

**URBAN HYBRIDS:  
THE SQUAT AS A TRANSITIONAL  
FORM BETWEEN OCCUPATION  
AND INSTITUTIONALISATION  
OF ART CLUSTERS**

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**УРБАНІСТИЧНІ ГІБРИДИ:  
СКВОТ ЯК ПЕРЕХІДНА ФОРМА  
МІЖ ОКУПАЦІЄЮ  
ТА ІНСТИТУАЛІЗАЦІЄЮ  
МИСТЕЦЬКИХ КЛАСТЕРІВ**

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**Abstract**

Contemporary urban processes are increasingly shaped by informal practices of spatial appropriation, among which the squat emerges as one of the most contested phenomena. Its emergence reveals gaps in urban policy, leaving extensive areas unused yet accessible for temporary exploitation. **The purpose of the article** is to analyze the role of squatting as a transitional urban form positioned between spatial occupation and the institutionalization of cultural clusters. The study employs typological, comparative, and morpho-analytical **research methods. Scientific novelty.** In the article for the first time, a comprehensive morphological model of squatting is proposed, which includes the identification of five morphotypes of squats, each representing a distinct developmental scenario — from spontaneous occupation to partial commodification within cultural institutions. These morphotypes reflect the diversity of squatting practices and demonstrate their potential to evolve from short-term protest actions into platforms for sustainable cultural production. Additionally, an original classification of urban hybrids has been developed, placing squats and art clusters within a coordinate model defined by two parameters: the degree of institutionalization and the intensity of spatial resistance. This system enables the tracing

**Анотація**

Сучасні урбаністичні процеси дедалі більше характеризуються неформальними практиками просторового привласнення, серед яких сквот постає одним із найбільш суперечливих явищ. Його поява виявляє прогалини в міській політиці, залишаючи великі території невикористаними, проте відкритими для тимчасової експлуатації. **Метою статті** є аналіз ролі сквотингу як перехідної міської форми між просторовою окупацією та інституціоналізацією мистецьких кластерів. У роботі застосовано типологічні, порівняльні та морфоаналітичні **методи дослідження. Наукова новизна.** У статті уперше запропоновано цілісну морфологічну модель сквотингу, що містить виокремлення п'яти морфотипів сквотів, кожен з яких уособлює окремий сценарій розвитку від стихійного захоплення до часткової комодифікації в межах культурних інституцій. Ці морфотипи відображають різноманітність практик сквотингу та демонструють їхній потенціал еволюціонувати від короточасних протестних дій до платформ сталого культурного виробництва. Окрім того, розроблено оригінальну класифікацію міських гібридів, яка розташовує сквоти та арт-кластери в координатній моделі, визначеній двома параметрами: рівень інституціоналізації

of dynamic shifts in squats over time and the comparison of their trajectories across different urban contexts. A categorization of squats based on types of spatial transformation has also been formulated, distinguishing reversible, adaptively repurposed, transformative, semi-institutional, and radical dissent squats. This morphological perspective emphasizes the architectural logic of squatting and its capacity to reconfigure abandoned industrial, residential, or public environments. **Conclusions.** Squatting is defined as a transitional form of urban development that intertwines resistance with the formation of new cultural models. The identified morphotypes of squats and the two types of art clusters illustrate different trajectories of transition from informal occupation to institutionalization, with industrial clusters arising only after a prior phase of industrial squatting. The proposed typology of urban hybrids and the classification of spatial transformations make it possible to consider squats and art clusters as interconnected components of the urban ecosystem and to assess their potential within strategies for the revitalization of post-industrial territories.

**Keywords:**

squatting, squat modulation, art cluster, spatial hybridity, post-urbanism, cultural institutionalisation, revitalisation

та інтенсивність просторового спротиву. Така система уможливорює простеження динамічних зрушень сквотів у часі та порівняння їхніх траєкторій у різних міських контекстах. Також сформовано класифікацію сквотів за типами просторової трансформації, що розрізняє зворотні, адаптивно-реутилізовані, трансформативні, напівінституційні та радикально-дисидентські сквоти. Ця морфологічна перспектива підкреслює архітектонічну логіку сквотингу та його здатність перепрофільовувати занедбані індустріальні, житлові чи публічні середовища. **Висновки.** Сквотинг є транзиторною формою урбаністичного розвитку, що поєднує спротив і формування нових культурних моделей. Виокремлені морфотипи сквотів та два типи арт-кластерів демонструють різні траєкторії переходу від неформальної окупації до інституціоналізації, причому індустріальні кластери виникають лише після етапу індустріального сквотингу. Запропонована типологія урбаністичних гібридів і класифікація просторових трансформацій дають змогу розглядати сквоти й арт-кластери як взаємопов'язані елементи міської екосистеми та оцінювати їхній потенціал у стратегіях ревіталізації постіндустріальних територій.

**Ключові слова:**

сквотинг, модуляція сквоту, мистецький кластер/арт кластер, просторова гібридність, постурбанізм, культурна інституціоналізація, ревіталізація

## Introduction

Contemporary cities are increasingly shaped by informal and transitional spatial practices that emerge in response to vacant infrastructures, urban precarity, and the search for alternative cultural environments. Among these practices, squatting has become a revealing indicator of structural tensions in urban development, exposing contradictions in policy-making, demonstrating the limits of formal planning, and generating experimental spatial configurations that challenge established governance models.

Squats typically arise in post-industrial or abandoned environments, where material decay and institutional neglect create conditions for new cultural initiatives. As they evolve, these spaces often transcend their status as irregular occupations, becoming complex formations that host artistic production, collective self-organisation, and alternative modes of living. Their transitional nature makes

them essential for understanding how informal practices can trigger broader cultural and architectural transformations.

This study examines the squat as a dynamic urban form situated between unauthorised occupation and the institutionalisation of art clusters. By tracing how such environments transform through spatial reconfiguration, community-driven organisation, and shifting relations with local authorities, the article conceptualises squats as urban hybrids capable of moving between autonomy and formal recognition. Within this framework, the concept of 'squat modulation' describes the phased evolution of these spaces and their capacity to reshape neglected territories.

The relevance of this research lies in demonstrating that squatting is not merely a marginal or resistant activity but a significant mechanism of urban transformation. Understanding its spatial logics and developmental trajectories offers new insights into the emergence of art clusters, the revitalisation of post-industrial districts, and the formation of alternative cultural infrastructures. In this way, the squat is positioned not as an endpoint but as a catalyst within a continuum of urban change.

## Research Objective

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The objective of this research is to investigate the squat as a transitional model of urban modification preceding the formation of art clusters.

## Materials and Methods

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This research is situated at the intersection of urban studies, cultural theory, and urban sociology, with a focus on analysing spatial transformations prompted by informal occupation (squatting) and their subsequent institutionalisation into art clusters. The primary empirical base consists of case studies of squats that have evolved into cultural spaces in cities such as Berlin (Kunsthaus Tacheles, RAW Gelände), Barcelona (Can Batlló), London (Centre for Creative Collaboration), and Kyiv (Centre for Contemporary Art 'Soviet', Nyzhnoiurkivska Street squat). The selection of these cases is based on their representativeness in the context of the transition from an informal to an organised cultural space, as well as the availability of data for analysis.

A comparative analysis method was employed to assess various development models of squats in urban environments, identify standard features, and determine differences in approaches to legalisation and transformation. The case study method enabled an in-depth examination of specific examples of squatted spaces as dynamic elements of the urban fabric. Additionally, a structural-territorial analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between squats and surrounding infrastructure, the level of community involvement, and broader urban transformations.

For discourse analysis surrounding squatted spaces, urban research and academic literature were used. The criteria for case

selection included: (1) initial occupation of space through unauthorised intervention, (2) subsequent transformation or partial institutionalisation, and (3) the presence of a sustained cultural or artistic impact on the urban environment.

In addition to these primary methods, *triangulation of sources* was applied to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Data were gathered from academic books, academic journals, and specialised online platforms that document squatting practices. Key online sources included local community websites that provide firsthand accounts of events and transformations. This combination of sources allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the spatial, social, and cultural dynamics of squatting.

The research was carried out in a *multi-stage process*. Initially, a theoretical framework was developed through an extensive literature review to identify relevant concepts and debates in urban studies, design, sociology, and cultural theory. Subsequently, data collection focused on gathering detailed information about each case study, including historical timelines, spatial characteristics, patterns of community engagement, and formalisation processes. Finally, the collected data were systematically analysed using comparative and structural-territorial methods, followed by synthesis into broader patterns and conclusions regarding the transformation of informal spaces into recognised cultural hubs. This methodical approach enabled both detailed, site-specific insights and the identification of generalizable trends across diverse urban contexts.

#### *Literature Review*

Within the research landscape, squatting is typically examined as a sociocultural or political phenomenon; however, its spatial and architectural dimensions remain only partially explored. Most academic works emphasise squats as forms of resistance, as demonstrated by H. Lefebvre (1991), or as examples of temporary occupation of abandoned spaces, as analysed by P. Oswalt, K. Overmeyer, and P. Misselwitz (2013). These approaches also interpret squats as transitional phases in the development of art clusters.

S. Burgum (2022) argues that squatted buildings can function as 'archives' of political and cultural contestation. His study of London's Railton Road shows how squatters repurpose urban spaces into living palimpsests of resistance, simultaneously preserving and rewriting urban memory. M. Lancione (2020) emphasises the political agency of squatted spaces, presenting them as arenas of contestation and alternative urban citizenship. At the same time, insufficient attention has been paid to the architectural logic of squats – how space is modified, reorganised, and endowed with new functions within informal cultural environments.

M. Nowicki (2021) investigates how post-criminalisation squatting in England and Wales adapts by masquerading as 'non-homes'

in commercial spaces, illustrating tactical legitimisation strategies. J. Draaisma (2016) conceptualises 21st-century squats as 'cultural incubators,' highlighting their role as temporary, informal platforms that seed alternative urban cultural clusters. M. Ferreri (2021) situates practices of temporary urbanism, including squatting, within broader processes of resistance and re-appropriation of vacant spaces.

In examining the phenomenon of squatting as a transitional model between informal occupation and the institutionalisation of cultural practices, M. García González (2022) considers squatting a form of political and social resistance, as well as a tool for spatial justice in the capitalist city. Earlier, in his doctoral dissertation, M. García González (2022) emphasised 'temporary urbanism' as a mechanism for constructing alternative urban development models.

S. Shkoliar (2019) highlights the squat as a form of contemporary cultural and artistic practice that fosters the development of the creative industry by providing conditions for artistic self-expression and informal collaboration. A. Soletskyi (2019) holds a similar view, focusing on squats as platforms for progressive artistic practices at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries. In the Ukrainian context, I. Antonenko (2021) analyses squatting as a factor in the development of the creative industry, stressing its importance in transforming derelict urban spaces into cultural platforms.

R. Boer, M. Otero Verzier and K. Truijen (2019) conceptualise 'squatting as spatial practice,' describing architectural processes of adapting abandoned interiors, material improvisation, and spatial self-expression through design. In the context of post-industrial cities, M. Joja (2021) examines the temporary activation of abandoned buildings as a tool of architectural intervention, creating unique spatial and social models. R. McArdle (2022) discusses the concept of 'Squat City,' a Dublin-based autonomous social centre that utilises squatting as a form of temporary urbanism, challenging conventional architectural programming and planning.

Y. Jabareen (2025) introduces the concept of the 'architecture of dispossession,' analysing how architectural transformation, rooted in art and visual design, functions as a tool of displacement and legitimisation of spatial change. This provides a critical perspective on the processes through which squatted spaces are transformed into institutionally accepted, yet potentially discriminatory, forms.

C. Grodach, E. Currid-Halkett, N. Foster, and J. Murdoch (2014) investigate the spatial dynamics of artistic clusters, noting that cultural initiatives most often emerge in areas with lower rental costs and the availability of vacant space –conditions typically found in squats during their early stages. In this regard, U. Altrock & L. Fan (2023) and U. Altrock (2024) provide particularly relevant insights, examining art clusters that emerged on former industrial or derelict

sites and emphasising the long-term impact of squatted initiatives on shaping the urban cultural landscape.

M. Tartari (2019) views artistic and cultural practices as instruments for influencing urban space and forming alternative urban aesthetics, which are often manifested in squats. He underscores squats as hubs of cultural production, capable of generating new types of social interaction and collective identity. Finally, M. Foucault (1994) provides a theoretical foundation for interpreting squats as heterotopias – spaces that simultaneously exclude and transform existing social norms-in his concept of ‘other spaces’.

In summary, current scholarship tends to regard squats not only as phenomena of resistance but also as initiatives with significant cultural and transformative potential, playing a vital role in the formation of art clusters and creative urban landscapes.

## Results **4**

Squatting, as a form of unauthorised spatial appropriation, emerges within broader urban crises characterised by the decline of industrial infrastructure, shortages of affordable housing, and the absence of culturally oriented platforms for self-expression. In this context, the informal occupation of abandoned or derelict buildings becomes a response to spatial scarcity and institutional neglect. However, this phenomenon should not be reduced to marginal or purely protest-driven behaviour. A squat, in its fundamental essence, is the temporary or long-term appropriation of a non-functional space without legal authorisation; however, its emergence also reflects more profound contradictions in urban policy, including the commercialisation of housing, the displacement of creative communities, and the dismantling of local infrastructure (Shkoliar, 2019), as such, squatting functions not only as a spatial gesture of resistance but also as a socio-cultural experiment that generates alternative models of urban coexistence and cultural production. Recent research challenges prevailing stereotypes by demonstrating the diversity and internal organisation of squat communities. For example, in Leiden, Van der Steen et al. (2020) reveal that squatters range from politically active collectives to individual households, questioning monolithic interpretations of squatting as a purely protest or homelessness phenomenon.

The first instances of squatting were documented in Europe in the mid-20th century, particularly in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Germany, where activists, artists, the homeless, and other marginalised groups began to occupy vacant buildings, transforming them into residential, social, and cultural centres (Martínez, 2020; Tartari, 2019). For example, in Berlin, the occupation of 43-45 Danckelmannstraße became a focal point of the local squatting movement, culminating in a forced eviction on 27 June 1983 (Fig. 1). The photograph captures law enforcement officers remov-



ing squatters amid barricades and personal belongings, illustrating both the confrontation between authorities and occupants and the social tensions surrounding informal urban occupation.

In parallel, other abandoned buildings were repurposed by squatters into self-organized spaces for living, artistic production, and community gatherings (Fig. 2). One such building, depicted in the image, shows the early stages of transformation, with visible signs of repairs, graffiti, and improvised installations reflecting the creative strategies used by occupants to adapt neglected urban spaces for cultural and social use. Together, these images not only document the struggles of squatting communities but also highlight their active role in shaping urban landscapes, turning derelict structures into hubs of alternative cultural activity.

Over time, squats began to play a significantly broader role, extending beyond shelter to serve as platforms for alternative culture, critical art, public self-organisation, and political activism (Shkoliar,



*Fig. 1. Eviction of 43-45 Danckelmannstraße in Berlin during the squatting movement in Germany, 27 June 1983 (Jackson, n.d.).*

*Рис. 1. Виселення з будинків під час сквотерського руху в Німеччині за адресою Данкелманнштрассе 43–45. Берлін, 27 червня 1983 р. (Jackson, n.d.).*



*Fig. 2. Abandoned house occupation during the squatting movement in Berlin, Germany (Renkes, n.d.).*

*Рис. 2. Захоплення покинутого будинку під час сквотерського руху в Берліні, Німеччина (Renkes, n.d.).*

2019). These spaces primarily attract representatives of creative professions – artists, musicians, performers, designers, architects, urban studies researchers, and activists – who seek alternative modes of existence and self-realisation outside of official cultural institutions and market constraints (Soletskyi, 2019; Tartari, 2019).

Based on observations, a squat is not a fixed space but rather a temporary module capable of transformation. It may disappear due to administrative pressure, become legalised and incorporated into urban revitalisation policies, or evolve into an art cluster – a post-industrial space adapted for cultural and creative activities, often based in abandoned industrial facilities, uniting artist studios, galleries, and functional zones for the development of creative industries. Their specificity lies in their ability to operate at the intersection of illegality and legality, cultural autonomy and institutionalisation, protest and commercialisation. A reverse dynamic is also possible: an art cluster undergoing commercialisation or loss of autonomy may generate a new squat as a reaction to the loss of freedoms. Thus, the squat and the art cluster exist in a complex interdependence, where one can become the source or consequence of the other.

In this process, the concept of 'squat modulation' is relevant – a phased transformation of the architectural and socio-spatial status of the squat within the urban environment, encompassing a spectrum from informal occupation to partial or complete institutionalisation. Squat modulation reflects not only the morphogenetic transformation of space but also a shift in its role within the urban cultural field: from a zone of resistance to a platform for adaptive urbanism. This concept enables us to view the squat not as a static form, but as a dynamic process that undergoes multiple configurations, changing in terms of legality, openness, self-governance, and institutional integration.

It is essential to clarify that the squat plays a crucial role in the formation of a specific type of art cluster, namely those that emerge from industrial squatting. According to the author's typology, there are two primary types of art clusters. The first type includes 'underground transformation' clusters. These are artistic clusters that emerge through the unauthorised occupation of abandoned industrial territories by artists seeking spaces for creativity. Initially, such environments function as underground cultural platforms without a clear structure. Over time, they undergo socio-cultural transformations and may become partially or fully institutionalised. Examples include 'Art-zavod Platforma' in Kyiv and 'Berlin's Ostkreuz' in Germany.

The second type includes 'managed creative zones', created with the support of municipal authorities or cultural institutions. These zones develop within urban strategies and involve partnerships between artists, state structures, and businesses. Hence, the squat is not only a starting point but also an organic element of the first type



of cluster, catalysing informal creation and gradual spatial transformation into a cultural hub.

In this context, it is appropriate to outline the author's classification of squats based on their method of formation, which considers both the spatial and socio-cultural nature of such entities. The first type includes spontaneous squats, which emerge without prior planning in response to urgent spatial needs, such as after mass evictions or disasters. These squats often exhibit a low level of organisation but a high degree of participant mobilisation.

The second type comprises culturally-initiated squats, founded by artists, architects, musicians, or other creatives aiming to establish platforms for artistic, educational, or research activities. Such squats typically have a well-defined program of events, sometimes a distinct ideology, and often serve as the foundation for future art spaces.

The third type consists of tactical squats, which function as tools of political or urban struggle. Their goal is not necessarily long-term occupation but rather the demonstration of alternative models of urban existence. These squats are sensitive to symbolic contexts and often appear in strategically significant urban locations.

A separate fourth type includes hybrid or intra-cluster squats, which emerge within existing art clusters as a response to their institutionalisation or excessive commercialisation. These squats aim to reclaim the original concept of space as autonomous, self-organised, and expressive of alternative culture. They may coexist with the cluster's administrative structures or operate in parallel, thereby generating a new layer of spatial hybridity.

The fifth category comprises industrial squats that emerge in abandoned manufacturing or warehouse buildings, serving as incubators for future art clusters. These spaces are characterised by their large area, open planning, structural adaptability to art practices, and technical infrastructure. In essence, such spaces represent art clusters at early stages of development. In one of her papers, Shkoliar (2025) proposed the term 'industrial squatting'. This type of art cluster emerges as a result of artists or creatives occupying abandoned industrial facilities without authorisation, seeking accessible spaces for their activities. Initially lacking clear structure or defined functions, these spaces gradually evolve into informal creative hubs and undergo the socio-cultural stages of transformation described below. In their early stages of formation, they are considered underground cultural spaces, and later, they shift their scenario. Thus, this type of art cluster begins as a squat and gradually expands its development trajectory through stages.

A vivid example of an art cluster formed through industrial squatting is the area around Ostkreuz in Berlin (Fig. 3). Following German reunification in the 1990s, numerous abandoned industrial buildings in the area were occupied by artists and cultural activists. Without



*Fig. 3. Occupied building in Ostkreuz area during Anti-Olympics demonstration, Haus K77, Kastanienallee, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, 1993 (Katsikopoulou, 2024).*

*Рис. 3. Захоплена будівля в районі Осткрюц під час антиолімпійської демонстрації, Haus K77, Кастанієналлеє, Пренцлауер-Берг, Берлін, 1993 (Katsikopoulou, 2024).*

official authorisation, they organised studios, exhibition halls, and creative spaces within these buildings. Over time, these initiatives drew the attention of municipal authorities and private businesses, resulting in a gradual legalisation and structural transformation.

Despite this institutionalisation, part of the environment retained its informal, experimental, and underground character. This model gave rise to a specific type of art cluster, conditionally termed 'underground transformation'. According to S. Shkoliar (2025), the formation and evolution of such clusters follow a specific set of socio-cultural stages that determine subsequent spatial development scenarios. A defining feature of these clusters is their exclusive emergence within post-industrial areas that have experienced decline and functional loss.

A condition of neglect characterises the initial stage of art cluster formation: former factories, warehouses, and other industrial facilities fall into decay, having lost their operational utility. It is on this basis that the next phase emerges – *industrial squatting*, in which an abandoned industrial building is transformed into a squat that may develop along various trajectories. One such scenario involves the squatting disappearing due to external pressure, such as intervention by law enforcement, the return of the building to its legal owner, or the implementation of commercial projects on the site. In another scenario, the squat may remain anarchic – self-governed, autonomous, and independent, with no intention of legalising its activities. In this case, it functions as a resilient node of underground culture,

an alternative space for artistic initiatives, social experiments, and grassroots self-organisation.

A third scenario involves gradual legalisation, where the community formed within the squat enters into dialogue with local authorities or private investors. This process may result in the institutionalisation of the space and its transformation into a fully recognised art community. It is important to note that a squat can only become an art cluster if it is located within an abandoned industrial zone or facility.

Suppose the squat evolves according to the latter scenario. In that case, it transitions into a phase of spontaneous cultural colonisation: a space that lacks a clear institutional structure begins to attract new communities and host initial informal artistic events and creative exchanges. Despite its marginality, such a space already functions as a gravitational point for the creative milieu.

The next stage is *aestheticisation*, characterised by the ordering of the environment, renovation of interiors and facades, and enhancement of infrastructure. At this point, the space begins interacting not only with artists but also with audiences and consumers, sparking interest from investors and businesses. In effect, the squatted space becomes a hub for art.

The culmination of this process is *gentrification* – a profound transformation of the district or site under the influence of creative interventions, whereby the artistic environment increases the space's attractiveness for capital. Consequently, the initial occupants – artists, squatters, activists – are often forced to leave due to rising rents and the loss of autonomy. This fate befell the Florentin district in Tel Aviv, which transitioned from an underground artistic hub into a commercialised zone of creative cafés, galleries, and boutiques.

During gentrification, not only does the social composition of the space change, but its architectural image also changes. A common phenomenon is the emergence of the *aestheticised ruin* – a stylised industrial environment that retains traces of the past while being adapted to new cultural and commercial needs. This is evident in Berlin's Kreuzberg, where galleries, design studios, and tourist infrastructure have gradually displaced alternative culture. Another example is 'La Fabrica' in Barcelona—an old cement factory transformed by Ricardo Bofill into a unique fusion of industrial heritage and contemporary cultural space (Fig. 4).

The final stage of art cluster evolution is *cultural capitalisation*. At this point, the cultural value of the space acquires economic dimensions. Art clusters become platforms for profitable events, investment opportunities, and tourist attractions. Spaces that emerged as anarchic and autonomous transform into structured institutions. This is illustrated by the case of *Station Nord* in Copenhagen, where



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Fig. 4. 'La Fabrica' art cluster revitalised by Ricardo Bofill in Barcelona: a) fragment of exterior of 'La Fabrica' after revitalisation; b) fragment of interiors of coworking studios in 'La Fabrica' (The Factory, 2012).

Рис. 4. Арт-кластер «La Fabrica», ревіталізований Рікардо Бофіллом у Барселоні: а) фрагмент екстер'єру «La Fabrica» після ревіталізації; б) фрагмент інтер'єрів коворкінгу в «La Fabrica» (The Factory, 2012).

illegal artistic activities were eventually institutionalised, and the space itself was integrated into the city's cultural policy.

During cultural capitalisation, authentic marginality often loses its original meaning, turning into *symbolic capital*. Moreover, the underground characteristics of a squat or cluster may be 'packaged' as a tourist product – part of city branding, guided tours, or visual marketing. Such spaces no longer perform a radically alternative function; instead, they become '*museum-like heterotopias*', where the culture of resistance is consumed as spectacle.

The transition from derelict factory to capitalised art centre reveals the complex developmental trajectory of urban hybrids, where the squat is merely an initial, though not obligatory, link. Art clusters of the first type, i.e., those that pass through the stage of industrial squatting, cannot form unless they begin as squats. Paradoxically, those who initiate the process of cultural transformation are often displaced by its culmination.

Thus, the squat is not only a precursor to the art cluster but can also exist within it or even emerge from it – *industrial squatting* functions as an incubatory form of the future art cluster, where initial experiments in cohabitation, cultural production, and spatial organisation take place. A reverse dynamic is also possible: an art cluster

experiencing commercialisation or loss of autonomy may give rise to a new squat in reaction to lost freedoms. Therefore, squats and art clusters exist in a *complex interdependence*, in which one may become the origin or consequence of the other.

This interdependence allows squats and art clusters to be conceptualised as urban hybrids – spatial formations that emerge at the intersection of legality and illegality, institutionalisation and autonomy. Urban hybrids are dynamic entities combining features of temporality, self-governance, resistance, and potential for integration into formal urban development structures. In this context, the squat is a *primary, 'raw' form* of hybrid space that may evolve into an art cluster or coexist with it as an internal oppositional pole. The art cluster, in turn, often originates from squatting experiences but gradually acquires traits of institutionalisation while preserving traces of alternative urban aesthetics. Owing to this plasticity, squats and art clusters exemplify *hybrid urban formations* constantly navigating between opposing states – control and freedom, commerce and creativity, community and market.

To theorise the phenomenon of squats and art clusters as hybrid formations, a proposal for a classification of urban hybrids is presented. However, first, let us consider Henri Lefebvre's classification of squatting. Within Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad – *perceived space, conceived space, and lived space* – space is treated as a product of social production, shaped through interactions among material, imaginary, and symbolic dimensions. In this context, squatting is not merely a marginal practice but a *spatial event* that disrupts the logic of planned urbanism and forms alternative scenarios of urban life. A typology of squats based on this framework enables an understanding of squats not just as residential resistance, but as fully-fledged urban tools.

**Type 1: Squats as Spaces of Resistance** – These represent the dominance of *lived space* over *conceived space*. Here, space acquires political and countercultural significance. Squats serve not only as shelters but also as terrains of spatial protest, embodying collective critiques of capitalist urban logic (Lefebvre, 1991). The aesthetics of such spaces often deliberately conflict with the uniform urban structure through the use of graffiti, architectural deconstructions, and public artistic interventions. In this form, the squat becomes a living political manifesto.

**Type 2: Squats as Spaces of Alternative Production** – These focus on everyday appropriation of urban space. Participants may lack a clearly articulated ideology, but they can establish new modes of living and interaction, based on communal living, self-organisation, and collective content production (Oswalt et al., 2013). The space becomes an infrastructure for alternative everyday urbanism, expressed through actions rather than plans – kitchens, workshops, educational events, and social practices.



**Type 3: Squats as Critiques of Conceived Space** – Here, squatting is interpreted as a spatial response to systemic alienation in urban environments designed by planners and developers. Squats are not only acts of resistance but of *creative reconfiguration of urban thought* (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). Squatters construct new architectural scenarios not because of a lack of alternatives, but because existing offerings are uninhabitable for life and culture.

A distinct category is *heterotopic squats* – spaces that exist within the city but exclude themselves from its norms, in the spirit of Foucault (1994) and Lefebvre (1991). They create autonomous micro-worlds with their own rhythms, codes, ritual systems, and signs. These squats serve as experimental grounds for new forms of being – encompassing cross-artistic events, informal education, and collective utopias. They are deeply symbolic spaces, where architecture becomes a means of community formation and mnemonic framing.

In Lefebvre's conception, the squat as a form of spatial action is not merely a response to lack but a site for the formation of new social and cultural realities. Squatting typologies within this paradigm reveal squats not as objects of illegal use but as *political and aesthetic instruments of spatial transformation*.

Accordingly, here is a classification of *urban hybrids* based on two key parameters: the *degree of institutionalisation* (ranging from full autonomy to formal integration into urban structures) and the *degree of resistance* to dominant spatial regimes (from oppositional to adaptive):

- **Type 1: Counter-Spaces** (low institutionalisation, high resistance): Autonomous squats and temporarily occupied spaces functioning outside legal norms, usually without official recognition. These form their own systems of self-governance and act as manifestations of direct political action.

- **Type 2: Institutionalised Autonomies (high resistance, moderate institutionalisation): Formally or partially legalised** art spaces that retain oppositional identity and operate within permitted autonomy. These hybrids often have contractual relationships with city authorities while maintaining systemic critique.

- **Type 3: Creative Platforms** (moderate resistance, high institutionalisation): Art clusters with defined organisational structures, stable funding, and infrastructure, while claiming to preserve alternative aesthetics and cultural missions. Frequently, such spaces become tools of soft gentrification.

- **Type 4: Urban Symbioses** (low resistance, high institutionalisation): Projects integrated into urban development strategies as 'creative hubs', often initiated by the private sector or municipalities. Their alternative nature is stylistic rather than political, and they primarily function as components of the urban cultural economy.

The proposed typology serves as an analytical matrix that allows squats and art clusters to be viewed as dynamic entities capable



of transitioning from one type to another in response to shifts in political, economic, or social contexts. Thus, urban hybrids are not merely spatial anomalies, but sensitive indicators of urban transformation, capable of both generating new forms of urban life and revealing zones of crisis. In this regard, squats must also be considered through the lens of spatial philosophy—as topoi shaped not only materially but also symbolically.

To visualize urban hybrids, it is helpful to represent them as a model within a coordinate plane (Fig. 5), where the X-axis denotes the level of institutionalization (ranging from 0 – anarchic squats to 40 – fully legalized clusters), and the Y-axis represents the degree of resistance to dominant urban regimes (from 0 – adaptive integration to 15 – active spatial protest). This approach enables the positioning of specific examples (e.g., Kunsthaus Tacheles, Soviet, Can Batlló) on the coordinate map and tracing trends of squat modulation across diverse urban environments. In the long term, this model could become an analytical tool for forecasting the evolution of squatted spaces within the framework of urban planning.

The role of squats within urban space can be defined by their level of institutionalisation, degree of resistance, spatial autonomy, and nature of interaction with the urban environment. **Counter-spaces** represent squats that embody spatial critique rooted in anarchist, Marxist, and radical urbanist philosophies. These are manifestations of

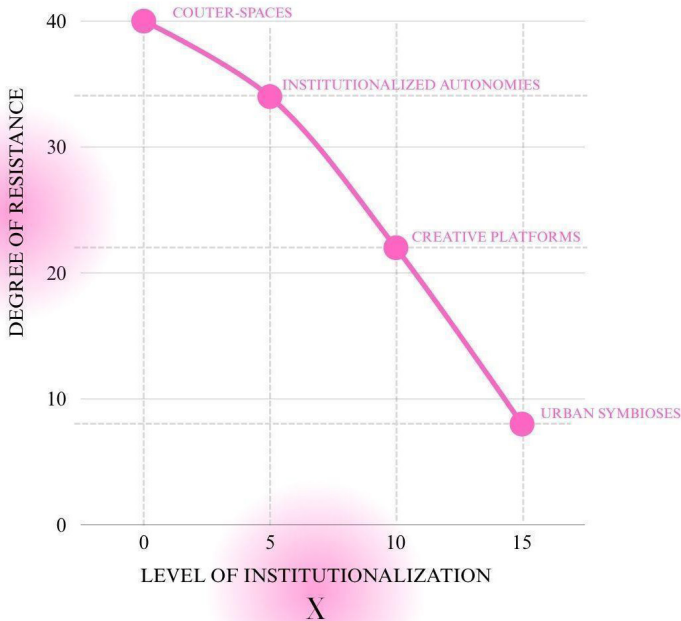


Fig. 5. A typological model of urban hybrids based on the squat modulation paradigm  
Source: Original illustration by the author

Рис. 5. Типологічна модель урбаністичних гібридів, заснована на парадигмі сквот-модуляції  
Джерело: Авторська ілюстрація

'spaces of resistance' (Lefebvre, 1991), where architectural structures undergo deliberate transformation aimed at subverting the norms of the city as a space of control. According to Lefebvre, urban space is a social product that must be reconstituted through everyday practices, particularly through phenomena such as squatting.

*Institutionalised autonomies* reflect the transition of squats into the paradigm of 'soft urbanism', where spatial initiatives balance between protest and cooperation. They establish alternative infrastructure while retaining design spontaneity, nonlinear planning, and openness to intervention.

Another type within this classification is the *creative platform* – squats that gradually integrate into the field of creative urbanism, their aesthetic shaped by design thinking and the logic of temporary space usage. These squats often become part of urban revitalisation design processes, approaching forms of semi-official participation in urban development.

*Urban symbioses* are squats that transcend protest and evolve into experimental sites of institutionalised urbanism. Here, space functions as a tool for urban testing, combining elements of shared use, sustainable development, and adaptive architectural approaches. These examples demonstrate a symbiosis between spatial experimentation and urban planning that transcends the traditional centre–periphery hierarchy.

Squats possess not only socio-cultural but also architectural typologies defined by the scale of intervention, type of adaptation, and method of environmental modification. These features highlight the morphogenetic potential of squats as unique spatial formations capable of transformation into art clusters, cultural institutions, or experimental urban utopias.

Based on the morpho-analytical and structural analysis of case studies (Berlin, Barcelona, London, Kyiv), this study develops an original classification of squats according to types of spatial transformation. The proposed classification enables morpho-analytical zoning of squats within the urban environment, identifying not only their degree of institutionalisation but also types of spatial practices. It also enables the assessment of each squat's potential for revitalisation-oriented integration into future art clusters or the city's cultural infrastructure. The classification is based on three main criteria: the degree of spatial intervention, the type of environment involved (industrial, residential, public), and the architectural transformation strategy (adaptation, reconfiguration, deconstruction).

**Type 1. Reversible squats.** These represent the least invasive form of squatting, involving the temporary use of space with minimal alterations (such as lighting, furniture, or symbolic markings). Most commonly, these are residential squats that do not alter the building's architectural logic but merely adapt it to meet basic needs. Such squats are characterised by high mobility and low visibility in

the urban environment (Pruijt, 2013). *Case: Kyiv's 'Pariyska Komuna' ('Parkkomuna') squat* (late 1990s) – a temporarily occupied residential space in the city centre without major architectural interventions, focused on symbolic occupation and autonomous living (Fig. 6).

**Type 2. Adaptive reuse squats.** These spaces undergo partial renovation, including room reconfiguration, the creation of communal areas, galleries, and workshops. Typically, such squats arise in abandoned industrial buildings where the primary structural grid remains intact, but functional zoning is adapted to community needs. *Case: Can Batlló in Barcelona* (Fig. 7) – an industrial complex transformed into a public cultural centre with open artistic spaces, self-management, and grassroots initiatives (Altrock & Fan, 2023).



Fig. 6. Artists in the Parkkomuna squat (early 1990s, Kyiv) (Parkomuna: movoiu, 2016).

Рис. 6. Художники у сквоті «Паркомуна» (початок 1990-х, Київ) (Parkomuna: movoiu, 2016).



Fig. 7. Fragment of the interior of the industrial complex Can Batlló in Barcelona (BlocOnze, n.d.).

Рис. 7. Фрагмент інтер'єру промислового комплексу Can Batlló в Барселоні (BlocOnze, n.d.).

**Type 3. Transformative Squats:** These involve profound architectural and visual transformation of space. Squats of this type create new spatial identities through street art, facade alterations, and performative architectural interventions. The space becomes not only functional but symbolic—a vehicle for ideology, protest, or cultural aesthetics. *Case: Kunsthaus Tacheles in Berlin (Fig. 8)* – one of Europe’s most iconic squat scenes, which transformed a derelict building into an art object and cultural centre through total artistic reinterpretation.



Figure 8. Fragments of the interior and exterior of Kunsthaus Tacheles in Berlin: a) Main entrance to Kunsthaus Tacheles; b) Gaming room in (Kunsthaus Tacheles; c) Artist studios in Kunsthaus Tacheles (Busch, 2024).

Рис. 8. Фрагменти інтер'єру та екстер'єру Kunsthaus Tacheles у Берліні: а) головний вхід до Kunsthaus Tacheles; б) ігрова кімната в Kunsthaus Tacheles; в) художні студії в Kunsthaus Tacheles (Busch, 2024).

**Type 4. Semi-Institutional Squats** These squats combine self-governed architectural logic with elements of institutionalised infrastructure – multimedia labs, exhibition spaces, temporary schools, workshops. They often hold a legal tenancy status or operate under a memorandum with the municipality. The architectural structure here reflects a shift from temporality to stable functionality



(Holm & Kuhn, 2011; Hou, 2010). *Case: The Old Tidemill Garden* in London – an example of a squat that partially legalised its operation as a public space with educational and cultural functions while maintaining an autonomous management model (Fig. 9).

**Type 5. Radical Architectural Dissent** This category includes squats that deliberately dismantle the spatial logic of buildings – removing partitions, creating openings, inverting interiors – to craft an architectural manifesto. These are not just occupations but the creation of *anti-spaces*, where every constructive element assumes symbolic meaning (Debord, 1995). These squats often operate on the edge of anarchic aesthetics and institutional artistic critique. *Case: Liebig34* squat (1990) in Berlin (Fig. 10) – an artistic environment where squatting became a platform for visual resistance, inversion of conventional exhibition formats, and critique of institutional art boundaries.

Scientific  
novelty

5

The findings of this study enable a reconceptualisation of squatting – not as a residual form of resistance or improvised housing, but as a dynamic urban process with a distinct architectural and morphological footprint. This reading departs from classic movement-centred interpretations by emphasising the spatial logics that drive transi-



Fig. 9. Occupied school building by squatters in The Old Tidemill Garden in London (McCarthy, 2018).

Рис. 9. Захоплена сквотерами будівля школи в The Old Tidemill Garden у Лондоні (McCarthy, 2018).



Fig. 10. Fragments of the exterior of Liebig34 squat in Berlin (Wohnprojekt, 2020).

Рис. 10. Фрагменти екстер'єру сквоту Liebig34 у Берліні (Wohnprojekt, 2020).

tions from informal appropriation to cultural clustering. In this regard, our results intersect with Puijt's (2013) typology of squatting logics (deprivation-based, alternative housing, entrepreneurial, conservational, political), yet extend it by translating social-movement rationales into **morphological trajectories** that can be detected in the built environment (reversible adaptations vs. radical reconfigurations). Whereas Puijt (2013) explains why squatting occurs, our framework formalises how those rationales materialise architecturally and how they may culminate in cultural capitalisation.

Holm and Kuhn's (2011) analysis of Berlin shows that squatting both reacts to and reshapes strategies of urban restructuring; legalisation waves and renewal regimes co-produce the movement's cycles. Our Ukrainian cases confirm this coupling but specify its **spatial mechanics**: using the 'squat modulation' lens, we show how changes in political tolerance/institutional stance correspond to shifts along two axes—degree of institutionalisation and intensity of spatial resistance—yielding detectable 'modulation patterns' (e.g., from oppositional, low-integration occupations to semi-formal cultural venues). Thus, we translate policy–movement conjunctures, observed by Holm & Kuhn (2011), into a coordinate model that enables cross-case comparison of spatial outcomes.

Vasudevan's (2017) historical synthesis positions squatting as a laboratory of urban autonomy and everyday citizenship. Our findings complement this by demonstrating the architectural conditions under which such autonomy becomes infrastructural: when entrepreneurial or conservational logics combine with medium-to-high **architectural intervention**, we observe higher probabilities of transition into cultural clusters (studios, venues, micro-institutions). In other words, the socio-political autonomy that Vasudevan (2017) details becomes durable when morphological adaptability and the symbolic reprogramming of space converge – the very dynamics captured by our expanded morphological typology.

Recent work on squatting and the **urban commons** adds another layer to the discussion. Polanska (2020) demonstrates how organisational cultures and local opportunity structures influence whether squats resist institutionalisation or evolve into broader urban initiatives. Our model aligns with this by making institutionalisation a measurable axis: the same communal practices can shift from oppositional to adaptive positions without losing their commoning ethos, provided that architectural interventions remain flexible and community governance persists. This helps to reconcile 'commons-building' with the risks of co-optation by specifying the spatial thresholds at which translation into cultural infrastructure occurs.

At the contested edge of urban change, Dadusc (2019a, 2019b) foregrounds the micropolitics of criminalisation and **enclosure** around migrant squats. Our results do not dispute this critical



perspective; instead, they show how **symbolic spatial** transformation (curation, exhibition, programming) can temporarily buffer enclosures by widening coalitions and reframing sites as cultural assets. Nonetheless, in contexts of weak municipal support (as in the Ukrainian examples), such buffers remain fragile: modulation towards institutionalisation is slower and more reversible, and the risk of displacement remains acute – echoing Dadusc's (2019a, 2019b) caution about governance through 'tolerance' and emergency fixes.

Finally, scholarship on **common space** emphasises that durable alternatives rely on spatial practices that promote openness, repeatability, and shared governance. Our 'urban hybrids' matrix operationalises this insight for comparative urban analysis: by plotting cases across institutionalisation and **resistance axes**, and overlaying levels of **architectural intervention** and **spatial adaptability**, we generate a visual grammar for distinguishing short-lived occupations from emergent cultural clusters. This contributes a **morpho-analytical** instrument to debates on commoning by tying social relations to specific design/retrofit patterns within post-industrial fabrics.

In this respect, our approach diverges from earlier scholarship, which has predominantly portrayed squatting as a practice of resistance or a response to housing shortages. Unlike previous approaches, which have mostly viewed squatting as a form of resistance or informal housing, this study conceptualises it as a dynamic urban process that potentially leads to the establishment of full-fledged cultural clusters. A model of **urban hybrids** is proposed within a coordinate framework where the variables are the degree of institutionalisation and the intensity of spatial resistance, enabling visualisation and comparison of various squatted and creative spaces. Furthermore, the morphological typology of squats is expanded to include the level of architectural intervention, spatial adaptability, and potential for institutional integration.

Together, these approaches enable a new interpretation of squatting – not merely as a temporary phenomenon, but as an active mechanism of urban transformation, influencing the revitalisation of post-industrial zones, shaping local cultural identity, and fostering alternative urban practices. As part of this study, we also propose a classification of squats by **types of spatial transformation**, which enables morpho-analytical zoning within urban environments and facilitates the ex-ante assessment of each squat's potential for integration into future art clusters or the broader cultural infrastructure of the city.

## Conclusions **6**

This study defines squatting as a transitory form of urban development—simultaneously a point of resistance and a laboratory for new cultural scenarios. The squat functions as a dynamic incubator of spatial hybridity, within which models of autonomous cohabitation, alternative cultural production, and experimental architecture

are tested. Its evolution may culminate in disappearance or full institutionalisation as a legitimate art form.

Five morphotypes of squats have been identified, representing various scenarios of urban transformation. Additionally, two types of art clusters – **industrial-squat-based** and **institutionally-initiated** – demonstrate opposing models of cultural spatial generation. It has been established that art clusters of the first type cannot be formed without an initial stage of industrial squatting. The proposed typology of squats as urban hybrids enables the interpretation of squats and art clusters as elements of a shared ecosystem of urban development, capable of navigating between autonomy and integration, resistance and inclusion, and informality and commercialisation. Thus, the squat emerges not merely as a spatial fact, but as a method of urban intervention – activating, protesting, and modelling new modes of cohabitation. The hybrid typology proposed here represents a critical attempt to conceptualise urban configurations that emerge at the intersection of formal and informal spatial practices.

The study develops an original typology of squats based on the type of spatial transformation, taking into account spatial dynamics and architectural strategies for engaging with abandoned urban territories. The classification is based on the combination of three key parameters: the nature of intervention in the existing environment, the morphological characteristics of objects (residential, industrial, public spaces), and the architectural rethinking strategies – from flexible adaptation to radical deconstruction. This approach enables not only the analytical capture of the current state of squatted formations but also the prediction of their potential evolution toward cultural legalisation or institutionalisation. The application of this model lays the groundwork for spatial mapping of squats and assessing their revitalisation potential.

Future research could focus on developing spatial indicators that enable the quantitative assessment of a squat's integration into the urban environment, as well as on empirically verifying the model in post-industrial cities. In the long term, squatting may emerge not merely as a marginal phenomenon but as a key urban instrument of adaptive development.

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