The Burden of the Rainbow
Exploring an Alternative Vision of Sustainable Urban Community

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Abstract

As of 2008, more than half the world's population was living in urban areas and that trend is expected to continue. Satisfying and sustainable design is now a top priority for urban and community planners. While much of the current discourse and research is centered on large-scale sustainable technological development projects such as low carbon impact housing and transportation, many studies and projects place their emphasis on the importance of smaller-scale self-regulating and participatory communities and the acquisition and development of different forms of community capital, i.e., human, social, cultural, natural, structural and economic. Some concentrate on design function and usability. Others focus on and call for the slowing down of our current pace of production and consumption as a pathway towards satisfying and sustainable urban life. This work takes a trans-disciplinary approach in exploring the alternative community of Christiania in Copenhagen, Denmark, and situating it within the current sustainable urban community development discourse. This city within a city populated by close to one thousand *"activists, artists, academics, criminals and all around black sheep[1],"* while not without its share of difficulties and challenges, offers a tantalizing model of how alternative visions of satisfying and sustainable community and society can be successfully incorporated into a modern urban context.

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[1] *-Kirstin*

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Disclaimers

I hereby attest that to the best of my knowledge all of the following views, opinions and data are the exclusive personal and intellectual property of myself unless otherwise noted or credited. Furthermore I attest that I personally created all graphs, tables, images and photographs presented herein, and that none violates any existing copyrights.

All research was conducted under strict ethical guidelines. Any views and opinions collected and presented herein were done so with the express prior consent of all the participants. Those who wished to remain anonymous are credited as such, as are those who wished to have their names printed.

Introduction

"Be the change you want to see in the world." –Mahatma Gandhi

In 2008, an historical shift in living trends occurred: for the first time in human history more than half of the world's population was living in urban areas. By 2030, it is estimated that that percentage will rise to 60%.[2] Sustainable urban design and community planning has become a key issue within the global environmental discourse. Much is being done towards researching and developing new and better green technologies in order to curb human impact on the environment. However, many scholars, community planners and policy makers are also focusing on the importance of establishing and encouraging self-regulating and participatory communities (Potapchuk 1996; Agrawal 2005; Ehrenfeld 2008; Portney and Berry 2010; Varol, Ercoskun, and Gurer 2011).

Others focus on the various forms of community capital (Bridger and Luloff 2001; Ohmer et al. 2009; Dale and Newman 2010; Adhikari and Goldey 2010; Campbell et al. 2010; Ergas 2010) and function and usability in design planning (Shane 2005) as well as lifestyle 'downshifting' and the need for a

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[2] http://www.un.org/esa/population/

less anthropocentric and consumption driven social and environmental philosophy (Schor 1993, 1999, 2005; Ehrenfeld 2008).

All this is to say that there are many different aspects and approaches to the sustainable urban development discourse, and chances are that no single approach will by itself be able to sustain and satisfy the entire global urban population. With that in mind this paper explores what has become over the years a rather high profile and controversial alternative urban community, namely the self-proclaimed 'Free City' of Christiania, located in the middle of one of Northern Europe's most bustling metropolises, the Danish capital city of Copenhagen.

Figure 1 Copenhagen – Several Blocks From Christiania

Christiania was founded in 1971, on an old, abandoned naval installation as a squatter community by a group of hippies, artists, activists and transients. It has been built up over the years into a miniature society of sorts based upon the anarchistic ideals of a flat, consensus-based system of governance as well as social and ecological responsibility. It exists simultaneously dependent on and in opposition to the Danish state and as such has always had a somewhat tense relationship with the government and authorities. In spite of this and its own internal struggles the community has managed to grow and survive over the years and has become one of the main tourist attractions in Copenhagen, as well as a symbol both at home and abroad of Danish tolerance, progressiveness and the willingness to try new ideas.

My primary reasons for focusing on Christiania were its size (there are nearly one thousand residents spread over 344,000 square meters), its unique social make-up (over the years it has attracted people from many different social, ethnic and economic backgrounds) and the fact that it

has survived for forty years in spite of being essentially an illegal squat. Furthermore, despite being so well known (the area reportedly attracts roughly one million visitors annually) there has been very little written about this community's position in the current sustainable urban development discourse.

To situate Christiania within the aforementioned discourse, the primary questions I am asking in this paper are:

. How do residents of Christiania define and work towards creating a culturally, socially, politically and ecologically successful and sustainable urban community?

. What are some of the perceived benefits and drawbacks of Christiania's system of anarchistic, consensus based democracy in achieving their goals?

This work builds on the trans-disciplinary, human ecological approach to the social and natural sciences developed and promoted by scholars such as Alf Hornborg (1993, 1998), Pernille Gooch (1998), Arun Agrawal (2005) and Arturo Escobar (2008). It views the topic at hand through the combined lenses of anthropology, ecology, sociology, phenomenology, grounded theory and anarchist philosophies. I find this grounded human ecological approach particularly useful as it allows for the collecting and interpretation of data from multiple spaces and scales, an approach I believe to be important in researching individuals' visions of sustainability.

To begin answering my questions I developed a hybrid, qualitative and quantitative research plan in order to explore the range of issues that contribute to the Christiania lifestyle. There is a strong ethnographic and participatory component to this project and fieldwork entailed securing residence in Christiania and working, playing, talking and generally interacting with as many people as possible. In addition to numerous candid conversations and exchanges, more than a dozen 'on the record,' in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Christianites as well as residents and business owners of the surrounding neighborhood of Christianshavn. Many hours were also spent just observing people and their interactions with each other and their environment. Quantitative support included tallying different figures such as residents' material possessions and the number of motorized versus non-motorized vehicles (for a detailed account see *Methodology* section).

I believe that this field of study has particular relevance not only generally in the current sustainability discourse, especially given current trends in migration, habitation and consumption, but also specifically within human ecology and the Culture, Power and Sustainability Program at

Lund University. Sustainable development requires the convergence of discourses of culture, power and ecology, as well as open dialogue among academics, politicians and average citizens and thus must take into account individuals, communities, taste, politics, economics, technology, ecology, power and more.

My research goals are to contribute to our knowledge of alternative visions of satisfying and sustainable urban communities, to work with and contribute to the advancement of theory, and finally, to facilitate change in the way we think about and engage in creating said communities.

Research Methodology

Introduction

In order to achieve my research goals I knew that a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach with a strong participatory and ethnographic component was necessary. Knowing that time, resources and human nature would never allow me to meet let alone interview all nine hundred or so residents, I engaged myself as much as possible in the community and chose to focus on a core of respondents throughout my time there. Time was also spent observing residents and visitors alike interacting with one another and their environment, as well as trying to get a sense of people's patterns of consumption in order to get a better idea of practice as well as theory.

I acknowledge that this approach has limitations and that others could be developed. The data that I've collected represents the perceptions of my respondents and is not intended to support sweeping statistical generalizations about the community as a whole. Rather, it is intended to provide a detailed and intimate look at how *individuals* living in Christiania perceive and work towards creating a satisfying and sustainable environment. I believe that the methods employed in this study were appropriate to these goals.

Spatiotemporal Timeframe of Phenomena and Research

While an historical perspective is important in contextualizing this work within the current sustainable development discourse, it is with Christiania's and the surrounding city's current incarnation that I am largely concerned. Therefore much of my research focuses on how Christiania has developed over the past forty years and where it stands now in relation to the surrounding neighborhood of Christianshavn, the City of Copenhagen, the country of Denmark and the current sustainable urban development discourse.

Fieldwork took place in early 2011 when I was able to arrange residence inside the Free City (as its residents call it) for periods totaling roughly five weeks between January and March as both my and the temporary residence's schedules allowed.

<u>Methods Employed (for a list of equipment used throughout the research and writing process see <i>Appendix B</i>)</u>

<u>Participant Observation</u>

In order to get a sense of how the community functions and how its residents live and interact with one another, it was vital that I take the time to live, work and play with them. It was not enough to attempt just to objectively observe. In order legitimately to comment on something one must experience it, and, as Eric Laurier reminds us, <i>"being able to comment on the culture, society and geography of various spaces and places is indeed the major requirement of doing geography</i> [or human ecology!]" (Laurier 2010, 135).

 My first step was to volunteer at a local ecological produce store and restaurant. I spent several days working there before moving on to the gardening group, that, in addition to assisting in most of the community's ecological projects, is also responsible for maintaining Christiania's multitude of walking paths and parks, as well as residents' larger scale gardening needs. In this way I was able to quickly make connections with a large number and variety of people, as well as earn a positive reputation within the community, where resident participation is a top priority.

But while the Christianites may be hard workers they are also hard players. Therefore it was also important to spend time relaxing, chatting, drinking coffee (or perhaps something a bit stronger), playing music and going to parties with as many people as possible. Most evenings were spent at one of the many local cafes, bars, restaurants or clubs hanging out, talking with residents and visitors, and watching people eat, drink, smoke, talk, dance, laugh, cry, fight and love.

I was also fortunate to be allowed to sit in on two area meetings (monthly meetings of the residents of the fourteen separate areas of Christiania), as well as a common meeting (community wide meetings that are held on a monthly or as-needed basis). This provided valuable insight into how the community functions, particularly in practice as opposed to theory.

Interviews formed the core of my data and were conversational in structure, guided by control questions intended to elicit in-depth responses, and typically lasted between one and three hours (for a list of interview questions see *Appendix C*). At first respondents were selected via 'cold calling' (Longhurst 2010, 124), i.e., by telephoning and sending emails to as many contacts as I could find and meeting with those who expressed interest. From there my selections were based on the recommendations of the initial respondents or 'snowballing' (Longhurst 2010, 124), as well as my own criteria of attempting to talk with as broad a cross section of residents, i.e., people of varying economic and social status, age, race, gender and sexual orientation, as possible.

All formal interviews were digitally recorded (see *Author's Notes* section) and copious notes were taken and times marked throughout the interviews, which were conducted in respondents' homes or offices, in a café or even sitting outside freezing on a park bench. Later these interviews were listened to again, and corrections and additions made to the transcriptions. The transcriptions were then color coded according to conceptual relevance, and these were then used to guide the process of developing a theoretical and conceptual framework (see *Theoretical Framework* section).

 Altogether fifteen formal, recorded interviews were conducted: ten with Christianites and five with local residents and business owners of Christianshavn. The official within the Danish Ministry of Finance responsible for relations with Christiania was also contacted for comment, but no reply was received.

When conducting this kind of study, one must consider the social and cultural implications of being a researcher visiting a place or community. Oftentimes researchers, in attempting to take an objective (fly-on-the-wall) or even an engaged (participatory) stance, run the risk of distancing themselves from the places and people they are trying to understand (Charmaz 2006). We are strangers in strange lands. Many people become nervous, close or distrustful when meeting an outsider looking to "do research" or "conduct a study" in their community (though many are equally eager to share their stories with you).

I realize that by being a newcomer; a student doing research; engaging total strangers (many of whom are not economically well off); sitting there conducting these interviews while typing away at a two thousand dollar Apple laptop with my digital Dictaphone running; I may have run the risk of creating a certain distance or discomfort. Thankfully the Christianites are fairly accustomed to tourists, photographers, journalists and visitors of all kinds. Also, I did make every effort to engage myself as much as possible in the community and word spreads fairly quickly. Most people I

encountered had heard something about the new guy volunteering at the restaurant and working with the gardeners within the first week, and this certainly helped alleviate much of the potential initial tension. I believe that showing this kind of engagement and interest in the people and places we study is necessary in gaining the trust required to adequately explore and describe them. My belief was confirmed by my experience in Christiania.

Consumption Observation

In order to help get a sense of how people live I felt I needed to get a sense of their patterns of consumption. To that end I spent a significant amount of time counting. Items tallied include:

. The number and type (residential or commercial) of structures in the community
. The number of social and structural institutions
. The number of recreational clubs and societies
. The number and type of ecological/sustainable/Agenda 21 compliant projects
. The number of motorized and non-motorized vehicles in and around the community

I also conducted several ethnographic observation sessions at various public places and events, for example bars, cafes, meetings and the street, and tallied:

. The number of people
. The number and type of name brand/designer clothing items
. The number of personal electronic devices
. Activities engaged in
. Items consumed

Finally, when visiting people's homes I took note of the number of:

. Residents
. TVs
. Computers
. Other electronic devices
. Art supplies/instruments
. Beds
. Couches
. Books

. Music

. Art pieces/decorations/personal items/heirlooms

. Kitchen appliances

. Indoor toilets/showers

. Food products observed

Theoretical Framework

When planning and preparing my research I specifically wanted to avoid developing a pre-conceived theoretical and conceptual framework to work within. Because I was primarily concerned with how *my respondents* define and perceive the phenomena in question, I felt it appropriate to develop a framework around the methodology and data as opposed to vice versa. That said I was attracted to *grounded theory* due to the fact that it takes just such an approach to qualitative research.

In keeping with the traditions of *phenomenology* and *grounded theory* the concept of a satisfying and sustainable urban community is examined here through the subjectivities of both researcher and participants. As humans we are constantly influenced and developed by the world around us, and it is difficult if not impossible to separate a lifetime of experience from one's research. Is there such a thing as objectivity? As grounded theorist Kathy Charmaz states:

"We are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of our values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority. Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world. Researchers and research participants make assumptions about what is real, possess stocks of knowledge, occupy social statuses, and pursue purposes that influence their respective views and actions in the presence of each other" (Charmaz 2006, 15).

Rather than trying to situate myself as an objective observer, and since my goal was to *experience* life as a Christianite and to try to get a sense of how Christianites live in and perceive of their community, I found a phenomenological approach to be both appropriate and natural. Instead of striving for objectivity, phenomenology embraces one's subjectivities, and indeed sees them as essential to experiencing and understanding a given phenomenon. As phenomenologist Pernille Gooch writes:
"The theoretical approach that I would advocate should take as its point of departure the condition of involvement of real [author's emphasis], *embodied people with both the human and non-human components of their world. In this way it should convey the* actual-living-in or dwelling [author's emphasis] *called for by Harvey"* (Gooch 1998, 293-294).

Grounded theory emphasizes developing theory from the data collected by analyzing and coding said data based on conceptual consistencies. It is not so concerned with statistical validity but rather with how well the theory fits the data, how relevant it is to both the data and current discourses, how well it works, as well as how modifiable it is, i.e., how well it can be altered to accommodate new and existing data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). For this reason grounded theory is considered a method of inductive or abductive reasoning, and makes no claims to being necessarily "right or wrong." Thus conclusions are generally fairly open to interpretation.

While some have criticized grounded theory both for its potentially questionable status as "hard theory," as well as its absence of objectivity and deductive reasoning (Thomas and James 2006), I have concerns regarding the idea of an objective researcher supposedly free from any preconceptions or subjectivities. By admitting that we are subjective creatures trying to understand each others' subjectivities I do not feel that we are undermining our grounded theories, nor even the scientific process, particularly as it relates to the sustainability discourse.

One primary tenet of grounded theory I found to be particularly valuable was its emphasis on searching relevant literature and creating a conceptual framework *after* developing a methodology and collecting and coding data. While I may have decided beforehand to work within a generally phenomenological framework, the specific concepts relevant to my research did not become apparent to me until after I had already spent time living and collecting data in Christiania. How could I answer the question of how residents define and create a satisfying and sustainable community with a pre-determined set of answers? Here I believe the logic of grounded theory becomes more apparent. It wasn't until after I had begun experiencing life in Christiania and talking with residents there that I began to get a sense of where I should be looking in order to situate and contextualize my findings.

Upon returning to Lund University after my first stay in Christiania I immersed myself in the library and began searching online databases for relevant research and literature. My primary sources were the Lund University Libhub online database and the EBSCOHost Publishing online database, as well as the course literature read over my two years in the Culture, Power and Sustainability program. Search criteria were based on my 'conceptually coded' interview and field note transcriptions.

Discussion of Key Concepts

Having experienced life in Christiania to some extent, and subsequently seeing what relevant research and literature existed I determined the following key concepts to be of particular importance and relevance to this study. I pursue my discussion by using the relevant literature,

where appropriate.

<u>Alternative</u>

In referring to Christiania as an *alternative* community it is important to clarify how and to what it is an alternative. In using the word alternative I am referring to something that exists outside of the parameters of traditional or established institutions, and espouses or reflects values that are different from or in direct opposition to mainstream social and cultural paradigms. In this sense one can define a community like Christiania as alternative in that it at least claims to exist in opposition to the Danish state (in spite of being, as shall be shown, highly dependent on it) and the mainstream social and cultural aesthetic.

<u>Anarchism</u>

An unfortunately oft-maligned word, anarchy is often associated with, for example, images of rebellious youth lashing out against 'the system,' and lacking any real direction or social and/or political philosophy. In the present thesis, however, its usage does not entail a society bereft of any rules or order. Proponents of anarchy claim that it is about creating a social system free from hierarchies and domination: one where all participants actively engage in creating a balanced and democratic system of governance (Graeber 2004). Anarchy is about action; about being the change one wants to see in the world. Many of Christiania's residents self-identify as anarchists, and as such feel a strong obligation to try and create a space where these ideals can be put into practice.

<u>Community Capital</u>

The different types of capital that can be accumulated within a community which are often used, for example, within the Sustainable Livelihood Approach[3] as indicators of the success and sustainability of individuals and communities.

. Commercial Capital **-** *"Commercial capital is that which comes from engaging in commercial activities, the for-profit provision of services and products. This type of capital is often subsumed under the larger category of manufactured capital, which includes everything built by humans (roads, factories, buildings)"* (Callaghan and Colton 2008, 937).

. Cultural Capital - *"Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the* embodied *state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the* objectified *state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories*

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[3] See: http://www.ifad.org/sla/index.htm

or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of
objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications,
it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee"
(Bourdieu 1986, 243).

. Economic Capital – The monetary form of capital represented by an individual, community or social network's individual and collective monetary wealth. It is often (though not always) regarded as the most important form of capital to possess in a capitalist society (as opposed to, say, the cultural capital that an individual or group can acquire).

. Environmental or Natural Capital - *"Environmental capital has a carrier function in that it provides space for human habitation, agriculture, and recreational activities."* (Callaghan and Colton 2008, 933-934).

. Human Capital – The actual people and skills that make up a community or social network. *"Components of human capital, additional to education and skills, include: level of personal spirituality or religious affiliation, basic moral character, emotional stability, and physical health. Institutions for building the various components of human capital include the schools, churches, recreation centers, and the not so obvious spaces, such as, a place to sit quietly and enjoy nature, or community gathering places"* (Callaghan and Colton 2008, 935). *It includes people's "competencies, capabilities, health, motivation, courage, tenacity and fortitude"* (Mykletun 2009, 149).

. Public Structural Capital - *"These are the structures and institutions in our communities that are public in nature. This type of capital again includes both stocks and services such as: roads, water systems, parks, libraries, youth centers, town run summer day camps, etc. It may be tempting to consider this type of capital as being provided by governments, however, that is not always the case. Private sector organizations often donate space or services to communities. Further, in the minds of citizens there is often overlap between private commercial capital space, and public capital space. For example, people value social meeting places. These meeting places could be parks or libraries (public structural capital), or coffee shops or pubs (commercial capital)—the important thing is that comfortable meeting places exist"* (Callaghan and Colton 2008, 937).

. Social Capital – *"Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the*

various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 1986, 248).

"*Social capital may be regarded as a series of constructive actions such as group members sharing information, exercising responsible restraints when using group resources, allocating time and attention to goal attainment, and linking group identification to group cooperation"* (Mykletun 2009, 149).

<u>Direct Democracy</u>

See: *Pre-figurative politics*

<u>Downshifting</u>

The concept of shifting focus and value away from the work/earn/consume cycle of existence in favor of, for example, working in multiple fields or working for oneself, spending more time with family, engaging in artistic pursuits, etc. The concept has become more and more popular over the years with prominent researchers and authors such as, Juliet Schor (1993, 1999, 2005), John Ehrenfeld (2008) and Charles Sampford (2010), who often condemn Western, consumption-centric lifestyles as socially and environmentally unsatisfying and unsustainable. Instead of looking for alternative, 'greener' pathways to continued production and consumption, these authors are pointing to the need for society to re-think its fundamental values. Ehrenfeld, for example, believes that in order to even begin moving towards social and environmental sustainability we must begin to differentiate between what we want and need (Ehrenfeld 2008, 128).

<u>Governance</u>

Here I define *governance* broadly as methods of leadership and management, be it in a household, a business, a neighborhood, a community, a state or an empire. In this way we can see how individuals can be simultaneously subject to multiple scales of governance. Many alternative communities like Christiania seek to *self-govern,* i.e., to manage their own social, cultural, political, institutional and ecological affairs to whatever extent they are able or the state allows.

<u>Participatory and Self-regulatory Communities</u>

These are communities that encourage or even require active resident participation in social, cultural, political, institutional and ecological matters. There has been much research done over the past several decades investigating the value of participatory communities in sustainable urban development. Potapchuk, in researching participatory democracy in alternative movements and communities writes that, *"this 'participatory democracy' becomes the central element in unleashing the power of people to control their own destiny and nurturing the citizen-to-citizen connection that helps build political consensus and will, strengthens neighborhoods, improves intergroup relations, and*

creates the neighborliness that helps with daily needs" (Potapchuk 1996, 54-55).

Arun Agrawal, in his treatment of forest management in Kuamon, India, has also examined the relationship between state and self-governance and resident participation and feelings of responsibility for the local environment. While he is quick to qualify that one cannot claim a direct causal relationship, he does note a distinct sense of pride and accountability in residents that does correlate to some extent with their level of community participation (Agrawal 2005). He notes that, *"in comparison* [to Foucault's Punitive City], *regulatory rule creates awareness and knowledge through direct participation in the various elements and stages of regulation. Those who take part in allocating resources, monitoring actions in forests, and implementing sanctions are more likely to come to appreciate the fragility of the environmental resources they are trying to conserve"* (Agrawal 2005, 163).

Pre-figurative Politics

A social and/or political movement that seeks to be or *pre-figure* the change it wishes to create in society. It is a concept often associated with anarchistic movements and communities such as Christiania. Pre-figurative political systems are oftentimes also *directly democratic,* that is, they are non-hierarchical and 'sovereignty' is shared equally amongst participants.

Sustainable Development/Sustainability

The concept of *sustainable development* became almost a household phrase in 1987 when the Brundtland Commission's report, "Our Common Future" came out. It defined sustainable development as, *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (Brundtland Commission 1987).

Five years later at the Rio Summit the United Nations released a new report, one that detailed the necessary social and ecological components of sustainable development. This document, titled *Agenda 21,* effectively set the new global standard by which sustainable development would be practiced and judged[4]. Agenda 21 has several dimensions to it. The social and economic dimension focuses on combating poverty and unsustainable patterns of consumption. In addition the plan also calls for the conservation and management of ecological resources, as well as strengthening the role of NGOs, women's and children's rights groups and businesses. It also outlined means for accomplishing these goals and intended for them to be implemented at the global, state, city and even community level. The latter, smaller-scale programs (such as Christiania) are called Local Agenda21 or LA21 programs.

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[4] See: http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/ for details

This is not to say that these are the only definitions of sustainable development and sustainability. Some authors, notably, John Ehrenfeld, conceive of sustainability as, *"an existential problem, not an environmental or a social one"* (Ehrenfeld 2008, 60). He claims that our current unsustainable position stems from a hegemonic western culture that since the days of Descartes has viewed itself as apart from and superior to the natural world. He goes on to loosely define (though I imagine he'd prefer not to think of it as a definition) sustainability as:

"The possibility that humans and other life will flourish on the Earth forever. Flourishing is the metaphor that brings to life this definition of sustainability and enables everybody to create their own image of what their flourishing world would be. Flourishing does not collapse into a thing or numerical measure of wellbeing to be managed. Flourishing is in poetry. It appears every time an infant first smiles. It unfolds in the blooming of a rose. It comes in the taste of water from a country spring or after a deep breath in the forest. All humans have had at least a moment where their senses revealed flourishing, but all too few live in circumstances where those precious moments reemerge over and over" (Ehrenfeld 2008, 49-50).

There are many definitions of what sustainable development and therefore sustainability can, should and must entail. However, like Ehrenfeld, I believe that no one approach will ever be able to satisfy and sustain the global population, and that sustainability shouldn't be some fixed utopian vision that we strive towards, but rather an amalgam of all these ideas and approaches; be they technical, social, cultural, political or philosophical.

I believe we must attempt to understand how the *individuals* who make up these experimental communities conceive of and engage in creating satisfying and sustainable urban living spaces. While all of the preceding key concepts contribute to our understanding of the vision of community in question, none of them are in themselves sufficient. Therefore it is important to acknowledge and explore as many perspectives and approaches as possible, to let the participants' voices tell the story, and to develop understanding from that basis.

Discussion of Findings

<u>Tearing Down the Walls</u>

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I... I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." – Robert Frost

When one thinks of Copenhagen, Denmark one might associate this Scandinavian capital with picturesque canals, Hans Christian Andersen's the Little Mermaid, busy shopping streets, ubiquitous sausage vendors, and of course the famous Tivoli amusement park. One might conjure images of a vibrant city inhabited by a people who for many have come to be known for their industriousness, level-headedness and perhaps most importantly, their progressive social and environmental attitudes and policies. Certainly these are some of the associations I have always made (particularly the latter). The Nordic socioeconomic and environmental model is considered by many throughout the world to be an example to follow, and the Nordic people, particularly the Danes, are often perceived as being quite forward thinking and tolerant. There is arguably no place or group of people in Denmark more symbolic of this supposed Danish progressiveness and tolerance than the 'Free City of Christiania,' situated in the middle of the busy commercial and residential neighborhood of Christianshavn.

Christiania, spread now over almost 344,000 square meters and home to nearly one thousand people, has become, for many at least, an unofficial mascot of Denmark. What began as a small squat has grown into a community that is 'larger than life' and symbolic not only of Danish tolerance but also of the potential for creating alternative spaces and communities. Over the years Christiania has

developed a reputation for being a socially and ecologically progressive and friendly community. Its residents have marketed and branded it as such, and their flag, three yellow dots on a red field, is internationally recognized and can be seen on the backpacks, lapels and bumpers of Christiania supporters all over the globe. The community draws an estimated one million visitors annually (Jacobi 2006, 2), and is thus one of Denmark's primary tourist attractions.

But it wasn't always so. Christiania is a community that many residents feel was created out of necessity, creativity, determination, hard work and struggle. Before it was 'settled' by the first Christianites in 1971, the area served as a military installation and barracks dating back to 1617. After World War II it fell into disuse and was sporadically broken into by trespassers seeking shelter. Finally on September 4, 1971, a group of homeless people and activists broke down a section of the fence surrounding the area and began to settle inside. Efforts were made to stop the inflow, but the area was far too large to patrol and eventually the police began to give up. On September 26 of that same year its residents proclaimed the area a 'Freetown' (Jacobi 2006, 3). Soon after, Christianite and journalist, Joseph Ludvigsen wrote and released the Christiania 'mission statement' in the alternative newspaper, *Hovedbladet*, part of which read:

"The objective of Christiania is to create a self-governing society whereby each and every individual holds themselves responsible over the wellbeing of the entire community. Our society is to be economically self-sustaining and, as such, our aspiration is to be steadfast in our conviction that psychological and physical destitution can be averted" (1971).

This article sparked a wave of immigrants to the fledgling community, and new residents began moving in by the dozens and soon hundreds. Ludvigsen is sometimes credited with unofficially 'founding' or 'proclaiming' Christiania, though it is worth noting that this 'mission statement' was by no means official or even necessarily representative of the feelings of the entire community. As one resident recollects:

"While the main wish of all Christianites I think has always been no domination of one over others, it [the mission statement] *was written by one white man. One white man out of a group of, what, maybe five hundred very diverse people? Less than one percent. This was hardly representative and hardly consensus."- Richard*

While this critical sentiment may or may not be shared by all Christianites, it does point to certain perceived challenges and pitfalls in their system of consensus democracy that shall be addressed later. For now the question remains: What then, if any, was the purpose of Christiania? Was there ever a plan? A goal? A strategy for development? Or was it simply a matter of a group of people who

needed a place to stay and saw an area not being put to better use? As one respondent said:

"The way we've been organized is an organization that grew out of need, there was no plan. In the beginning people just wanted a place to live. There was no thought of creating an alternative "Free State." They moved in like, wow, there's this huge area they [the Danish state] *just left to rot! Burglars had taken everything, wires and whatnot. It was a lot of hard work to build up stores, utilities and institutions. We built a system out of need, and because we grew in a grassroots, hippie way, we tried to put some sense into it. So we didn't adopt the normal system, we adopted a flat system. We have a consensus system, kind of like the Rainbow Movement's system. It's not perfect. People dominate and yell and complain. It can be hard to make your ideas heard. But we haven't found a better system. At least it's better than having some sort of normal hierarchy with a boss, a director at the top, and on the floor you have the average people with the average opinions and then we have democracy and the leaders should pick up something from them, but in fact they do it less and less." -Lars*

For many residents the process of development is seen as having been a fairly organic one, with the basic social system and most new structures, services and institutions being built as need arose. If solutions were 'alternative' or 'eco-friendly,' they were often so because of need or circumstance rather than a particular desire to 'go green.'

"In the beginning there was nothing. No utilities, nothing. People just threw their shit outside. Later someone had the idea that we could build compost toilets, and so we built two and that's what we use in Blue Caramel. It's rather nasty work, but we manage it. We couldn't do things the ordinary way, like sewers and things. I don't know if we were idealistic or just practical. There were no sewers out here so we had a chance to try alternative solutions like compost toilets. We didn't even get electricity out here until 1990!" -Kirstin

Which is not to say that the results were in any way random. The fact is that Christiania was settled at a certain time by a certain group of people (namely participants of the European hippie movement of the late 1960's) who had certain social and cultural ideals and aesthetics.

"I can give you one example [of the kind of people attracted first attracted to Christiania]. A guy named Ray from England showed up on a boat with eighteen other hippies and they were living on the boat and one day a Christianite showed up and was like, 'what are you guys doing? Why are you living like sardines? There's plenty of space in Christiania!' So they all came into Christiania. This is the kind of way that Christiania developed over the years. People showing up on boats, caravans, horses (laughs)! I read once that there were 150 houses here during the military days, so they were here already, so in the beginning people just started to move into those. And many of those are historically protected sites.

They're under protection of the government. But those filled up and then people started to move
caravans out here and many of the houses were built up from that."-Alan A

Figure 3 Caravan House

The area began to attract more and more residents from different walks of life. Soon it became a hot political issue. Should these people be allowed to settle in such a manner on government property? In 1972, the Christianites offered to pay for water and electricity to be provided by the State, which in turn agreed to allow Christiania to exist as a 'social experiment.' Currently they pay the city of Copenhagen 18,000,000 DKK (roughly 3,600,000 USD) annually for these utilities and the right to live on the land[5].

Soon after Christiania began to organize itself. By 1973, it was divided into ten (and later fourteen) self-governed areas each answerable to the highest authority, the Common Meeting. A model of governance was developed based on the idea of participatory, consensus-based democracy wherein all residents have, in theory, an equal voice and responsibility in managing the community (Jacobi 2006, 3).

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[5] As reported by Kirstin, Info Office representative and tour guide.

Over time Christiania has become a bustling community complete with its own self-managed social, cultural, political, economic, structural and ecological institutions. Kindergarten is provided for children, though afterwards they must attend school in Copenhagen. Health care is provided for the community by an office of homeopathic caregivers supplemented by Western trained doctors and dentists who visit the community once a week. Otherwise residents must go to clinics in town.

These services, and the annual payment to the city, are funded by touristic and business revenues as well as the monthly 1800 DKK (350 USD) rent payments made by every adult resident.

Furthermore, they have, as a community, created (and for the most part agree upon and try to enforce) their own system of basic laws to be abided by, including:

. No hard drugs
. No weapons or violence
. No stealing or accepting stolen property
. No gang related activities or clothing

Most residents agree with these simple rules and work to keep them enforced. While there is no official police force inside Christiania, there is an extensive neighborhood watch network, as well as the Women's Group, which has typically been responsible over the years for dealing with problem situations. For example in 1980, when the number of hard drug users in Christiania had grown beyond control it was the Women's Group who came together and issued (and enforced) an ultimatum: clean up or get out. They rounded up the users and gave them the option of going into treatment or leaving the community forever. Most accepted the former. The rest left and Christiania has been, for all intents and purposes, free of hard drugs ever since.

While they do live on government property and rely on state infrastructure to provide water and electricity (and for some residents, economic support) and cannot be said to be entirely independent of the state, they have managed to build up what is by and large an alternative 'society within a society' based on their own ideals, and constructed in large part with their own hands.

"The Loser's Paradise"

"Oh, a storm is threatening my very life today. If I don't get some shelter, oh yeah, I'm gonna fade away."
– The Rolling Stones

Figure 4 "The Country Within the City"

But what are the ideals that Christiania was built upon? What constitutes a satisfying and sustainable urban community for a Christianite? How do they conceive of sustainability? Almost everyone I spoke with insisted that asking this question of nine hundred Christianites would yield nine hundred very different answers. In spite of this I experienced almost the exact opposite, finding striking and surprising regularity in many of the responses I got. For almost every respondent I spoke with the number one most important factor in creating a satisfying and sustainable community is having responsibility and input in planning and building; the ability to participate in all levels of governance. As one woman put it:

"This is Christiania. Eight hundred different lives with different meanings and different answers, except for one thing [my emphasis]*: the pride of being involved in creating a society, a community, and THAT'S what you can take on further* [in terms of large-scale sustainable planning]. *I don't think people in general are questioning themselves and their role in their community in this way. Here we have the freedom to do that. You can have your fingers in all aspects of the community." -Louise*

Some other responses to this query include:

"Every morning I wake up with the joy of being satisfied and knowing I'm making a difference. THAT'S sustainable living. The Christiania way is that there is space for so many things there wouldn't be space for in other societies and I think that's a beautiful thought and it makes us more sustainable actually, again, in valuing the human being as a resource, not in the way that they're productive, but just by being and participating you give your life, our lives, meaning." -Felicia

"The feeling of doing this together and not having any more or less right to be involved or to control... you can share and everybody can bring something to this issue or project whether you're clever or not or smart or a handy man or even a pusher. Everybody can bring something. That's what I hope we can keep on developing. Make it even better than it is now. That's what you need to be sustainable. It's not just about the ecology and the nature and everything. It's so important to have that relationship between each other. To have these connections and this culture." –Alan L

"The challenges of living in a place like Christiania can be truly wonderful. It forces us to use our brains and our creativity. It forces us to come together and work together. And this direct involvement is so wonderful and so important for building a sustainable community." -Lars

For many, placing emphasis on the value of the individual and active community participation; on *being* and *doing,* has become the pillar on which Christiania is built. Of course not every member of the community chooses to be an active participant. There will always be those who prefer the freedom of living in Christiania without the responsibility of participation. Nevertheless the community tries to make room for everybody and to elicit and encourage engagement from all.

There are however times when participation wanes and this can indeed be challenging for Christiania. Typically when this happens the community responds by holding some sort of big social event, be it for example, a party, an art exhibition or a demonstration, in order to rekindle the sense of unity so vital to Christiania. While there are no official sanctions in place, this perceived unity, combined with the sense of pride many residents have in being an 'alternative' to mainstream Danish culture, seems to keep people motivated generally speaking.

Another challenge this freedom creates is in the allocation of jobs. There are simply too many people and too much required to keep the community functioning to allow everyone to do whatever job they feel like. While most positions are filled voluntarily, not everybody *loves* their work. However working in Christiania pays reasonably well: those on social support earn 35 DKK (7 USD) per hour, while those not on welfare earn 75 DKK (14 USD) per hour; paid in cash, tax-free. This, combined with the fact that many residents prefer not working outside of Christiania, results in most positions

being filled with a minimum of problems. Sometimes work may go undone, but for the most part people I spoke with seem satisfied with the work they do.

Another common sentiment regarding creating a satisfying and sustainable community, and therefore a sustainable world, is the need to rethink values and decrease levels of consumption.

"Most people nowadays are so completely absorbed with buying and selling. That's all there is in life. That's all that development means. Are these towns, highways, pollution, this poor and rich thing, is this good? Is this modern? Developed? Were the Indians primitive? There's no respect in the modern capitalist system for original cultures. And when our values become focused on the system and economy and production, where is the human being? First comes the person and the needs they have. I think at least. We need to put the person first. I think Christiania, for all its problems, has achieved this at least. We put people first. It's not perfect, we don't say we're better than others, but it's important. I still do a lot of wrong. I buy the wrong things. I do the wrong things. Nobody is perfect. But we try at least." -Lars

This feeling is echoed by another far younger and more recent addition to the community:

"*We need to change our value system. This I think is the biggest challenge. But I think I, WE, make a difference. It may not make a global change, but I'm not going to go the grave thinking I needed 25 mobiles and flat screens, and I think just that there are people like this thinking in this way makes a difference. And I think in this way Christiania shows that if you have good social values and are satisfied in your community and your social life and are connected to your community directly then you don't need these things. I think living this way reduces the craving for all these THINGS. I get all my needs covered." -Anonymous*

But is the culture of Christiania actually less consumer driven? To get a sense of residents' material consumption habits I created the following tables based on observations and figures I collected myself while I was living there.

Table 1: *Material Goods Observed in People's Homes*

Residents per household	2 *	4*	5 ***	1	2	3	1	1	1	2
TV sets per household	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Personal Computers	1	0	4	1	1	2	0	0	0	1
Stereos	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cell phones	1	0	3	1	2	3	1	0	1	2
Mp3 players	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Art Supplies •	18	5	0	1	8	2	4	4	8	0
Beds	1	2	4	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Couches	1	1	2	2	2	3	0	0	1	2
Books	H	H	D	H	H	D	20	D	D	H
Music (CDs, LPs, etc.)	H	0	0	D	H	0	0	D	H	D
Art Pieces/ Decorations/ Heirlooms	D	H	3	5	D	7	18	D	5	D
Kitchen Appliances ■	2	3	7 ■	2	5■	2	1	0	2	3■
Indoor toilets	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Indoor Showers	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1

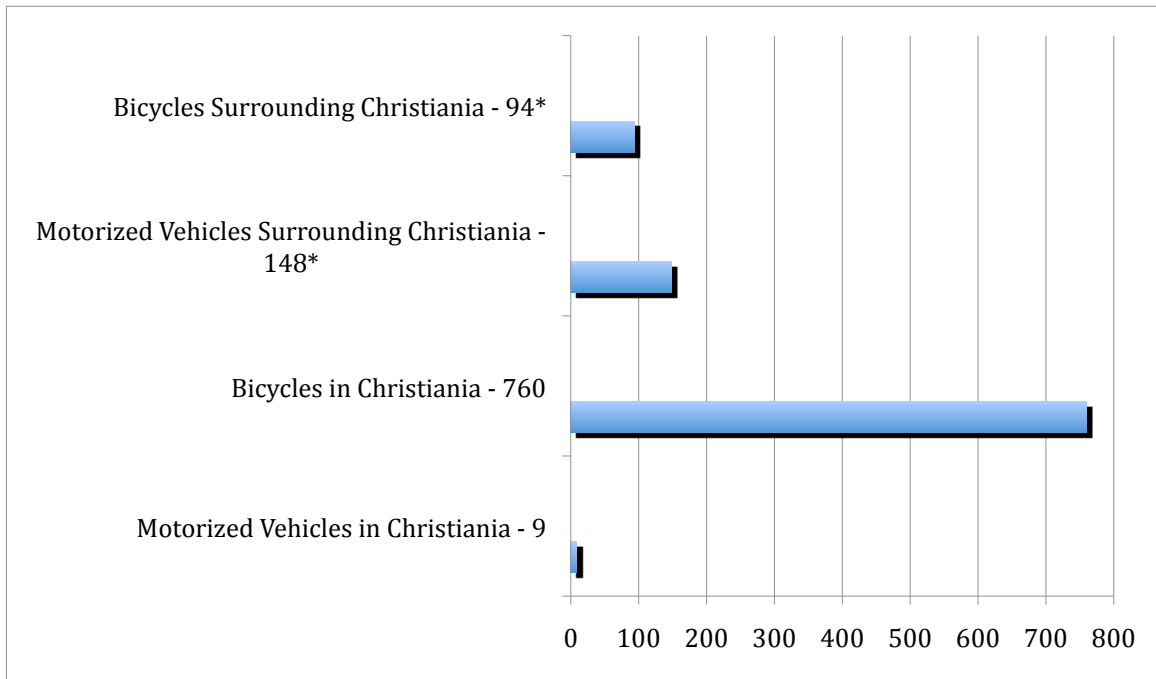*** Indicates the number of occupant minors (included in total)**

• Value of 1 attached to each piece of equipment (paint set, guitar, camera, etc.)

■ Indicates the number of textile washing machines. Each carries a value of one.

H = Hundreds
D = Dozens

Table 2: *Number of Parked Motorized Vehicles and Bicycles Surrounding and Inside Christiania*

* It is not known how many of these surrounding are/not actually owned by Christianites. Nevertheless there are 84.4 bikes to every motorized vehicle in Christiania (760/9). In contrast, there are only 0.64 bikes to every motorized vehicle surrounding Christiania (94/148).

Table 3: *Observations of leisure time conducted while in Christiania.*

Where and When	Number of People	Number of Name Brand/Designer Clothing Items	Number of Personal Electronic Devices	Activities Engaged In	Items Consumed
Christiania Jazz Club – Saturday Night, 19.00-23.00	184	19	5	Drinking, smoking, talking, singing, dancing, playing music, listening to music	Music, beer, tobacco, cannabis, soda, juice, coffee, water, electricity (to power instruments)
Blue Caramel Area Meeting – 20.00-22.00	14	2	2	Meeting, talking/debating, eating, drinking	Fruit, tea, tobacco, cannabis, electricity, wood for fire
Common Meeting in Christiania Art Gallery – 20.00-23.00	81	12	5	Meeting, talking/debating, drinking, smoking, eating, looking at art	Coffee, tea, juice, cake, beer, tobacco, cannabis, electricity, art, music
Nemoland (Café, bar, club, restaurant) – Friday Night, 22.00-00.00	347	52	37	Talking, eating, drinking, smoking, dancing, singing, listening to music	Food, soda, beer, tobacco, cannabis, electricity, music
Pusher Street – Wednesday Afternoon 15.00-17.00	631	300 (estimate)	22	Selling and buying hash, clothing, pipes, etc., smoking, drinking, eating, guarding, walking dogs, painting, listening to music	Cannabis, tobacco, food, beer, juice, soda, wood and scraps for fire

Indkøbaren (General Store) – Thursday Evening, 17.00-19.00	52	11	3	Meeting, talking, drinking, smoking, paying bills, walking dogs, sending mail, reading	Books, electricity, beer, water, juice, tobacco
Café Månefisken – Saturday Night, 21.00-23.00	188	56	12	Talking, singing, dancing, smoking, drinking, eating, listening to music, playing billiards, chess and table soccer, checking email, drawing	Food, juice, coffee, tobacco, cannabis, electricity
Café Woodstock – Friday Night, 21.00-23.00	217	4	3	Drinking, smoking, dancing, singing, listening to music, fighting, making love	Beer, tobacco, cannabis, water, coffee, electricity
Grand Total	*1714*	*71*	*89*		
% of people		*4.1%*	*5.2%*		

Note that many of the people observed were visitors to Christiania (apart from the area and common meetings which are open only to residents and the occasional researcher).

While none of these graphs or figures is intended to represent the entire community, I believe they provide an idea of residents' material values. Their purpose here is to provide an impressionistic layer of understanding of the community's characteristics. Having lived, worked and played with them for over a month, I can attest to the fact that many of the residents I encountered (even the wealthier among them) lead quite spartan lives; at least compared to me and many of the people I know. Personally, I had never lived without indoor heating or plumbing, and yet that's how all of my neighbors in the Blue Caramel and much of the rest of Christiania have lived for decades. Many have no computer or Internet connection in their homes, let alone the orgy of kitchenware, electronic gadgets and consumer goods I see strewn about my apartment.

My recorded observations and general experience also show how important social contact and bonding are to the residents and culture of Christiania, despite the differences that may exist among people. It is a community that many residents believe was built upon an ideal of working and playing together as equals, and as such has developed a culture rooted in building and experimentation, as well as celebration and the arts.

Culture, as in any society, is a force that ties people together, and in Christiania it is strong, even tangible. It is also unique in the sense that it often transcends typical social and economic divisions. Rich, poor and those in between can all be found in Christiania, and they can all be found working and socializing side by side.

In spite of the fact that most respondents stress how different and diverse the residents of Christiania are, there are actually striking commonalities among them. When one goes to a heavy metal concert one expects to find a group of heavy metal fans dressed, behaving and consuming in a certain way. So too is it in Christiania. The aesthetic and values of the community were born out of the hippie movement, and over the decades it has branded itself as such. While it is certainly a group of unique individuals, that uniqueness exists (somewhat paradoxically) within certain parameters. In many ways residents appear to share a common spirit, and part of this common spirit includes a general desire to be ecologically, as well as socially sustainable.

The "Green Lung" of the City

"Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings." – John F. Kennedy

Figure 5 Visitors On a Fine April Day

Several years ago Christiania was recognized as an official Agenda 21 initiative by the Danish Agenda 21 representatives to the United Nations, meeting or working towards meeting almost all of the requirements set out by their initial document. For Christiania this has entailed the creation of a building office, a gardening group and a trash and recycling group who are responsible for collecting,

sorting and transporting all waste in the community to recycling facilities. Furthermore they are in charge of collecting, purchasing and eventually using recycled building materials and planning and maintaining Christiania's many parks, walking paths and green areas. Some of the projects and installations made by these groups include[6]:

. A reuse and recycling station – Christiania is responsible for collecting and sorting all of its waste, at no cost or effort to the state.

. Rainwater collection – Rainwater is collected throughout the community and used to flush toilets, run the Laundromat, water gardens and more.

. Phytoremediation systems – Sewage systems for those areas not connected to the state system: these ponds use plants and bacteria to filter wastewater preventing it from harming the local aquatic environment.

. Compost toilets – Again, for those areas not connected to the sewage system.

Figure 6 Blue Caramel Compost Toilet

. Biomass and solar heating – These low carbon footprint systems are used in the larger, communal residential buildings in the town center, as well as in the bathhouse.

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[6] Information gathered came from guided tours, interviews, and working with the gardening group.

. Composting - Special buckets are made available to residents, and it is a popular practice. Plans are underway to create a centralized compost heap in cooperation with famed local Christianshavn restaurant, NOMA.

. Soil reclamation – Having formerly served as a military installation with munitions depots, the soil of Christiania is unfortunately quite polluted. Consequently there is no local agriculture (a fact that many residents lament). Efforts are being made to reclaim the land by removing and replacing the old, polluted soil. This is however, a painfully slow process; one in which the Christianites reportedly invest roughly 300,000 DKK (roughly 60,000 USD) annually.

. Green areas – Christiania is famed for its green areas, and is sometimes referred to as the 'Green Lung' of Copenhagen. Much of its 344,000 square meters are comprised of large undeveloped forest area, parks and walking and cycling trails, the bulk of which are maintained by the gardening group. Most non-Christianite interviewees expressed an appreciation for this fact, and it comes as no surprise that Christiania is a haven for Danes and tourists alike seeking a break from the concrete miasma of urban life. In fact, even many of Christiania's detractors emphasize their appreciation of the Christianites' efforts in this regard, in spite of any disapproval regarding the community.

Figure 7 A Stark Contrast to Surrounding Christianshavn

. In addition Christiania works towards meeting the social and cultural goals outlined by Agenda 21, such as dealing with unemployment, poverty, addiction and illiteracy. They have their own social welfare service called, *Herfra og Videre (From Here to There),* which works in cooperation with the city of Copenhagen to provide services for the community's less fortunate. Indeed Christiania has become a refuge of sorts for people who feel they don't belong or can't function in normal society. Many people find acceptance and in some cases even salvation where on the outside their likely future would be jail, a mental institution or a pauper's grave.

Christiania is a community of affluent and impoverished residents who live side by side in seeming coexistence. One of the results of this convergence of people from different walks of life is a community where local culture not only thrives, but is a binding force: one rooted in large part in Christiania's system of non-hierarchical participatory democracy, wherein every resident is given (in theory anyways) an equal voice in the community.

<u>"Culture With Room for All"</u>

"Our truest life is when we are in our dreams awake." – Henry David Thoreau

Figure 8 Christiania Street Art - "Free Your Spirit"

This community of *"activists, artists, academics, criminals and all around black sheep[7]"* has over the years developed a reputation in Copenhagen and abroad not only for political, social and environmental activism, but also for culture, theatre, spectacle and the arts. Cafes, clubs, restaurants and bars abound in the Freetown. *Loppen (the Flea)*, a 4-star restaurant, art gallery and concert venue known as both a culinary and a musical hotspot, is often credited, along with other Christiania venues such as *Rockmaskinen (the Rock Machine)*, *Månefisken (the Moonfisher)* and *Nemoland,* with helping to revive what was a dying Copenhagen restaurant, cafe and music scene in the 1980's.

When asked why it is they think that Christiania has such a strong cultural identity and has always attracted such a strong artistic contingent, most respondents had, again, very similar answers. As one put it: *"We're all a little mad here. One of the good things here, if you've got an idea, and you can get support, then you can actually do it without asking through seven different kinds of papers." -Felicia*

"I'm not an artist per se but this place gives you a chance to be creative just by living, by being here and being involved, by participating. It must be very inspiring as an artist to go outside and see people sitting and painting and no one cares. There's the freedom to create and be an artist. You can make a painting. You can make graffiti. You might get stopped, but it's not like 'what the fuck are you doing here?' it's like, 'hey this isn't a good wall to do this.' So being an artist here, I mean, you get dragged into it." -Louise

Another stated that: *"We're well known for making the best parties and we're a magnet for any kind of culture because we have space, and we support. If you have an idea and you bring it to the community and they feel it's a good idea then you can do it and we'll support you. Not with a lot of money, but enough so that you can buy materials and you can always find people who will support your project with work and bring in friends to help and you have this experience that if you have an idea you can come and realize it. And that's one of the strongest things we can give to Danish society." –Alan L*

Even non-residents perceive the strength of the Christiania artistic culture. One Christianshavn resident working in Christiania observes how: *"It's so easy to get things done if you have the right energy. I mean, you came and you knocked and talked to Louise and you got work, otherwise things take time and you have to get permits and money and blah blah blah and in Christiania it doesn't take all that. You say 'can I do this?' and if they like your idea then you can do it! And people will help you make it happen. That process is so much more complicated in other places in Denmark." -Robert*

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[7] *-Kirstin*

"You see a lot of refinement and intellectual juxtaposition in Danish art. But these raw, show off artists, like Warhol or Prince, like, can you imagine Prince being born a Dane? And I think these people need a cultural playground where they can show off, because the constraints of these Jantelagen[8] prevent people from showing off, even if they want to, even if they're amazing. Imagine being amazing at something and not being able to do it. And I think Christiania provides a lot of people this space for exhibitionism." -Anonymous

The Christianites have worked hard over the years to create a free and open space (a playground as it is often called by both residents and neighbors) for experimenting with alternative social, cultural, political and environmental models. Despite their difficulties, they have had and continue to have a fair amount of success in this regard. The fact that people stay there and that the community still exists and still functions mostly according to its own design after forty years is a testament to both its success and sustainability thus far. Survival has not been easy though. Christiania has been under almost constant pressure from the Danish government to "normalize" as residents put it. While the Christianites have always had a tenuous relationship with the state (see Christiania Guidebook for a detailed account of this relationship from the Christiania perspective) it wasn't until around 2001, that the government really began to putting pressure on the Freetown.

Every Trail Has Its Puddles

"You know, I've seen a lot of people walkin' 'round with tombstones in their eyes. But the pusher don't care, ah, if you live or if you die." – Steppenwolf

Figure 9 Christiania Street Art – Pusher Street

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[8] See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jante_Law

Unfortunately, for many people the first and in many cases only association they make with Christiania is Pusher Street: the main, almost unavoidable drag through the town center where dozens of rival groups of dealers peddle cannabis to Danes and tourists alike. Pusher Street represents both the freedom and alternative values of the community, as well its darker, more criminal underside and the problems that can arise from the ideals of total freedom and consensus. Residents see it as both a blessing and/or a curse, and no matter where people stand on the issue everyone seems to agree that it, and the level of drug consumption it encourages, is one of the main problems both within Christiania as well as with the outside. Indeed most efforts made by the state to shut down Christiania have been made under the banner of ending illegal drug trade (and Copenhagen's reputation as a haven for marijuana smokers), and it has been a constant source of internal and external tensions.

For many years there were permanent stalls set up along Pusher Street where local dealers sold moderate amounts of hashish. By all accounts most of the original dealers were residents selling to make a little extra money or to support their own, harder drug habits. As one resident critical of the scene recalls:

"In the beginning there were maybe 30-40 junkies who were selling hash to support their habits. And we couldn't forbid them to do that because then it would be OUR fault for forcing them onto the streets to steal and prostitute themselves, yea? Then the biker gangs started figuring out that the cops don't come here so they started setting up shop. And before you knew it we had this huge drug scene here. Now the smoking is part of Christiania's image, whether we like it or not. There's 500-800 million DKK (100-160 million USD) *going through Pusher Street every year." -Richard*

Even though it's just an estimate (I've heard much higher guesses), it's understandable that a government that forbids the use of cannabis in the first place would take issue with a community where it is blatantly being sold openly and in such high quantity. Add to this the violence that often occurs when rival gangs operate near one another, and you've got either a legitimate reason or an excellent excuse (depending on your perspective) to put pressure on the community as a whole to shut down.

When the right wing, Conservative People's Party took control of the Danish Parliament in 2001, some in the community felt that war was essentially declared on Christiania. Plans were made (though have yet to be implemented) to build three hundred residential structures in the community that would be available for private ownership (Jacobi 2006, 11). Additionally, pressure began to be placed on the Christianites to privatize: to purchase and own their property and homes, a practice

forbidden in Christiania (though this is also a contested issue within the community). Consequently they have been stripped of their right to move from residence to residence as well as to build any new structures, which, as Felicia points out, is crippling to the community.

"A few years ago we were told we couldn't build new things and that we needed to privatize. And that started killing Christiania. Many people lost their livelihoods. If someone wanted to build (and people always do) you could be sure that people would be around helping and being involved. And that's gone now. And we all really miss that. It would be the BEST thing for Christiania to be able to build again." - Felicia

While some believe that private property *encourages* both satisfaction and sustainability by motivating people to invest in and develop what is theirs, many respondents feel that it is exactly the kind of flat, common property arrangement found in the Free City that makes it satisfying and sustainable. They believe that this arrangement encourages people to come and work together, which many residents (and researchers) see as an indicator of sustainability. On the other hand, there are residents that believe this system to be archaic, and in the current situation, futile.

Particularly at a time when the community is under so much pressure from the government, some residents feel that by clinging so conservatively to the old ways the community risks negating any future relationship with the state, and thus any possibility for continued survival. This issue of privatization is one of the main ongoing debates within Christiania at the time of this writing. If my observations of area and common meetings are any indication it will be some time before it is resolved.

In addition to bringing pressure to privatize in 2004, the government ordered all the hash booths be removed permanently in an effort to shut down Pusher Street for good. In spite of a Gallup poll indicating 68% public approval amongst Copenhageners for the preservation of these booths as cultural heritage (Jacobi 2006, 11) they were torn down and removed.

By shutting down the visible, 'legitimate' dealers, some residents claim the government succeeded in creating circumstances for more gang elements to move into the scene. What was once a dusty street lined with quaint little stalls has become all but a warzone, with highly territorial rival groups vying for position. One resident living and working for many years directly adjacent to the street notes how:

"They take places that don't belong to them, like the artists' workshop, or the Laundromat. They have taken all the areas around all the other businesses. They're like rats and it's not ok. I'm very angry about

that. All these gangsters and territory, Bullshit, Hells Angels... I'm just very tired of it. It's not the rules in Christiania. It's not fair. And all the nice people are giving up. Every time they try to stand up the gangsters come to the meetings and they are very 'yea yea yea, of course' and when we split again they just laugh at us. And then there's violence the next day. And nobody wants to say anything. If someone gets killed we make a meeting to figure it out, and people know, but they don't want to say. They [the dealers] *are not part of Christiania. They don't accept the simplest rules. And of course there's a lot of good going on here in Christiania, but many don't see it and it's a big problem." -Anonymous*

Even residents who have traditionally supported Pusher Street, as well as the legalization of cannabis are becoming weary, critical, afraid and angry about the scene on the street.

"Pusher Street is a double-edged sword for us. I've always been pro-pusher street, but after the most recent laws from the government we've had really big problems on the street. I mean, Christiania survives mostly from people coming from the outside. Tourism is vital. The pushers are important, but we can survive without them. We don't take any of their money for the common money box. Which is a good thing because we are not dependent on them and then people can't say that we can't survive without this market. Of course it attracts people but you know, we manage and pay for ourselves without their money. And lately it's become such a problem with the government and the violence, we really need to ask ourselves, 'Is it worth it? Is this what Christiania is?'" -Kirstin

Kirstin makes an important point that although Pusher Street attracts a lot of visitors to Christiania; none of its profits is contributed to the official annual budget (though it is certainly possible that funds are unofficially filtered into the community), a fact that has always helped to maintain Christiania's public credibility. Another positive side to the presence of the hash dealers (apart from attracting visitors) is that they help to strictly and successfully enforce Christiania's policy of no hard drugs. While their motives may not be entirely altruistic they do at least provide that service, as even those residents most critical of the dealers acknowledge. However, most people I spoke with seemed to think that the scene creates far more problems than it solves, both outside and within the community, and question whether it should continue to exist.

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." –
Abraham Lincoln

Figure 10 The Anarchist Spirit Is Prevalent in Christiania

In conducting this research I was also interested in the perceived benefits and drawbacks of Christiania's system of participatory, consensus based democracy in achieving a satisfying and sustainable community. For many, it too is a double-edged sword. On the one hand the ideal of an open and flat society was (and is) what attracts most people to the community (and keeps them there). And yet Christiania is so large, and, as several respondents pointed out, consensus simply isn't possible between so many people. It would be almost unimaginable to be able to get nine hundred people into a room and get them to agree unanimously on any given matter. For that reason, Christiania, as any society, fails to *completely* fulfill the ideals and goals of *all* of its residents.

"The possibilities of this society meet my ideals. For sure lots should be changed, but the possibilities here are limitless." –Louise

This seems to be what has kept people motivated over the years: the *possibilities* afforded by their chosen structure (or lack thereof). As many respondents have already made clear, just being able to come in to a community and have a say and an influence; to be able to participate on all levels – economic, political, cultural and ecological - regardless of who they are or where they've come from, is fundamental to their vision of a successful and sustainable community.

Again, a unique and vital part of Christiania's social and cultural fabric is the fact that people from all backgrounds can be found working and socializing side by side in many different contexts. One can find economically well off, middle-aged white males sweeping floors and scrubbing toilets while financially destitute women are managing bars, building houses and operating heavy machinery. Women, by most accounts, also seem to take more responsibility for attempting to enforce the rules of Christiania.

"Women tend to be very strong in Christiania. The Women's Group did the junk blockade. The women's group are the one's dealing with the violence that happened before Christmas. Women here also often take jobs that are traditionally men's jobs. They work construction, gardening, in the bars, yea. There's much kind of equality. Women are always very active in organizing activities and making decisions. We're working VERY hard. In the beginning women didn't want to move here because there weren't many facilities and life was so difficult. Very difficult. It's a little more equal now but there's still more men. And it's like the Wild West out here, so the women who came were tough!" -Kirstin

"There are mostly men here, but the power is with the women. The men moved out here and they hate the system and have escaped from it and hate everything from the outside and they grow old and bitter. Whereas there are many nice women out here. When I think of the population Christiania, all the bright people are women! Of course there are nice men also, but comparatively speaking they are drinking and smoking and destroying themselves more than the women do. And every time there is a serious problem it's the women who come together and take action." -Gønne

Christiania's flat social and political structure is fundamental to the community and to many its residents' vision of a satisfying and sustainable community. However, trying to reach consensus among so many people is not only unrealistic, it's bound to create problems. Perhaps no issue better illustrates the difficulties that can arise than Pusher Street.

"We had so many smart and creative and wonderful people in the center before. These were the people with the degrees, with the knowledge of how to build and create. Filmmakers, artists, engineers, ecologists, social anthropologists, we had all this knowledge coming together at first. And then this Bullshit biker gang and Hell's Angels started moving in and Pusher Street got bigger and bigger and more and more money and people started coming through and more and more police, and those smart wonderful people they got scared. And they left the center. They moved away (to farther areas) *or they just stay in their homes. And they all think we should get rid of this Pusher Street, and I agree. But many don't and of course you have to have consensus and of course Pusher Street IS Christiania, right? Bullshit! This place would be just fine without Pusher Street. Better! It's created a huge gap in our*

knowledge, you know? We have these meetings now and they (the aforementioned educated people) *are the only one's who show up, because there's this big disconnect, and so we lost that knowledge. They go to meetings and they make plans and the trust is gone, you get these little groups, you know? Like the pushers, and the Greenlanders and the young people and so on. And we've lost so much communication and so much power and it's created so many problems with the government and if you ask me, if you ask a lot of people, it's because of these fuckers out here. They don't give anything to the community and they don't care. They only care about the money. And we're so divided we can't do anything about it."* – Anonymous

Richard is also highly critical both of Pusher Street and of the current incarnation of Christiania's system of governance:

"Most everything should be decided by consensus, but that's not really possible. And so you gotta have friends in the community to get anything done, so people are forced to be diplomatic and not speak their minds so that they can make allies so they can survive. And maybe there are a lot of people who would rather have a ghetto than a more dynamic society. To the pushers it's a risk that people move in here who DON'T smoke hash and who DO work every day. To me it would be welcome, but for a lot of people they just want it the way it is: black work, lots of so-called 'freedom,' the pushers can stash shit under my house, that gives me 10,000 DKK a month and this guy also gives me pot for free, and so nobody wants any changes to be made. At first maybe it's more fun, but it becomes more criminal and you become trapped. It's a catch-22 almost."

Other respondents also expressed a feeling of being trapped sometimes.

"For me it gets a little frustrating sometimes. The stress and the inability to deal with the big dangers within ourselves, for example Pusher Street or people who don't feel obliged to maintain the community or who don't pay or who work against the community by just not caring. And the government is creating an internal, indirect way of killing us by not allowing us to build... It's hard. But I'm SO attached to the spirit and people of Christiania. Without these I would die." –Louise

"Sometimes it gets to be too much, all the Christiania stuff, the burden of the rainbow, you know (laughs)? Maybe you start to wonder if it's really worth it and if you should go out there and try and make a life outside. And so maybe you need to get away for a while, clear your head. Recharge!" – Kirstin

In the end I think my host, neighbor and friend in the Blue Caramel, Lars Nordman, said it best:

"A place like Christiania can never be better than the human material it's made of. We have many problems. But I look back and ask myself if I regret spending my years here, and no way. Not even a little. It IS hard, but there's SO much good in it."

Figure 11 Christiania Street Art - Bevar (Preserve)

Analysis

To reiterate, this research project is concerned with two primary questions:

. How do residents of Christiania define and work towards creating a culturally, socially, politically and ecologically successful and sustainable urban community?

. What are some of the perceived benefits and drawbacks of Christiania's system of anarchistic, consensus-based democracy in achieving their goals?

Regarding the first question: after living as a member of the community for several weeks I found the following to be the most important factors for my respondents:

Creating a flat, non-hierarchical and *participatory* democratic social and political structure. *Self-governance* and *community participation* have been shown to have an at least partial connection to feelings of social and environmental responsibility (Agrawal 2005), as well as nurturing social and political consensus (Potapchuk 1996), and encouraging social, political, cultural and ecological *sustainability* (Varol, Ercoskun, and Gurer 2011). My experiences and observations in Christiania

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serve to further evidence these claims. Almost all respondents expressed perceiving both a personal and a general connection between theirs' and others' ability to participate in all levels of governance and feelings of accountability, success, satisfaction and sustainability.

The structure of Christiania is (in theory at least) designed to allow for maximum agency among all participants. One of the goals of this social structure is to create an environment that can empower and engage even the most marginalized members of the community. This individual agency has oftentimes over the years manifested itself as the kind of *collective capability* discussed by Ballet, Dubois and Mahieu (2007).

In turn this collective capability often serves as an indicator of *social capital*. While the community's collective level of economic capital might be comparatively low to the rest of Copenhagen and Denmark, having been planned and built from the ground up by the cooperative effort of its residents, it can be said to have high levels of social and other forms of capital.

In fact many respondents I spoke with place greater priority on having reserves of social and other forms of capital rather than economic.

"I don't have much money but I have my house in this beautiful nature and the birds are singing." –Lars

"Most of us here don't have much money but we work together to make these concerts and art and parties. Socializing and culture is very important here." –Alan L

"We may not have much money but we have each other!" -Anonymous

For residents this high level of social capital can be both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand they do stand more or less united on the whole as Christianites, and there is a strong sense of solidarity amongst residents, particularly when they are in a situation of tension or conflict with the outside world. This has been a key factor in helping them to both build up and preserve both their community, as well as reserves of other forms of community capital. It is their willingness, their eagerness, to at least try and come together in spite of their differences and help one another, that defines them as a culture and a society.

However Christiania also experiences some of the negative impacts of high levels of social capital. As Callaghan and Colton state:

"While there are obvious positive contributions that strong social capital can make to communities,

negative aspects of social capital have also been identified. Social capital among one group can lead to exclusion of other groups to the extent of racial and gender inequity (Durlauf 1999; Portes 1998). Strong social cohesion can also enhance demands for conformity and squelch individuality leading to feelings of alienation (Portes 1998). Finally, there is a risk that strong binds of social capital can stifle innovation either through promotion of unproductive 'group think', and/or not allowing for the fresh generation of new ideas from 'outside' the group to enter (Alder and Kwon 2002). All of these risks speak to the importance of supporting a certain level of 'turn-over' of ideas within a community" (Callaghan and Colton 2008, 935-936).

To some extent Christiania experiences all of these negative aspects of having strong social capital. While racial and gender inequality and prejudice is not the norm, I did hear stories of dealers and gang members verbally and physically assaulting both women and people of different colors. However, I gathered these to be isolated instances. Perceived trouble for the community lies more in the demand for conformity and the lack of the kind of 'turn-over' of ideas that Callaghan and Colton speak of.

New members must be voted into the community, and it can be difficult or even impossible for people who don't have some sort of personal or familial connection to be accepted. As such the community has become, as previously indicated, somewhat homogenized, in spite of claims made by many respondents to the contrary. When asked if they perceived a similar discrepancy, one resident replied, *"No, I don't think so. We're all pretty different here. I mean, we're all pretty much hippies and anarchists, but that can include a lot of different kinds of people, you know?" –Anonymous*

Many respondents were similarly hesitant or unable to recognize or admit to what I perceived as being the case. One respondent was able to shed some potential light on this.

"The problem is that everyone here sees us as being so diverse and different but only in relation to the outside. I mean, of course it's been important for us, it's given us a reason to come and work together, to build this place up, but we've become so focused on being "alternative," on what the world thinks Christiania is supposed to be, that we've forgotten what we actually want it to be! It's like you have to fit into this little mold against the state and you have to fall in line with certain ideas and strategies, otherwise you're some kind of traitor to the cause. And so there's no new energy coming in and we're just stuck." -Anonymous

This statement says quite a lot. Some residents believe that it is has been the forging of this alternative identity that has allowed them to unify and bring some degree of order to the community: a sort of Us versus Them mentality. But while this may have provided an initial rallying point, the

above quote suggests that not only is it an inability to agree and reach consensus that creates problems, but it is also a tendency to agree too much as it were.

Furthermore, many of Christiania's more "conservative" residents struggle against any kind of change or any semblance of cooperation with the state. There are those who want things to remain exactly as they were forty years ago (what I have come to call the 'time capsule effect'). Consequently situations arise in which certain individuals and groups can, and do, enter positions of power and authority, in spite of being a part of an ostensibly non-hierarchical system.

While the Christiania system doesn't really allow for the blatant usurping of power, it has shown itself to be susceptible to more insidious processes. As one respondent indicated, there are those well-educated, long time members who have banded together to some extent and made it a point to always to be present at meetings (and only those who actually go can give an opinion). The system is designed to reward those who participate; over the years certain individuals and groups have been able to build up reputations and political relationships both within the community and outside. Eventually an unspoken hierarchy of sorts develops where those stronger personalities are able to position themselves above others, and unofficial divisions and hierarchies are created.

Bridging these divisions seems to be the primary challenge facing the community at this time, and it is the kind of 'turn over of ideas' that Callaghan and Colton promote that many residents feel needs to happen in Christiania. As Lars put it:

"Christiania is like a computer. And we've caught a virus. And the only cure is to shut it down and re-boot and re-install. We need to come back together again and re-define who and what we are as a community."

Yet in spite of these problems Christiania continues to survive. This fact can perhaps be attributed in part to Christiania's high levels of other forms of community capital.

On the whole the community can be said to have high levels *commercial capital,* as evidenced by the abundance of successful shops, restaurants, cafes, bars, clubs, art galleries and more. Christiania is a community with many artists, builders and entrepreneurs in residence, and as such they have been able to develop a successful, service-based internal economy. This points to not only high levels of commercial capital, but also high levels of *human capital*: the people and skills that make up a community.

Having built a complete social, political, cultural and ecological structure from the ground up, Christiania is also high in *public structural capital*. Typically thought of as the kind of capital provided by the state (schools, libraries, roads, clinics, welfare offices), the residents of Christiania have shown that smaller groups of individuals are quite capable of building up their own unique community infrastructures. While it would be incorrect to say that they've built up a system entirely independent of the state, none of the institutions or services they provide for themselves or the city of Copenhagen is state run or funded.

The state has however, provided the Christianites with one form of capital: *environmental* or *natural capital:* the land that provides space for human habitation and business, recreational activities and agriculture. While the soil of Christiania may not allow for any sort of agriculture, as previously stated, Christiania is often regarded as the 'green lung' of Copenhagen, and is as close a facsimile of the countryside as one is likely to find in an urban center. The natural capital of Christiania provides an aesthetic and even spiritual function for many of its residents and neighbors.

Finally Christiania can also be said to be rich in *cultural capital,* particularly in the *embodied* and *objectified* senses in which Pierre Bourdieu conceived of it (1986). Christianites can be said to possess a lot of *embodied cultural capital* in the sense that they have very unique and dear ideologies and traditions that are passed on from resident to resident across social, economic and generational divides. As many residents are artists after some fashion there is also an abundance of *objectified cultural capital*: physical, cultural goods that are exchanged both for money as well as other goods and services, in addition to being displayed symbolically (as in a painting hung on a resident's wall).

For most respondents, the third factor important to a successful and sustainable community (after *having a participatory system of governance* and *having rich social, cultural, structural and environmental* ties to one another) is *creating a less production/consumption-oriented society.* Many respondents are highly critical of mainstream, neoliberal capitalist society, and claim that *sustainability* by any definition is predicated on moving away from this social, political and economic system. One of the differences they've tried to establish between themselves and the outside world is in creating a set of social values that are not based in consumption, and many respondents espouse a lifestyle reminiscent of Juliet Schor's *downshifters* (1998). By trying to wean themselves away from consumer culture, residents seek to create a more spiritually and economically satisfying and sustainable community and lifestyle.

For many residents it is the system itself that draws and keeps them in Christiania. By being given an opportunity to participate, many residents gain a feeling of accountability and empowerment they've never experienced anywhere else. The flat social and political system allows people to live side by

side who ordinarily might never do so, and affords people the opportunity to take on jobs and responsibilities they might never have been given otherwise. It is system that allows people to forget many of the social and cultural preconceptions they come in to the community with.

It is not however a perfect system, even in the eyes of the most devout Christianite. Many respondents concede that difficulties have arisen over the years; that consensus is a nice idea but totally unrealistic in such a large group of people, and that there are those who do in fact come in and either dominate or submit. Over the years this has led to slowness and sometimes, even unwillingness to take action. People get tired of meetings and debates and endlessly trying to reach consensus on an issue and so things often get put on hold or are just ignored completely.

Pusher Street is an excellent illustration of this point. Most residents, even those most supportive, concede that it has gotten out of hand, and that something needs to be done. Yet the divisions that exist and residents' inability to agree unanimously has led to the situation getting worse and worse. People may try and blame the problems of Pusher Street on the government shutting down the original dealers, but for many respondents it is their inability to define who they are and what they want as a community that is as much a cause of the problems within as any police or government interference.

In the end though, as almost everyone I spoke with points out, they have yet to find a system they find preferable.

Figure 12 The flag of Christiania

Concluding Reflections

In this paper we have seen how a selection of residents of Christiania conceive of a socially, culturally, politically and ecologically satisfying and sustainable community. We have also explored some of the advantages and disadvantages of their chosen system of anarchistic, pre-figurative, participatory governance in achieving their goals. Furthermore, we have seen how some residents' visions of sustainability involve many of the different sustainable development discourses which are typically studied separately: the emphasis on communal and environmental responsibility and participation; the development of different forms of community capital, particularly social, cultural, human and environmental; and finally, the need for society to break out of the cycle of endless production and consumption.

On the whole respondents conceive of a satisfying and sustainable community as something necessarily constructed by engaged and willing participants, and that creating and maintaining a vibrant artistic *and* building culture is vital in fostering the internal and external relationships necessary to achieve their social and environmental goals. Their efforts towards social and environmental sustainability can be attributed to a number of factors, including: circumstance and need, feelings of accountability and empowerment encouraged by participation, and the ideals of the movement from which the community arose (and even the ideals imposed upon them).

While the flat system of governance and alternative identity is at the core of their vision of sustainability, these are also an Achilles Heel; one that threatens to divide or destroy the community. Some feel that survival thus depends on being able to re-evaluate, edit, adapt and ultimately improve.

Though many residents identify as anarchists and alternative and have dubbed their home a 'Free City,' they are in fact quite dependent on the Danish state. Due in part to their illegal squatter status and their open cannabis market it is a tense relationship. Land, water, electricity and for some, social support, are provided by the government, as are education, health and employment services the community is not capable of providing for itself. One gets the feeling that sometimes some residents may take this for granted. While earlier governments accepted or even supported Christiania as a 'social experiment,' and perhaps enjoyed the reputation for tolerance it afforded them, the current one appears much more critical of the community and eager to normalize or shut it down. But while threats are made not much has yet been done to actually carry them out.

I got the impression from talking with residents and neighbors alike that support for Christiania is so strong, both in the Danish public and in other anarchist groups and networks, that to shut them down would create a public outcry. This coupled with the fact that the city would be then faced with one

thousand or so displaced and very angry residents, and you have a Cold War of sorts. Mutually assured destruction. As such, many people I spoke with seemed to believe that in spite of its aggressive posturing, the government really has no desire to actually close the community.

Christiania may or may not be a model for all to follow, and in the end it may even prove unsuccessful and unsustainable. Its residents are however, trying. Many of them perceive society at large as being unsatisfying and unsustainable, and they can be said to be working through trial and error to develop a better model for themselves and others as well. In that sense this 'playground' is also a laboratory of sorts, attempting with varying degrees of success to engage in a dialectic relationship both with itself and the outside world.

In this way I believe Christiania to be more than an isolated incident, inapplicable to a global discourse. By meeting, hearing and sharing the stories of the individuals that make up this community, and any other for that matter, we move that much closer to one day realizing the goal of global sustainability. One person or group's vision will not satisfy everybody and therefore it is important to begin examining how we can go about creating space for alternative visions of community in a mainstream context.

But how do we go about creating these spaces? Christiania is a community that was made possible in a specific place and time under specific circumstances. What would be required in order to implement similar visions across different spaces and scales? While this is perhaps a topic for another research project, I can offer some insight based on my time in Christiania.

While it may not be practical or possible for everyone who so desires to settle on a piece of public land and pursue their vision of an alternative lifestyle, there are ways one can incorporate elements of the Christiania ideal into their day to day life. My interactions with residents have shown that it is not so much the physical place they are attached to (though this is also important) so much as the spirit and ideals of the community. There exist already examples of how these can be taken further in mainstream society. Such examples include:

. Community based gardening and agricultural projects
. Community cleanup and beautification programs
. Community based athletic and education programs
. Communally planned and executed cultural events
. Neighborhood watch programs
. Collectively managed housing projects

All of these practices encourage individual participation and responsibility, as well as social cohesion. As for the notion of *downshifting*; of living a less consumption driven lifestyle: one needn't be a Christianite, an environmentalist, an anarchist or anything else in order to wean oneself away from consumer culture. As with breaking any habit it is primarily a matter of making a decision and following through.

My experience in Christiania has led me to conclude that global sustainability cannot be deduced through a priori theories and hypotheses, and that to pre-suppose what a sustainable community (or sustainability in general) is negates the very possibility of it achieving fruition. We need to accept that global sustainability will take many simultaneous forms, and that no one answer can ever be *the* answer. Regardless of how one personally perceives and judges the Christianites and their community, its benefits or faults, successes or failures, if nothing else they have shown that it is possible, for better or worse, to at least try another way.

Appendix A – Respondent Profiles

RESPONDENT	Gender	Age	Head of Household	# of Minors in Household	Occupation	Education	Nationality	Economic Standing
1	M	62	Yes	1	Artist/Custodian	College grad	Norwegian	Average
2	F	60	Yes	1	Artist/Custodian/Tour Guide	College grad	Danish	Low
3	F	31	Yes	2	Gardener	HS grad	Danish	Low
4	F	-	Yes	0	Blacksmith	Some high school	-	Average
5	F	-	-	-	Social Worker	-	-	-
6	M	58	Yes	0	-	College grad	Danish	High
7	M	40	Yes	3	Builder/Ecologist	Some college	-	Average
8	M	55	Yes	0	-	-	Danish	Low
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	M	41	Yes	0	Gardener	HS grad	German	Average
12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	F	-	Yes	0	Retired	College grad	-	High
14	F	32	-	-	Business Owner	-	-	-
15	M	44	-	-	Business Owner	-	-	High

NOTES:
- Respondents 11-15 represent neighbors/neighboring business owners.
- In cells containing a hyphen (-) the information is unknown either because the respondent wished to remain anonymous in that regard or because that information could not be determined.

Appendix B - Tools Employed Throughout the Research Process

. Laptop computer
. Digital Dictaphone
. Notebook and pen
. Mechanical counter
. Digital camera
. Field journal
. Lund University Libhub online database
. EBSCOHost Publishing online database
. My skills and wits

Appendix C - Interview Questions

Christianites

. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Where did you grow up? When did you move to Christiania?

. How do you compare life before you moved here to life since? What is it that attracted you to this place? What is it that keeps you here?

. What did this area, buildings, nature; the environment, look like in 1971/when you first arrived? How was Christiania developed? How was the nature, the ecology built up? What different kinds of ecological projects? Parks? Institutions? How were the neighborhoods planned? Was there any rhyme or reason to it? How does current development happen?

. What kinds of resources are produced within the community? How are they used? Future plans?

. Describe what you feel were the original ideals Christiania was founded on. What is the appeal for you? Do these ideals hold true today? Explain.

. What do you think is needed to create a satisfying and sustainable community? How do you define success (cultural, political, economic, ecological)? How do measure this? Does Christiania fulfill these criteria for you? Why/not?

. Why do you think there is such a strong cultural element to the community i.e. cafes, clubs, theatres, workshops, street art, etc.?

. What are the challenges you think face sustainable urban development? What, if anything, do you think places like Christiania offer the greater urban area?

. What are the institutions of Christiania? How is responsibility for managing these created/divided? Is there truly a system of equality and consensus? How do you view the balance between male and female? Richer and poorer? Younger and older?

. How do you perceive Christiania's relationship with the surrounding community, i.e. Copenhageners, residents of Christianshavn? Do you perceive a difference between popular and official State opinion?

. Much of the Christiania identity/mythos is centered on its tensions and struggles with the outside world, most visibly perhaps the battle between the hash dealers and local police. How do you see yourself and the City as influenced by these tensions? What would Christiania look like if given complete autonomy – if there was NO tension with the government/outside world?

. I've read Christiania's proposed Udviklingsplan, i.e. develop the local currency, build new structures like schools and hostels, ecological cleanup and eventual agriculture, etc. *Why aren't these seemingly positive ideas taking action? What do you see as standing in the way? Internal/external factors?*

. Finally, is there anything you'd like to tell me or think I should know?

Neighbors of Christiania

. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now? What do you do?

. How do you feel about modern urban life? How would you describe a satisfying and sustainable urban community? What do you see as the challenges facing modern urban development?

. Have you ever visited Christiania? What did you think? (Why not?)

. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of having a place like Christiania in the neighborhood? How does it impact your daily business/life? Would you say you support their right to continue living there?

. What, if anything, do you feel communities like Christiania offer to the city at large?

. Why do you think there is such a strong cultural element to the community i.e. cafes, clubs, theatres, workshops, street art, etc.?

. Do you think the State will succeed in closing Christiania? Why/why not? What impact would this have on the neighborhood? On the city?

. How do you define/measure success? Cultural? Political? Ecological? How does Christiania measure up to those standards? Copenhagen? Denmark?

. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to tell me or think I should know?

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