ended with them asking the neighbour to move out. When talking about not welcoming everyone who wanted to live there, they expressed guilt and asked who they were to decide who gets to live there when they had just moved in without asking themselves. It seems they did not feel they had the right to decide what happened there because they were not the legal owners on paper. As written above, they requested more dwellings where the price was regulated; they could not house everyone wanting or needing it.

Roger similarly discussed that when deciding on new residents for their UEPP, they emphasised the applicants' abilities to contribute to the community.

> *We want to accommodate the people who need it here, but we also want information about how they can contribute and so on. That is important. Why do you want to live in this type of house? Is it because the rent is low, or do you want to contribute to create something else? Urban ecology and such… Or is it because you really cannot manage the rental market, that you have a great need? That can be a good argument too.* (Roger)

They also touched on this feeling of wanting the project to be a space for people in need, but being able to contribute and wanting to 'create something else' was also important. Many wanted to move into the different dwellings founded by squatting, so they had made ways of deciding who got to move in. In one of the UEPPs, they decided together during their monthly meetings. Every resident was asked in the squat where Trude lived, and if one person said no, it was a no.[10] In general, they had in common that the community decided who got to move in.

Unmeasurable Values

In line with what Mehta & Harcourt argue in their article about feminist and decolonial contributions to degrowth, a "feminist lens allows us to tease out these non-material, emotional aspects by acknowledging the importance of care and love, and the damage done when these aspects of life are absent" (Mehta & Harcourt 2021, 1), the participants all brought forward emotional aspects of their communities. Sharing, belonging to a group, collaborating, and caring for each other made them feel good. As Roger said, they felt fortunate not having to stress or rent some apartment without the community, and as Bea described, their gathered

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[10] When I moved into this space years ago, I had to come and meet everyone. They asked me why I wanted to live there. Later, they explained that since it is an untraditional home, and since some have not always respected it as a home, in the same way as a purchased and legally owned dwelling, it is particularly important for them that no one needed to live with someone they did not feel comfortable with.

community made them feel good and appreciate their lives. Valter commented that one could learn from their experiences with the community aspect when planning a new housing sector.

Their dwellings made room and time for organising politically, and the communities in them were big parts of this. Scholars have also emphasised similar effects of having a secure dwelling combined with a strong community. Nembhard (2014) describes how the African American cooperative roots have been important in establishing

> *Negro-organized communities and communes to house freed African Americans and to teach them how to live as free people, earn a living and an education, and run their own communities. [...] These communities created spaces of isolation and independence from racism* (Nembhard 2014, 34)

It has also been seen among female factory workers that their cooperative communities enable them to uphold their strikes (Morrow & Parker 2020). The squats and UEPPs had room for community in gardens, around bonfires and in each other's dwellings. Although Engelstad described a lack of shared spaces in the UEPP E37, none of the participants of this thesis shared this opinion. Their communities were necessary for their ways: of doing maintenance work together, horizontal governing, helping each other, sharing, having a satisfactory community, feelings of belonging and working together towards their political goals. It made them freer – freedom that allowed other ways of dwelling and participating in Oslo.

As Moan, Morrow, and Parker argued, creating more communal ways of living also contributes to challenging the gendered division of work and disturbs the notion of work within the dwelling being private and individual. For some, the communal activities were shared dinners, maintenance, or other chores. For others it was workshops or political work. I now end this part where I started, with a description of what happened when I went out to look for the new squat.

Box F. Finding Oslo Gate 35, 09.10.2022

I eventually located smoke. The music and signs about a flea market also made it hard to miss. As I enter the garden, they invite me to help myself with coffee and waffles and explain that they are entering uncertain times, so they cannot keep having this much stuff. Someone hands me a lighter, and I say I do not smoke, but they say it is always nice to have one with you in case someone needs to borrow one. While I eat my waffle in the last ray of sunlight, they explain how they have stayed there illegally for a week. So far, they have not heard anything from Bane NOR[11] – the owner. They expect them to throw them out, but they are not too worried about that because if they gain attention to the case, that is a victory in itself. The case is explained in a pamphlet, and this is an excerpt:

> *In addition to many urban development projects worthy of critique in Oslo in the last decade, there is also an interest in alternative, more social forms of dwelling. Quality and diversity in the city's neighbourhoods will not happen with today's commercial development – other perspectives on what is of value in a city must be considered.*
> *We aspire to contribute by opening this house for the neighbourhood [...]. The former inhabitants' focus on urban ecology and art- and cultural diversity is something we*

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[11] Bane NOR is a state-owned railway company. From the webpages of Bane NOR Eiendom, it is explained as one of Norway's main Property Managers and Developers. The company owns, manages, operates and develop railway related properties and hubs. https://www.banenoreiendom.no/about-us

They now want the space to be positive for the neighbourhood and make the 'grownups' listen. I meet someone I know, a former inhabitant of the house and a former squatter. They moved out a while ago and have just come by to pick up some of their stuff. They explain that most of the ones staying are younger and that they wish them the best of luck, followed by a sigh and with that, what I had planned to be my last day of fieldwork turned out to be the official opening of the first new squat (that I have managed to locate, at least) in Oslo after the pandemic.

DIY – "Not Asking for Permission, Just Doing It"

Squatting is a way of taking matters into own hands. A way of acting, of not waiting for others to solve one's problems, of taking space without waiting for or asking for permission. The participants kept using the English expression 'DIY' (do-it-yourself) when referring to fixing, making, or doing things on their initiatives. Before I discuss their experiences, however, I will present a place that could also count as a former squat by the definition used in this thesis but that does not usually go by that categorisation. The saunas in the fjord are dear places for many inhabitants of Oslo that started with illegal use of space, and they will here serve as an example of 'DIY urbanism' that could be called squatting but is not associated with squatting and what it takes for illegal use of space becoming appreciated and taken seriously.

Box G. The Sauna, from occupying urban seashore to posterchild

Oslo Sauna Association was formed in 2016 by anarchists and diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ice bathing club. It all started with the sauna raft Måken, which was built with driftwood found in Bjørvika. Since then, the popularity of saunas and ice baths has increased considerably (Oslo badstuforening 2022).

The above quotation is from the association's webpage, describing how it all started. Finding more information about what happened before this meeting between anarchists and diplomats is difficult. The people I meet in the saunas do not know and there is nothing else on their website. However, a master's thesis on space-making in Oslo explains the story of the saunas more thoroughly: Two friends, an activist interested in urbanism and a Swede missing saunas in Oslo, wanted to create a public sauna that was more economically accessible. They built it on an island in the fjord with driftwood and leftover wood from a festival in Oslo. The finished product was a sauna called Måken (Norwegian for seagull). After that, a long period of moving it between different places along the harbour in Oslo followed. "They were moving the sauna to areas where the different departments would have fewer controls or on the line between different departments' responsibility, where they would expect the other department to take care of the issue..." (Reich 2020, 97). She explains that they were not welcome, "The Sørenga property development, the authorities, the harbour authorities and the residents were against the sauna; they considered it unaesthetic and the project as unfitting for the area" (Reich 2020, 97).

This lasted until they met the diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ice bathing club, which became interested in it. Reich also explains how a Norwegian celebrity frequently posted photos of it on Instagram. After positive public attention and co-work with the diplomats, they finally achieved permission to dock along the harbour. Today, the association has grown considerably. Illustrations of the sauna have been repeatedly used by the municipality of Oslo and the municipal real estate company Hav Eiendom, so it is no longer seen as unaesthetic and unfitting. If anything, it is now the opposite.

The two friends who created the sauna wanted to create a place that made the fjord and saunas more available for everyone, not just the wealthy. Like squatters who tried to create spaces where people could spend time without spending money, it was an effort that used illegal methods to fight economic growth or income governing who gets to use urban space.

Bea similarly explained that they initiated projects as a critique of and a wish to create non-commercial spaces for people:

> *When you're standing there in an empty house and have a goal of being… a place where people can gather and where people can live and where cultures can come together and exist together, then it's kind of up to us to arrange things, then. Concerts, book launches… it was up to us to cultivate the… so, Skar Leir for example, we had a goal of cultivating vegetables there, and that demanded a lot related to cultivating the soil.* (Bea)

Every time they occupied a new place, they aimed to make it available to the public. They described how non-commercial places where people could be without spending money disappeared one by one, exchanged for yet another office building. "And if there is one thing the centre of Oslo doesn't need more of – it's fucking offices" (Bea). Helle also emphasised non-profit places to be in Oslo:

> *And then, if there were more places to be without spending money, people would have become freer, and had a different wealth then, with experiences – to share, have a community… less isolation in society. Then one will also be freer, financially too.* (Helle)

Changing youth losing places to hang out and non-profit culture spaces disappearing would entail stopping prioritising profit over people when administrating property. This is the matter they were taking into their own hands when they were occupants, interlinked with a critique towards the municipality letting property rot if they were not planned to be profitable.

> *The aim was it becoming a kind of forest centre. And then, it just remained empty. So when we took it, we thought, 'how hard can it be to realise those plans?' So, we kind of created a café for the weekends. We did a youth club in the evenings. We did a nature trail on Sundays. And tried to, kind of… initiate a bunch of measures to give some sort of forest centre to the people, then.* (Bea)

In this case, the critique is directed towards the municipality not accomplishing its plans. They explained what happened to a huge property, 'Skar Leir', that was bought by the municipality and left unused.

Helle was also frustrated about the slow bureaucracy and having to be a professional to participate in creating positive places in the city.

> *I think they have many empty houses at their disposal that could have been used for better purposes than rotting. Maybe the municipality of Oslo could have relaxed a little on some bureaucracy… if people want to do something positive for society, for example, run a cultural centre, it's terribly difficult. You need an education and to go through the right roads, then it becomes your job, there aren't many possibilities of doing it voluntarily.* (Helle)

Bureaucracy and professionalisation were blamed for not allowing people to participate in the city. As they did not believe in growth-minded politics and businesses creating a good city, squatting and DIY became a way of contributing and participating.

Demanding the Right to Participate

Box H. Against Slow Processes and Political Correctness 27.09.2022

We are about to get into the car to drive out of the gate of one of the currently squatted spaces. As Trude opens the gate that looks like it's closed by a thick lock and chains, I realise it is only closed with a tiny little thread. They tell me it's just to prevent the wind from opening it, and I think to myself that it is probably not just the wind it prevents from opening it. There is no bell by it, so if one does not want to walk around it, one is left with trying to shout or knock loud enough.

Besides the gate, it is written 'ALL FOR ALL, UNTILL ALL IS ….TY'. I ask them what it once said, but they do not remember. Until all is *shitty*? They start talking about how things were when they moved here around ten years ago. They were tired of people being politically correct and therefore had posters saying, 'Eat the poor, stay rich' and 'Homeless people, go home', and things like that. They wanted to joke about the political, but they emphasised that this was not something they stood by for real, they only wanted to make fun of problems both within society and within the squatting community. They were tired of big ideological discussions and making huge plans without doing anything about it. The ones who moved here agreed that it had to be different from the previous places. They did not want long meetings; they did not want to spend hours talking, discussing, and planning on things that might never happen. They wanted no one to ask for permission to do anything. If one wanted to make something, one could just do it. Moreover, they did not want people to move here because it was cool.

When the participants talked about DIY, they often emphasised the power of being able to influence and create things, without waiting for someone else to solve the issues and without spending much time planning it. When Trude looked back at when they were first introduced to squatting, to a life and a home that they made themselves at Brakkebygrenda, they described:

> It was incredibly fun to just, just… I did exactly what I wanted, and I was introduced to the whole DIY, do-it-yourself, way of thinking. I was kind of brought into it, to all kinds of things. One could just do things oneself. I have some carpentry background, and it is just like, hell, we can just dumpster dive materials, get materials for free on Finn, and find things around and about. Build things… Just, not asking for permission, just do it. Yes. That was totally… Cool as shit. (Trude)

Trude got excited when talking about Brakkebygrenda. About creating things, as opposed to the one thing they criticised the most: talking big and doing nothing. As described in Box H, they and the group who squatted a new space when they were evicted from Brakkebygrenda, were also tired of parts of the squatting culture, which in their opinion, got too busy with long meetings and big words. Therefore, they distanced themselves from parts of it in the new squat, ensuring that the DIY aspect of it was withheld.

When Helle looked back at life in Brakkebygrenda, they also expressed appreciation for the possibilities of making things and sharing skills,

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There was always someone working on some project. Either it was [X] repairing some banjo or someone insulating their shower, there was always something going on… A lot of recycling, everything was basically reused. Firewood gathering, pallet gathering, […] a dark room for developing photos. It is very important for me, a place where I am content living needs to have a workshop. I need to have a workshop at home and Brækkers was a big workshop, so to say. (Helle)

Trude and Helle both described Brakkebygrenda as a place where one had freedom and space to create things. Many participants talked about the squat with longing and bitterness about the eviction. They took the liberty of using the space and continued using it to create things.

It seems that just as the occupants emphasised squatting as a way of taking things into their own hands, they generally emphasised doing things with their own hands. Valter, who had never been part of squatting their dwelling, also emphasised DIY as a part of their lives at the UEPP. "It is kind of DIY at ours, so… I do kind of feel, I do feel that I have quite a lot of power, or like, if it is, the frames that the house gives." (Valter). They connected the possibility of being able to do it yourself with having power and compared their situation to that of a tenant, not even allowed to hang a picture on the wall. Roger explained further about their UEPP,

[a]nd we try to do as much as possible ourselves. We pay more rent than we need to, so we have savings, so when things need to be repaired, we don't have to call the municipality and be like, 'hello, the entrance door just broke'. Therefore, we're more independent. (Roger)

Glenn explained that the municipality had not supported them in environmentally friendly maintenance, so "everything else, we have just, just done ourselves" (Glenn). Even though they now had a formal agreement letting them stay in the UEPP, they had not entirely left actioning; a couple of years ago the municipality decided that they would be able to expand the UEPP by using another abandoned tree building close to the current UEPP. But time had passed, and nothing had happened. Tired of being forced to watch the house decay, and what they explained as the municipality stalling the project, they did what Glenn called an innocent and kind action. One day they just went there and started doing maintenance work on the house. They brought attention to the cause by starting to scrape away old paint of rotting planks, illegally.

Roger also explained a situation in which the municipality was involved, where they were allowed to use a space for certain things, but chose to push the limits:

We sent an email to the Agency for Urban Environment and asked if it was okay if we cultivated there. Then they came for an inspection, one was very nice and one was strict, later we got a letter, saying yes okay, but do not plant any trees or, it must be such that if they suddenly want to use the area – they have done that before when they had to repair the railway, they drove through with a construction machine down that hill, so it has happened! So that's why it was a bit like 'be prepared that it belongs to the municipality', right? Then they were supposed to come for an inspection after a year, but a year passed, then we thought, 'now a year has passed, maybe we should send an email? ah no, they should contact us if they are interested in an inspection'. After that, we have not heard anything, and now we have applied for green funds from the district, which we have received, it really helps to get some money. And with little money, we can get by for a long time, because we try

to reuse everything. We find a bit of stone and a bit of Leca and some pallet racks. There is very bad soil out there, that's why we have used a lot of pallet racks, - added compost and bought some soil and... Then, the garden gradually became what it is today, and then we got the garden award last year, which was amazing. I think it was the municipality of Oslo themselves that nominated us for the award... We have not applied for permission to build that greenhouse, to put it like that. (Roger)

Roger laughed about the situation, explaining that they were not that worried they would drive through the garden again after they were rewarded the price – the greenhouse was now accepted.

In addition to the positive public attention they had gotten, they were touched by what the garden did to the neighbourhood:

I think that the fact that we have made that garden means that an incredible number of people come in and have a chat and are a little curious about the house and who we are. They have perhaps lived in the neighbourhood for years, and suddenly they come by. People are welcome to come in and sit on the bench and, it has been so nice, beyond all expectations, I feel that we may have created something positive for the neighbourhood. (Roger)

For the two friends who made Måken, for the residents of the UEPPs and for the people who made the greenhouse, the DIY projects turned out well. However, for other participants who squatted, it has not always turned out this way.

"Chemically Cleaned for What a House Should Be"

Box I. 'Brækkers' and notes from a meeting about the plot 01.03.2022

There are almost no traces of Brakkebygrenda or "Brækkers" today. Instead, there is a flat plot filled with gritstone and some plants that live among and around the high fences. But although Brækkers no longer exists physically - as dwellings and a meeting place - it is there in the memories and hopes of activists and former occupants.

At the beginning of the meeting, we talked about the history of Brækkers. About how the owners had not touched the plot in over twenty years. Still, the squatters were thrown out two times and met a lot of resistance and violence from the police. They explain how it is absurd that the people who created this squat were being called riots by the media. The fire station in Oslo had approved of the way they were living, the camper vans had sufficient space between them, and they had smoke detectors all over. They also explained how a doctor had approved that it was healthy to live there. They said it was a really nice space and that all the neighbours loved them. One of them used to take his kids to events there, another used to live there. They planted a lot of food, did not consume much, and used second-hand materials, in that way they were an eco-friendly space. To them, it made no sense that they were seen as the 'bad guys'.

Trude reflected on how much effort they should put into their dwelling – not too much in case they would be evicted someday. This had happened in their last squatted home, Brakkebygrenda, where one day it was suddenly all taken away:

Yes, it is completely empty now. It was very weird that, that it... because it was only the day after that they just flattened out, levelled out, and it was removed. All that digging we had done through the years... if you come with excavators, then it happens fast, right? And it was just, levelled out. In a day! (Trude)

Bea also recollected memories of what happened in the squats. The more tired the police got, the more they wrecked their dwellings:

Then they destroyed a lot after they came in because they used a lot of resources on taking down all of the things we had built. So, I think they understood and had a little… were a little… maybe a little tired of us. So, they understood that this is a good way of hindering us from coming back, with, with making it… inhabitable. So then, after that, in a house we called Spragleberget[12] [...] they chose to saw down the stairs from the first to the second floor after they… after they had thrown us out and built up a giant concrete block outside the front door which made it almost impossible to get in. And then we also got back in afterwards through a broken window in the basement with a bit of crawling and, yes, to see what they had done, and then we realised that it… here they have destroyed the house in such a way that it is completely inhabitable. And then it escalated. To, kind of a climax, that was Hausmannsgate 42, which after the eviction was sealed shut as ... as crazy, and there was not… There wasn't one opening that wasn't filled with concrete. And we also got in there eventually to sort of see if there was anything we had left behind or that the police hadn't taken so we could take with us further. And, like, what? What is the condition of the house? And then it's so improbably, like, sad to go into a house like that. Which is just like, almost chemically cleaned for what a house should be, which is like the human aspect of having a home. After all, we had lived here for a year or one and a half, and then sort of. Yes, but you enter a house where you have, you've had your home, and then all you see are bare concrete walls and not a ray of sunlight, it's a bit like, it's a bit disappointing in a way. (Bea)

It was important to keep squatters away, even if it meant making the buildings completely inhabitable.

Accepted and Unaccepted Forms of DIY

Although there are places in Oslo today that were originally squats and became accepted by the municipality – such as Blitz, Hausmania, Ormsundveien and Enebakkveien 37 – the great majority of squats have been evicted. Most of the squatters I have met in Oslo have eventually given up on this type of activism because of exhaustion.

As Heim LaFrombois discusses, some kinds of DIY urbanism are appreciated and accepted although they are illegal on paper. 'Måken' completely changed face when certain people took an interest in it and started appreciating it. It was seen as unaesthetic at first but became welcomed. In 2021 they made 14 million kroner, even though they were only open half the year because of the pandemic (Jacobsen 2022). It is therefore safe to say that the saunas became economically productive. The municipality using them as a poster child and the fact that they won a prize for 'best association in 2021' (Oslo Badstuforening 2022) indicates that they are trendy or cool. They thereby fit into the aspects Heim LaFrombois mention as reasons for why

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[12] Spragle is the norwegian name for the plant Coleus and Spraglet means mottled or variegated. Berget means the the mount.

some get to stay; economically productive, charismatic, and critical in a moderate amount, making them cool or edgy.

The price Føflekken received, might also indicate that the UEPPs and their initiatives can be understood as trendy or accepted for other reasons. At least the UEPPs have managed to stay, although most squats have not. Even though squatters experience prejudices and UEPP residents suspect the municipality is stalling them because of their connection to squatting, they are conceived as resources and acceptable to varying degrees. Heim LaFrombois argues that it takes social privilege to become accepted as 'DIY urbanism'. The political cause of squatters, demanding to use and maintain decaying buildings, has been accepted in neighbourhoods. While they have had to adapt their causes to become more tolerable, being able to put the time and energy into creating an urban ecological project and knowing what the right thing to say or do is, is not available for anyone. For the people I have talked to, it has been a choice. Not everyone has this choice, and not everyone has the same chance of being taken seriously. But even though most recent squatters have portrayed themselves as urban ecological projects, it mainly has not worked. Although they could fit into Heim LaFrombois' definition of DIY urbanism, as she discusses, perhaps they have not been critical or edgy in the right way. Although they managed to keep their forest centre and their dwellings for a while, as I will discuss further in the next chapters, they often brought attention to issues with the municipal governing and wanted to create non-commercial spaces, which did not help their case of trying to become accepted as a resource in the city.

Although it is illegal to squat, the participants did not understand it as primarily illegal, but as direct action. And they understood their actions of being resources in the city, of being able and capable of contributing to sustainable change. The squatters' ways of DIY involved critiquing the fact that it is difficult contributing to create something in the city without doing it professionally. Here, we have seen that DIY is a way of opposing professionalised bureaucratic ways in Oslo, and a way of using second-hand materials. It was also about claiming the power to participate and create – a power they felt they did not have if they did not claim it. For some, it was about demanding to participate, for others it was about not spilling their energy and motivation on trying to change things within the bureaucratic organisation. Some understood taking space as their best chance of participating in the city. This is in line with how Owens connects squatters to DIY practices. He argues that they celebrated the power of DIY, and therefore "always sought to *do* their politics, not just espouse it" (Owens 2013, 204). In one of the books created by SqEK, it is also argued that "[s]quatting as an alternative housing strategy

can be attractive for […] radical DIY enthusiasts, who would rather create housing for themselves by investing a lot of time in it than working long hours in a job to pay a high rent" (Pruijt 2013, 24). His perspective is inspired by Moan, who emphasised how in squats, there was created space for practising feminist living, not just talking about it. And in the squats and UEPPs they practise other possible ways of living in cities, as well having the time, space, and communities in which to imagine what is possible beyond their dwellings.

Summary of Participants' Knowledges About Sustainable Dwelling in Oslo

The participants' knowledges varied, but there were also some common perceptions. Among other things, they knew that:

- Dwelling is political.
- Current housing politics are making housing expensive and are affecting everyday lives in a way that makes community, political participation, activism, and sustainable practices inaccessible.
- Their dwellings proved that another type of dwelling is possible, and their knowledges were useful in creating a new dwelling sector.
- Cheaper housing, time, freedom, meaningful work, and community allowed well-being – covering their needs – and participating in political engagement and activism – aiming for making the city more able to cover others' needs.
- Demanding to participate, resisting, engaging politically, and creating alternatives breaking with dominant ways were crucial aspects of what they knew was needed to create more sustainable housing in Oslo.

The squats and UEPPs challenge the notion of the home being private and apolitical. In line with the feminists who criticised urban developers for overlooking the home, the participants started participating in urban politics *with* the home – at the centre of their critique of urban management was the home. Using the dwelling to demonstrate the possibility of doing it differently, creating time and space for that, and claiming space to protest how it is being used, distributed, or speculated with, their dwellings were political. For some, a temporary space to organise themselves politically; for others, more of a place to live in peace, but for all, a response and reaction to the housing market and politics in Oslo.

They all acknowledged that housing in Oslo negatively affected everyday lives and criticised dominant housing politics for allowing housing to be run by profit. The result forced people

into lives associated with death – lives so busy earning enough money that there is little room for anything else. The scarcity of time resulting from expensive housing in Oslo did not allow for satisfactory communities, engaging politically or in other projects, not feeling stressed, or lowering consumption. The first part of this chapter discussed how not being dependent on working 37.5 hours to pay for an expensive dwelling was an important foundation for much of how they lived. It released time for the communities explained in the second part, and making things oneself, described in the third part. Both having an alternative lifestyle and working for others getting such possibility demanded time. Connected to for-profit housing and a market dependent on continuous growth were individual family units where everyone must own their own everything. Dominant housing politics not only decided how people could live in terms of making housing expensive –they also promoted a specific type of dwelling associated with the nuclear family, making alternative communal ways of living more challenging. The standard individual for-profit home reinforced individualism, consumerism, and passivism. Growth being an incorporated value of the modern way of understanding successful development, makes it hard to unite urban ecological living and dominant urban development.

As the utopian feminists imagined homes that went beyond the traditional notion of home, the participants also opened up and erased borders around it. They had house meetings in each other's dwellings, they shared facilities and things, they invited people in, and they helped each other with chores. By doing this, they challenged the norm of the enclosed family unit where every unit is responsible for doing certain organisation and work within their own family. They also enacted their own visions of more sustainable dwelling and the results of this were radically different dwellings, of which they thought one could learn – in the search for a more sustainable dwelling sector.

Many aspects have been working together, resulting in the communities of today. The community was something most participants took very seriously, they were paying attention to needs beyond the material ones, such as feelings of belonging, and of caring for each other and the same causes. The joint project and common political goals were one thing gathering the participants. Collectively organising was another. Having the time and space for meetings, maintenance work, garden work, bonfires and organising events was also important for the community. As discussed, the participants called for more non-profit dwellings like theirs because they experienced it allowing them to feel good, create good communities, organise, consume sustainably, and challenging dominating knowledge of how it is possible to dwell in Oslo.

Initiating one's own projects and working together for the same goals was important for the community and participating in the city. They understood urban organisation as of today, as only allowing some inhabitants to participate. DIY is sustainable in terms of using second-hand materials, in the same sense, squatting can be understood as sustainable in terms of using old buildings. Demanding the right to participate can be understood as sustainable in terms of how Tsing (2017) described sustainability, breaking with the hegemony and doing things that disturb hegemonic practice. Using the resources of the people – who could create other values than economic profit, such as maintaining empty dwellings and creating non-profit places where people could be without spending money – was understood as positive urban change.

Many of the participant's knowledges are not surprising; community is good, recycling is good, time is good, freedom is good. Still, their way of enacting these knowledges – of living their imaginations of a more sustainable way of living – despite it being illegal, stands out. They understood their actions of challenging what is legal and the accepted way of participating in urban development as necessary for creating change. Their ways are entirely different from more institutionalised ways of organising, and their ways of acting without being allowed to, demanding to participate, and refusing dominant knowledges and practices of urban development and housing make them sustainable. Christiansen and Løken argue that the non-commercial was important for alternatives, and the participants did too, but the non-commercial would not be there had they not done something illegal first, had they not acted outside established institutions.

This chapter has presented a gathered story of parts of what the participants emphasised about their lives in dwellings founded by squatting but has not provided any complete image. Being able to create was important to all participants in different ways, and it went way beyond the physical act of creating. It was about freedom and the ability to take care of oneself and each other, create what one needs, and imagine something radically different, in a space, community and with time that allowed it. It was about doing work that made sense and having a sense of being able to do something, not having to stand along watching a development of Oslo that they feared. Having established these dwellings within a city which initially did not allow them to do so, seemed to continue to bring along a sense of being able to contribute, of having a say and some power. They had acted outside established institutions, but some had also become institutionalised – gained some power, let go of some power. Even though the participants' ways of understanding sustainable dwelling were radically different from one proposing a sustainable and commercial sector, they did pose urban ecology as a goal, the same words used

by the municipality and which sometimes ended in cooperation. The new squat in OG35 also presented their project as urban ecological, but in the end, that day I spent there did turn out to be my last day of fieldwork because the next time I came back, they were gone. They were evicted, as close to all squatters who try to initiate new UEPPs. The municipality of Oslo does want more Urban Ecological Projects, but they do not allow inhabitants to initiate them by squatting. The following chapters compare participants' discourse about urban ecology and sustainable dwelling with how urban ecological dwelling is defined in official municipal documents.

6. Green Words of Common Ground

But it is words that make the trouble and confusion.
We are asked now to consider words as useful in only one way: as signs. Our philosophers, some of
them, would have us agree that a word (sentence, statement) has value only in so far as it has one
single meaning, points to one fact that is comprehensible to the rational intellect, logically
sound, and – ideally- quantifiable.

-URSULA K. LE GUIN 1969

It ends up becoming a buzzword that does not mean shit,
but that still turn out to mean a lot
-BEA

In 2022, the municipality of Oslo published the booklet *Urban Ecological Dwellings and Areas*, part of the project *New Dwelling Qualities*. As urban ecological dwellings and areas in Oslo result from cooperation between squatters and municipal actors, the discourse on urban ecological dwelling has been shaped by relationships between them. Between the squatters and the municipality, which initially have goals or motives that are hard to combine, the words 'urban ecology' and the type of dwelling they imply have created common ground. The concept of urban ecological dwelling is now presented as a source of inspiration for alternative ways of dwelling and creating dwellings.

Through my research, the words 'urban' and 'ecological' came up jointly at some point in nearly every conversation, interview, or event I attended. This happened in connection to various meanings and topics and often involved participants expressing feelings ranging from anger to hope. Urban ecology could be praised and ridiculed by the same person in the same interview. This made me wonder what exactly urban ecology encapsulated. My feminist curiosity (Åhäll 2018) pointed me towards suspecting that this great ambiguity resolved from power relationships involved in the space where urban ecology was created- and resided. From the beginning, I knew what the words meant separately, but I did not know what they were referring to as a concept, nor why they were connected to squatting. The following textbox describes an experience from a 'city walk' that went by a UEPP, an example of a situation in which the words came up, and just one of many ways they could be said and heard.

Box J. City walk and confusion 03.10.2022
Our next stop on the city walk – part of the program of a housing politics event – is a UEPP. A resident is awaiting us in front of the entrance to explain what living here is like. They describe the community and talk about sharing things, collectively running a concert scene in the basement, and doing maintenance by themselves as a group. In our muddled circle of listeners, the confusion is rising. Questions are asked, and some are answered, but when it comes to questions about the rent, we are only told it is low. There are also questions about the project's origins, about how these particular people were allowed to live here paying the low rent. Part of the conversation between the crowd and the resident goes something like this:

> *-But who are you renting it from?*
> *-The municipality.*
> *-But not in the traditional way?*
> *-No. It is an Urban Ecological Project.*
> Mentioning the UEPP was the end of that conversation. How this untraditional arrangement worked, or what an urban ecological project is, was not explained. I knew this project resulted from young residents refusing to be evicted, who had fought to stay, and I was left wondering why this story was not explained. Only after a while the resident brought up the standard being low as a justification for the low rent.

The more time I spent listening to people talking- and reading what they wrote about urban ecology, the more confident I became that I was not the only confused one. The above words of Box J did not answer *how* the untraditional rent relationship came about. The history of how it became a UEPP or how a UEPP worked was not explained either. Instead, the words 'urban ecological' silenced the conversation. In this situation, the concept was used as an explanation, and urban ecology seemed to be understood as common sense – hence not something that needed to be challenged or explained.

In this and the following chapter, to answer the second research question of how knowledge(s) of sustainable dwelling deriving from squatting differ or align with dominant knowledge of sustainable dwelling, I compare discourses on urban ecology in the municipal documents with ones from transcriptions of interviews of the participants of the thesis. The municipal documents here represent dominant knowledges – they are dominating in the sense of having political power and in that the municipality is generally conceived as representing the citizens. Although the municipal documents and the participants of this thesis all discuss alternative ways of dwelling and use identical words, they do not necessarily contain the same meanings or knowledges. I compare them to expose different understandings of sustainable dwelling in Oslo, differences in knowledges, how the official discourse of the municipality is influencing that of the participants and the other way around, and how power differences in these relationships shape the discourse. I am not asking what urban ecology *is*. Instead, I am asking how it is negotiated. Before presenting and analysing the stories and documents, I present theories helpful for studying what can be hidden in common sense.

Feminist discourse analysis and approaching documents
Because social movements often involve criticising dominant knowledges and discourses, and due to feminists' heritage and long experience with criticising power and dominant discourses, the feminist approach is again practical. Nancy A. Naples explains that a feminist discourse analysis understands prevailing discourses to be continuously created through systems and

relations of power (Naples 2003). Knowledge is negotiated, created, and sustained through dominant discourses determined again by power and positionality. The feminist approach sheds light on how discourse "limits what can be discussed or heard in a political context" (Naples 2003, 227). Sometimes, social movements reproduce and adapt to dominant discourses to be heard in a political context, and sometimes they successfully create or reproduce alternative discourses. Leaning far in one direction can involve giving up on some aspects of the original critique, alternative or radical views. Leaning too far in the other can lead to not being heard or losing control over own narratives. Having this in mind can help to discover how oppositional ways of speaking or writing either "contest, reproduce, or participate in relations of ruling" (Naples 2003, 229).

This is a simplification of things; it is merely a way of trying to point to certain aspects of how groups communicate through language. Looking at ways of speaking through a lens of power and positionality might help recognise dynamics which otherwise could remain hidden. Power and dominance are enforced and reinforced through words, and that might stay well hidden due to conceptions of discourse and knowledge as natural, inevitable, or universal truths. Although we will see that the discourse of the municipal documents and that of the participants are similar as they do use many of the same words, they might have different reasons for using these words and the ones in power might dominate and decide what can be said and heard.

The municipal knowledges analysed in this thesis are online documents published by municipal actors on the municipal website. As discussed in the methods chapter, Asdal and Reinertsen suggest that methods for approaching documents should go further than analysing text and discourse. They are also material objects, used, created, published, and shared in specific ways. Whether a document is powerful or not is situational, but it is never neutral, instead "[d]ocuments are sources of power; they provide opportunities and spaces of action. What is happening in, behind or assisted by documents?" (2021, 25). They further write that "documents can be tools that control, suppress and discipline, as well as liberate; they both divide and bring together; both open up and hide away; both start something and stop it" (2021, 44). They are not just representing or communicating something in 'the real world'; they are always made in a situation, for a reason, and attached to things outside the document.

Asdal and Reinertsen propose that for analysing them, documents can be separated into tools of governing, knowledge, and economy. Documents used in politics "may not appear as authoritative, but still be forceful in practical terms" (Asdal & Reinertsen 2021, 43) because they are essential parts of the political machinery and bureaucratic organisation. "The

bureaucracies' daily work of preparing and implementing approved policies as well as that of developing new policy directions and strategies is by large document work" (43). Often, they can be analysed as belonging to more than one of the three categories, as with for example climate rapports, both presenting insight about how the climate in the world is doing and suggesting what must happen to diminish the damage. The way documents might appear as neutrally explaining something in the world, it might also seem like the proposals in them for creating change will naturally become followed, but of course, nothing will happen if the documents are not translated into action. As stated by the Norwegian Aid Agency in 1981, "an evaluation report – no matter how good it might be – has no value unless it's being used" (quoted in Asdal and Reinertsen 2021, 45).

Asdal and Reinertsen also argue that all documents can be understood as contributing to knowledge production. Being published by governing actors or academic institutions might give the knowledge in them a heavier authority – seeming like trustworthy good knowledge or knowledge that is not even considered as anything else than reliable. There is power in having such authority of being able to decide and tell how the world is and works. Combining this with the feminist discourse analysis as presented by Naples, the municipal documents can be seen as material presentations of what can be said and heard. As Donna Haraway proposes, claiming to tell the one truth about something while not situating that truth – admitting that this truth is seen from a certain perspective – prevents other worlds or knowledges from existing alongside it. Claiming to see everywhere from nowhere, while hiding the site where it is seen from, also puts parts of the process of knowledge making out of sight.

Processes disappearing out of sight also relate to the concept of 'black boxing' as described by Bruno Latour. He used black boxes as metaphors for how a finished result becomes the only thing visible to the human eye, thereby concealing elements that were part of making the result, making them, as Asdal and Reinertsen suggested, so reliable that it is not even considered that it could be anything else, or where the knowledge came from. Latour described black boxes as,

> *[t]he way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.* (Latour 1999, 304)

Black boxes invisible processes of making something, which in turn "makes the joint production of actors and artefacts entirely opaque" (Latour 1999, 183). Not taking the production into account separates the results from the processes, practices, knowledges, and cooperation that led to them. The more it is repeated and used as a thing in itself – referred to

as an obvious or natural concept, the more something of what it entails gets left behind. According to Latour, when an issue occurs or when trying to fix it, the processes become visible again. Otherwise, it can continue unnoticed as a 'matter of fact', or what Åhäll names common sense – something feminists have often worked to deconstruct: "in a cultural context of patriarchy and sexism, feminist scholars are often interested in challenging the politics of "common sense," that which we tend to take for granted" (Åhäll 2018, 42).

The consensus formation in academia – "weaving together of multiple elements of scientific propositions until their internal divisions are well hidden" (Shwed and Bearman 2010, 820) – can also be imagined as a black boxing process. Shwed and Bearman explain, as Latour, that when consensual scientific knowledge or a machine is working and stable, the elements that took part in creating such accepted knowledge or working machine becomes concealed. However, when knowledge has not yet become accepted and consensual and is still contested, such elements are still visible. As different actors create knowledge(s) and machines, the black box could describe any process where the final result is so accepted and consensual, or just working as it should, that the elements behind the result are invisible. When official municipal documents contain descriptions of reality and what is needed for more sustainable ways of dwelling in Oslo, they can be seen as consensual propositions.

Urban Ecology in the Municipal Discourse

The municipal documents about sustainability frequently mention urban ecology. In the *Urban Ecological Program 2011-2026* (Oslo kommune 2011), the concept is, not surprisingly, extensively used. However, the text does not explain what urban ecology *is*, it mainly mentions the words when referring to the program itself or to 'urban ecological principles', which are not explained either. The *Action-plan environment and climate 2013-2016* (Oslo kommune 2013) and *The green shift- climate and energy. Strategy for Oslo* (2015) refer to this Urban Ecological Program as the overarching environmental policy document of the municipality, but beyond this urban ecology is not mentioned at all, and therefore not explained in these documents either.

The programme has many goals and visions; the main goal is for Oslo to be "a sustainable urban society where everyone has the right to clean air, clean water and access to good open spaces" (2011). The fact that the document referred to as an overarching policy is called an Urban Ecological without explaining what that is, and that other documents refer back to this unexplained concept, results in their urban ecological goals and ways being unclear. For

example, when they write about everyone's right to clean water, they do not specify whether they refer to all living beings in Oslo or the human ones specifically. While ecology is generally understood as concerning all living organisms, the goal states that everyone has this right in the urban society – and societies generally refer to groups of humans – so it remains uncertain who this right concerns. Using the words as the name of the programme, then over and over again in that document, then repeatedly in other documents referring to that document, might strengthen the perception of it being consensual and obvious while weakening the connection to what the words contain or once contained.

The lack of explaining urban ecology suggests that it is common sense and leaves it at general or abstract 'green' visions. Green words like ecology, sustainability and environmental friendliness are all used extensively in the document, and the front page and fonts are also green. At one point they mention that "the purchase and sale of property must contribute to sustainable urban ecology" (2011, 7), placing sustainable and urban ecology together; one green concept after the other. As suggested in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the word 'sustainability' has been criticised for meaning so many different things that it has lost its meaning. It has been viewed as meaning everything and nothing (Connelly 2007, 260). The same critique could go for how urban ecology is used in these documents. The fact that it is not described but seems to be referring to everything 'green' could allow for it also meaning nothing and everything. The fact that the words do not clarify anything leaves them mainly sounding good, as buzzwords.

The documents related to the project *New Dwelling Qualities* on the other hand, although also referring to the *Urban Ecological Programme*, contain numerous explanations of what urban ecology is. The municipal webpage explains about urban ecological dwellings that "one always thinks holistically and looks at how to utilise existing natural and human resources to live more environmentally friendly" (Toth 2022). The UEPPs use "[u]rban ecological principles, among other things for use of materials, local circuits and influence of nature." (Toth 2022). In them "low housing costs is an important aspect because it frees up time for self-effort and an environmentally friendly lifestyle. The social, economic and environmental aspects reinforce each other" (Toth 2022). The booklet is described as "a new booklet which shall contribute to clarifying the term and inspire more people to explore the form of dwelling" (Toth 2022), and "shall contribute to a common language and a common understanding of terms and dwelling concepts. By presenting built examples we can inspire and gain wisdom from these" (Plan- og bygningsetaten 2022, 3). The leader of the project states about urban ecology that

We need more of this type of thinking. I think such efforts are helping to move the understanding of sustainability in the right direction. It also includes our own consumption and efforts, and not just what is easy to measure, such as energy consumption per square meter. (Solberg in Toth 2022)

The aim of the booklet's first part is explaining the terms 'urban ecology' and 'urban ecological', and how they are used today. It concerns how scholars, municipal actors, professional urban planners, architects, and a museum use the terms. While defining urban ecology based on professional actors definitions, it is suggested that urban ecology does not derive form professional actors. Urban ecology is described as challenging more universal sustainability strategies, which are "often taking universal goals as their starting points" (PBE 2022, 8) and use "ready-made, fixed quantitative goals" (8). These standardized strategies are limited to "well-defined environmental problems" (8) and the document refers to the UN sustainability goals as examples of such goals. In a holistic urban ecological way of thinking, on the other hand, one also emphasises how the efforts of the inhabitants contribute to lowering consumption and what happens to materials, resources and societal structures over time, and bases the strategies on a specific place and the resources in that place. Urban ecology is described as dealing with the relations between nature and the built surroundings such as houses and infrastructure, and the lives and businesses of people. In the web article about the booklet, it is written that "urban ecological principles represent a different approach than that of the engineer and politician when it comes to how to direct environmental efforts. (Toth 2022).

The latter part of the booklet is largely based on existing UEPPs and their experiences. There is much focus on Svartlamon, which is described as the only urban ecological *society* in Norway. They explain that "the area is organised and run according to principles about sustainable environmental solutions, horizontal structure, low standard and own efforts" (Toth 2022). It also devotes some space for describing Hurdal ecovillage, placed an hour away from Oslo and created and financed by a group wanting their own ecovillage. As the ecovillage stood still after a couple of years, they decided to involve a company, and there are now constructed many new dwellings in the ecovillage. The booklet concludes about their project that:

> *The implementation model must essentially be professional, with actors who have the expertise and resources for implementation. If the projects are only user-controlled, there is a high chance that one will never get to the implementation phase. Establishing an eco-village is a big project and requires both knowledge, the ability to organise and, not least, perseverance. After a long period of planning, the project stood still until the process was professionalised. User participation must have clear boundaries. Common areas and gardens are an example of something residents can further develop together.* (PBE 2022, 47)

There is not much focus on how previous successful UEPPs in Oslo have been created in the documents. In fact, although the UEPPs in Oslo are mentioned and portrayed in photographs, there is not much room devoted to describing them at all. In the booklet, it is written that

[b]oth projects also started with house occupations. In Enebakkveien 37 there were formerly Ungbo apartments, which were shut down. The residents, on the other hand, stayed. Ormsundveien 14 were also municipal dwellings, but was vacated because of low standard. (PBE 2022, 35)

However, in the web page article, which was posted after the publication of the document, one of the UEPPs was not defined as a former occupation:

In some cases, it has started with an occupation, such as in Hauskvartalet and Ormsundveien. In Enebakkveien there were former Ungbo apartments, where the residents stayed after the contracts were finished. Today, everyone has formalised rent agreements. (Toth 2022)

These two examples are the only times occupation and the history of the UEPPs in Oslo are mentioned, once in each document. There is no description of how- or why squatting was part of creating the UEPPs, nor of the start of cooperation between squatters and municipal actors. Writing that it has started with occupation only in some cases and modifying the narrative to saying that only one of the projects was occupied, combined with not going into what this has meant, how it happened and how it changed from being a squat to becoming a UEPP, make it seem like nothing more than details, some additional information to the projects they are today. As the first part of defining urban ecological dwelling does not include how residents of UEPPs use and understand the term, the examples are evaluated based on professional understandings of the term.

Nevertheless, there is an apparent difference in the discourse of the governing documents for the environment- and climate work and the UE dwelling documents. The discourse about 'what is green' in the documents based on urban ecological dwellings stands out from the discourse in the older documents. It describes a balance of different life forms, mentioning the life forms of nature and humans in the same sentences. It also focuses more on citizens, which instead of being described as someone in need of being taught to act 'green', are seen as having resources one can benefit from, hence being able to contribute as actors with the potential of engaging and initiating sustainable practices. As they consider urban ecological practices giving more agency to nature and the citizens, they are acknowledging that change is not restricted to policymakers. It also critiques standardised sustainability strategies and poses urban ecological strategies as alternatives. The urban ecological principles are many, which makes sense because they are supposed to derive from the citizens and influence of nature, instead of from a systematic level. It is acknowledged that sustainability is not easy to measure. The particular solutions derive from particular people, in particular places and situations. Most of them are focused on own efforts, like sharing, low and ecological consumption, and cultivation, but also more systemic ones, like low and inclusive rent enabling them to have the time to do this.

However, even though they now explain what urban ecology is, they do not explain how the existing UEPPs in Oslo were and are created. They define urban ecology on their terms, and the radical grassroots that initiated them, or the fact that they had to do something illegal to do this, remains undiscussed. While they write that they want to gain wisdom *from* built projects, only professional voices are presented in the first part defining what urban ecology is. How the municipality can contribute to less standardised strategies or support urban ecological projects also remains unanswered. How the ones they want to inspire to do so, can do so, is not explained either. For example, PBE writes that they want to inspire businesses to create such projects. It is not proposed how businesses, whose organisation is dependent on profit, can create dwellings with the low rent that is described as a fundamental aspect of the urban ecological dwelling. They do not propose any other suggestions for initiating UEPPs either. The fact that the processes of occupation and of cooperation in creating the UEPPs are not described, gets in the way of understanding how new ones could be created. Describing the results without their background leads to missing aspects of their organisation.

After reading the municipal documents, I still would not know how the UEPPs ended up with their low rent. Although low rent is emphasised as important and it is mentioned that it started out with occupation, I do not know anything about the processes of why the buildings were occupied in the first place or how they went from squats to becoming UEPPs. It could seem like they were not dependent on the squatting, like UEPPs in Oslo are, were, or can be created in other ways too.

Ambiguous Urban Ecology

The residents of UEPPs and the squatters also threw the words 'urban ecology' around them in our conversations and often used them as if their meaning was obvious. While some responded by explaining how they understood the concept when I asked for elaborations of what they meant, others threw the questions back at me, some had no idea what it meant, and others again made jokes about it or seemed annoyed. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, it was initially the feelings of the participants that came up when we talked about urban ecology that inspired this analysis. This part presents how participants were expressing conflicting feelings and thoughts towards this celebrated concept.

When one participant explained that they depended on "working hard to achieve the demands we set for ourselves, regarding what we wanted to achieve politically and kind of… urban

ecologically as well" (Bea), I was quick to ask for elaborations about what these urban ecological goals were. The atmosphere changed the moment I finished my short follow-up question. While they had just talked about the goals in what seemed like a positive manner, their tone was now different. I got the sense that the fact that I simply asked what urban ecology meant to them opened for a critical view of the concept. As if they got the sense that they did not have to put urban ecology in a good light and could let their guard down. They explained,

I have never cared much about urban ecology. I believe or think… for what I know, urban ecology is a term coming from some think tank for architects or highly educated people trying to find fancy terms for building with natural materials and kind of using nature as inspiration. And it ends up being eaten up by the municipality, right? Because the bureaucrats are sitting there and 'skalter og valter'[13] with their fancy words in their offices. And it ends up becoming a buzzword that doesn't mean shit, but that still turns out to mean a lot because it's some sort of leverage point in an argument, right? Hausmania must stay because it's about urban ecology and urban ecology is a buzzword in the municipality. So then, we just think, oh yes, urban ecology. That's fucking important. What is urban ecology and who controls what is urban ecological? In other words, it's a vague term that's, kind of, given effect and weight from it being used, and it's so vague that, kind of, everyone can use it without being kept responsible for anything at all. At least in my occupation career, urban ecology has been a non-word, […] Urban ecology is a keyword to endear oneself to the District Council, who are damn busy with rose bushes this year. 'Kjell Arne won the local rose bush competition'. So, it's totally indifferent to me, but I gladly use it to make a political point. To put things bluntly. (Bea)*

Their duality of first presenting it as their own goal and moments later saying they never cared about it, calling it a non-word, captures an ambiguity that was apparent all through this interview, and in other conversations with other participants. For Bea, they express the usefulness of the term for being heard, mixed with indifference and annoyance. It seems like defining themselves by these words was a bittersweet experience. Their frustration seemed to be mostly about feeling like they did not have a choice, they *had to* use urban ecology as a means of being heard. They had to endear themselves with- and try to create a project which could become accepted within the municipality, the same municipality that led politics which their project was largely about critiquing. They clearly now tried to distance themselves and other occupants from it, with a coolness towards it and emphasising that they only used it in a cynical way, as a tool. Ending their answer by making fun of the municipality was the cherry on top.

Bea did not believe in the municipal urban ecological project. At the same time, many of their goals as occupants aligned perfectly with many of the principles of urban ecology presented by the municipality. Not surprisingly, as, I am repeating myself, these principles are inspired by once squatted UEPPs. I will go further into Bea and their co-squatters' goals in the succeeding

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[13] Skalter og valter, Norwegian expression, coming from the German language. It means deciding after what best suits oneself, often without considering others.

chapter, but goals like horizontal structure, low rent, and resident participation, were certainly part of their occupied dwellings and political projects. It was not the principles they disagreed with, it was something else that troubled them, about the concept being eaten up by the municipality and about them being in control of what it meant.

Even the hardest criticism of urban ecology must not be understood as being opposed to what has been presented as urban ecological principles. Trude was the participant who was the least ambivalent towards the concept. When I asked how they understood urban ecology, they answered by asking me back "yes, I've always wondered about this, what *is* that?" They explained that they had never understood the hype; they thought it was nonsense and that they did not want to have anything to do with it. The annoyance seemed to be mostly directed towards using radical practices to create a bureaucratic project, when for them, bureaucracy was the exact issue. Trude is the only person I interviewed who occupied and dwelled in privately owned property, and therefore also was not required to have anything to do with the municipality, and therefore, perhaps, neither with urban ecology. As opposed to Bea, they did not have to worry about endearing themselves with the employees of the municipality. The fact that they were able to fully distance themselves from those words, was perhaps due to them being the only one who had that possibility.

It was not only Bea who emphasised that these words were connected to collaboration with the municipality and a more tolerable project than occupation. Roger explained that the idea of their house becoming an urban ecological project came about politically, with the influence of the city council.

> *Then the municipality probably figured out that it was better with rent and some sort of contract than it being a squat, then the city council probably brought about 'urban ecological project'. Then one has hopes or expectations of what it should be like. From the municipality's side, they have not been involved that much…* (Bea)

In their perception, the UEPP was a result of the municipality choosing the lesser of two evils. Some sort of contract and cooperation was better than it being occupied, but Roger did not think they actually cared about the cooperation and elaborated on the lack of involvement of the municipality. They explained that EBY are responsible, but that they did not care about what happens in their dwelling. "There, it is just a contact person who is a bit concerned with fire routines and a little bit of… whatever it is they have to do, I think." They further said that their living in an Urban Ecological project is random, but that this does not say anything about their engagement in sustainable dwelling:

> *It's natural for me to think about having a low consumption, sharing what one has, creating social… help others… but I don't have a definition, it's more like a natural part of everyday life. It is likely*

to be different everywhere. Here it's like; own efforts are important; we try to work as much on the house in community as possible. I don't know how well we come out of it in terms of footprint though, surely to some degree… We have changed the wood stoves, tried to find things at Finn and by as little as possible new. It's a little unorganised, but that is just how it is living here (Roger)

Roger also somehow separated their concrete actions from the concept of urban ecology, which they seemed to associate with being a municipal concept more about a display than actions. They did not want to call their private practices urban ecological, nor be defined by these words, because they associated it with a term assigned by politicians. Roger has a long story of activism and living in alternative ways, and they were sceptical towards urban ecology. They, like Bea, emphasise that they do care about things that align with urban ecological principles, even though they are critical towards this specific concept. At the same time, they did not have faith in these principles becoming reality through current politics and the discourse of urban ecology, because they did not experience the municipality as caring much about the principles, beyond the fancy words.

Glenn, on the other hand, seemed more comfortable calling their dwelling urban ecological. However, they also expressed ambiguity towards how the words were used by the municipality today. They distanced themselves from that, but they seemed to divide between the municipal urban ecology and their urban ecology. Glenn was also concerned with urban ecology being an empty expression nowadays, and commented, "Urban ecological centre… today, right? What is that? They're concerned with tree planting." They explained that they also thought they did some nice activities and that they knew a lot of good people working there, who cared about important stuff, but that there were elements of it being too mainstream. They explained that "There will always be a mainstreaming of things though, but I think that, yes, I may have taken a very long detour, but I think you understand what I'm saying." This citation from an interview explains how they understood where urban ecology came from, and what it was before the mainstreaming:

Urban Ecology in itself, at least initially, started very radical. For example, when we started in the 2000s, it kind of, it was a time… it was still a time when no one ate ecological food, everyone flew as much as they could, and there was not that much consciousness in the general population concerning environmental lifestyle. That consciousness perhaps only existed in radical environments. (Glenn)

Glenn identified with where the ideas of urban ecology came from, although they talked about not knowing what the urban ecology of the municipality is. The mainstreaming and going away from important aspects of what the radical autonomous left wanted to achieve, makes a different urban ecological project than the one Glenn believed in. They criticised how the municipality has taken ownership of the words and created this professionalised project that is supposed to

be similar to- or compatible with the ideals of squatters or radical leftist movements, without really taking the content of it with them. But when Glenn talked about urban ecology, they were also talking about the urban ecology deriving from the occupational movement. There are two different urban ecologies at play here. They continue explaining that,

> *Luckily, I don't think the term urban ecology has become as watered-down as for example social sustainability, or sustainability in general. But that's perhaps because urban ecology is a little unfamiliar and a little like… a little too alternative. But I, for me, urban ecology, I would say that, I know that it's distinct, that it's not for everyone, but for me it's a very important key point of what I'm working with here, in this project. And so for me, it's about… so, you can understand urban ecology at an individual level, or a societal level. I'm mostly concerned with urban ecology on the individual level – or connected to dwelling and lifestyle. And put a little banal, for me… there are many definitions, there's a Danish one, and the urban ecological centre here in Oslo, or Bykuben, have tried to make a definition, but for me, it's about how one can live as sustainable-, as environmentally friendly, as possible, in a city, that is. It's easy as that. But for me, urban ecology is closely connected to the third part of the sustainability concept.* (Glenn)

When Glenn said they thought I knew what they were saying, they had just been explaining that the origins of urban ecology were originally about questioning the growth paradigm and working for non-growth. Therefore, these projects have only been found on the left. They said

> *It is somewhat political… Urban ecology cannot be real if one does not also think about having a lower consumption. One cannot have an environmentally friendly consumption if one has a high consumption.* (Glenn)

They then went into explaining the mainstreaming of the project, and that it had now changed. What I think they were saying, is that this fight for non-growth and lower consumption could not be maintained within the municipal project. Because, as it has become a mainstream project, thereby having to be combined with the growth paradigm, it has lost the central aspect of non-growth. They point out that it is problematic that EBY, the agency responsible for the UEPPs, who had to create economic growth through their management of municipal property, are responsible for their project. I think they were saying that urban ecology cannot be real within the growth regime and that the municipal urban ecological project cannot be real without the municipality changing.

Bea also critiqued the strong focus on growth and profit,

> *What can be improved is everything that concerns valuing profit above people, then. Right? Which is… it's not like… one and another thing, but it's a way of thinking too* (Bea)

They emphasised that it is not just about specific cases, but about a way of thinking. Making the changes they thought to be necessary for a better city, within this growth mindset, was not possible.

While Roger explained the origins of the concept as deriving from the municipality for political reasons, Bea pointed towards the professionalisation of the concept or that professionals,

politicians, or architects created it. Glenn understood it as a concept that was born out of the autonomous left, losing its meaning through mainstreaming. Referring to different parts of the origins, and the different situations it came up in, affected how they talked about it; from not wanting to identify themselves with it at all, to identifying with parts of it, or with a variation of urban ecology. Urban ecology is both a fancy term and an abstract project, and a way of combatting the growth paradigm and profit-focused dwelling sector. When Glenn claimed that urban ecology comes from the radical left, they were talking about the content, when Roger said that it is just something the municipality came up with, they were talking about an idea, a name for the project, a name for the resolution. When Bea talked about who invented it, they were also referring to the term. Glenn and Bea both joked about the municipality planting trees or having rose bush competitions. They ridiculed the municipality for these green and indeed visible changes while not going into the deeper matter of the issues of exponential growth, valuing profit over people, and letting buildings decay – issues that no forest of trees and bushes in Oslo would be great enough to fix. What they all agreed on, is that their projects, ideals, or goals are different from the municipal urban ecological project. The participants' ways of using the words urban ecology were partly criticism and partly something they believed in.

Valter explained that they thought urban ecology could potentially be a positive project, but that the slow bureaucracy got in the way. They explained that they thought living in a city initially is environmentally friendly, or can be, as living close to one another in a city offers a good environment for sharing and for example for using public transport because where you need to go is always close. They said they think it primarily is about "reducing own climate emissions and finding good ways of living which are also good for the climate" (Valter) and about creating different types of dwelling deriving from a focus on community, instead of on earning as much money as possible. They thought their way of living, with more common areas and sharing things was part of what made it urban ecological. It was about finding good ways of living together as humans. They conclude by stating that urban ecology is about "[f]inding new ways of living together that benefit both us and the ecology" (Valter).

However, even though Valter had faith in urban ecology as a concept in theory, they neither saw it happening within current politics. They emphasised that they thought it could be possible to create such projects without having to occupy, in theory, but that the politicians or municipal employees were not doing anything. They explained that they thought it was "just so incredibly slow. Nothing is happening. I guess I think… it seems like it's somewhat related to the fact that there seems to be little will to initiate projects and… make a difference" (Valter). They,

therefore, thought urban ecological dwelling was connected to squatting because "squatting is probably what happens when enough people are discontent about how things are and wish to create change themselves" (Valter). Again, there was faith in the project itself, but doubt that it could be fulfilled through the slow bureaucratic governing of the city of today.

Chapter Discussions

The participants and the municipal documents emphasised many of the same principles of urban ecology. While the older documents about urban ecology mostly collided with the participants' knowledges, the municipal discourse of the UE dwelling documents that were inspired by UEPPs and the opinions of the participants aligned in them emphasising the importance of cheap rent, that sustainable dwelling is not easy to measure and that citizens are resourceful and able to initiate sustainable changes. The municipal documents also recognise that urban ecology represents another approach than engineers and politicians. However, only professional approaches were included in the part that defined the term. There is a doubleness in emphasising that urban ecology does not derive from professional actors, but from grassroots and residents, while still not letting their approaches be part of defining what it is.

The participants emphasised how their efforts, doing things themselves, horizontal power structure, and less growth and consumption were hard to combine with municipal policies because of hierarchical power structures, slow bureaucratic processes and profit-oriented policies and organisation. The municipal documents do not recognise this. They do not point to issues with combining the municipal organisation and the established UEPPs, or their role and power in the relationship between them and the UEPP residents. As the documents are a public presentation, and part of working towards more urban ecological projects in Oslo, it might be a conscious choice to reach that goal. Nevertheless, this was a source of frustration to the participants, as much of their efforts in the UEPPs and squats were about trying to challenge and disturb dominant ways of organisation. While the municipal documents do not present any suggestions of change within the municipal organisation to allow more urban ecological dwelling in Oslo, the participants all called for political and organisational change for sustainable changes to become available.

Among the participants, the distance between different ways of knowing the concept posed a main challenge for following sustainable change. In contrast, the municipal discourse discusses it as if it is not an issue combining their knowledges and organisation with the ones of squatters

and UEPP residents. Participants connected squatting and UEPPs because they were critical towards growth, had will and acted on their principles and did not leave it with pretty words, and had roots in social movements taking environmental politics seriously. To answer how the knowledges of the participants align or differ with dominant discourses about sustainable dwelling and change, the following discussion will further explore how these seemingly incompatible aspects have not been posed as issues in the municipal documents, as well as how control over the discourse of urban ecology affect participant's intents of creating sustainable dwelling in Oslo.

Urban Ecology as a Black Box – UEPPs Must Grow, Squatting Must Go

We have seen that the municipal presentations of urban ecological dwellings in Oslo are disconnected from some of the radical elements that were part of their establishments. The overarching documents do not present urban ecology as political and do not mention power differences or social inequality. The radical and critical views and knowledges of the participants are not part of the municipal discourse of urban ecological dwelling and there is in general close to no focus on the occupational foundations of the projects, or the cooperation and negotiation between occupants and municipal actors that are- and were part of creating them. The more contentious parts of their history are barely mentioned. By presenting the UEPPs without acknowledging where all these ideas, knowledges, practices, and cooperation came from, the municipal discourses are ignoring essential parts of the history of urban ecological dwelling in Oslo and separating the results from the processes. That they also evaluate them based on professional understandings of the term, which fits with what participants described as urban ecology being a term created by professionals, and this booklet reinforces this. However, the actual important aspects of their alternative dwellings as described by participants, are not coming from professionals.

I use the metaphor of a black box, as presented by Latour, to think about how this happens. In this case, the object of discussion is urban ecology. As urban ecological dwelling is presented as a stable and firm object in the municipal documents – an established and recognised type of project – that enables concealing what went and goes into making them. The work and processes entailed in making urban ecological projects become increasingly hidden as the object 'urban ecology' becomes increasingly seen as common sense. When the municipality sets out to create a common understanding of what urban ecology is, by making a document which presents this

thing, they also contribute to leaving some aspects out of sight, not fitting into their conclusion, clashing with the one knowledge of what it is.

As this chapter is not asking what the object 'urban ecology' is, but the role it plays in colliding knowledges about sustainable dwelling, it is exactly the processes that come into play in creating them that are of interest. What this black boxing does to the possibilities of learning about sustainable dwellings from the UEPP residents and squatters, is what matters. Inside the black box, there are radical knowledges. Without what happened and happens in the 'black boxes', what comes out of them would not exist. But when these processes and histories are hidden, when one does not know what happens there, one does not have to take it into account. It can seem like they were not necessary for creating the UEPPs, and that they are not necessary for creating new ones. The fact that the role of squatting is not recognised becomes apparent through the municipality not discussing it, but also when they encourage businesses and developers to create urban ecological housing. This demonstrates just how much of the processes that is either forgotten, not paid attention to, or ignored. It is not discussed how power and freedom to residents, horizontal power structures and less growth can become available for for-profit businesses. While they also encourage people to create UEPPs in Oslo, they cannot refer to any UEPPs in Oslo that did not start with squatting, and they do not encourage squatting.

Embedded in urban ecology are criticisms of hegemonic knowledges that are not touched upon or taken seriously in the documents. The squatters and the UEPP residents, the ones engaging in, or trying to engage in creating such projects, notice that the municipal urban ecology is not working. When Glenn combined the origins of urban ecology and the radical left, they emphasised that these radical roots were still parts of today's projects. They were frustrated about the municipality using these ideas about something as apolitical as tree planting, saying that they use it on projects of which any radical critique is strained out. Glenn took ownership of the ideas, reminded us of their history and worked against losing these aspects through the legalisation and mainstreaming of their project. As they commented, and as I will go further into in the succeeding chapter, there are aspects of the current municipal governing that cannot be combined with their understanding of urban ecological dwelling.

Bea commented on the concept being flawed by dismissing it as buzzwords. The way buzzwords are used to impress, while often having little meaning or going away from their original meanings in the process, resonate with the way I use the metaphor of the black box in this discussion. When what creates the object that becomes a buzzword is hidden or not knowable, it enables using the buzzword without being held responsible for its content or what

it means or has once meant. This can further be connected to what Haraway writes about "unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims. Irresponsible means unable to be called into account" (Haraway 1988, 583). Black boxing strengthens the feeling or perception of knowledge not coming from anywhere, as an object is increasingly presented as firm or obvious.

The stable concept of urban ecology makes it hard to point out what exactly is contradictory about these ways of knowing urban ecology. The participants used it as it was obvious, but the ambiguous feelings about this concept hinted at something being off. I understood their ironic ways of asking me what urban ecology is, as them making a point of it not really being anything substantial. I propose that the participants' feeling of disconnection from the municipal urban ecological project is partly enabled through processes being hidden. Concealed processes and fundamental elements enable using the same words while there are huge gaps in how the words are understood. The participants worried that municipal actors were more preoccupied with making it seem like there were no issues with the UEPPs, than with what happened there. They thoguht that their fancy words and focus on portraying themselves in a good way were getting in the way. According to the black box theory, recognising issues would mean recognising and understanding the processes. In this case, recognising the process would also entail recognising the issues. While the participants saw many barriers within the municipal organisation for carrying out and creating new UEPPs, the municipal documents were optimistic; it just demanded visions, will and engagement from initiators and property owners. Concluding about Hurdal ecovillage that such big projects necessarily must be professional, because they need knowledge, ability to organise and perseverance, also points to the process of creating other UEPPs in Norway being ignored. They were not made professionally, according to the participants they still do not have much to do with the municipality, but they still have knowledge, ability to organise and perseverance.

As I argued in Chapter 3, the foundation of the UEPPs being built on squatting was also downplayed in some scholarship on UEPPs and Svartlamon in Norway. For example, Engelstad explains the history of the building thoroughly, but when it comes to the story of what happened as it became a UEPP, she only writes that "at that time there were many punks from the blitz environment living there. In 2007, a decision was made in the Oslo City Council that Enebakkveien 37 should become an ecological pilot project focusing on resident participation" (Engelstad 2022, 40). Kjærås and Haarstad also described Hauskvartalet as a controversial housing quarter, and not as mobilising housing alternatives. Relating the past to punks, writing it off as controversial, and understanding a professional architecture competition or a city

council decision as what made it urban ecological, make it seem like what came before this is an irrelevant story. As Polanska (2019), and Holm and Kvaran (1989) argued, there are stigmas towards squatters, which might play a part in why certain parts of the UEPPs' histories in Norway consequently stay in the background.

"Who Controls What Is Urban Ecological?"

The municipal documents fit into Asdal and Reinertsen's categories of being tools of governing and tools of knowledge. Through these documents, the municipality can say they have put in efforts to reach the goal of more UEPPs in Oslo. By conducting a project resulting in a booklet, and by referring to the UEPPs in Oslo without mentioning any issues in them, they can say that they have both created UEPPs themselves and contributed to inspiring others to do so too through writing. The participants all emphasis that it is important for the municipality appearing as 'green' and these documents help them in that project. The participants, on the other hand, feared words that did not lead to action. As also emphasised by Asdal and Reinertsen, a document has no value unless it is being used, but the booklet is directed to inspire outwards, so it can be outwards' fault if it is not being used.

The participants did not know urban ecology as an established, unquestionable concept. They considered and criticised the reliability of the municipal knowledge of urban ecology. They sometimes used the words as common sense when mentioning it, but when they started explaining it, it became clear that there was no simple answer to what urban ecology was. They all experienced obstacles with the urban ecological project, associated urban ecology with embellishing the truth, and were critical towards whether any change would and could derive from such a concept. Some felt discomfort with having to use the words to be taken seriously by the municipality – they used the words knowingly of them being an empty expression and experiencing that the municipality did not really care about the UEPPs in Oslo.

Like feminists are trained in knowing that common sense is not neutral or natural because of experiencing oppression through common sense discourses and practices, the squatters and UEPPs residents can be understood as equipped to know that urban ecological dwelling is not common sense. They knew the history of where it came from, and that parts of that history did not fit into the municipal urban ecology. Still, they used the term, often, but not without negotiating what it meant. They either separated the municipal urban ecology and their urban ecology, disturbing the perception of urban ecology as a fixed and single concept, or used it to communicate with the municipality or gain support for their projects, but still stayed critical

towards it in their group. As participants used urban ecology as means of communicating with the municipality, they adapted to and reproduced a discourse that is accepted by the municipality. As described by Naples, some alternative and radical views are given up on through adaption to dominant discourses, to be heard. Discourse is created in relations of power, and the participants both contested and reproduced the discourse on 'urban ecology' in their attempts to create more sustainable ways of dwelling. Thereby, while urban ecological projects in some ways enabled participants to conduct and create alternative dwellings, they also limited what could be said and heard in the cooperation between the municipality and residents.

The knowledges of what urban ecological dwelling in Oslo is, is created and sustained in the dominant discourses of the municipality as they define it in their documents. The municipality openly aims to 'clarify the term' urban ecology, as this shall contribute to inspiring more urban ecological dwelling. However, they have defined what urban ecological dwelling is without considering the opinions of the residents of UEPPs in Oslo, and as explained, they only mention some general facts about the UEPPs in Oslo. Defining the concept as consensual and fixed contribute to hiding internal divisions. Although the participants contesting the concept exposed issues in our conversations, these elements are not as visible to the public – they are kept hidden as the participants adapt to the municipal urban ecological concept and project to collaborate with them and are not mentioned in the municipal documents. They also named their squats urban ecological projects in their attempts to be allowed to stay. In this sense, participants adapt to the municipal discourse to be heard, and the stable concept of urban ecology largely remains uncontested. Thereby, the UEPP residents have lost some control over the narrative about them in their adaption to the municipal discourse and the institutionalisation of their projects.

The growth paradigm, property rights, understanding homes as commodities and allowing homes to be used as financial assets and for speculation were all subjects of the participants' criticisms and motivations of their projects. Criticism specifically directed towards municipal actors and the housing market were important driving forces and reasons for occupying municipal property in the first place. None of these aspects were included in the descriptions of urban ecology by the municipality. Therefore, as the municipality avoided talking about issues with the profit-oriented housing market and other more radical critiques related to urban ecology, they ignored fundamental parts of the history of urban ecological dwellings in Norway. One could say that urban ecological dwelling in Oslo is intrinsically critical to the status quo, as the roots of the urban ecological principles are in critical actions and activism contesting it.

Bea asked, who controls what is urban ecological? Not Bea. The municipality has control over the discourse on urban ecology in that they own the UEPPs, in that they can allow new squatters to make new UEPPs, or throw squatters out, and in making public documents explaining what it is. While UEPPs involves criticism of dominant knowledges, organisation, and discourses, the municipal urban ecology does not have room for substantial aspects of their criticism. Although the municipality emphasises that we can learn about sustainable dwelling from the UEPPs of today, the UEPPs are not understood as parts and results of radical, critical social movements, so this does not have to be part of urban ecological dwelling in Oslo.

In this chapter, I have discussed that the lack of acknowledging processes that were unavoidable in creating UEPPs enables these sometimes contradictory understandings of what they are or aspire to be. As Lundberg (2009) and Hammer (2018) argued that the history of occupation was important for what Svartlamon is today, I argue that the history of squatting is important for what the UEPPs in Oslo are today. Their ways of engaging and disturbing accepted ways of acquiring a dwelling and participating in urban matters and housing politics are inevitable for the exceptions they have become in Oslo. The participants knew that dominant ways and organisation had to be interrupted in order to make space for other ways. The municipal documents to some degree recognise this, but while emphasising that these exceptions are positive, they suggest that one can make more without disturbing or changing the way housing in Oslo works today.

These diverging understandings also affect how they understand cooperation with each other. The participants' stories reveal a power imbalance limiting what can be expressed and heard in the relationship, which is significant to how they communicate. I have argued that the municipality exercises power through telling the story, telling the one truth, and sharing knowledge. They have told it without challenging anything within their own institution. The next chapter will further explore two themes where parts of the experiences or knowledges of the participants did not fit into the municipal presentation or definitions. One is another buzzword- resident participation, the other is about discussions concerning standards.

7. Participation and Standards

Urban ecological dwelling in Oslo can be an incomprehensible concept. The previous chapter explored vast dilemmas, such as whether sustainability can exist within a growth-oriented city and if urban ecology can become mainstream without losing fundamental aspects on the way there. To further explore how knowledges about sustainable dwelling in Oslo differ or align, this chapter gets closer and more concrete by circling in on two categories. I created these categories that derive from- and are inspired by aspects and themes discussed and referred to as related by participants. Narrowing down the scope is an intent to survey more concrete aspects of the participants' lives. The last chapter intended a more overarching view (by which you stand further away to see a bit of everything at once, accepting seeing it from the outside, some things hidden behind others only visible from an angle you did not visit). This chapter goes closer – it does not try to see the whole picture at once but concentrates on two out of many possible categories.

The first category is about residents' power and agency. Embedded in this category are relationships, cooperation, user control, and negotiations. It also goes further into the distance between the participants asserting that the municipal organisation, and the way housing in Oslo is organised in general, had to change to allow more sustainable dwelling, and the municipal documents not including that aspect. The second is about standards – about measuring and using general scales in projects focused on diversity, and about ways of measuring whether a dwelling is sustainable, in terms of covering the needs of the residents and others needs being affected by how one dwells.

Participation, Initiation and (Power) Relation

> *The term urban ecology arose based on grassroots initiatives. In some cases, it has started with an occupation.* (Toth 2022)

As discussed in Chapter 6, DIY and squatting are ways of demanding to participate in power relations which initially do not allow much participation, and as the previous chapter demonstrated, participation and initiatives from inhabitants of the city emerge as essential aspects of the municipal presentation of urban ecology. At the same time, I argued that power relations embedded in the discourse of urban ecology limited what could be said by participants and heard by politicians. Also, while they here state that the term arose based on grassroots initiatives, they did choose to only include professional knowledges of what urban ecology is

in the first part of the booklet defining the term. The participants' dwellings often involved both criticisms of municipal politics and intents of cooperation with municipal actors, leaving them with ambiguous feelings about using the language accepted by the municipality to be heard. These insights will be brought into discussions on reorganising power dynamics.

While the importance of resident participation in the UEPPs is emphasised in the municipal documents, the importance of occupation is not. The above quote states that urban ecological grassroots initiatives have started with occupation *in some cases*. Hence, grassroots are arising the term without occupying in other cases. I take as a premise of discussion that the role and importance of occupation are downplayed, whether it is an active choice or not. If the starting point of the municipal analysis and their discourse on participation, cooperation and relationships do not recognise the role illegal and contentious actions have played in creating these relationships, they might struggle with taking this into account when discussing how the relationships should and do work, and how inhabitants can initiate sustainable ways of dwelling.

The municipality mostly makes sure squatters are evicted, urban ecological or not. For squatters and UEPP residents, their dwellings as they are would not have existed if they were not occupied in the first place. Still, the UEPPs would not have without cooperation and institutionalisation, either. This section presents municipal discourses regarding participation, collaboration and co-work between the municipality and residents/citizens before it goes on to retelling the experiences of the participants. But before that, it goes back and out towards Svartlamon. Thoughts about participation, initiation and power relation are connected to other (squatter) movements and their fights—for example, this first UEPP in Norway.

Box K. Autonomy and Resident Participation at Svartlamon
> *I have a realistic dream… About one day taking the control - take back. A little of what we once had* (Hernes 1997, 67).

This quote is part of a poem in the book 'Svartlamon Lever!' (Svartlamon is alive) from 1997- a time when it still was a squat. Screenshots from the website of Svartlamon (Svartlamon 1988) from one year later, right before its legalisation, show explanations of the area as being a little island by itself, physically separated from the rest of the city. The shots show long descriptions of their cause; fighting against the municipality and getting what they want: deciding for themselves and living as they please. Keeping their right to participate in decisions concerning them has been an essential priority since they became legal tenants in 1998. In a survey conducted by the 'social group' at Svartlamon 10 years after, they found that among the residents who answered, the most common reason for wanting to live there was resident participation and autonomy (Sosialgruppa på Svartlamon 2009, 24). The authors wrote that it is not surprising that this was most important for people because it has been the cornerstone in the milieu since the creation of the resident's association in 1990 – it is a value many inhabitants feel connected to.

In 2016, the municipality of Trondheim evaluated the project, which the residents did not accept. Therefore, they evaluated the evaluation, among other things, evaluating the involvement of the

municipality of Trondheim at Svartlamon. The first chapter is named 'participants participation' (Svartlamon Beboerforening 2016). They write that the project was supposed to emphasise resident participation; vitalise the local democracy; appeal to active participation in decision-making and planning; use human resources in the area, and create a binding relationship between inhabitants and the municipality. Resident's participation was, as mentioned, put in the same category as autonomy in the survey. However, being able to participate did not mean deciding – they point to their voices often not being heard, hindering them from participating.

In the Discourse of the Municipal Documents

One of the eight main goals of the Urban Ecological Program for Oslo 2011-2026 is that "Oslo must work together with the citizens, business and the state for a better Oslo environment" (Oslo kommune 2011, 2). However, most focus and concrete suggestions in the text concern cooperation with businesses. This document goes through the eight focus areas. They use two pages to go into the cooperation point. Only one out of fifteen paragraphs mentions inhabitants, which writes "strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with the state, businesses and inhabitants concerning their co-responsibility for better environment and sustainable development of the city." (Oslo kommune 2011, 19) The rest of the two pages talk about, again, mostly business. There are no concrete examples of how cooperation with inhabitants will look, as there are in the paragraphs about businesses.

Instead, inhabitants are, among other things, described as a mass that produces greenhouse gases (3); someone exposed to noise (3); someone who should be encouraged to bike instead of driving a car (4,5); and someone who should be taught to become more conscious consumers. One of the plan's goals is to make inhabitants "conscious about own consumption, life span costs of products and possibilities for reuse and reparation" (12). Another similar goal is increasing "the inhabitants' consciousness about environmentally efficient purchases, increased use of eco-labelled and ethical fair and ecological products" (19). A more general one is "communicating Urban Ecological Program to all employees, inhabitants, organisations, state, businesses and other important actors in the urban society in an environmentally efficient[14] way" (17). As there are no examples of how residents can participate in dialogue and cooperation, how they can work together with the municipality, or have their voices heard, and that they are extensively described as someone who need to be taught to become conscious consumers, the inhabitants are portrayed as passive actors in this discourse. Only businesses are described as someone who can contribute besides the municipality.

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[14] Miljøeffektiv, environmental efficiency or eco-efficiency. Referred to as a tool of creating sustainable development instead of unsustainable development

Again, the UE dwelling documents differ from this. The webpage on urban ecological dwelling states that "[o]ne of the main points of urban ecology is using the participation of the residents. That means that for projects that residents do not initiate, one should at least have a close participation process, if one is following the urban ecological principles" (Oslo kommune 2023a). The booklet itself presents its hopes as being an inspiration for thinking differently about dwellings. They write that the booklets are "showing how residents can participate in the development of their future homes" (Oslo kommune 2023a). In the UEPPs "everything is initiated from below, from the residents themselves" (PBE 2022, 15.

The UEPPs in Oslo are common projects of residents and the municipality, who should be in dialogue with each other.

> *It is a political decision that the municipality of Oslo will enter a dialogue with the eco-village, aiming to use one of the empty and dilapidated neighbouring houses as a pilot project with effort-for-rent.* (PBE 2022, 35)

The importance of resident participation and initiation is explained by increasing the feeling of belonging to the area and understanding dwellings as ongoing processes, not finished results. This allows residents to live in a way that is adapted to the ecological circuit and the natural conditions in that place, and "[t]he behaviour and own efforts of the residents contribute to keeping the use of resources and the environmental impact low" (Toth 2022).

The change from describing citizens and residents as passive consumers or someone who needs to be educated in becoming environmentally friendly to seeing them as active and resourceful, with the potential of initiating and engaging in creating practices positive for the urban ecology, can be assumed to be connected to documents being inspired by the UEPPs. There is a severe difference in the discourses of the older documents to the newer ones using UEPPs as examples. Still, it remains to be seen how they will make space for these initiatives and engagements in their politics. That the role of occupation is not recognised, hidden within the black box, enables writing that they encourage 'enthusiasts' to initiate similar projects without suggesting how that can happen. Although the discourse is different, the fundament of it is not. Beyond the established UEPPs, there is a lack of suggestions on how residents can collaborate with the municipality to form new UEPPs.

While the residents are seen as more active and capable of initiating their initiatives, there are still similarities to the discourse of the older documents. Like they wanted to communicate urban ecology to the inhabitants, they here share how inhabitants can create urban ecological dwelling. Their project is said to demonstrate how residents can participate in the development

of their future homes. However, as explained in the previous chapter, it is beyond the leeway of the municipality, and there is no room in the planning and building act, to secure the intentions of such projects. The project is directed to inspire – it is directed outward:

> *The target group of the booklet is you that is curious about urban ecological dwellings or areas, either because you want to live this way yourself or because you work on housing questions or housing production.* (PBE 2022, 3)

UE dwellings have always been created in cooperation with the municipality. In the former chapter, I argued why other alternatives are hard to imagine. How this will be made possible without considering their role in such relationships remains to be answered. The municipality is not recognising their role and power in enabling or allowing such initiatives. Without looking inwards, to what the municipality could do at their end, to changes that would have to occur to enable citizens to initiate their projects, the knowledge about creating UEPPs is left in a vacuum. While the citizens are described as more active in the UE dwelling documents, they are also assumed to have power they do not have. The power relation between inhabitants is not mentioned in discussing UEPPs, while for the participants, they consequently had to deal with and act within it. Not recognising this leaves the same result, only businesses or others with power or money, or the ones able to go through the burden of becoming a criminal through squatting, can participate. And not on the same premises.

In the UE housing booklet, when going through the UEPP Svartlamon in Trondheim, they write that "[u]sing the municipality's leeway as a property owner is a powerful tool. The municipality can achieve a lot by making a plot available and collaborating with enthusiasts." (PBE 2022, 31). Beyond this, it is not discussed how this collaboration can work, why it is important or how something similar could be implemented in Oslo. As mentioned, the booklet provides very little information about the UEPPs in Oslo and does not reflect on how the UEPPs in Oslo are working today. While one page is devoted to both the UEPPs in Oslo, there are 15 pages about the UE area Svartlamon. As they mentioned that the municipality of Trondheim has a powerful tool for achieving new UE projects as a property owner, they do not suggest that the municipality of Oslo, themselves, also have this powerful tool as a property owner or try to encourage or inspire to use it. Instead, they declare that this is beyond their power as the person in charge at PBE describes how,

> *many of the intentions in the booklet cannot be secured by the planning authorities because there is no room for it in the planning and building act. It also demands visions, will and engagement from the initiators and the property owners* (Toth 2022)

Here, they describe how UEPPs do urban ecological dwelling, but not about what the PBE or municipality do, can do or how they can facilitate such projects, other than spreading knowledge

and a 'common terminology'. It is described as the responsibility of initiators and property owners; it demands their engagement, as the leeway of the PBE is narrow.

In the Words of the Participants

Like the opinions of residents at the UE area Svartlamon demonstrated in Box I, the participants of this thesis also emphasised the importance of participating in deciding what happens in their dwellings. The following quote is about the political resolution of the UEPPs in Oslo.

> *In that resolution, it's written that the foundation for both houses… or the formal basis, there it's written that it shall be user-controlled, or that's the term used in the resolution. Yes, because that is what we've wanted. But in practice, it's not a good management model, because we've had many challenges with the municipality* (Glenn)

Wanting the residents to control what happens in their dwelling is also emphasised by residents of the other UEPP.

> *I think it's vital that we – us who are living in this house – decide what it will contain, that it doesn't come from outside* (Roger)

> *In my experience, we have quite a lot… it's kind of us who live here who decide everything that can be decided. So, I feel like there are huge possibilities and kind of, I propose something, and if you can argue reasonably for it, and be capable of carrying it out, then at least usually … at least in comparison to… I know people living in SiO[15] apartments, where they cannot even hang a picture* (Valter)

The participants living in UEPPs agree that it is crucial deciding what happens in the house, in the house. However, they have varying experiences with how well this works. Although there has been a collaborative aspect of the municipality allowing squatters to use buildings to create UEPPs, and although the documents emphasise the importance of cooperation, the participants' experiences only sometimes reflected this. Here, Valter, who did appreciate the freedom they had in the house, also questions the collaboration with the municipality today:

> *In the 2 or 3 years I have lived here, I have somehow not had much of an impression of it [the collaboration with the municipality] because it has not been very apparent. There is not much contact, really, which I think is actually a bit. It is in fact, stupid that the municipality does not follow up on their pilot projects. Because we are, we kind of run our project in our way, and then we are trying to document things we do and make things work and such. Still, I think the real point of a pilot project is that it should be able to, that you should be able to learn from it and draw different experiences and, take that into account in the design of new ones, new projects and, you know, and like that investment they now have in the third housing sector and, I think that is very natural to… or I feel when they write about it now, they act like there are no pilot projects. And that they must start from scratch. It almost becomes like stalling. That is connected to them not being present, gathering experiences. But then again, I also think many people in the house are happy about it because you really want to be a bit left alone, a bit left at peace, and so it becomes a question of how to do it in a good way. But I think that in this case, it is a little bit like, it feels like we always have to make ourselves visible and be like; we are here, and we have these experiences!* (Valter)

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[15] Sio- the welfare organisation for students in Oslo. They offer student housing

For Valter, the freedom and possibility of deciding what happens were not based on good collaboration. Their call for more attention to their experiences aligns with the scarce information provided about them in the municipal booklet. They have their experiences, but their knowledges are not used for learning about sustainable dwelling. As Valter emphasised, this was also something many of the residents appreciated. For example, Roger explained that they always had a contact person in EBY, which changed whenever a new person got the job, and jokingly, every time they got a new one, they had to teach them to leave them alone again. They also explained that other than this, in the fifteen years they had lived there, they had not had much to do with them. They preferred fixing things themselves because they were worried that if they contacted the municipality to discuss issues, they would somehow start disturbing their project. Still, they were also concerned about the lack of cooperation with the municipality.

> *We never live entirely safe in a house like this. Both concerning the construction machines or that they will expand the railway and this house goes with it… Saying, things can happen, so I don't feel like… I can feel a little worried. If there's suddenly a new city council who says, 'oh oh oh, do you live here? What exactly is this project? What have you done?' So, we try to document everything we do to make it clear. I don't think… I'm insecure about how safe we are living here; I don't know our rights… suddenly we don't have… I've lived here without a contract; it doesn't bother me… but it is there.* (Roger)

After fifteen years, Roger is still insecure about the future of their home. They also explain that they fix everything themselves, partly because they want to avoid asking the municipality for help when something is not working, as this would make them more dependent. They explain that they think they would have come and helped them fix things if they asked for it, "but then they could suddenly demand to have a key to that door and come for an inspection whenever they wanted, not that we have so much to hide, they are welcome to come in, but then I think we should agree on when they come to visit" (Roger). It does seem that some residents connect a closer relationship to losing one's autonomy, but no matter how distanced the relationship is, the power relation, which becomes apparent through the municipality inevitably owning and having the power to change the project, is still there.

Glenn also brought up the distanced relationship and feeling of being stalled by the municipality. They explain that the big wooden house that has been politically decided to become an expansion of their UEPP in 2020 is still empty and decaying. They were ready to start working on it – and had been since the political decision and before that, but were not allowed to do so, and it had been hard to uphold any dialogue with the municipality.

This power imbalance became apparent in the residents' experiences with occasions when they have had a closer collaboration with the municipality. Glenn described that the fact that it should be user controlled has been problematic in practice, with an example of a difficult situation:

The first big conflict we had, it was ... we had an extensive participation project with the agency right after we got the contract inaugurated. And that project lasted for a year and a half. The project was... we made a feasibility study for how the house could be rehabilitated, then. And there were a lot of us who lived here. There were 17 of us, I think. It was back then, before it became more like family homes, it was more of a collective. And then, we had maybe ten or twelve full-day workshops with the agency, lots of consultants, and it was the agency that managed the feasibility study process. They spent a lot of resources on it, and in some way, we finally came up with some solutions for the house that everyone was united with. And then we felt that it had been a relatively good but demanding participation process, and then... This was a very long time ago. It was like the starting point for how the participation has been here, but in any case, when we finished the process of the feasibility study, it had turned into a report, and we were ready to start all the measures we were going to do here. Then EBY said, yes, but we can't do any of... we can't implement any of the measures. So ... We were completely shocked. We felt like we had spent a year and a half of our lives, and they just said, we cannot afford to do any of those measures. And then we realised that they actually... that they had known all along. So, they led us astray. It was an abysmal start to the participation then, and it has been shown in retrospect that they do not have competence in participation. That's how they deal with participation, then. It's more like pretend-participation, yes, manipulated, participation in a way then and, after that, it has, so we got through a few small things. We were allowed to insulate the floor partition in the basement and we had a permaculture course in the garden, which the municipality paid for. Still, those are the two environmentally friendly things that the municipality has agreed to, and everything else we have just done ourselves. So, the agency that manages us and [x], they don't really deal with that [participation]. They engage in property development and property sales on behalf of Oslo municipality. They don't deal with residents or tenants. They work within market principles, so. Tenant participation is not common in Norway, so there are almost no examples of tenements where tenants can participate in their own living conditions. A tiny section in Chapter 6 of the Tenancy law deals with tenants' right to organise. But apart from that, which is actually a paragraph that is never used either because it is so bad, you have no right to do anything. You must ask for permission to paint the walls or hang a picture. That is what ordinary tenants in ordinary tenements have to deal with. It is like ... control. Yes. And yes, EBY, the agency that manages us, they... have no interest in doing this. It's kind of just been... our project has just, just been sorted under that agency there. So, they're stuck with us, right. It is very clear to us, or in our very subjective experience then, that it is not something they want to do. (Glenn)

As explained here, it has not worked well, and they have had many conflicts with EBY. Glenn describes further: "But after our conflicts, I think the municipality has simply resigned. They think we are very difficult, and so they do not give a shit about us then, so they leave us alone, and we leave them alone, and then we can do as we like." They clarify that they have accomplished more significant resident participation with time, mainly because the municipality does not bear more conflicts with them, so they leave them alone. However, this has not always been the case.

For example, the façade was going to be painted, and this is an urban ecological project, so it is written in the city council resolution that rehabilitation is supposed to be environmentally friendly and so on. Therefore, we said we must paint it with linseed oil paint. Related to principles of building protection, and ecology, it is self-evident that it must be painted with linseed oil paint, but

we did not get that through because one day, the municipality just showed up with a firm who just painted with some shit plastic paint, that we know is very damaging for old houses. (Glenn)

So, although they were mostly left alone, sometimes the municipality made decisions that they disagreed with. This made them doubt EBY's intentions of letting them participate in decisions. Here, the cheaper paint was chosen over one that could make the wood last longer. Decisions based on money were also something Bea worried about. Concerning urban change, they said that "it is always measured by money, and if everything is measured by money, then what is cheapest will always be what is prioritised" (Bea). And as the cheapest paint was not what was sustainable in this case, they were not able to collaborate.

As explained in the former chapter, the webpage article does not describe the way residents of E37 stayed in the house illegally as an occupation. This uncertainty about the history of E37 came to show among the residents as well – they were not clear about E37 being a former occupation either. As demonstrated in Box J, when people asked how their project came into being, they did not mention occupation or that the youth stayed and fought to become able to stay legally. In the interviews, the residents of E37 explained that "indeed it was… it wasn't a direct occupation, but it was a kind of occupation at the start. Then it was negotiated that it became a pilot project." Later, they continued discussing this:

> *It was a type of social housing for youth and was supposed to be renovated. And sold, but then those youth continued living there. Yes, and then they sort of started a political process to take it over and turn it into an urban ecological project, which ended in 37 – the way it is today. So, it's in a way… It was an occupation for a period, but they were people who originally lived there. So, it wasn't the typical… breaking into a house that way.*

In similar matters, another resident explained, "People who lived here didn't want to move, so it got a bit like… then the municipality probably figured out that it was better with rent and some kind of contract than house squatting". It is not always considered squatting because the youth did not break into a building but were already there and only refused to leave.

A participant from the other UEPP identified more with their history as squatters. It was a more traditional occupation; they entered a house without permission. They also connected their dysfunctional relationship with EBY to their being judged because of this past,

> *EBY just ended up with us… Not… but the reason they don't like us is… Well, now I am personifying an agency, but it is because we have been squatters, because we started as squatters. And it's very much like… I think it runs very deep in them. It's probably not… they're very uncomfortable with it, with people who don't… it's unpredictable for them. They don't understand it. Protestation. They wanted more of some kind of streamlined dialogue and not new thinking, not to deal with… they want conventional projects, which they understand, a security for them. And neither we nor e37 nor Svartlamon represent this. Therefore there is such reluctance from the bureaucracy.*

They suspected their past as squatters, and their 'new thinking' got in the way of their cooperation with EBY. What they explained here throws light on the difficulty of collaboration across fundamentally different ways of organising and thinking. While they understood protest and squatting as a means for participating in creating more sustainable housing in Oslo, the municipal organisation and bureaucracy were organised differently. They pointed to them being so different that EBY did not want to deal with or knew how to incorporate it in the streamlined, conventional organisation, and that the prejudices against squatters ran deep in them.

For the (x-) squatters, the relationships with the municipality were naturally quite different. They had not been accepted as UEPPs and were in no agreement or cooperation with the municipality. Although most participants who (had) squatted wanted as much attention as possible, as public attention was a tactic for becoming accepted and gaining support, one of the participants tried to stay under the radar, similar to the UEPP residents. Trude lived in a squatted, privately owned property and had no communication with the owners, so their situation differed. It had not always been this way, however. The squat was previously connected to another occupied property, which was municipal. The stories say that the relationship with the municipality consisted of them showing up once a year to tell them to leave and would then leave them alone until the following year. At one point, though, the municipality forced the residents out. Today the space is still empty.

The other squatters I talked to had aimed to become urban ecological projects because it was that or eviction to them. They used what they called direct action or civil disobedience in their attempts to influence and participate in politics in Oslo. This meant using illegal means to try to create change.

> *It is a little burdensome to commit burglary in such a way that before you have been in a place for two days, it's then you will be charged. Because if you get caught? Right? So it is stigmatising. In a way, also because you are in danger of making yourself… a criminal. Although the motivation is political and social, in a way, the method is of a kind that lies in the grey area.* (Bea)

Helle also described how it is hard to try to make a change as activists:

> *I do think the bureaucracy is a little over the top. I don't know… I'm sure many students are looking for solutions. I've seen so few alternatives. It's hard to imagine what things could have been and why it's not like that. I've always been ambivalent, or forth and back, between building up something alternative on the outside or thinking that we should change society from the inside. Totally autonomous communities do exist, where the police aren't allowed and such. I'm sure it's precious for the ones who live there, but I don't know if it contributes to changing society as a whole. But I don't know if you can change much from the inside either. So many are working on and researching it, and nothing's changed. Think about how many are using energy to make a better world, and then we're like… we pretend we think renewable energy is cool; 'can't you study that?' But then, we're gonna continue with the same old shit. I think many become a little bitter. Maybe*

that's why there aren't that many grownup activists… you become tired, and then you want stability. (Helle)

Still, Helle believed that it was important to keep using civil disobedience because if not,

Well, then I think the big 'housing sharks'[16] and the developers would get to do what they wanted even more. It might be a detour, but I remember when I was in 'Natur og ungdom'[17], the prime minister called us watchdogs, 'Oh, it is so good that you are paying attention and letting us know when we are doing something wrong', and such, so I think that this is similar. To speak up… with strong means to become seen and heard. (Helle)

Although Helle aligned occupation as a method with other activist methods and thought what they did as occupants was sort of the same as what they did in 'Natur og Ungdom' – using powerful means to become seen and heard – as occupants, they were not appreciated in this way. They explained that they were not perceived as watchdogs when using the 'strong means' of occupation, "it feels more like they think of us as being in the way – not following the rules." (Helle). There was no cooperation, and they did not feel like they were conceived as having the potential to be part of creating a better city.

Bea reflects on why they are not recognised as resources when they take empty buildings and create something, in their opinion, positive.

So, to see it in a bit of an extreme way, I guess it is a little bit like… American vibes, at least concerning like… you don't negotiate with terrorists, kind of. It's not supposed to pay off to commit a crime or break the law. (Bea)

Whether it paid off or not was also discussed by Helle:

When you look at the correlation between all the engagement and all the energy put into that type of project, I certainly do not feel like we have any power to any significant degree. When we have to use civil disobedience to keep those places in such a short period… But, a little bit, so… one will impact the politicians a little, people's way of thinking… push the limits a little… I think it has some effect, but there is very, very little left over from all the work put into it. This is not something one can do for a larger period, in my opinion (Helle).

Both Helle and Bea emphasised that although they hoped they had made some influence, living in illegal squats was exhausting and not a long-term solution. Although the municipality appreciated aspects of what they did at times, they still always evicted them in the end. Bea here explained this experience of being conceived as a problem but also that aspects of their projects were appreciated.

I think… when it comes to the opinions of the municipality, it is kind of… the economy rules. And then it is also the economy that becomes the clearest sign of what kind of politics and choices they make, right? So, the agency of urban environment, lovely agency, they want the best for the citizens of Oslo, green areas, lovely… but it does not help that fifteen employees of the city stand there applauding because we have planted a hedge when they throw us out the next day because the municipality will make four million on an unused plot of land. (Bea)

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[16] Housing shark, directly translated. A negative name for a person who owns a lot of property, just for the matter of making money from it, not caring about the residents of his properties
[17] Natur og ungdom, liteally, nature and youth, norwegian environmntal organisation for youth

Bea was referring to a doubleness in their experiences with the municipality. They appreciate the squatters, in some senses, for caring about plant life in the city, for example. However, they also wanted them gone. They appreciated that the hedges were growing but prioritised growing economically. Bea also emphasised that the municipality could not admit they were not handling urban issues because that could create distrust.

> *It is a lot about pride too. Being able to defend what one's doing… and, if the municipality of Oslo had said, 'we are not grappling with the housing questions…' then the trust disappears, right? We won't admit that we perhaps need some help from the grassroots?* (Bea)

In Bea's opinion, they could be a resource, but the municipality would not admit this because that would involve shedding light on its shortcomings.

> *It's a bit divided, right? Because to get creds from the municipality, you often have to fit into the municipal template, and we didn't. And some of those things that we spotlighted, found out and made media stories about were to the disadvantage of the municipality. It put the municipality in a terrible light. So, we kind of felt that the cops, to a great extent, did their job. And then, there are, kind of, okay and less okay cops, but it becomes more of a personal matter, and it is somewhat the same in the municipality, right? When they talk about urban development and ecology and such, they would like to take creds for a great deal of what we worked on and thinks very highly of themselves… for allowing groups like ours to exist [...]. Then the end of the story is that you get fined and are punished, right? So, there is some sort of doubleness in their way of communicating.* (Bea)

Like what Glenn explained, Bea did not think they fit into the municipal template. Bea emphasised that squatting was a way of criticising "the political system and building a real democracy based on people's needs and not on money". When you squat, "you kind of put yourself in the crossfire… concerning, like, ways of protesting, and it's very liberating and very, very democratic, in a way" (Bea). However, although they explained that it is democratic, they did not seem to think they were received democratically.

Occupation is negotiating, communicating, and creating a different relationship where things get stirred. The occupants become criminals, but sometimes they got public attention and spread anger with, or attention to, the municipality leaving buildings empty to rot and profit running housing politics. A few times, they have been accepted.

Stigmas and Power Relations Where the Power is Not Recognised

The relationship between the municipality and the residents is a recurring theme in the documents and is presented as essential for urban ecological dwelling. The participants frequently discussed this relationship as well. The municipal documents also use built examples of urban ecological projects to present other possibilities of sustainable dwelling, although they

have gone through the municipal organisation before reappearing, published on the municipality's website.

Picking up the disagreement of whether the municipal organisation and housing sectors have to change in order to allow more sustainable dwelling or not, we have now seen that in the municipal documents, it was explicitly expressed that many urban ecological ways of dwelling cannot be achieved by the planning authorities, because of Norwegian Laws. Instead, it depends on the will and engagement of initiators and property owners. This does not suggest that the municipality itself is a huge property owner, as mentioned, the booklet emphasises that the municipality of Trondheim is and has power in being a property owner, or that it is a problem that Norwegian Law does not have room for urban ecological dwelling. Implicitly, it recognises that one has needed exceptions from laws and rules to make the UEPPs, but the documents do not comment further on this. Where does that leave resident and citizen participation? The municipality wants more urban ecological dwellings, but not changing to make space for them, so perhaps citizens and participants are to continue carrying the burden of breaking the law.

What Bea said about the municipality needing help from the grassroots captures a way of thinking apparent in all the participants' ways of talking about creating sustainable changes in Oslo. They thought of themselves as resources who could maintain buildings and pointed to issues with the current housing sector in Oslo. That they are resources is emphasised by Løken (2019), who found that the dwelling projects founded by squatting were more successful in creating dwellings with good communities because they were not run according to market principles, and by Christiansen (2020), who concluded that the hopes for a non-commercial housing sector were in the grassroots. They both connected the independency of market principles with enabling community and solidarity and found that similar projects initiated by political or market actors did not accomplish the same because the emphasis on economic growth collided with their goals. As I also discussed in Chapter 6, the participants argued that more sustainable dwelling was incompatible with the commercial housing sector – the alternative sector could not simultaneously be commercial and sustainable.

However, as squatters or UEPP residents, they felt like they were not *perceived* as resources – instead, they were in the way, despite promises of resident participation. While the municipal documents describe using the involvement of the residents, the participants felt left alone. They explained cooperation either as bad or as non-existent. They were frustrated about the relationship with the municipality and did not feel that EBY wished to cooperate with them. The UEPPs in Oslo mostly tried to keep under the radar because the cooperation worked poorly,

to the degree there was any. Løken (2019) similarly found in her study of UEPPs in Oslo that the respondents lacked trust-based arenas for participating in political decisions and actions, despite the municipal decisions emphasising resident participation. Such lack of room for participation "considerably reduces the likelihood that the projects can be used as a learning arena for urban ecology" (Løken 2019, 96). This also became apparent in the participants of this thesis' worry about not knowing what concrete possibilities they had to participate, initiate, or make own efforts, and not being paid attention to as having knowledges and experiences.

According to Vasstrøm & Paaby (2021), the resident participation in Oslo does not challenge power structures; instead, economic interests still run city planning. They also connect citizen initiatives being dismissed with the municipal employees not having the time, knowledge, or tools for collaborating with citizens. This resonates with what Glenn said about EBY not having competence in resident participation and it resulting in 'pretend-participation'. If the municipal organisation is not adapted to involve resident participation and does not call for changes within their organisation to learn and adapt, then it will either be left with residents demanding to participate, perhaps illegally, or without new urban ecological dwellings where resident participation is essential.

This also resonates with what Martínez et al. (2013) wrote about how politicians encourage self-responsibility and citizen participation: "when people actually take these values seriously by engaging in squatting, they are often treated as criminals who undermine social integration" (Martínez et al. 2013, 12). The participants of this thesis did not just understand the lack of cooperation and possibilities of participation as an economic and organisational issue; they also connected it with prejudices towards their background as squatters. They felt that the labels as criminals jumping the line added to them not being perceived as resources. The fact that the resident of the UEPP where they squatted in the more confronting way through breaking an entry experienced more stigma concerning their history than the other UEPP participants, supports this. Polanska's book about squatting in the Swedish welfare state (2019) also problematises how squatters have been framed as a democratic problem, which again legitimises repression and violence against them. She explains that reformist and non-conflictual ways of doing politics are the norm and that it is widely accepted that corporate leaders and market actors have the power to participate in Swedish politics, while civil society does not. There might be similar tendencies in the Norwegian welfare state, where, as described by Riise (2013), laws against squatting are strict. And as explained by Krogstad (1985) and Holm and Kvaran (1989), there were prejudices against squatters in Norway too.

As argued by Bea, squatting was a way of participating actively in democracy. This view, as well as squatting pointing to issues with current politics, is emphasised by Polanska too.

> *Urban squatting has served to decolonize Swedish civil society from the conditioned cooperation with the state and its institutions by reclaiming a renewed version of democracy and pointing to the fault lines of Swedish politics* (Polanska 2019, 174)

As Helle also emphasised, squatting is democratic in the sense of allowing people to participate regardless of who they are; they do not need a specific education or professional position to take part in shaping the city.

At both ends, as a squatter moving into municipal buildings or as a UEPP resident, there are relationships with the municipality to varying degrees. Through looking at these relationships, just how big the power differences are become more apparent. The municipality is a part of the UEPPs as the owner of the buildings and decides what happens with them in the future. They are in a relationship with UEPP residents and with other inhabitants trying to participate in creating sustainable change. Still, the municipal documents did not recognise the power difference in these relationships. The booklet is directed outwards, not inwards. It was a different agency that conducted the 'new dwelling qualities' project and created the booklet on urban ecological dwelling than the agency responsible for the UEPPs in Oslo, and there is no mentioning of PBE consulting EBY to learn about how the UEPPs are doing, nor how the cooperation is going. If they have discussed this, none of EBY's knowledge of UEPPs in Oslo is shared in the booklet, which as mentioned, only contains general facts.

While in the old documents, the municipality is supposed to communicate urban ecological ways *to* the inhabitants, in the newer ones, they are inspired *by* the inhabitants, as they use the UEPPs in Oslo and Svartlamon to demonstrate what urban ecology entails. In this way, they are considering the knowledges of the residents. However, as argued in the former chapter, some of the knowledges about sustainable dwelling that I found with residents entails protesting fundamental aspects of the municipality, and these knowledges were left unmentioned. There are paradoxes in the municipal emphasis on cooperation and resident participation. The municipality uses them as positive examples of UEPPs, but they do not acknowledge their occupational past and that they had to do something illegal to obtain the ability to participate and cooperate. They emphasise giving citizens more agency to contribute, participate or initiate. Still, they do not provide other suggestions for how this agency is supposed to come about beyond the former squats – to people without economic or political power, or to people who do not have the possibility of squatting. They encourage more urban ecological dwellings, but as they do not direct the knowledge on creating changes towards the municipal organisation – as

they do not consider being part of these changes themselves – which is what the participants know that they would have to do, they are only taking selected knowledges of the participants into account when explaining what urban ecological dwelling entails. That the participants also understood challenging the growth paradigm, profit-oriented politics and the lack of participation or democracy in the city as important aspects of their projects, are not recognised in the municipal documents. They have radically different views on how changes of dwelling in Oslo can happen and what the problems are.

In the squatters' sense, there was a lack of trust that things will be fixed from above, this inspired them to take spaces illegally, while the UEPP residents try to go under the municipality's radar and be left alone. The experiences of the UEPP resident participants were that EBY was not following the urban ecological principles themselves, that the cooperation is not good, and that they are not invited to participate. No matter how much resident or citizen participation is emphasised in the municipal documents, there was not much collaboration between the participants and the municipality.

As discussed in the previous chapter, urban ecology can limit what can be said. This part has provided examples of insecurities about what would happen if they got more involved with the municipality – of losing independency, being surveilled, being evicted – insecurities that strengthen the fact that not everything can be said. They were worried that the municipality would no longer bear them if they were too critical or involved with them. These insecurities are unfavourable for the uneven power balance or the participants' possibilities of sharing their knowledges.

Spreading Standards

Box L. Reflections on Standard in a UEPP in Oslo 14.09.2022

Roger meets me where we first met, in their garden, which is open to the public and has a sign saying one is welcome to enter. It has a greenhouse, a bench with a view and many eatable vegetables. Still, we soon decide to record the planned interview in their more private apartment. Walking up their stairways feels like being inside a home already, even if we have not entered the apartment yet. Downstairs there is a concert scene. There are clothes and shoes outside the doors and decorations on the walls. When we get a few floors up, there is suddenly a long shelf of toiletries, and beside it – the door for the famously shared bathroom.

I end up in a soft chair in Roger's living room, which they share with another resident. The calm colour of the walls is the same as the original one they found under all the newer layers of paint. We have moved into the living room from the kitchen because the dishwasher was running and making noise. A few times, a neighbour has come by to borrow and deliver back some tools for fixing their bike. The view is pretty, especially here from the top floor, but even down on the little bench in their garden. The thought of this place being of low standard makes me upset. There is even a fireplace. I do not know the average standard in Oslo or what that means. Still, most people I know do not have a fireplace,

dishwasher, nice view, well-insulated windows, a beautiful garden where they can grow their own food *and* neighbours that are also friends.

This part is about standards. It explores perceptions and negotiations of universal or general measurements of what is good enough concerning the material aspects of the dwellings, quality of life, or sustainability. The word 'standard' is about measuring something according to a general scale, about the level of quality of something or something accepted as normal. It is similar to the word sustainable, which refers to the ability to sustain, maintain or uphold something. That 'something' is also decided and measured in different ways, as a particular something is deemed worthy of sustaining, whether being a specific economic growth, level of emissions or degrees of global warming. Sustainable standard hence refers to a standard of sustainability worthy of sustaining.

What is understood as standard and sustainable varies greatly, even though the words suggest the opposite –the fact that the word 'sustainabilities' does not exist in dictionaries suggests that there is one sustainable way. The duality of sustainable or unsustainable also refers to there being one correct version of sustainability.

In the Municipal Discourse

In the Urban Ecological Program from 2011, they use the word to describe how new buildings should be built. It is written that they will phase in "requirements for 'green buildings' and requirements for passive house standard" (Oslo kommune 2011, 8). Passive house refers to buildings that use little energy to achieve a comfortable temperature. Here, standard refers to measuring how well- and if the demands for a passive house are fulfilled.

The word 'standard' is extensively used in the document *Urban Ecological Dwellings and Areas* (PBE 2022). It is used in the way described above, as a way of measuring how 'green' a building is. Additionally, 'Simple standard', 'moderate standard' and 'low standard' are considered urban ecological principles. About Svartlamon, they write that it is "organised and run according to principles of sustainable environmental solutions, horizontal structure, transparent economy, simple standards and cheap rent" (PBE 2022, 23). Later, it says that "[t]he municipality has concluded that moderate housing standard and protection of houses go well together" (31), and that "[t]hrough Svartlamon, they have found a way to calculate rent by valuing low standards" (31). In addition to this, a text box on principles of ecological societies explains that "quality of life is maintained even if requirements for the technical standard are lowered" (24). Low standards here seem to have negative and positive connotations: low

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standard can be valued, it both brought forward as an urban ecological principle, and it is proposed that they can live good lives *despite* the lower standard.

When the rent at Svartlamon is discussed, it is explained that residents pay average rent, "but the rent is adjusted for actual conditions such as own efforts and a lower standard including heating comfort, shared sanitary solutions and the technical condition." (26). This sentence is the only concrete explanation of what is meant by 'low standard' in the documents about urban ecological dwelling. The concrete examples of low or simple standard were heating comfort, shared sanitary solutions and technical solutions. Among these, the shared bathrooms are the only examples mentioned otherwise in the document, which they assume leads to lower water consumption. Shared bathrooms also bring some formal issues; at Svartlamon, the residents cannot get Housing Allowance because "the Housing Allowance law does not allow support housing without a private bathroom and WC, which very few people in Svartlamon have." (PBE 2022, 31). This law supports the notion of shared bathrooms not being the appropriate standard.

About the UEPPs in Oslo, it is also explained that the rent here is decided according to living standards and own efforts. Both spaces were originally municipal housing, vacated because of the low standard. In the city council decision of 2007, it is stated that

> *[r]ent is decided according to own efforts, housing standard, and future efforts in collaboration with Oslo municipality about using the experiences the pilot projects provide. The pilot projects must be exempt from the rules on reference rent. Residents, for their part, must contribute to the rehabilitation process and operation with 'dugnad'[18] efforts, as well as during and after the rehabilitation, be available to Oslo municipality and state authorities as a learning arena for urban ecology.* (Prosser et al. 2017, 45).

Here, they imply that the UEPPs must be exceptions. They also emphasise the importance of the contributions of the residents. The booklet stating that "an eco-society views themselves as an ongoing process, not as a finished result" (PBE 2022, 14) could point to the material standard being dependent on their continuous efforts. Still, they continued describing the standard as low, not as in movement or in relationship to participants contributions. The next part presents how the participants discuss the standard in their current or former dwellings.

Standard in the Knowledges of the Participants
As described in Box L, I interpretated the resident of an UEPPs mentioning of the low standards in a conversation about the low rent, as a way of justifying why they were an exception – why they did not have to pay average rent. This situation was, like the municipal documents about

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[18] Dugnad – voluntarily work in a group

UEPPs, a public presentation of their UEPP. However, as the following citation is an example of, this did not reflect how the participants felt about their UEPPs. Valter, for example, points to the standard not being higher on the private rent market:

> *Where I have lived before, it's been like… I've sort of been on the private rental market, mostly, and it's sort of a thing where we live… that you don't necessarily have, like, top standard, that it's not like, everything is newly renovated and so on, at least not according to Norwegian standards then, but for me, it wasn't really that much like that. I have, like, visited people who have a shower in the kitchen and things like that in the private housing market or the rental market. But it is a thing that, in a way, it is a little, yes, simple standard. But I experience it as very, somehow… I don't know if you sometimes make a difference between 'standard of living' and kind of 'material standard', but I experience it as very, really quite high… that it's actually quite ok on both. At least compared to what I've been used to before. It's pretty nice in the immediate area, and there's quite a nice view, and it's quite bright and things like that. Then some things stand out a little from how one might, that is… some things that surprise people when they come in. We don't have a private bathroom, for example. So, we brush our teeth in the kitchen. And then we have a shared shower in the basement. But then there is also, yes… a community in the house.* (Valter)

Valter emphasised that the low standard is 'a thing', a concept, but that they do not relate to this attribute. 'Norwegian standard' is described as high, but they emphasise that this 'top standard' is unnecessary to dwell well. They also did not think their previous dwellings, or the current homes of people they knew, were of a higher standard than their UEPP. Valter understood this presumably low standard meant not being newly renovated and shared bathrooms.

Roger shares a similar story:

> *We had a much lower standard where I lived before, maybe the last two or three shared homes where I lived before… No, for me, the standard is not low here. What does that mean? It was the municipality who said that the standard here was low from the start. I think it was because it was a bit decrepit, decrepit shower, toilet outside in the hallway… it is almost better to have the bathroom out in the hall than inside the apartment. It makes sense to step aside a little! If we had outdoor toilets in the garden, the standard would have been a bit low, perhaps… You get so used to… you adapt to other people's habits. I don't have to wash clothes on Sundays, the children's families wash a lot of clothes, so you quickly adapt to other people's routines. The standard is not low here. It doesn't draft from the windows; there's hot water in the tap; adapting to others is pleasant. It's just interplay.* (Roger)

Roger also emphasised that they did not experience the standard as low and added that they thought this 'thing' of there being a low standard, as Valter called it, was invented by the municipality. At another point, they described how the house went from municipal youth housing to the UEPP – the municipality evicted the youth in the first place because they thought the standard was too low. They also emphasised a positive aspect of the shared facilities: adapting and interacting with neighbours is nice. Both Roger and Valter bring forward the community in the house when discussing the standard. For them, it was a positive aspect of their dwelling – or of their living standard.

Glenn also emphasised the positive aspects of simple standards. They mentioned it in a conversation about how they imagined a more sustainable city:

> *A rental sector that was so big that it was meaningful, with long-term contracts, cheap rent, resident democracy, and of course, I know this will never happen; that it was also environmentally sustainable. That one built homes of a simple standard, where the residents themselves could put in an effort, where you attempt to keep costs low by using second-hand materials. Not so big homes. Yes, things like that…* (Glenn)

While the words used by the municipality are both low and simple, Glenn was consequently saying simple standard. Their way of using simple standard in a positive manner here is similar to that of the discourse of the municipality. It is the opposite of big, expensive, dependent on high consumption, and therefore linked with sustainability.

However, another conversation demonstrates their critical view towards the understanding of appropriate standard promoted by the municipality. Again, this is about the decaying big wooden house in which they wanted to create more UE dwellings that the municipality had decided that the residents could maintain and use to expand their UEPP. When the municipality was planning how much it would cost to maintain and make the building of a high enough standard, the plans were stopped because it became too expensive. Glenn explained that the result was a budget with some 'totally gross' parts. The budget, among other things, included a garage remote control and a 300 000 kroner picket fence. They explained that this did not make sense because it is regulated as an urban ecological project. They said: "It is decided that the residents are supposed to contribute with a large part of their efforts, it is decided that it is supposed to be urban ecological which means simple standard, reusing second-hand materials… none of that is mentioned in the budget" (Glenn). Not accounting for the urban ecological principles in the budget made it too expensive. The result was that they had to watch the house continue rotting because they were not allowed to start maintaining it (until they did their 'innocent action'). Here, the high budget was set in opposition to a simple standard.

As discussed in Chapter 6, a workshop was an essential feature of a dwelling for Helle. They recognised that people are different and have different needs concerning the material features of homes.

> *People are different concerning how important their way of dwelling is to them. For some, it's ok as long as they have a room with a socket. I don't know. I need a workshop.* (Helle)

On a hike through the woods, Trude explained that many found their way of living primitive, while they thought there was much richness in their way of living. Usually, they did not talk much about how it was with their colleagues. People generally went silent when they learned about the occupational history. Trude was frustrated about feeling judged and said, "People are

so square that it is insane. They think that… showering every day is the good life". Back in their dwelling, they explained that they had not installed skirting boards- around their windows. They had also left grey pencil marks on the wooden walls from when they built them on top of the isolation. In their opinion, the important thing was that *they* liked it. In an interview, they said where they live has 'cabin standard'. They carried their water to their water tank and did not have a shower, hence the everyday showering comment. They explained that this was what differed from more standard dwellings, implying that it was not much, and they repeatedly reminded me that they lived normal lives. This way of living was not for everyone, something they expressed in our first conversation: "In my experience, young people in Norway today are so used to high material standard… living standard… I do not envision the youth I meet today living with lower standard" (Trude).

Bea also talked about standards when discussing the places they lived, mainly as low. In one place, they had no electricity and got water from a stream through the winter. They were impressed with a journalist who withstood staying with them for a whole week. The occupants coped with it because they did it as political projects. Helle similarly explained that

> nobody stands in line for these dwellings we are taking. They are often in terrible condition, without water, electricity, and mould, and they are not attractive. But people… some people, maybe people on the right wing, create an image of us just wanting to be lazy and avoid paying, avoid waiting in line.

All the spaces that have been occupied, both the ones that were eventually evicted and the current UEPP, have been defined as being of a too low standard to dwell in. However, the spaces that were not evicted have been maintained and fixed in ways that the residents are content with. The occupants/residents created a standard that was sufficient for them.

Standards Beyond the Material and Technical

Regarding the standard of today's UEPPs, the participants did not conceive it as low. As Helle commented, they thought the municipality called it that from the beginning because it was a bit descript before, and as Valter described, the low standard was 'a thing', more than an accurate description of their dwelling.

In the municipal documents, similarly to my experience described in Box L, the 'low standard' seems to be used to justify the low rent. This might be a way of managing these exceptions that the UEPPs are, for example in not being accepted by Norwegian Law or rules of reference rent. As it is also written about Svartlamon, the rent is adjusted to 'valuing low standard'. Valuing low standard is nevertheless a curious phrase, as standard is about general measurements of

what is adequate, it is easy to assume that low standard would refer to that which is not adequate. Instead of questioning whether 'the standard' is an accurate way of measuring whether a dwelling is good enough to live in, it suggests that residents of UEPPs can value what is not adequate. On another hand, it might be that such writing about valuing low standards can contribute to open viewpoints on appropriate standards.

The participants disagreed with the standard being low, despite the shared bathrooms. They appreciated sharing and adapting to each other – the community was also important for making a dwelling good to live in. They defended their dwellings, saying the standard was not low; instead, it was pretty ok or nice. In this discourse, low standard becomes the opposite of it being nice; they did not understand low standard as something to be valued. As shown, Glenn criticised the notion of appropriate standards in the municipality while simultaneously wanting dwellings to have simple standards – they used the idea of simple standards positively, as they connected it to lower consumption, smaller spaces, and lower costs. Still, the participants did, differently from the municipality, question the categorisation according to standard. They described something being off about that way of categorising a dwelling, while the municipality instead created an exception for the UEPPs but did not question the way of categorising dwellings according to established standards.

In the municipal documents, 'low standard' and 'simple standard' are used interchangeably and measure something material and often technical. However, in the UEPPs in Oslo, the heating comfort was not low, and the 'technical solutions' is vague and not elaborated on, so we are left with shared bathrooms being the only concrete example of the low or simple standard, in the municipal documents. The participants described the municipal way of measuring standards according to the material as unfit to measure whether a dwelling is good to live in. Like the residents at Svartlamon protested their ways of dwelling being surveyed and reduced to explained by what could be measured in numbers (Hammer 2018), the participants living in UEPPs in Oslo also resisted measurable standards being able to describe whether their dwellings enabled good lives or not.

Back when the UEPPs were squatted, the municipality had declared the standard of the buildings as too low for them to be lived in. The municipality now appreciates the residents living there, and in doing that, they recognise UEPP residents' efforts and contributions to maintaining and creating an adequate standard. Although the documents can be read as UEPP residents enjoying low standards, it is not so low that the residents are not allowed to live there.

The aspects making them of a low standard, and thereby urban ecological, are the same elements of the buildings that led to them being deemed as not of a high enough standard to dwell in, in the first place. The participants recognised that they squatted buildings of a low standard, but they were not described as low beyond the time they were squatted. Part of the political project of the squatters is that these dwellings were not of a too low standard because they counted on their contributions and maintenance. They could fix things that needed fixing and maintain what needed to be maintained, and the standard would keep sinking if no one did. Residents of squats or UEPPs kind of take the leftovers of what is deemed undwellable and turn them into suitable dwellings for their standards. The buildings were not inevitably of a low standard; it was what is done or not done to maintain them so that they can stay good to live in that decides the standard. It was changing and in relationships with the dwellers. The participants explained that they had maintained and rehabilitated the UEPPs almost independently of the municipality's support. They knew that they were resourceful and able to maintain them. They did not need someone to build a 300 000 kroner picket fence to make a good dwelling. If the lack of garage remote controls is an example of low standard concerning technical solutions, then they did not need that either. Good or appropriate standards did not have to mean high consumption or buying new and expensive, and they perceived the standard of the municipality as getting in the way of using buildings that, in their opinion, one could have lived good lives in.

Part of what is urban ecological about the UEPPs is being critical towards notions of the appropriate standard. As they prove that high consumption, having one's own of everything, and big homes are not necessary for their dwellings to enable good lives, they show that the material standard that demands such features is not needed. They disrupt dominating views of what a dwelling should be and point to other values – community and having more time was more important for their well-being, as well as sharing and consuming less is important for the wellbeing of other people and other life, now and in the future. I borrow what Pattaroni (2014) say about squatting challenging the modern city: "Objects and individuals spill over the narrow frames of order which govern the modern city" (Pattaroni 2014, 67). These narrow frames could concern narrow conceptions of appropriate standards, which in the participants' view, cannot ensure good lives for inhabitants of Oslo, or good lives for all living beings now and in futures further away, concerning the extraction, emissions and work high consumption and large dwellings lead to.

The participants questioned the norms of a good dwelling and were critical towards notions of new, individual, and modern equalling adequate standard. It was crucial for the participants to

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have the possibility to live in different ways. They needed the freedom of paying lower rent, the communities and deciding what a good dwelling is rather than a set of material standards. The municipal descriptions of valuing low standards, combined with the paradox of cherishing the UEPPs for living with low standard, which was initially used as an argument for not letting anyone live there, might build on participants' ambiguity towards standards. Although the standard might be there to protect inhabitants, as the participants commented – the standard was worse in the rental market. As Holt-Jensen (2013) argued, the rental market in Norway is close to completely unregulated, and the standard does not prevent people from living in dwellings with inadequate standard.

Chapter Summary

Describing the standard as too low involves not recognising that the residents or squatters are capable of maintaining and creating what they need to dwell well. The participants recognised that the buildings they had occupied or dwelled in were in bad condition before they were squatted but now perceived them as of a good enough material standard. They understood themselves as resourceful, and the material standard of their dwellings and many abandoned dwellings in Oslo as depending on whether anyone was allowed to take care of them. Part of their political project was maintaining and conserving buildings as a protest of letting them rot and not letting people live there when there is a lack of dwellings. As Bea argued, there is not really a housing crisis because many houses are not used. There is an unwillingness to make the necessary changes to let them live there and take care of them.

When participants talked about standards, it went beyond the material – their communities and the relational were parts of it. Whether a dwelling could meet their needs depended not only on their efforts in taking care of it but also on how the communities in them allowed taking care of each other. Feminists have criticised urban planning for being too technical and economical, for using masculinist and systematic metaphors of machines in their search for other ways of urban life, and for leaving out care, community and the home in their analysis and suggestions for how one could improve lives in the city (Heim LaFrombois 2017; Morrow & Parker 2020). Similarly, the participants also knew what made their dwellings good to dwell in could not be reduced to the technical, material, or economical. The municipality also mentions the community as important, but as they simultaneously kept writing that the standard was low, they maintained a discourse separating material and technical from the emotional and relational.

As the potential of residents is one of the principles presented in the municipal documents, an urban ecological way of living would necessarily have to allow for another way of organising dwelling. The participants described their ways of organising as unorganised and believed that citizens have much to contribute with if they are allowed to participate. It would also entail questioning standards, even though this is hard to combine with today's municipal organisation and general standards. Although the municipality did emphasise this in the UE booklet, the picket fence might be one of many examples of ways of organising that complicate this.

If urban ecology cannot be combined with growth and cannot be initiated from the municipality, but neither from new squats, how will potential new ones be started? If the case of the wooden house decided to become an extension of the UEPP by the municipality themselves is not followed up on because of the high material standard demanded, how will there be more UEPPs? Creating new ones was a goal of the municipality of Oslo and the participants. However, they disagree on how it can happen, with the municipality thinking it can happen without challenging the growth-minded housing sector or its own organisation as much as the participants do. The booklet states one should gain wisdom about urban ecology from built examples of UE dwellings, and yet they have published a booklet without describing the UEPPs in Oslo in a way that one can gain wisdom from. Not including the UEPPs that the municipality is responsible for strengthens the notion of the project being directed outwards and not for improving its sustainability measures.

The relationship between the municipality and the residents also has material consequences. For example, when they tried to get allowed to use the paint they thought was appropriate, the result was that another one was used – one that was good enough for the municipality. For the participant, the standard of the paint was not high enough, concerning the health of the wood, and the environmental consequences connected to the, in their words, shit plastic paint, and its lack of maintaining the wood for as long as possible. Glenn pointed out that the municipality followed urban ecological principles neither in terms of resident participation nor concerning renovating or repairing in ways that lead to low emissions and low consumption. They were not allowed to be heard in their wish for another type of paint – the painters just showed up.

Although the term UEPP involves aspects and goals that unite residents and the municipality, sometimes the cooperation between UEPP residents, squatters, and the municipality ends up in nothing. The way the municipality and the participants knew 'standard', participation and collaboration sometimes collided. It appeared demanding to incorporate such dwelling projects into the municipal organisation, which has to adhere to Norwegian laws, and as discussed by

Glenn and Vasstrøm & Paaby (2021), is not adapted for nor has experience in resident participation. EBY's leader also commented that they cannot be involved in something like this, other than inspiring people and businesses, because of Norwegian laws. And Christiansen (2020) also argues that state politics and legal system create a narrow leeway for municipal non-commercial initiatives. Writing about valuing low standards might be a way of managing such conflicting role of both wanting more urban ecological dwelling, but working within a state and municipality organised in ways complicating creating non-commercial alternatives, spaces exempt from reference rent, with resident participation, and material standards different from appropriate standards. The municipality and participants agreed on the resources among the residents of the UEPPs being able to withhold an appropriate standard, although the municipality described it as valuing low standard. Nevertheless, the participants criticised the municipality for not allowing the inhabitants of Oslo to maintain and enhance other abandoned municipal buildings. They thought the dominant way of organising housing and participation had to be challenged in order to achieve more sustainable dwelling in Oslo.

8. Conclusion: Sustainabilities from the Roots

'SUSTAINABLE', 'NATURBAN', 'AN INNOVATIVE PILOT BUILDING', 'ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY' and 'AN AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENT BUILDING' is printed all over a fence surrounding the construction site of a new apartment building in Nydalen – a grey office building/business/shopping area in Oslo and the location of the research centre from which I am writing this thesis. Not long after they started building, someone initiated a conversation on the fence: 'MILJØ?' ('environment?' in Norwegian) was written among the printed text. A few weeks later, someone responded: 'rorb, ert re teD' ('It is wood, brother' written backwards in Norwegian). Months after that again, as my companion looked down on it, she said she had checked the prices of the apartments and that it was expensive to be sustainable. She said 'sustainable' ironically. And hers, the taggers' and the developers' different ways of knowing sustainability all crossed paths in them expressing their opinions about the sustainability of the new dwellings in Nydalen.

This thesis has aimed to explore knowledges about sustainable dwelling in Oslo. Following a long line of scholars arguing for recognising grassroots and social movements' knowledges in the attempt of opening for imagining other possibilities for change towards sustainability (Escobar 2017; Di Feliciantonio 2017a; Christiansen 2020; Delanty 2021), I have asked what alternative possibilities of sustainable dwelling derive from squatting in Oslo. To answer that, I have shared stories of participants currently living in or who have previously lived in dwellings founded by squatting.

To talk about ways of dwelling that improve living conditions, I have talked about sustainabilities. The concept of 'sustainability' can be used to hide destructible practices but inspired by Tsing (2017), I have used it as a radical argument calling for radical alternatives. If all that lives is/are to have needs covered, and not just material ones, today, tomorrow and in futures further away, that calls for radical change. Latour emphasises that all spaces on this planet are "devastated sites in crisis" (2017, 45). I am thus concerned with responses to experienced issues with a site in crisis. The stories are stories of alternative possibilities in this crisis because the squatters and UEPP residents have claimed space, thinking, knowing, and doing in ways that challenge dominant understandings of possible responses to such crisis.

I have hence theorised squatting and UEPPs in Oslo as creating space for different imaginaries and alternative visions, both as autonomous and institutionalised spaces, both as material spaces and spaces of imagination. In this endeavour, I have been guided by feminist theories as tools

for thinking about and with the stories. The languages and logic (and possibilities they allow) that brought us into these crises have often proven unable to respond in ways that lead to changes towards sustainability. It is challenging to imagine and create alternatives that break with hegemonic logic and discourses, and to think thoughts that do not perpetuate oppression in an oppressive hegemonic culture, but feminists are experts in doing just this. They are experienced in questioning dominating and accepted knowledges which they do not believe in and have experienced not fitting into. Feminists' interest in the home and their criticising ignoring traditionally female spaces and practices in mainstream urban development has been particularly helpful in my research.

Feminist contributions to research on urban matters and sustainable change often point towards care, communities, power differences, oppression, and the home and what goes on in it being ignored in analyses of urban and sustainable change. Heim LaFrombois (2017), Morrow and Parker (2020) and Mehta and Harcourt (2021) argue that research, social movements, and politics concerning urban development, and degrowth scholars, can benefit from including a feminist perspective in the analysis of urban and sustainable change. Inspired by them and the participants' stories not being constricted to economic, systemic, or material aspects, I have included a feminist perspective in this research on squatting. Squatting is, among other things, about the home, challenging a hierarchical governing of cities and who gets to participate and have a say, and questioning technical and standardised ways of measuring good dwelling. A feminist perspective on squats and institutionalised squats contributes to noticing aspects of what type of dwelling goes on in them, beyond the economic and material.

A feminist approach to the UEPPs allowed me to recognise that they were not only different in the sense of being non-commercial. Scholarship on UEPPs in Oslo (Løken 2019; Christiansen 2020) predominantly reasoned positive aspects of the UEPPs in Oslo, such as allowing for solidarity and community, with them being non-commercial. The non-commercial is brought up by scholars and partly in the municipal documents about UEPPs. Still, the history of squatting, and everything it entails, beyond questioning for-profit housing and demanding non-profit alternatives, is barely mentioned. Removing squatting from institutionalised squats creates a divide between squats and UEPPs. The feminist focus on the relational and emotional, and feminist expertise in questioning dominating knowledges, allowed me to add to such reasoning and recognise that the community, the relational and the challenging of dominant ways were important aspects of dwelling in UEPPs in Oslo. I have challenged a dualism of squats and UEPPs in Oslo by exploring what squatting has meant to the sustainability, the

communities, and the imaginations of the UEPPs, beyond making them non-commercial. To break with a discourse describing UEPPs as something distanced to and detached from squatting, I have discussed squats and institutionalised squats/UEPPs side by side, as connected and dependent on each other, as part of the same story – that is a story of which the municipality is also part.

The alternatives created by squatters and UEPP residents do not exist in isolation, but within a city governed by a, from the participant's point of view, slow bureaucratic and profit-oriented municipality. As squatters try to disturb the dominant organisation of the city, they also negotiate with it. I have therefore been concerned with how the imaginations and knowledges of squatters and UEPP residents collide with dominant ones. By comparing the residents' perspectives and municipal discourses, I have also surveyed how knowledges about sustainable dwelling deriving from squatting align with or differ from dominant discourses about sustainable dwelling in Oslo, and how dominating and alternative knowledges are entangled in the search for sustainability.

My research found that municipal and participants' narratives both collided and not. One way they aligned was in their argument that creating sustainable ways of dwelling benefits from questioning general ways of measuring standards. But while the municipal discourse described material standards in the UEPPs as being low, the participants knew that the standard was not low because they had created a satisfactory material standard through their collective maintenance and improvements. They understood the standard as changing – connected to and dependent on how it was taken care of.

Whether a dwelling could meet the participants' needs depended not only on their efforts in taking care of it but also on how the communities in them allowed taking care of each other. When participants talked about standards, it went beyond the material – their communities and the relational were parts of it. Feminists have criticised urban planning for being too technical and economical, for using masculinist and systematic metaphors of machines in their search for other ways of urban life, and for leaving out care, community and the home in their analysis and suggestions for how one could improve lives in the city (Hayden 1982; Heim LaFrombois 2017; Morrow & Parker 2020). Similarly, the participants also knew what made their dwellings good to dwell in could not be reduced to the technical, material, or economical.

Although the participants described many aspects important to dwell well beyond the material and economic, they also saw capitalist economics as entangled to these, and as important factors

to how dwelling in Oslo was organised. All participants argued that the growth regime and profit-oriented city organisation got in the way of other possibilities and therefore stressed that challenging capitalist organisation was important to create change. The municipality also emphasised the importance of the low rent in the UEPPs for allowing sustainable practices but did not discuss changing their organisation. Instead, they directed the mission of creating more UEPPs outwards. In doing that, they suggested for-profit companies could create urban ecological dwellings – this was quite the opposite of the ideas and knowledge(s) about sustainability amongst the participants.

At the time when the municipal documents about UEPPs were published, applauding them and writing that the municipality wanted more of them, I was listening to the participants' worries about being ignored and stalled by the municipality. They described the cooperation with the municipality and the resident participation as poor and something they continuously had to struggle for and negotiate. The municipal documents write warmly about cooperation and resident participation in UEPPs, but do not propose how other inhabitants can participate, as they do in the UEPPs, if they do not want to or cannot squat. While the municipal documents largely separated the sustainable practices from housing activism and squatting – the UEPP participants were not resting, they had not stopped challenging housing in Oslo, and they knew that was part of continuing to enable their ways of dwelling. I have argued that participants' ways of communicating with the municipality, demanding participation, and causing changes in the city without being invited to do so, or having formal, legal, economic, or professional grounds, cannot be separated from the history of squatting municipal buildings, nor from what the dwellings are today. The UEPPs in Oslo were founded by squatting, and without this type of what I have called *radical participation*, they would not exist. They knew that they, or someone before them, had had to break with Norwegian law to allow them that possibility.

The municipal brochure was intended to create a common language about urban ecology. However, and importantly, the municipality defined such a common language without UEPP residents' participation or cooperation. *Not* including the knowledges or involvement of the residents of UEPPs reinforced a type of collaboration and relationship where the municipality kept the power and position to decide and to publicly present knowledge about what sustainable and ecological urban dwelling is. Although they aimed to present built examples of UEPPs to inspire and gain wisdom, they did not add much information about the UEPPs in Oslo. Instead, the brochure focused on the urban ecological project at Svartlamon. This allowed explaining that the municipality of Trondheim had power in owning property that they could make

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available for enthusiasts to create more sustainable dwellings, without acknowledging that the municipality of Oslo has this powerful tool too.

I have argued that the words 'urban ecological' are used to unite squatters and municipal actors in cooperation on a common project and that it was an ambiguous term to the participants. It was both used to collaborate and be allowed to create alternatives and to make something sound pretty without leading to actions. The participants expressed conflicting feelings about the term urban ecology. I was inspired by a feminist emphasis on taking emotions seriously (Åhäll 2018) to explore what was off about this concept. Participants used the words to speak the language of the municipality and increase their chances of being perceived and treated as someone with the potential to create and participate in sustainable changes. Some believed in what the words represented but emphasised that the urban ecological alternatives they imagined were other than the ones of the municipality. Some emphasised that they were nothing more than empty 'pretty words', but still used them. As feminist discourse theory points to, social movements sometimes reproduce and adapt to dominant discourses to be heard in the prevailing political context (Naples 2003). I argue that a reason for the conflicting feelings about urban ecology was that they had to adapt to the dominant discourse they wanted to challenge. They knew that there were several ways of knowing urban ecological dwelling, so like the feminists knew and know, they knew that there was more than one truth.

I was further inspired by Latour's (1999) metaphor of the black box to describe how the UEPPs and the institutionalisation of them giving them this new name, conceal radical aspects of the dwellings. Presenting the UEPPs and urban ecological dwelling in official municipal documents contributes to the perception of it being stable concepts. Latour's theory suggests that when an object is stable, what goes into making it becomes concealed. If UEPPs are like black boxes, then not having to consider how they came and come about facilitates talking about UEPPs without paying attention to how they were made and helps conceal their radical origin. If radical parts of squats become concealed through institutionalisation, the documents publicly presenting and defining them further reproduce the UEPPs as something distanced from squatting. The participants knew that urban ecology was political and a result of radical political activism, and while the municipal documents mention squatting and grassroots, they do no more than mention it, and suggest creating new ones without squatting and what is embedded in it, suggesting that it is not fundamental in creating them. As squatting disturbs the organisation of nation-states, it might be important that their radical aspects are concealed for them to fit into them. They might need to be sustainable urban ecological instead of radical and critical in the

wrong way to be the exceptions they are. While the participants accepted this compromise in some ways, it still led to feelings of frustration and discomfort. They were not really polished green, and they feared urban ecology being used to promote sustainability that did not confront or change anything substantial.

The participants lost some control over the discourse about their dwellings and projects through the institutionalisation and creation of the UEPPs and through the publication of official documents about them. In a way, squats have been cooptated through institutionalisation; in another way, institutionalisation has also allowed some participants to not be evicted. They stay, not as squats, but still as different. The way squatters understood themselves as able to claim a building, claim a say, and imagine another way, stayed in the imaginations of the UEPP residents. They had all this around, within and before them and it did not disappear, despite the municipality defining them as less radical and as far away from squatting and political housing activism, and despite the municipality having power over them in owning their dwellings. While the material and the language were institutionalised, the residents were not institutionalised. They were still critical. Although it was not published in the municipal documents, they kept imagining radically different ways and working to make them possible.

The participants' knowledges and the municipal discourse aligned in their argument that low rent and resident participation enabled sustainable practices. But the participants expressed that the organisation of housing would have to change to allow non-commercial and participatory housing. While the participants emphasised having to keep challenging the dominating organisation of housing and the city, the municipality presented a way of doing sustainable dwelling without challenging it. Additionally, the participants, like the feminist scholars, understood sustainable change in line with the relational and emotional, while the municipality was more occupied with the technical and economical. Many of these differences in describing sustainable dwelling in municipal documents and among participants might be the results of the municipal documents being public and representing an urban ecology they want to promote. The municipality is in a conflicting role of managing exceptions that do not fit into Norwegian law or rules of reference rent, and that challenge it. The municipal documents suggested radical change too but did not share the same knowledge of fundamental ways of organisation having to change in order to allow that. The participants thought this was paradoxical.

All participants knew that dwelling is political. In line with the feminists who criticised urban developers for overlooking the home, the participants started *with* the home – at the centre of their critique of urban management was the home. They knew that current housing politics

makes housing expensive and affects everyday lives in ways that make community, political participation, activism, and sustainable practices inaccessible. Their dwellings proved that another type of dwelling is possible, and they knew that their knowledges were useful in creating more sustainable dwellings in Oslo. For some, a temporary space to organise themselves politically; for others, more of a place to live in peace; but for all, a response and reaction to the housing market and politics in Oslo.

As utopian feminists imagined homes that went beyond the traditional notion of home, the participants also opened and erased borders around it by challenging the enclosed family unit, coworking and taking care of each other beyond families and apartments. Living in dwellings allowing them to spend less time in paid work, gave the participants time to create community, political actions, and safe and comfortable dwellings. Being able to create things went beyond the physical act of creating. It was about freedom and the ability to take care of oneself and each other, knowing that one could participate and are resources in the city and create what one needs. It was about doing work that made sense to them.

My analysis has shown that the sustainable possibilities of UEPPs should not be understood independently of the social movements and squatting they derive from. The participants' ways of knowing, and the spaces and situations they know in, stem from social movements, squatting, and counter cultures challenging dominant ways. The participants knew that the different aspects could not be separated – without challenging the growth paradigm or profit-oriented politics, policies, organisations, ways of thinking and discourses, there could not be less consumption, cheaper dwelling, or more democratic ways – without challenging who got to participate in urban governing and planning – political actors and actors with money – they would not enable more sustainable practices. They knew they had to keep challenging and questioning hegemonic practices, through their alternative ways of dwelling and struggling to keep and expand them, and through the possibilities those dwellings gave them to participate and engage in society beyond their dwellings. They knew that they needed time and space to imagine and practice other ways, and that dominant ways had to be challenged to allow more of that.

They knew in groups, with a history, with their hands and imaginations who have been taught and inspired by others and with feelings of something being off. Their ways of making things with their hands and taking matters into their own hands cannot be divided. Their hands (or the hands of squatters before them) have broken into buildings, cleaned, maintained, insulated walls, knocked on neighbours' doors to explain why they are there, made posters, opinion

letters, media attention, non-profit meeting places and events, common bonfires, vegetable gardens, and cultivation courses.

If you only hear or read about the Urban Ecological Pilot Projects and the 'Naturban', Sustainable, Innovative Pilot Buildings, you might not be able to know the difference. But the first is the name of institutionalised squats in Oslo; the others are descriptions of under-construction apartment buildings in Nydalen. Although the UEPPs were institutionalised, they, as well as the squatters and x-squatters, had a different approach to housing than municipal and commercial developers. They thought from an oppositional perspective, they come from a critical place, and they knew that was needed to imagine and create more sustainable dwelling and dwellings in Oslo.

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Appendix 1: Overview of cited interviews

- Interview/conversation with Helle 23.03.2022

- Interview/conversation with Bea 29.08.2022

- Interview/conversation with Trude 06.09.2022

- Interview/conversation with Glenn 14.09.2022

- Interview/conversation with Valter 22.09.2022

- Interview/conversation with Roger 09.10.2022

Appendix 2. Overview of fieldwork and conversations

- Interview / conversation with squatters from Trondheim, 07.10.2021[19]

- Participation and observation at meeting about Brakkebygrenda, 01.03.2022

- Email conversations with Helle, 23.03.2022-22.04.2022

- Observations in UEPP, 14.09.2022

- Observations in the squatted dwelling of Trude, 27.09.2022

- Observations at political event about tenancy in Oslo and city tour visiting a UEPP and the now empty plot where Brakkebygrenda once was, 03.10.2022

- Observations in UEPP, 09.10.2022

- Observations in the new squat Oslo gate 35, 09.10.2022

- Observations at neighbourhood meeting concerning evictions of tenants, 20.10.2022

- Observations of dwelling conference concerning non-commercial housing 22.10.2022

- Observations of the municipality of Oslo's website

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[19] This interview and conversations found place before I changed the project, due to Covid restrictions, so it is not used directly, but they have still been part of shaping the project. I was in contact with them on several occasions after this too, to discuss findings and discussions of importance

Appendix 3. Interview guide(s)

The interview guide changed each interview, both as a result of reflecting on former interviews, and naturally when I started interviewing UEPP residents. The first guide is what I started out with, and below are the questions that were included throughout the fieldwork. However, I generally tried to ask open questions and rather focus on the follow-up questions based on what they were saying and what they considered important / relevant / interesting.

First interview guide

-Can you describe your dwelling?

-What is the most important aspect of your dwelling, to you?

- Can you describe your engagement in the city?

-What would be a just / sustainable way of dwelling in Oslo?

-If you were to imagine a sustainable city, what would it look like? (or what would have to change?)
         - What is a good city to live in, in your opinion?
         - How do you imagine such changes happening? What would it take?

-What do you do / have you done to dwell more sustainably or just?

-Can you describe how you perceive your possibilities to influence or participate in the city?

- Can you describe your relationship to house occupation?
         -If so – how did you end up squatting/ living in a squatted dwelling?

- Can you describe what it was like in Brakkebygrenda?

-Why do you think there is not much squatting these days?

-How does the relationship with the municipality work?
         -How does it affect you dwelling today?

Added questions

-What is it like to squat and live in a squatted dwelling, for you?

-How are/ were you doing, living in such dwelling?

-Why are UEPPs connected to squatting?

     - How do squatting turn into ecology?

-How were the squats institutionalised/ how did they become accepted?

-How does the cooperation with the municipality work?

Appendix 4. Overview of municipal documents

- "Urban ecological program for Oslo. 2011-2026" (Oslo kommune 2011). *Approved by the city council in 2011, still presented as the overarching environmental policy document at the webpages of the municipality*

- "Oslo Green Capital: Action-plan environment and climate 2013-2016" (Oslo kommune 2013)

- "The green shift- climate and energy. Strategy for Oslo" (Oslo kommune 2015)

- "Climate-strategy for Oslo towards 2030" (Oslo kommune 2020)

- "Theme booklet for the project New Dwelling Qualities: Urban ecological dwellings and areas" (Plan- og bygningsetaten 2022)

- "Urban ecology, testing the sustainable solutions of the future" (Toth 2022). *Municipal webpage.*

- "New Dwelling Qualities" (Oslo kommune 2023a). *Municipal webpage.*

- "Governing Documents for the environment- and Climate work" (Oslo kommune 2023b). *Municipal webpage.*

- "Oslo Municipality Garden Award" (Oslo kommune 2023c). *Municipal webpage.*

Appendix 5: Overview of squats in Oslo

This is an incomplete list over house occupations in Oslo from 1960 until now. It is difficult locating information about house occupations, so these are ones I have found information about online and through interviews and conversations with activists, former occupants, and occupants. Additionally, these are only squats open to public knowledge. No secret squats are mentioned in this list, for example the dwelling of Trude described in this thesis, occupied from 2014 until now, so a complete list would be much longer.

- Hjelms gate 3 (1969)

- Karl den 12s gate (1969)

- Tinker'n (1974-1981)

- Hedmarksgata 2/4 (1975)

- Strømsveien 49/51 (1975)

- Schønings gate 32 (1975)

- Pilestredet 34-36, "Pilestredetkommunen" (Læregutthjemmet) (1975-1976)

- Hammersborg skole (1976)

- Larviksveien 124 (1978)

- Skippergata 6/6B (1981–1982)

- Skippergata 8 (1981–1982)

- Pilestredet 30/Blitz (1982)

- Dahlheimveien 2 (1982)

- Tromsøgata 8 (1982)

- Ullevålsveien 4 (1982)

- Korsgata (1982)

- Nedregata (1982)

- Trondheimveien (1988/1990)

- Stolmakergata (1982)

- Boligdirektørens kontor (1982)

- Markveien 61 (1982)

- Ullevålsveien 102b (1983)

- Pilestredet 83 (1983)

- Toftes gate (1983)

- Schous plass 5 (1983)

- Pilestredet 45B (1983)

- Pilestredet 47 (1983)

- Olav Ryes plass 10 (1983-85)

- Fyrstikkaleen (1984)

- Storgata 36 (1984)

- Akersgata 21 (1985)

- Drammensveien 165–167 (1985)

- Borggata 14 (1985)

- Frognerveien 8–10 (1985)

- Brinken 53 (1985)

- Heimdalsgata 23 (1985)

- Breigata 20 (1985)

- Hedmarksgata 7/9/11 (1986)

- Geitemyrveien 33 (1986)

- Langegata 3 (1987)

- Grønland 30–32 (1987)

- Toftes gate 61 (1989)

- Alnafetgata 5 (1989)

- Kruses gate 7/9 "kulturhuset Volapük" (1989–2001)

- Thorvald Meyers gate 41 (1990)

- Storo gård (1990)

- Økernveien 11–13 (1991)

- Toftes gate 18 (1991)

- Mustadsvei 3 (1994)

- Saxegaardsgata 8 og 11 (1996)

- Hausmanns gate 34 (1999)

- Hausmanns gate 40 (1999)

- St. Hallvards gate (2000)

- Tøyengata 10, 12 og 14 "Ostehullet" (2002)

- Enebakkveien 37 (2004)

- Mor Go'hjertas vei 23 (2005)

- Trosterudvillaen (2005)

- Hausmanns gate 42 (2005)

- Ormsundveien 14 (2005)

- Fossveien 20 (2007)

- Olaf Ryes Plass 2 (2008)

- Skar leir (2010)

- Holmenkollen leir (2010)

- Torggata 13 (2011)

- Mosseveien 61–67 (1983/2011)

- Kongsveien 21 (2011)

- Bispegata 12 (2013)

- Brakkebygrenda (1999-2008/2011–2014)

- Josefines gate 9 (2014)

- Pilestredet 84B, «Korperhaugen» (2015)

- Mariholtveien 97, Enga "Enga Eko squat" (2016)

- Tromsøgata 8 "Homsøgata" (2020)

- Oslo gate 35 (2022)