"It's not just an occupation, it's our home!" The politics of everyday life in a long-term occupation in Cape Town and their effects on movement development

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Abstract

This empirically focused article takes a closer look at the specifically challenging role of internal dynamics and micro-politics in a squatter movement that have been conspicuously absent from the eye of scholars even in social movement literature. We ask 'what happens to a movement itself when a tactic of collective action becomes its mode of existence and its very base?' Through an in-depth anthropological analysis of the occupation-based "Reclaim The City" social movement in Cape Town we explore what effects the evolving everyday life and its accompanying challenges have on social movement development, movement participation and its political impact. We argue that besides potentially generating thick ties of solidarity and cohesion, constant, intense and inescapable proximity may also bear the risk of individual withdrawal that triggers, requires, and explains fundamental shifts in movement activity and its organization. As a consequence, movement organizers have to divert attention increasingly inwards with the effect of a decrease in external movement activity and eventually its political impact.

Keywords: social movements, Cape Town, everyday practices, routines, micro-politics, squatter movement, resistance, gentrification, spatial apartheid, social housing

Introduction

This empirically focused article takes a closer look specifically at the challenging role of internal dynamics and micro-politics resulting from intense everyday life in a squatter movement that has been conspicuously absent from the eye of scholars in social movement literature – with a few exceptions such as Caciagli 2019, Huron 2015, Noterman 2015 and in a certain way also Bayat (2000). Through a micro-level analysis of the occupation-based social movement Reclaim The City in Cape Town, we argue that besides potentially generating thick ties of solidarity and cohesion, the constant, intense and inescapable proximity of an occupation also bears the risk of individual withdrawal that triggers, requires, and explains fundamental shifts in movement activity. We thus aim to contribute to the literature, growing only recently, that emphasizes the importance of an inside view on social movements in order to understand

their functioning, impact and efficacy (Caciagli 2019, Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield 2011, Yates 2015, de Moor 2016, Bouillon 2009, Blee 2012, Huron 2015, Noterman 2016, Bresnihan and Byrne 2015). We further push this perspective by following the very challenges of everyday life in an occupation to unravel their consequences for movement building and participation. We argue that exactly those recurring and constant frustrations in everyday life, as small as they are, often add up to people's low level of participation and increasingly pejorative perception of the movement. This perspective stands in contrast to other micro-level analyses that mostly focus on the potentialities and positive effects on e.g. group solidarity, a common project and political influence against gentrification.

Our case study of one out of two main occupations of the social movement Reclaim The City is informative in this respect, as the occupation went through an extreme process of transformation and also reinterpretation. What started as a short-term form of protest and a classical tactic of direct action to reach public visibility in the struggle against the sale of public land, privatisation and gentrification as well as the deconstruction of 'spatial apartheid', transformed into a long-term occupation and now serves as a home for over 900 people who suffered from these very grounds of protest.

As such, one could quickly interpret it with recourse to Pruijt's (2013) typology as a "deprivation-based squatting" since the movement is mainly composed of evicted or homeless poor and working-class people also supported by middle class activists. However, it also exhibits some features of other categories of Pruijt's typology such as "alternative housing project" or "political squatting" which, to a certain extent, question this strict categorization. As other researchers also demonstrated (e.g. Martinez 2018, Piazza 2012, Caciagli 2019, Holm and Kuhn 2010), Pruijt's categorization is useful to show the diversity of squatting activity, but it does not take processes of political and social evolution of such movements sufficiently into account. As Caciagli (2019) argued, most squats are actually forged by political action and are not static entities. Additionally, as Fillieule (2010) noticed, the sociology of collective action focused more on the movement's emergence or visible moments of protests (Yates 2015) than on their trajectories, which counts for the literature on squats as well.

The evolution of a squat and its internal dynamics is important to take into consideration when analysing a movement as it would be naive to think that dynamics such as an intense increase of the number of occupiers, the opening of new spaces, the establishment of rules and duties would not have any influence on movement activities and its functioning. In other words, everyday life and the resulting internal dynamics, their challenges and the evolution of a movement are responsible for its constant redefinition. Another typology from Péchu (2010) suggests that squatting is either a "classist" form of collective protest for the right of housing or a "counter-cultural project" that uses the squat as an end in itself. Apart from 'counterculture' being a concept that rather

stems from European scholarship and contexts and that is not directly applicable to extra-European contexts, we will demonstrate that both logics overlap in our case study. This often creates tensions about the definitions of the movement's goals and activities.

Bouillon (2009) analysed the daily life of squatting using an anthropological perspective. While Péchu's work mainly focuses on the ideological discourse and meso-level of squatting organisations, Bouillon studies the routines and competences developed by the occupiers in a precarious space. The dialogue between the political organisation (meso-level) and the daily life of occupiers (micro-level) is often eluded, giving the impression that there is no interaction between the two (Fillieule 2011). As Siméant and Sawicky observe, "activist organizations, as organizations, and regardless of their degree of institutionalization, work on individuals and are worked by individuals" (2009, 115) and therefore studies would do well to connect both levels in their analyses. Becker (1963) also demonstrated through an interactionist perspective that attitudes, behaviours, and social activities are only understandable if one takes into account the influence of institutions on individuals. The micro-level approach is therefore inseparable from the organizational and social context in which individuals evolve. Additionally, if the micro-level is studied, scholars, in our view, do not pay enough attention to the resulting challenges and rather glide over them to emphasize the potential for creating solidarity and cohesion (Yates 2015; Caciagli 2019; Maeckelbergh 2012; Bouillon et al. 2012, Steyn 2016). Statements like the following one from Yates (2015, 238-239) are frequent in the literature on squatters, which we want to balance by emphasizing the challenges and constraints of proximity:

> everyday practices can develop and establish relationships of cooperation, learning and a culture of experimentation with political ideas about everyday life in their own right. These processes allow different types of social groupings to coalesce and derive group solidarity, share skills and understandings, and they help explain recruitment and rapid mobilization beyond activist cadres.

Part of our focus in this paper is contributing to social movement theory and even more specifically to gain new insights into squatter movements. However, our case study also serves as an example for a movement against gentrification and adds to the massive literature in this vein (Slater 2009; Lees 2012, Lees et al. 2016; Lees and Philipps 2018; Atkinson and Bridge 2008; Hamnett 1991; Smith 1992). While literature on gentrification, and even more so on anti-gentrification movements, has been prolific internationally, analyses of Cape Town are comparatively rare (e.g. Garside 1993; Visser and Kotze 2008, Lemanski 2014) compared to the emergence of the phenomenon itself in several South African cities as early as the 1990s. If researchers have documented the cooperation of public and private sectors and the tools they strategically use to

foster gentrification, the answers and resistances of the inhabitants affected by the phenomenon have been little explored.

We understand resistances as "practices of individuals and groups who attempt to stay put in the face of exclusionary, neoliberalizing forces. In this respect we can say that resistance to gentrification 'seeks to occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation'" (Annunziata and Rivas-Alonso 2018, 395). Herein lies the implication of resistance as practices in motion, of creation, of dynamics, of finding new ways in gaining new grounds in a struggle against a hegemon. However, in the course of this paper, we develop the notion of 'stagnant resistance'. On the one hand, stagnancy in our case describes both an external loss of momentum expressed in a partial acceptance of resistance by the government and the public, fewer public actions as well as an internal dynamic towards the movement as an end in itself and the limitation of political ambitions. On the other hand, stagnancy also means creating spaces for developing everyday routines that many people never had that produce emotional attachment to the occupation and which in a way anchor the movement, giving it additional political weight as well as importance for securing individual livelihoods. Thus, stagnancy in resistance is not a devaluation but rather a status description that contains both opportunities and limitations.

With our case study we also want to add an example from the 'Global South' to the discussion of movements for the 'right to stay put', which is highly dominated by cases from Europe and the US. On the one hand, Reclaim The City (RTC) does exhibit many parallels to movements such as Coordinamento Cittadino di Lotta per la Casa (Caciagli 2019, Annunziata and Lees 2016), the Instandbesetzungen in Berlin (Holm and Kuhn 2011; Ozozomox 2014), the numerous squatting movements in England (e.g. Dee 2014; Grohmann 2020), and especially La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) movement in Barcelona (Annunziata and Lees 2016). On the other hand, we will show how locally specific urban policies, historicities and localities shaped the evolution and the specific composition of RTC. In this regard, the main dimension that differentiates RTC from squatter movements in the global North is that its "master frame" (Snow and Benford 1992) is less to build a comprehensive alternative to capitalism (Cattaneo and Martínez 2014) but to "undo the legacy of spatial apartheid".

Reexploring spatial proximity and everyday resistance

The 'everyday' is inherently political as it is the expression of structural economic inequality. In this paper we focus on the potential of everyday lives to create challenges for movement building and the overall political impact. This is even more important in a movement which draws its political weight precisely *not* from spectacular forms of protest but from creating spaces of mundanity.

The concept of the 'everyday' (in this paper we use the words 'daily' and 'mundane' as synonyms) is fundamental for our argument and we understand it generally as the collection of routinized practices and experiences on which people's lives are based. In the case of occupations, everyday lives must be negotiated not only in between occupiers but also between the political intentions of the movement and the occupiers. These inner-occupational politics clearly contain the idea and the aim of transforming everyday lives into vehicles for fostering movement participation. However, we observed that everyday lives often escape from these movement purposes, which has consequences for the development of a political movement. Following Nolas et al., a focus on "everyday practices and experiences is necessary in order to understand the spaces between intentions and actualities, so often obscured by the stories that movements tell themselves over time" (Nolas et al., 254).

Researchers who have looked at everyday resistance also explored the role of space in social movements (Ripoll 2010; Hmed 2008). Space is not only a support for mobilization, it is also commonly regarded as a strategy and a motor of solidarity. Indeed, the proximity between activists sharing similar social trajectories, grievances and interests would promote cohesion and solidarity and thus be at the basis of new political possibilities (Routledge 2017). Squatting is not only a symbol of resistance for external observers but also has a key role in forging the resistance of its occupants, particularly through education, knowledge and politicisation (Caciagli 2019).

Daily practices of resistance have been highlighted by some researchers (Frère and Jacqemain 2013) but most of the literature focuses on post-materialist movements (Melucci 1996; Yates 2015) such as feminism and ecologism. Yates (2015) identified the daily and practical forms of resistance and solidarity in social centres; however, these counter cultural spaces are composed of inhabitants that have been previously politically socialized, which facilitates an internal understanding of the performance of political ideas and discourse. Indeed, just because people live in a highly political space does not mean that their everyday practices are necessarily perceived as political as well, especially when the reason for moving into the occupation is in our case nearly always driven by an extreme need for shelter and basic services.

Unlike the squatters studied by Yates (2015), Prujit (2013) or Caciagli (2019), most of our interlocutors have not been previously politicized nor does the majority regard their actions as a deliberately political practice of resistance. As other researchers have shown through an interactionist perspective (Eliasoph 2010, Salman 1997; Eliasoph et Lichterman 2003), the association of people sharing a common interest is not necessarily synonymous with politicization and engagement, even for groups with a political dimension. Social movements are deeply heterogeneous; people are not equally disposed and willing to transform their presence into a political act of resistance, even if once they join the occupation they are all considered by the movement as activists belonging to the group. Moreover, engagement dynamics can be curbed by the extreme daily

proximity among squatters and their mundane concerns, as we will see further below.

Throughout the course of this paper, we will try to shed a new light on proximity and daily routine, opposed to frequent idealizations in sociology, as elements that can possibly weaken activists' interactions and more generally the whole social movement. After having positioned our contribution within existing literature, in the next section we briefly describe the evolvement of Reclaim The City in the post-apartheid context of Cape Town to better understand the claims of the movement as well as the specific composition of occupiers as the social movement's base.

In the main analytical and empirical section we then, firstly, take a look at how the occupation has been corroborated and what opportunities it possesses for the struggle for inner-city social housing. In a second part, we take a more nuanced look at the role of permanent proximity and daily resistance in the development of a localized social movement. We identify some of the emerging internal dynamics and evolving challenges and analyse how they shape the movements character, its repertoire of action and its overall impact. This paper aims both at social movement scholars (with a focus on occupation-based movements) to advance knowledge about the meaning and consequences of micro-level dynamics in an occupation and at activists who may benefit from these observations and thoughts in order to reflect on their own movements and underlying challenges.

Research methods and issues of reflexivity

We rest our observations and findings on data gathered between September 2018 and October 2019. During this time, we had two phases in which we stayed together in the field, conducted interviews with three persons in leadership positions together and were part of both numerous informal conversations as well as formal meetings and actions. Having participated in identical situations provided the opportunity to reflect collectively on those situations. Additionally, regular conversations about our interpretations and perspectives with members of Reclaim The City, Ndifuna Ukwazi (the founding NGO) and other researchers being present during that time helped tremendously to develop multiple perspectives on and a deeper understanding of the movement as well as becoming increasingly self-reflexive and critical about the own perspective on the movement. We also draw on a total of 33 interviews, which we conducted independently from each other, and on long-term participant observation, which offered the most important insights for witnessing everyday practices and challenges in the occupation.

As such, our methodological approach implies core characteristics of what Scheper-Hughes (1995) and Jeffrey Juris called "militant ethnography"(2007, 164) to the extent that we try to use ethnography also as a way to "contribute to movement goals while using [our] embedded ethnographic position to generate

knowledge of movement practices and dynamics."[1] At the same time we also want to contribute to social movement research by generating "theoretical insights about (…) experiences, emotions, and internal political struggles and debates" (ibid.)

Our different gender influenced the research we conducted in that we had access to different people and occasions (e.g. only Margaux was invited to a baby shower). Material issues also played a role (e.g. Björn had a car, which was a hotspot for informal conversations) and our personal social characteristics and dispositions. However, we shared similar ways of engaging in participant observation. In house meetings we preferred a rather observing behavior and rarely commented actively on issues being raised. We did not feel legitimated to comment on experiences and opinions that people shared, as we have never lived under circumstances anywhere near those of the occupiers. In smaller meetings of working groups that we were active in, however, we contributed much more as other participants encouraged us to do so. In public actions, we participated actively with singing, chanting slogans and blocking spaces, as well as waking up public figures during escraches[2]. As other researchers experienced in fieldwork (Broqua 2009, Opillard 2018) our public involvement and the use of the body during demonstrations were also moments to prove ourselves and to increase acceptance within the group.

Engaging in research in post-colonial regions and precarious environments as white, European, financially and otherwise fully equipped persons not only creates a diverse range of feelings of wrongdoings, shame and "social guilt" (Memmi and Arduim 1999) throughout the research but also expresses and solidifies existing hegemonies of power, especially over the creation of knowledge. In South Africa, where the relationship between activist organizations and scholars has traditionally been both very entangled but also contested, accusations of using the poor to step up the academic ladder and for personal achievements were also mentioned frequently in our research. Especially in one-to-one interview situations, this often leads to lasting feelings of unease, when people opened the doors to their most private spaces, gave us their precious time, let us capture their words that in the end serve as building blocks of our writings and we had nothing comparable to give back. This tension, that constantly accompanies such research, cannot be resolved during a research project because it is a systemic product of historical, economic and political processes.

We tried to deal with these systemic imbalances of power and privilege, of which we and the research situation are a product, by taking seriously our

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[1] http://www.jeffreyjuris.com/research/militant-ethnography-political-engagement-and-social-movements-research

[2] A direct form of demonstration, originally from Argentina, in which protesters go to officials' houses in order to publicly denounce their actions.

interlocutors' agency. Indeed, contrary to a paternalistic view, on an individual level we regard the people we work with not as victims but as people with agency, (political) attitudes, and self-determination who are capable of making decisions not only regarding their own lives but also with regard to participating and engaging with us. Our social trajectories, that produced certain dispositions and privileged statuses, heavily influence the data we collect and the way we interpret it. Unpacking that also involves a deconstruction of one's own position during research, which is crucial to understand the perspectives that open up by the analysis of the data. This is why we regard our analysis as a product of a momentary perspective based on interactions and impressions that we encountered due to a multitude of factors and privileges. There were many other corners that were left untapped, many people we did not speak to, many thoughts we did not think. As such, we welcome more diverse perspectives on RTC (both academic and non-academic) to eventually – collectively – paint a picture of this polymorphous construct.

Contesting spatial apartheid – the becoming of *Reclaim The City*

Context

The evolution of RTC must be embedded in the specific historical and social context of Cape Town, a city that is one of the most unequal in the world. This inequality does not only express itself through extreme income differences but is deeply ingrained in the city's spatial layout. Based on the legacy of the apartheid era and the institutionalization of the Group Areas Acts from 1950 until 1991, space was divided racially such that that non-Whites were forcibly removed and relocated to townships[3] far from urban centres where, however, most economic activity was taking place. Despite the democratisation process since 1994 and the important extension of housing and infrastructural services in townships in order to integrate them to the post-apartheid city (Levenson, 2016), the spatial patterns developed during apartheid still exist today, discriminating against people in multiple ways. In the 2000s the local government implemented "aggressive cost-recovery policies" (Oldfield and Stokke 2006), increasing the financial difficulties of poor families often affected by unemployment, to pay basic services or rent. Moreover, to build massive and low-cost social housing, private real estate companies mainly focused on plots of public land localized at the outskirts, intensifying urban sprawl and perpetuating apartheid spatial structures. Until today, inner-city developments of e.g. affordable, social or inclusionary housing in order to reduce these spatial apartheid patterns are still absent and yet to come.

[3] Suburbs built at the outskirts of South African cities to house the excluded Black, Coloured, and Indian population before and during apartheid.

Additional to these reproduced relicts of apartheid spatial planning, intense dynamics of gentrification are in process especially in the neighbourhoods of Woodstock and Salt River, two of the few "mixed neighbourhoods" (Garside 1993; Visser and Kotze 2008) during apartheid. Both neighbourhoods are mainly composed of Coloured and white working-class people of whom many worked in textile and other factories located nearby. From the 90s, the textile crisis and the development of the creative industry attracted a white middle class but excluded the Coloured and white working class, increasing unemployment and social instability (see Visser and Kotze 2008 for a detailed account of population 'replacement'). For them, the rise of rent, due to the lack of rent control policies, is often followed by eviction processes, which displace many long-established and rooted families (Levenson 2017).

In response to the increase in homelessness due to evictions, public authorities decided to relocate evictees to Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs). These camps built by the City of Cape Town were initially constructed to respond to special circumstances such as natural disasters or land invasions. The most prominent TRAs are Blikkiesdorp (tin-can-town in Afrikaans) and Wolverievier, both considered as "informal settlements" quickly built in 2005 and 2007 respectively and located more than 30 kilometres away from the inner-city.[4] Highly criticized and compared to "concentration camps" (Smith 2010) or a "human dumping ground" (Huisman 2013) by journalists and NGOs, TRAs isolate people from public services and jobs, which are both mostly situated in the inner-city. Nonetheless, because of the lack of alternatives proposed by public authorities, the TRAs have become permanent. Implemented as a temporary solution before the World Cup until 2017 and despite being overcrowded already, they remain the main alternative proposed by the City when facing evictions and natural disasters until today. People from Woodstock and Salt River refusing to go to the TRAs found unstable and temporary alternatives, living in backyard shacks or sharing rooms. As such, TRAs are a main focal point and serve as a symbol of displacement against which leaders often develop their narratives in official speeches, which were frequently mentioned in informal conversations and which are used in protests to express the government's perceived misuse of public land in the inner city. The overcrowded TRAs express the city's failure in its constitutional duty to provide decent housing to all citizens and thus a highly important frame in the struggle of RTC

Campaigning for Change – The early Days of *Reclaim The City*

Within this context of intense spatial inequality and the perceived lack of political will to actively undo the legacy of spatial apartheid, RTC evolved and

[4] In 2016, "Our Future Cities" reported that over 20.000 people have been living only in Blikkiesdorp (http://ourfuturecities.co/2016/06/3000-blikkiesdorp-residents-to-be-relocated/

developed into the currently strongest contester of urban Capetonian housing politics. RTC was created as a campaign in February 2016 by the NGO and law-clinic Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU)[5]. NU, a financially well-equipped NGO that is funded among others by the Bertha foundation, consists of four lawyers, two researchers, five so-called organizers who organize and conduct actions, a videographer who creates media content and cares about the internet and social media appearances, as well as two popular education facilitators who provide knowledge and ideas in form of workshops in the occupations. All these staff members can be called 'professional activists' fully employed by NU, most of them graduates and all belonging at least to the middle class. Between 2015 and 2016 NU was strategically shifting its focus from the provision of basic services in the townships to housing in the inner city, which Josh[6], 38 years old, the former Co-director of NU, justified as follows:

> we realized [that] if we put all our energy into the periphery, we will never transform the power that replicates the inequality in our city. […] So we made a conscious decision that instead of focusing on the periphery we will change our attention to the center and that we would try to antagonize and disrupt their land that has much more value as a tool to shift the system a little bit. Just tinker a little bit as a whole. […] At that stage there weren't any social movements there. We had decided to focus on inner city areas as a kind of antidote to working in Khayelitsha.

The final catalyst that made NU shift focus completely was the report of the controversial and secret sale of the Tafelberg School to a private developer in February 2016, which initiated the launch of the campaign to Reclaim The City. The Tafelberg site gained its momentum as one of the last pieces in the inner-city neighbourhood of Sea Point on which inclusionary housing was feasible. The Tafelberg case was, as Josh said, "Ground Zero" in the fight for more social housing in the inner-city.

In this first phase 'Reclaim The City' as an official label for a fixed movement was not yet in place. However meetings and protests in collaboration with a local group of workers and carers called the Rainbow Housing group were held on the promenade in Sea Point, which were attended by around 100 people under the label #stopTheSale and through which Reclaim The City became a battle cry around topics of land and spatial justice. NU, in its function as a law clinic, launched an interdict to stop the Tafelberg Sale, which after 4 years came

[5] We are aware that the link between NGO and social movement could be central for a meso analysis of movements (Roy 2014; Ley 2014). However, a detailed discussion of the relationship between both is beyond the scope of this paper and would need to be discussed in another paper.

[6] All the names have been changed by the authors.

to a successful end with the court decision at 31st of August 2020 that the sale was illegal.

At the same time, in April 2016, evictions happening in Bromwell Street (Woodstock) also attracted the attention of NU. Here, a whole row of buildings just behind the old Biscuit Mill – an old mill factory renovated into a luxury market that became a 'symbol of gentrification of Woodstock'—was bought by a real estate company called 'the Woodstock Hub' and tenants received an eviction order. In August 2016, people from the Seapoint meetings and Bromwell Street evictees together with NU 'invaded' the weekly Neighbourgoods Market in the old Biscuit Mill and protested against those evictions. Both cases serve as strategic cases for NU as they both symbolize the two main urban issues RTC is contesting: (1) stopping the sale of public land and instead using it to develop a form of inclusionary housing on it as well as (2) stopping displacements of long-term residents due to gentrification dynamics and the lack of policy regulations.

During the campaigning around these two core cases, the repertoire of action was already diverse: Public meetings in public spaces, social media content, pamphleteering, occupations of public space, flashmobs, banner droppings, recreational gatherings, public art activations, mass marches, petitions, pickets, civic education as well as more legal forms of action such as court submissions and objections. Interviews with NU staff revealed that these early days were intense and highly creative phases where NU invested a lot of human resources (organizers, facilitators) as well as financial resources into these actions, which created strong publicity and visibility. It was especially the middle-class and students that could be mobilized by these forms of action, as Jared described in an interview, and that a kind of exciting pioneering spirit prevailed during these times.

Becoming an occupation-based social movement

The news about the completion of the sale of Tafelberg by former mayor Helen Zille (Democratic Alliance) and thus the defeat of RTC's campaigning caused RTC to use another form of protest which had a profound effect on RTC's further development: In March 2017, it occupied two governmentally owned inner-city buildings - the former Helen Bowden Nurses' Home at the Waterfront in Green Point (near Seapoint) and the former hospital of Woodstock (near Bromwell Street).

Placed in the respective neighbourhoods of the two major battlegrounds of RTC, the occupations not only stand symbolically for the two thematic focus areas of the movement (sale of public land and gentrification) but also compile neighbourhood-specific groups of persons: whereas the Green Point occupation is dominated by Black domestic workers from the townships and their families, the vast majority of the Woodstock occupation consists of Coloured people from Woodstock and Salt River itself who have been evicted from their homes as well

as of homeless people. Furthermore, the Green Point occupation counts around 800 people and suffers from an absence of basic services such as water, electricity and a functioning sewage system, which creates a highly precarious living situation for occupants. In Woodstock, around 950 people are living in a comparatively "comfortable" situation as both electricity and water is available and for free. As a symbolical act of appropriation, both occupations were renamed after prominent figures of the social struggle against apartheid in South Africa: the Green Point occupation into Ahmed Kathrada House (AKH) and the Woodstock Occupation into Cissie Gool House (CGH). This paper focuses on CGH in Woodstock, as data has been mainly gathered there and consequently concentrates on the evolution of this specific occupation.

Talking to the first occupiers, who mainly consisted of middle-class NU staff and some students and friends, the stories of taking over the two buildings are always told with an excited sparkle in their eyes. Taking over these buildings, that were guarded by a private security firm, was only possible by using a mixture of careful planning, creativity in getting access, deep knowledge of the law concerning occupations, and patience. Crucially, the occupations were explicitly planned as a short-term political protest against urban land politics:

> We wanted to provoke the state. We wanted to show them that we weren't going to just take their bullshit lying down. Our intention was just to take it for a week or two. And the people that went there were activist-types and younger people and very poor people. It was a mixture of those. And yeah, the state didn't really know what to do, this was a new phenomenon in Cape Town, they were too slow. They thought that we would fizzle out. They thought that oh, a bunch of activists, they've made their point. They didn't expect that we would hold them and then expand them.

In this quote, Josh points to different important dimensions of this innovative form of action: First, relating to the above mentioned strategic shift from the periphery to the inner-city, large scale occupations of houses in the inner-city was a completely new form of action. Moreover, as Visser and Kotze (2008) highlight, after apartheid, most of the research institutions, funding agencies and NGOs (as Ndifuna Ukwazi) used their resources to investigate the needs of the urban poor living in townships located at the outskirt of the city. As a consequence, the inner city has become invisible and under-investigated by social science scholarships. Whereas there have been numerous occupations in the townships (Thorn and Oldfield 2011) to fight spatial injustice and point to a lack of service delivery (e.g. the Marikana occupation in Philippi, the Symphony Way Pavement Dwellers, the several occupations and protests by the anti-Eviction Campaign, Zille Raine Heights) the inner city was spared from this.

Second, the people who moved in after the first politically motivated, middle-class, and experienced activists had a completely different background. Dumele,

one of those first occupiers, described in an informal conversation how they tried to recruit people who were willing to move into CGH to keep the occupation going. Paraphrasing him, they literally went to taxi ranks, and walked up the roads in Woodstock to reach out to people. This second group of occupiers then consisted mainly of homeless people from Woodstock who held the occupation for another month. And from there on, people in need of housing moved in - many single mothers, elderly people and families. Most people came from Woodstock or Salt River neighbourhoods and experienced one or more evictions and refused to be moved to temporary relocation camps. Most people did not have a full-time employment and worked in temporary or part-time jobs with an extremely low salary. Only a very few people had a permanent job with a stable income. These characteristics have not changed since the beginnings of the occupation.

In nearly all the interviews, occupiers insisted on the attachment to the neighbourhood that unites them. The majority of occupiers are Coloured and most have relatives who were evicted from the contiguous District Six during the mass displacements in the 1960s. We tell all of this to emphasize two things: first, the population of occupiers is deeply rooted in Woodstock in diverse ways; and second, that except for some people currently in leadership positions, they did not and still do not occupy out of a political or ideological reason but out of need for shelter. We know of no person living in CGH that has an apartment outside that would be available to live in and only in one case of our sample was another option than CGH available. In all other cases people were either homeless or were evicted with no viable alternative to CGH. Precise demographic data on occupiers is not available as neither NU nor RTC are collecting such information regularly, and publishing this information is problematic given the political role RTC plays.

The third point that Josh exhibits in his statement is that the occupations were planned as short-term, politically motivated actions and not as long-term homes for affected people. However, due to the passivity of the government and by strategically deploying legal means, NU occupiers established the right of access against the securities (employed by the government) and filled up the buildings with people. As a result, the houses transformed into multi-purpose centres of action and especially into homes for hundreds of people. Occupying those buildings, thus, was the beginning of a profound transformation of RTC from a campaign to a social movement:

> So the occupation has really changed RTC and now I would say actually RTC has become an occupation-movement. Primarily…and a political movement. The occupations give it its grounds, gives it its strength, gives it its reason for being. It's the ability to organize, it's the place to organize, but also allows it to be a political movement that is bigger than just two buildings (Josh)

Kathie, a 42 year old single mother, is one of the chapter leaders of CGH. She moved into the occupation with her father and her son in January 2018 after being evicted from her house in Woodstock, which was her third eviction in a row. She supports Josh's view when she says that "starting the occupation meant building a movement, because you are building a community and with it aims. We are able to push past all the forces." This immediately required a restructuring and realignment of RTC's actions, as organizing the life of the occupation and politicizing the occupiers became the core tasks of RTC. This entailed e.g. establishing a regular meeting structure, a leadership structure, house rules and political education processes. These statements clearly align to the critiques of Pruijt's (2013) strict typology and categorization of squatter movements and express that at least the occupation of RTC is a lively mixture of several forms of squatting. This claim will be supported by ethnographic data in the following chapters. Having a solid base of people that is permanently present at a specific place was an abrupt turn that transformed RTC not only into a social movement but especially into an occupation-based social movement. By concentrating on these new, more inward-pointing practices and forms of actions, RTC's political meaning changed and both new opportunities but also challenges evolved, which we analyse in more detail in the next section.

One last comment is to be made at this point: The (re)development of the occupation did not happen from within itself but was inspired by a diversity of influences. One of the main leaders of CGH, for instance, was a professional unionist, active in the apartheid and post-apartheid struggles which influences his political and Marxist framings of RTC's struggle in his numerous speeches during meetings. The weekly and public so-called 'Advice Assembly', a space of mutual learning and information exchange between lawyers from NU, occupiers, former evictees and people currently facing evictions, has been a central forum for RTC's development since the very beginning. This specific form of "self-help" as Jared called it in the interview, was inspired by a trip to Barcelona where he and a small group of activists visited the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) movement. Additionally, the involvement of Zachi Achmat, one of the most prominent activists in Cape Town and figurehead of the Treatment Action Campaign, also provided important knowledge that was used to build up RTC. As such, networks of knowledge transfers are crucial and worth investigating in more detail.

Microdynamics and –politics and their consequences for an occupation-based social movement

(Creating) a social movement based on a couple of hundred people living together in a highly decrepit building, most of them in a precarious economic and social position who mostly do not regard their life in the occupation as an act of political resistance but a means to survive, provides the opportunity of initiating social and political change but also brings serious challenges. As

mentioned in the introduction, we are recognizing a bias in literature on squatter movements which tends to either fade everyday challenges or regard them as rather secondary, emphasizing the evolving organizational structures to overcome them (e.g. Caciagli 2019). Our argument, which we support with thick ethnographic data in this article, is, however, that those very challenges in everyday life need to be taken seriously because we found them to be highly responsible for fundamental shifts in movement activity and its political impact, especially with regard to occupation-based movements.

In other words, we want to highlight the other side of the scholarly interest in mechanisms for creating solidarity, cooperation, cohesion and identification, namely the threats to those cornerstones of social movement building that lie in the micro-politics and everyday behaviours among participants. We are aware of the rather pessimistic undertone of this perspective; however, we regard it as vital both for activists as well as for social movement scholars to better understand the (challenging) role of everyday issues. As such, focusing on challenges should be rather understood as constructive critique in order to reflect on these issues in one's own respective social movement. In order to balance this view, the next section focuses on the many opportunities that arose throughout the development of RTC which have been used to create political pressure and to initiate social change in many ways thereby supporting people in greatest need. In the second part we shift the perspective and focus on everyday life and the challenges it entails for movement building.

Opportunities

As we briefly pointed out before, the occupation as a new form of action in central Cape Town questions the centre-periphery model built through decades of apartheid and gives visibility to the existence of social exclusion in the inner city, as Josh explains:

> This is an occupation. (…) what we are doing here is we are reclaiming. (…) we are occupying, as a political act of resistance. (…) Occupation is new, being able to deploy people from a location. That's like a little colony… If you think about it as the centre and we were on the outside, and now we have a colony in the middle, where we are able to deploy our ground forces.

Broadly speaking, materially reclaiming land, especially in a long-term manner, directly implements RTC's main demand, namely to prevent public land to be sold and developed and to reclaim this space for local, poor people. As such, it is a direct action against what Rodgers and O'Neill (2012) called "infrastructural violence" which in Cape Town prevails in form of intentionally excluding poor people from housing and basic services in the inner city. Occupying can be regarded as a form of reappropriation of the inner city. The presence of 950

people sharing the same space creates a strong political pressure as evicting those people, who then would be mostly homeless, would entail high political costs. Moreover, the presence of these 950 mainly working-class people in a gentrifying, middle-class neighbourhood is an affront to the municipality and real estate companies investing there. The space of the occupation, by allowing poor and working-class people of Woodstock to remain on their familiar territory, is a brake on gentrification.

More than being just a political act of resistance, the occupation as the movement's base is an important spatial resource. Indeed, it not only provides people with a roof over their head, it also enables them to stay in their familiar neighbourhood with all the infrastructural advantages as being close to e.g. governmental services, job opportunities, social networks, schools and leisure activities which otherwise would all be cut. Most of the interviewees feel a strong attachment to the neighbourhood and want to stay there. The occupation brings together people with similar social backgrounds: the majority consider themselves as Coloured and suffered from similar traumatic experiences of exclusion. As such, it fits with Melucci's widely accepted view that the spatial and social proximity of individuals who share similar social attributes and experiences may foster their cohesion and thus facilitates collective action (Melucci 1995). The space of the occupation is also an important organizational resource since it allows the joining and identification of all activists previously dispersed in the neighbourhood. Moreover, it is mainly the occupation that makes the recruitment of new activists possible as it serves as a central place of holding meetings and gatherings of RTC while some people in precarious conditions only come to find a roof over their heads and then become members[7]. Indeed, once they join the occupation, the inhabitants are obliged to participate in all the activities organized by the movement. "Participation" appears in the set of rules that they signed when they moved in and their non-compliance can lead to a disciplinary action. Neighbourhood ties therefore exert informal social pressure providing an incentive for participation.

The occupation thus reinforces first and foremost the numerical weight of the organization. Furthermore, moving to and staying in the occupation with one's whole family in highly precarious circumstances without any other alternative is a deep physical and psychological experience, which is inherently different from occupying as a temporary form of protest as e.g. students or activists do when they occupy universities or squares (e.g. Rheingans and Hollands 2012). People

[7] The differentiation between members, activists, and occupiers is a bit tricky and fluid. Whereas formal membership exists (not for kids, although there is no age limit for becoming a member) that can and should be obtained by taking part in an induction course and paying 50Rand membership fee. Nonetheless, not every occupier did this and thus not every occupier is formally a member. In external actions or public presentations, however, all occupiers are referred to as "RTC members" or "activists".

can not go home after protesting as they do in marches and other protests. Hence, occupying here is a full-featured life decision without a real alternative.

Indeed, the development of a range of internal activities in the occupation opened up opportunities to politicize people in diverse ways. House meetings for example not only inform occupiers about the activities of the movement but especially serve to collectively cope with internal challenges such as e.g. cleaning, building and renovating and solving personal conflicts. Workshops about different topics (e.g. raising of children, domestic violence, psychological issues, conflict training, gardening, yoga) offer the opportunity to reach and empower occupiers, which would not be as easy when people lived scattered across the Cape Town metropolitan area. Different fixed groups in the house rely upon and thus consolidate a sense of responsibility for the collective such as e.g. the safety and security task team, the youth team, the youth group, the women's and men's group and the house leader group.

And finally, the weekly so-called 'Advice Assembly' (AA) not only serves the internal political and legal education, but also the access to the movement by outsiders and affected people in need of support: as the central meeting of RTC, the AA is an open meeting in which a lawyer of NU is present and people currently being evicted can join to gain both information about the process and possible ways of intervention, as well as emotional support. The meeting is held with the idea of self-help and mutual assistance from people who have experienced similar things and as such also supports occupiers through an increase in self-confidence when being able to provide helpful knowledge. This also reflects Levitzky's (2006) analysis of the diverse roles that legal advocacy can take in activist organizations: "sources of legal expertise or organizational assistance, vehicles for public education, tools for mobilization and fostering a sense of pride and self-confidence" (Levitzky 2006: 152). The frequent meetings within the occupation are also aimed at an increase in identification with the movement and at creating a sense of belonging: Having fixed meetings routines, singing, learning struggle songs, and creating moments of socialisation between occupiers thus serves as important nodes of the movement (Haug 2013).

As a collective project, a kind of "laboratory for urban resistance and node of counter-hegemonic struggles" (Abellán et al. 2012, 321) as well as a space of experimenting with alternative future imaginaries the occupation also maintains, or rather reclaims, an equal urban citizenship status for individuals. When Henri Lefebvre proposed the right to the city, he did not only mean a spatial right. As Harvey (2012) makes clear: 'To claim the right to the city (…) is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade and to do so in a fundamental and radical way"(Harvey 2012: 5). Hence, the transformation from a protest to the provision of a "home" makes clear that what has been reclaimed is not only space but especially an equal urban citizenship status entailing the possibility and duty of being an active participant in shaping society. Miraftab and Wills (2005) make it clear when they say that "this new drama of citizenship is

performed not only in the high courts of justice and ministerial corridors of government institutions but also in the streets of the city, the squatter camps of hope and despair, and the everyday life spaces of those excluded from the state's citizenship project" (Miraftab and Wills 2005: 201). Leaders reject formal exclusionary citizenship, reclaiming - and above all practicing - another citizenship based on daily engagement and participation, closed to Holston's (2009) conception of 'insurgent citizenship' (see also Holston and Appadurai 1996). As such, the occupation in a way compensates for the state's perceived failure to provide adequate housing and infrastructure for everyone, which specifically in South Africa expresses the failure of the promise of democracy after 1994.

When Josh says "what's gonna make CGH dignified housing is the organizing around that housing" he summarizes the evolution of RTC during the last three years of occupation in which most of the movement's energy was directed into organizing a functioning occupation so that it serves as a home for people. Creating an environment that gives people the opportunity for an everyday life supports James Holston's view that

> It is not in the civic square that the urban poor articulate this demand with greatest force and originality. It is rather in the realm of everyday and domestic life taking shape in the remote urban peripheries around the construction of residence. It is an insurgence that begins with the struggle for the right to have a daily life in the city worthy of a citizen's dignity. (Holston 2009: 246).

Challenges of sustaining an occupation-based social movement

It is exactly this everyday level, the level of domestic life to which we turn our focus now. It is clear that the settlement of over 950 people to a highly valuable piece of land in the inner-city creates political pressure in itself, as this process is nearly impossible for the government to undo without great political costs. Additionally, the fact that most of the occupants would be homeless or living in even worse situations in some township far away from their original neighbourhood if CGH did not exist can also be regarded as a huge success of RTC. However, we experienced serious moments of despair, frustration, annoyance and depression among occupiers (both leaders and other inhabitants) that cast a shadow over those rather political successes and the future of the movement. The following section aims at unravelling the grounds and implications of those everyday issues. We use quotes of interviews as basic data in the text, but we gained most of the underlying knowledge by experiencing and taking part in numerous informal conversations, fights, discussions, 'moments-of-wait' and other mundane situations.

Conflictive proximity

In general, many challenges are consequences of the sheer proximity and interferences of people's living spaces due to the architectural constraints of the building and the high number of people. The precariousness of the architecture further adds stress to the interference of lives in the occupation although renovations, rebuilding, and conversions are constantly undertaken: toilets are broken, pipes are leaking, electricity cables destroyed, the roof is porous, windows broken.

One of the most gruelling consequences of permanent proximity is a constant and high level of noise. The walls are thin and the improvised partitions small, so occupants have to get used to the voices of their neighbours, the flapping doors and the tumult of the children. If at the beginning of the interviews most interlocutors expressed praise for the space they occupy, after a few minutes of building trust with us they quickly talk about the problems related to life in this space, as e.g. Ron, a 50 years old unemployed inhabitant:

> I think everybody living in the house now, you got to adapt or die! We've got children running around making a noise. If I wasn't a parent, I probably would take offense to it. Because I'm a parent, I understand these things. You know people knocking on your door at one o'clock the morning or two o'clock the morning: "Have you got a tea bag for me?", ok right! "come in look the electricity is broken". You know, then I got to sleep, at maybe two o'clock in the morning until four o'clock the morning, I must wake up for work, it's just two hours sleep!

Yet it is not only the noise of children that is a constant companion of life in the occupation but the constant noise, smell, and dirt resulting from the concurrency of different lifestyles, habits, routines, and jobs of people. Walking through a hallway of CGH on a random afternoon, one experiences a guy working on his furniture, a person washing clothes, a couple cooking wonderful-smelling Biryani[8] next door to a teenager producing gqom-songs[9] at full volume to sell to the taxis down the road, a group of people doing a braai and enjoying some drinks, a sick person trying to get some rest and, in the room next door, a couple fighting and kids crying. In between, the smell of cigarettes crawls through door slots and sounds of a group dispute echoes along the corridor. Whereas this condensed snapshot can also be seen as symbolizing a rather romantic diversity of a housing project, its constancy and dimensions are mentioned as highly frustrating, demoralizing and tiring. As in every collective living together, the oscillation between personal freedom and the maximum of impositions to the collective is a constant and conflictive process of negotiation.

[8] Popular Indian rice dish.

[9] Gqom is a popular South African electronic dance music style.

In interviews, complaints about missing respect and lack of adaptation of one's own behaviour were frequent as Rita, one female occupier in her 60s, who is unemployed earning little money by performing different informal jobs, is expressing:

> People, they drink, and smoke and ... they enjoy life. You must enjoy life, but there is many ways to enjoy it. But in this place, eish...you stay for free here, but they take life for granted, the room, the people. And most of the leaders here try their utmost best. Most of them (...). But everyday I say to myself 'Im not here to watch people what they do.' (...) They mess up the place and now you must come and clean and...See, I dont want to live in a mess. If I see something I just do it and when I finish I go.

The proximity and immediateness are also stressful because everybody hears and witnesses the most intimate things of the neighbours, which is especially problematic when it comes to misuse of substances, as the interview above already implies, and different forms of domestic violence. In informal conversations, people talked about those situations with us, however, often reacted with a withdrawal from their neighbour's businesses. Imad, an occupier in his 70s, unemployed, made this clear with regard to his attempt at admonishing some kids who were smoking inside the hallway, which is forbidden:

> I never walk around there. I was walking twice there and I see the kids smoking and I tell one kid 'Hey, what are you doing there?' So he tell me 'Who is you to ask me?' (...) They haven't got respect anymore. (...)

As such, permanent co-presence and the consequential lack of intimacy are conflictive and lead to high levels of frustration and withdrawal of a common life. Especially misbehaviour with regard to a perceived improper use of alcohol and drugs, changing intimate relationships, aggressive behaviour towards other people or the gossip about conspicuous relations/connections to people outside the occupation are common causes of disputes or at least social distancing and stigmatization among occupants. A set of rules and a code of conduct have been created to regulate such behaviours in the occupation and to generally reduce stigmatisation based on gender, class or race. They also aim to regulate the distribution of tasks and participation within the occupation and to sanction non-compliance. People generally respect the rules to avoid being sanctioned by the organisation and to maintain good relations with their neighbours, but they also bend and break them as they are regarded as too strict: Some people, for instance, bypass the duty of attending the meetings by delegating the signing of the attendance register to a peer.

Social control, material conditions and constant proximity encourage some people to spend as little time as possible inside the occupation. As Marta, a woman (CGH) in her 50s, said: "I just try to keep myself busy and try to spend as much time as possible outside the occupation. Go early and come home late. I can't handle this anymore. Nonetheless, it can, I'm so tired." Conflicts of proximity are common in neighbourhoods and even more in overcrowded spaces as slums or squats and as such are also part of CGH. Nevertheless, these everyday conflicts and inconveniences cannot be dodged since they can degrade relations between inhabitants and prevent or deter them from participating in the group, as Rita's statement also demonstrates. Ghassan Hage (2015) and his study in Palestine puts this in a nutshell when he says that people need spaces of resilience, of rest and of trust in order to engage in their activism. In CGH, those spaces are very rare.

Personal Relationships

Another source of frustration, mistrust and withdrawal from engaging in the movement is the (assumed) existence of groupings and networks within the occupation, perceived by many occupiers as giving certain people advantages. What makes these networks and groupings conflictual is its conflation with relations of power. One example, and frequent trigger for conflict, is e.g. the allocation of rooms. Allegations are widespread that some leaders reserved the best rooms for themselves and their acquaintances, although they are expected to behave in an exemplary and selfless manner. During the time of our research, we also witnessed instances in which after long periods of refusal, the allocation of a new room suddenly happened during a time when the relationship to specific leaders improved. Without judging the factual correctness of these rumours, stories, and allegations, the main point is: Those stories exist and circulate and have an important influence on the engagement in the movement as feelings of disadvantage and nepotism quickly lead to demotivation. Occupiers know and observe exactly who lives where, who is allowed to move and how people communicate their wishes to whom. Having spent a lot of time with occupiers and also being part of their daily lives, we experienced rumours about clientelism within networks of occupiers as a constant topic of conversation which often lead to mistrust and envy among inhabitants.

Additionally, the rootedness of CGH in the neighbourhood of Woodstock and the common origin of most occupiers on the one hand entails many advantages, especially an identity as original residents of Woodstock who have the right to stay put in "their" neighbourhood and the sharing of a collective loss and threat. However, on the other hand those old stories, old disputes between families, and the mutual knowledge of personal trajectories are carried into CGH and serve as basis for in- and exclusion. The conflicts between groups of inhabitants imported to the occupation are then sometimes exacerbated by the constant proximity inside the occupation and the frequent rumours among occupiers.

Whether it is former activities in illegalized parts of society, actions of some of your relatives to a family member of another family or other conspicuous behaviours in the neighbourhood, this deep social knowledge is integral part of people's interaction with each other. Thus, an important point both for occupation-based movements as well as for movement scholars is, that a movement and an occupation is never a blank sheet – it is made up of people with (common) histories that are crucial for the internal politics and dynamics of a movement.

Simon, a 54 year old harbour worker and house leader points to yet another cause of mistrust within the occupation:

> You have got all these tenants in here, who doesn't know that maybe one of these tenants have been put here by the council. Go stay there, go get us information, it happens like that. That's why council gets to know what is happening here (…) Certain people here is not right. I am not going to mention names. There is a lot of people that stays here that doesn't… Yes! I promise you! They can hear me the way I am talking here. I am telling you. There is some people that is inside this building that is not good. Serious.

This fear of spying and also takeover of the occupation is both rooted in the history of RTC, in which the occupations have already been attacked by groups in order to take them over, as well as in the specific history of South Africa (Huchzermeyer 2011; Ramutsindela, 2002). We perceived this underlying scepticism among occupiers in many interviews and conversations in which interlocutors often emphasized that they would not engage much in talking with other occupiers, especially not the ones they don't know. Tarek, a man in his 60s and responsible for the community garden in CGH, for example, said:

> That's why I said I never speak….If one see me I only look to him and I walk. I not even say what and how are you…but if you say 'how is it' then I say 'No its alright my friend. How are you?'. That's it. You want to talk about that one and that one, worse and good … not for me, sorry man. I don't engage in stories here.

Yet another example of the difficult character of personal relationships in CGH is mutual help among occupiers. Without neglecting the fact that there are many moments of mutual support, we also experienced despair with regard to the need for assistance. Anita, for example, a single mum in her 50s, unemployed but caring for children in the occupation, who moved from one section to another, was desperately looking for someone who could help her with fixing a door, repairing a window and painting her room because she couldn't do it. In numerous conversations, she expressed her frustration over the fact that "everybody is charging money for everything. Nothing is for free in here. And

actually we should support each other." In fact, Anita had to pay 200 Rand for her door and another 200 Rand for getting her room painted. Her case is not the only one in this regard. On the one hand, these kind of economic transaction processes are comprehensible, especially in contexts of poverty and lack of resources, where everybody tries to earn a little bit of money. On the other hand, in a community in which solidarity is supposed to be a cornerstone, interlocutors often expected more altruism and mutual support. Caciagli (2019) mentioned similar negotiation processes in the *Coordinamento* squat in Roma when she says that

> mutuality and collaboration are not cultivated in the absence of selfish attitudes or conflicts. They come from the attempt to re-organise individualistic feelings of tension and competition to liberate the housing conditions of each family (Caciagli 2019: 738)

These tensions of earning a living and expectations of assistance and allegations of selfish behaviour further add to a constant (re)negotiation of relationships and a degree of uncertainty with regard mutual reliability.

Different levels of engagement

Another factor of conflict are the different degrees and different expectations of participation in the social movement among inhabitants. A lot of active occupiers – those who regularly participate in meetings and actions and are involved in the different internal and external groups of the movement – often complain about the lack of commitment and participation of their peers, repeating that "it is always the same people who mobilise". Fillieule (2005) supports this when he says that imbalances of engagement among activists in many cases indeed discourage the most active ones which can lead to burn outs. In fact, several activists decided to slow down their engagement as e.g. Marc a 52 year old single, unemployed occupier and one of the most active ones in the movement:

> They shouldn't even be living here. They don't take part in the movement and it's wrong. We give our all, you know. And they just sit at home. They don't even go to the induction course. When you call them, they don't come and they try to hide. (…) If you can not fight and stand, how can you benefit from somebody else's fighting all the time? And you want to say tomorrow, "ah I want to move there in that house", but who was fighting? It wasn't you! It's me who fought for that house there. But this people, they don't understand.

For Marc, the imbalance of commitment is a source of frustration. He believes that occupiers must earn and deserve their place in the occupation though their activism. His speaking is also a way to distinguish himself from the other occupiers, valuing his own activism, and corresponding to the image of the good

and altruistic activist. Indeed, people inside the occupation are not committed in the same way and intensity. And if so, they often give priority to their close environment, privileging the private issues rather than public ones. When leaders express their demands for an intense participation also in external political activities, many justify their low engagement in that sphere with coping with everyday life challenges such as earning money and caring for the family as well as with their tasks they may have exercised on their floor. Indeed, coping with precarious economic situations, earning a living and at the same time fulfilling demands of commitment is often a serious challenge.

However, even attendance in the weekly meetings is a constant topic of conflict as in the time of our research mostly only around 70-100 people (maximum) out of the 950 occupiers participated regularly in those meetings. Not only the standard delay of around 30 minutes frustrated some people but also the general feeling of repetition and stagnation. As Rick, a 41 year old unemployed man who earns some money as a security guard in the evenings, commented when we asked him if he would come to the meeting later:

> Naaa, man. It's always the same anyway. I don't have time for that. Those people talk and talk and nothing gets done. (…) You can't only be an activist, you need to eat too. And who will pay you for this? Nobody. They should pay us for doing this.

Activism is perceived by less committed people as a time-consuming activity with no impact on their daily lives, whereas activities carried out in the occupation or private sphere have immediate and visible effects on their quality of life. Indeed, a lot of people are focused on improving their living conditions and do not firmly believe that their participation would change anything in the power relation with the City. In the interviews we discovered that for most people the real "struggle" is not understood as a struggle for housing but as a daily struggle to survive. Some of them have been evicted several times from their houses and for the first time, after traumatic experiences of privation, homelessness or eviction, the occupation gives them the opportunity to dedicate themselves to a private space as Bouillon (2009) also noticed in other occupations. Especially for single mothers, who are numerous both in the occupation as well as in South African society in general, practical features as domestic tasks and insecure employment are seen as incompatible with political activity.

Despite low levels of participation in collective and organizational meetings and actions, occupiers pay attention to preserving the rituals of good understanding (Goffman 1982) between neighbours living in the same shared space. The numerous parties, birthdays, anniversaries, baby showers, weddings and religious ceremonies celebrated within the occupation are perceived as opportunities to participate in the movement while enjoying the conviviality

that these moments guarantee. Yet, these festive practices, even if they contribute to building up collective identity (Melucci 1988; Poletta and Jasper 2001), do not carry any political claim. Some of the extra activities posted on the Whatsapp RTC mobilization group, for instance, reveal the conflicts of leaders around the definition of politics within the hospital grounds. While Erina, a 45 year old chapter leader who works as a domestic worker, gets upset about wedding photos and other sharing moments and points out that "the group is primarily a political coordination group and not a sentimental outpouring", Kathie, a 41 year old single mum and chapter leader replies that "building community is a political practice". It is a general observation, throughout our research that there exists a gap between living in an occupation that once was primarily a form of political protest and the actual political demands of the movement. Especially older and less committed people often had difficulties to express what RTC actually is and what it is fighting for. It was also remarkable that people often answered as if they were not part of RTC, like for example Tarek, the gardener of CGH cited already above:

> No he [RTC] fights for us and I will stand with him, even like, the soldiers can come and say anything to me. I will tell him fuck you. RTC did fight too much for us. And he fight against all things like that, law and all that.

Also answers like "They fight for houses for us" were frequently mentioned in conversations. This points to the importance of the provision of a (temporary) home to people that RTC is standing for because nearly all people also mentioned how "thankful" they are for RTC supporting them with a place to stay and how "dignified" they feel. As such, a low engagement in the more political activities of RTC could be explained by the relative unconnectedness of the private and the political sphere of the movement. Despite several workshops (mostly done or organized by NU staff), speeches and actions that try to expose this connection, most of the people do not link their experience of deprivation with structural issues. In this regard, Rita's answer to the question if she would still be part of RTC when not living in CGH anymore and participating in its actions, sums this observation up and exposes the importance of the occupations as the social movement's base:

> Honestly, no. I just thank god that they give me a place to sleep. Because this is not life. I want to be in my own place. I don't care if it's in Khayelitsha, Philippi or wherever. I'm so tired."

A stagnant resistance?

> Already you can see what was fresh and new ways of organizing in the movement, have become normalized. Like "Oh we meet on a Thursday, oh we do it like this" and as soon as that starts to happen it adds strength because people have like cultures that we develop, but become stagnant. We take less risks because we want to maintain the routines because routines are comforting. And that can come to a point where we become irrelevant. (Josh)

With this statement, Josh indeed points into the direction of this paper's argument: that routinisation in a movement can lead to stagnation and, as he says, political irrelevance. However, whereas he refers to the routines of the movement itself (e.g. meetings, actions) we highlighted the dynamics on the micro-level of occupiers themselves and the consequences of their everyday challenges for the evolvement of the movement. Apart from the movement routines, that may become boring, tiring or sometimes even annoying for people, we discovered that the specific and precarious living situation creates other far more gruelling routines and feelings: routines of frustration that e.g. other occupiers still do not abide by the house rules, routines of demoralization because e.g. rooms are allocated in a perceived nepotistic manner, routines of mistrust because of rumours, several experiences of theft or simply because people know each other's trajectories in the neighbourhood.

Having participated in movement activities for over a year, we observed that the existence of those underlying feelings and the resulting practical consequences among occupiers have both a direct influence on movement activity, in that participating in external and internal actions decreased but also indirectly, in that the overall attention became increasingly directed inwards in stabilizing and organizing the occupation itself, which reduced the number of external political actions. Some leaders and occupiers reacted to these internal challenges by framing their solving as part of the struggle to create an alternative living space with a new solidarity in order to show that "a new way is possible and [that] we're going to show what dignified public housing can look like for thousands of families like ours - on the very best land." (Facebook post by RTC on 7th of June).

However, we support Bayat's criticism (2000) that the literature sometimes tends to overestimate the political dimension of everyday practices. Although the very act of organized occupying of valuable inner-city space is intensely political, many everyday practices within CGH do not necessarily share this political dimension. In fact, the consequences following from everyday challenges and focusing on organisational issues can deflect the political scope of the movement and unintentionally "contribute to the stability and legitimacy of the power in place" (Bayat 2000: 545) and not necessarily question domination anymore by getting caught in the organization of the occupation as

an end in itself: "By doing so, the actors may hardly win any space from the state" (Bayat 2000: 545) The risk is that the movement loses its power of opposition and becomes a mere palliative for state failures and responsibilities in a context of neo-liberalization. As Bayat also points out, stressing the multiple capacities of the poor to resist and organize themselves to collectively improve their living conditions, why then should state action be necessary? In RTC's case, the reduction of collective action and protest to internal organization of the occupation and the arrangement and negotiations with the city could be interpreted as a form of political stalemate, as it is the case in many post-apartheid movements that decided to adopt a collaborative attitude with the state (Ballard et al. 2005).

As other housing movements analysed by Duclos and Nicourd (2005), RTC has to find a way to resolve the tension between organisational/internal issues and the conquest of political rights through mobilisation. Activists have to constantly navigate between two logics that seem contradictory but are deeply dependent: on the one hand they have to assist, help and organize people suffering exclusion (assistance and organizational logic) and on the other hand they have to build a collective cause and fight to defend their rights (struggle logic). The occupation is at the moment tolerated and even if it is often criminalized by city officials it appears comfortable for the state. On the one hand, RTC accommodates 950 persons of the lowest end of the economic stratum in the middle of Woodstock and organizes as well as enables a daily life for them. On the other hand, it is taking over the responsibility of a core governmental task. In a way, the state benefits from RTC as it provides a solution for its policy failure, gives the opportunity to not perform its duty of assisting evictees and weakens the political pressure of showing its accountability. The acceptance of three years of occupation reveals the lack of state initiative to find political solutions for the urgent housing problem in Cape Town.

Conclusion

Although having collected a wide range of data that also shows how living in a political space shapes and politicizes everyday practices in manifold ways, in this paper we deliberately selected data that focus on the challenges of everyday life in an occupation-based movement which are highly significant for the development of a movement and underresearched in social movement literature, but yet responsible for a fundamental shift and transformation of a movement. This does not mean that we fetishize everyday life, however it does mean that it pays tribute to our finding that everyday life, in our case, can be regarded as the main mode of the social movement. As such we want to balance the often romanticizing view of everyday life in a social movement by taking on a rather nuanced perspective.

Staggenborg and Taylor (2005) are correct when employing Oliver's (1989) broader conceptualization of collective action than that of the contentious politics approach by scholars such as Tilly, Tarrow and McAdam and taking a closer look at the "impact of collective action campaigns on a wide variety of actors and on subsequent campaigns" (Staggenborg and Taylor 2005, 39). Whereby studying impacts of collective action on everyday lives is part of this agenda, concentrating only on emerging forms of solidarities, identities and new networks as Melucci advocated in his idea of New Social Movements (1988), may overlook the more challenging dynamics that emerge through social movement activity. In this article, we aimed at filling this gap and go deep into the challenges of everyday life in one occupation of the social movement RTC.

We, firstly, showed that the shift to an occupation-based movement changed the direction of actions to the inside of the occupation: organizing co-living, educating occupants, solving internal conflicts, developing future alternatives of existence, rebuilding a common space, transforming values of individuals are all new aims of the social movement that formerly were focused on opposing city politics with a rather 'traditional' repertoire of action. As such, one main finding of our research is that the transformation of the repertoire of action also entails a subtle and sometimes unnoticed shift of goals due to routinization and the everyday life of an occupation. In other words, the social movement has in a way diverted from its original claims. Regaining political impact is, thus, currently one main challenge of RTC.

Secondly, we closer analysed the internal dynamics that lead to such a diversion of the movement and realized that close proximity is not only supporting mutual solidarity but is a highly double-edged sword. The benefits are many: providing a roof over otherwise homeless people's heads in their familiar neighbourhoods, blocking high-value space in the inner-city, having a large group of potentially mobilizable people to support and carry out political action, creating structures of political and popular education and empowerment through a diversity of workshops, confronting people with different value systems, constructing and demonstrating a blueprint of social housing to the city are only some opportunities that open up through such an occupation.

However, 'living an everyday life in protest' also poses serious challenges to the functioning of the movement: Spatial precariousness and its consequences such as high levels of noise, the neglect of caring for common spaces, quick spreading of gossip and rumours, social observation and reprimands as well as being intensely exposed to people with different behaviours from oneself leads to exhaustion, demoralization, attrition and annoyance of occupants. In our case, those affects often lead to a dissociation from the movement despite numerous internal activities to solve those problems and tie people to the movement and frame the overcoming of those challenges as part of the struggle. Withdrawal to the private sphere or escape to public spaces and networks of friends in the neighbourhood are common reactions of many occupiers. As such, proximity and the special composition of inhabitants have an ambivalent value for

creating a social movement and especially its limiting characteristics are not investigated enough in social movement research. Not only does it mostly focus on everyday practices in times of 'latency' or quiescence - which means low visible or public activity - (e.g. Polletta 1999; Glass 2010), it also does not take the gruelling characteristics of everyday life into account.

Our case shows that an occupation is not a blank sheet but built by and with subjectivities with their own trajectories, routines, particularities, personalities, values and objectives that are part of and sometimes a big challenge for a movement. As such, apart from consolidating the movement, the occupations also paralyzed it in a literal sense, as the political impact and the external political work is currently in a way stuck due to solving internal challenges. This political tranquillity and the fact that the occupation accommodates 950 otherwise homeless people for which the city would have been responsible creates a situation of political stalemate from which RTC is currently trying to revitalize itself.

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