Democracy, Utopia and Difference

A Study of the Effects of Normalisation on Freetown Christiania

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Ben Riordan - 80046

Emma Falkentoft Hansen - 80812

Tristan Jeberg - 80554

Abstract

This research project examines the impacts of the Danish neoliberal state's normalisation process on Christiania, an autonomous Freetown in the centre of Copenhagen. It reconstructs Christiania through the lenses of radical democracy, prefiguration and alterity to analyse the impacts of normalisation on its constitution, practices and political and social expressions. By utilising primary data such as interviews, policy documents, Christiania's own publications and academic discourse, this research concludes that normalisation has commodified Christiania and marketised it's alterity, diluted its democratic practices, restricted its autonomy and minimised its radical political and social expression.

Introduction

Urban activism and resistance in the form of squatting, occupying empty buildings without permission of the owner (Martinez, 2019), is an intersection of a myriad of problems stemming from capitalism. The need for affordable housing, desire for alternative and sustainable forms of living, rebellion against the 'status-quo' and political and social activism have culminated in squatting movements globally.

Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen provides a unique example of squatting that began as a youth social movement in 1971, grew and developed and after forty years eventually becoming legitimised by the state through the process of normalisation under the neoliberal-conservative government. The squatting of the abandoned military barracks that came to form Christiania was a product of the rebellious, anarchistic and hippie youth movements of the late 60s and early 70s in Europe, significant housing crises, rising counterculture and disillusionment with the state and capitalism. This is conducive to the understanding that youth movements tend to stem from social and economic pressure, shared marginalisation, political exclusion and lack of opportunity (Honwana, 2019).

Christiania has been studied as a pioneer in urban sustainability and offers a radical alternative to traditional environmental practices. In light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set out a framework quantified by 17 separate goals, Christiania is an interesting case study in urban sustainability. SDG 11 for sustainable cities and communities coincides with the values and ideologies of Christiania in the following ways:

11.1 access to affordable housing

11.3 participatory urban planning focussed on inclusivity and sustainability

11.6 decreasing cities' environmental impacts. (United Nations, 2015)

For a city such as Copenhagen which is known to be a global leader in sustainability, normalising radically sustainable communities should be questioned and analysed. Christiania is now a far departure from the hippie, utopic resistance it started as, and

normalisation has had significant impacts on its constitution, practices and political and social expression. This project aims to analyse these impacts.

The project begins by reviewing the existing literature surrounding squatting, its relationship with the state and neoliberalism, formation and perspectives on Christiania and subsequently its normalisation. Using a reconstructive critique we first construct a new conceptualisation of Christiania through three theoretical lenses to understand the practices of the residents (referred to as *Christianitter*), namely: radical democracy, prefigurative politics and alterity. The second section of our analysis aims to describe the impacts of normalisation on Christiania in relation to our three lenses. To create a comprehensive analysis, we have drawn on multiple data sources including interviews, academic discourse, policy documents and Christiania's own publications and website. We recognise some limitations of our critical analysis arise from the lack of data available. The next section provides a discussion of our analysis and a conclusion summarising our interpretation of the effects normalisation has had on Christiania, and why.

Case Selection

Copenhagen has long been praised as one of the most ambitious and successful cities in terms of sustainability and urban planning. The local government has long maintained sustainability as a top priority when it comes to its development. The Copenhagen Climate Plan explicitly aims to make the city carbon positive by 2035. (Technical and Environmental Administration, City of Copenhagen, n.d.) This plan specifically (Krähmer, 2024) and the general approach to urban development in has received significant criticism. Many critics lay the blame at the feet of a neoliberal planning system which has allowed for large scale gentrification and displacement while proliferating vast mega-projects in place of genuine empowerment and social change. (Meyer, 2012) Copenhagen is unique not only as a beacon of this contemporary, sustainable, neoliberal approach, but also because of the continued existence of a direct, exemplary alternative right in the heart of the city. Freetown Christiania serves as a direct counterpoint to the approach of the Copenhagen model, leading to significant contestation and conflict. We have chosen to study Freetown Christiania as an example of alternate forms of life, urban development

and democratic practice. Through the specific study of Christiania, we hope to gain an understanding which is more broadly generalisable to other social movements globally in contesting the established orthodoxies of development, citizenship and difference in urban environments.

Literature Review

Squatting and the State

Urban squatting refers to the unauthorized occupation of tenancies within a city centre for political and/or socio-economic purposes. Therefore, shantytowns, self-built houses or migrant housing on the outskirts, are discarded, as these forms of living do not tend to be political but rather forms of dealing with homelessness or displacement of disadvantaged groups.

Collective urban squatting during the 1960's has been scrutinized in several different ways, where scholars argue it was to pursue a collective ideological and political goal of attaining an egalitarian system, addressing housing issues and homelessness or as a way to challenge city planners and their functionalist ways of designing and managing urban and rural areas (Prujit, 2013, p.20). Prujit thus argues that scholars have focused on traditional insights on squatting, viewing this movement as searching either for housing or promoting counter cultural and political views, which fails to capture the entirety of urban squatting as neoliberal policies and contemporary urban planning designs merge deeper within, and challenge these movements. However, consensus amongst most urban squatting movements lies around the unmet housing needs that squatters experience (Van der Pennen et al.,1983).

'New Social Movements' implying comparisons between classic models and new models within urban squatting contexts, are built upon an informal network of participants mainly of the middle class, with a flexible role of being active without fixed commitment (Calhoun, 1993 and Tarrow, 1994). Within these movements, actors aim to challenge

bureaucrats and technocrats implementing ideologies opposing managerial control stressing the importance of horizontal decision-making. New Social Movements differ from other groups considering their goals and composition, as they are middle class activists with the objective of enacting a cultural identity whilst not solely pursuing political outcomes. Thus, (McAdam and Scott, 2005) contingency theory within 'New Social Movements' explains the squats in focus, using the efficiency and effectiveness method, giving unused buildings a better purpose whilst integrating them with the fabric of everyday life.

The shift of the neoliberal project has demanded new political and social action, not only incorporating vertical decision-making through the replacement of public to exclusively private or semi-private property rights but also incorporating participatory modes of decision making at local governance levels (Mayer, 2013, p.4). This has not only included non-profit organizations but also groups that were critical of the system into a less centralized model of decision-making fostering community governance at more local levels. In turn, this has also fostered interurban competition for creatively led urban policies as a market strategy for certain cities, now commercializing on alternative networks for profit-making attracting tourists worldwide (Mayer, 2013, p.4).

Neoliberal policies manage successfully to hijack and commercialize sub-cultural groups and their artistic networks, when necessary, often polarizing urban squatting movements internally. On the flip side, when inconvenient, neoliberal policies introduce heavier policing, more evictions and stricter laws painting a negative picture of the squats that had previously been used to bring tourists and diversify cities (Mayer, 2013, p.5). As a result, radical politics and alternative cultures that previously were part of the same movement have clashed all over the EU, especially amidst economic crises that have led to cuts in self-run projects, however, when these same economies recover, they prioritize trendy bars or designer outlets (Mayer, 2013, p.5). Thus, while squatters often resist succumbing to neoliberal cities and their pervasive policies their activities replaced by strong political and radical activism often unintentionally contribute to the marketization of these spaces. Ideas such as self-management, regulation or personal growth that used to be seen as radical and integral to urban squatting movements, have been merged into

city programs, which, before were empowering political means for these activists, and are now ideas promoting participation and responsibility aligning with the systems rationale (Mayer, 2013, p.6).

The Fight for The City: Christiania

Existing literature generally agrees that squatting as a social movement in Copenhagen over the past six decades has been cyclical. Political, economic, and social contexts shaped each phase's development, characteristics, and ideologies. Public opinion and the relationship with the state have been dynamic and consequential to the successes and failures of different factions of the movement.

The two most researched movements are the Slumstormer movement and the BZ movement, later becoming the Autonomen movement. Squatting emerged post-WWII as a form of securing safe, affordable residence, however squatting as a social movement began in the 60s (Karpantschof and Mikkelsen, 2014). Steiger (2018) examines social movements utilising squatting for action and identifies five distinct cycles. Her work provides a chronological framework to understand the evolution of urban squatting as a social movement. Steiger categorises the five cycles as the Slumstormer movement, the early BZ-Brigades, the late BZ movement and expansion of activism, the Autonomous movement and finally a move from confrontation to cooperation.

The Slumstormers formed part of the original settlers of Christiania in 1971. The movement began in the late ‘60s early 70s and was focussed in Christianshavn, squatting empty buildings with the aim of creating alternative, communal living spaces and demanding self-managed accommodation. The social democratic government was pursuing modernisation schemes at the time, providing many empty buildings. This movement was a response to the housing and living standard crisis and was situated amongst other social movements including the New Left, feminist, anti-racist and anti-capitalist movements. The demographic was composed mainly of Leninist and Maoist hippies who engaged in peaceful tactics (Steiger, 2018). In 1971 the government passed legislation legalising the occupation of buildings condemned for coalition. In the same

year, Freetown Christiania was formed in an abandoned military ground in Christianshavn.

Christiania has been examined and perceived from a plethora of angles in the literature. Many scholars focus on the alternative urban living, consensus democracy and communitarianism aspect. Hansen (2011) describes the Freetown as a 'space for Urban Politics' (p.303) and an experimentation ground for alternative urban living, consensus democracy and sustainability. He highlights the combination of ideologies that have allowed Christiania to succeed as socialism, anarchism and liberalism. He also portrays Christiania as an urban sustainability pioneer and an inclusive haven for marginalised and excluded people who should also have a right to the city.

Other scholars have chosen other aspects to explore, such as alternative family and home dynamics (Jarvis, 2011). Not only is Christiania a place of political alternativity and autonomy, but it is also a place of collective reciprocity, 'work-life reconciliation', 'fluid families' and humanism, a stark contrast to dominant society where isolation is a growing concern. The approach to parenting and homemaking is more mutualistic and shared, creating a positive support network for raising children.

As the only Freetown of its kind in Europe, Christiania has attracted many scholars trying to explain what underlies its survival. Karpantschof (2011) draws on the political struggle with the state as the defining characteristic in Christiania's (and free spaces generally) timeline. From its formation in 1971 to its eventual normalisation in 2011 the state, more specifically the ideologies of the government in power, determined the struggles it faced. Karpantschof theorises that the mechanisms of Christiania's enduring existence are bifold. First is bargaining and an ability to negotiate with the authorities and mobilise sympathisers in the public. Secondly, is the relentless stubbornness and refusal to give in of *Christianitter*, creating a barricade in the form of making it too expensive for police to clear the town.

Vanolo (2012) describes Christiania through the lens of creativity, drawing on its myriad of artistic features, from the self-constructed and alternative architecture to the music, theatre and art displayed throughout the city. He focusses on Christiania as a place of expression and freedom and attempts to explain this as a result of some key structural

elements including communal property ownership. For example, as they do not buy/sell their houses they simply use them, residents are more likely to design and spend money on their homes in whichever fashion they want at that time. The freedom regarding building and planning regulation allows for more creative and radical architectural designs. He posits that 'place-specific social institutions' (p.1796) are key in the emergence of creative spaces. He also describes that Christiania provides value for the neoliberal state as part of its 'Creative Copenhagen' scheme, giving the Freetown economic value through consumption and tourism, contributing to its survival.

Christiania and Normalisation

Research concerning Freetown Christiania has gone through a number of phases which have reflected the struggles and concerns of the members of the community themselves (Thörn, Wasshede & Nilson, 2011). The first phase (1972-1979), following the foundation of Freetown Christiania, addressed the community as a 'social issue'. Researchers were generally concerned with the social problems present in Danish society as a whole and in Christiania as a social experiment and response to these issues. The second phase (1979-2002) focused on Christiania as a 'space for alternative culture'. Despite regular police raids this was a period of relative stability for Christiania, having been legally tolerated by the state as a 'social experiment'. The most recent period defined by Thörn et al. following 2004 has focused on the place of christiania as an *urban* phenomenon and a sustainable, democratic alternative to contemporary questions concerning the environment, the right to the city and gentrification. A pressing issue since 2004 has also been the renewed conflict between Christiania and the state following the states 'Normalisation' policy towards Freetown Christiania. In 2011 the residents of Christiania agreed a deal with the Danish Government which has raised a number of questions for residents and researchers, not only as to how this changes Christiania but also, what is Christiania about in the first place?

The new 'Normalisation' policy of the Danish state began in 2001 with the formation of a right-wing coalition in Denmark between the *Venstre* and *Dansk Folkeparti*. Amouroux (2009) shows us that the renewed efforts against Christiania originate in a wider socio-

political shift in Denmark. The perceived failure of social democrats to deal with the problems of globalisation and immigration led to joining of forces between neoliberals wishing to 'modernise' the Danish welfare system through lower taxes and cuts, and the cultural conservatives who saw a degradation of Danish society by others, namely migrants, who refused to integrate and respect the established norms of Danish society. This neoliberal-conservative coalition viewed Christiania correctly as antithetical to its socio-economic vision of a modern Denmark. Amouroux uses Foucault to suggest that the state's narrative of normalisation is in fact a non-violent act of coercion to ensure discipline and conformity among citizens.

Hansen (2011) in a similar fashion to Amouroux, despairs at the government's efforts to normalise Christiania. In an analysis of a specific event, the government's destruction of a house known as *Cigarkassen*, they see the treatment of Christiania and *Christianitter* as a form of urban imperialism. Using the work of David Harvey, a Marxist geographer, they view the attempt to normalise Christiania as a mere euphemism for privatisation, gentrification and ultimately dispossession of a community deemed to be 'other'. They commend Christiania as a social and political experiment in alternative modes of urbanism: "*Through continuous struggles, Christiania remains a laboratory for new modes of urban design, democracy and social and environmental justice.* " (Hansen, 2011, p.304) They note also a difficulty in deriving a single 'Christiania Doctrine' which could be used in other struggles, but the community itself may serve as an example of contestation for the right to the city.

In their paper, Coppola and Vanolo (2015) analyse the agreement between Christiana and the Danish state as a conflict between the forces of autonomy and neoliberalism. They state that normalisation policy and the subsequent agreement has created a unique hybridisation of autonomy. While they maintain that autonomy in christiania's case is usually thought of in terms of self-management and self-determination, this autonomy has always been fragmented and flexible. The agreement with the state has formalised this autonomy and embedded it within the neoliberal state. *Christianitter* now maintain a form of micro-citizenship (Centner, 2011) which entails certain rights and privileges that differentiate them still from other Danes. This opens Christiania up to the accusation of

being simply another gated community in an already atomised and privatised society. Coppola and Vanolo reject this however, highlighting the openness of Christiania and its tolerance of social and racial difference.

Further Research

The normalisation policy of the Danish state and the subsequent agreement with Christiania generated significant interest in academia, especially in urbanist and ecological spheres. Since the aftermath of the agreement, however, there has been a dearth of published research on Christiania. We also note that the focus of research on the ecological and urban aspects of Christiania has brought great recognition to its function as an example for alternative urban development. Missing from this research, however, has been an attempt at theorising Christiania itself. *Christianitter* often refrain from trying to sum up what Christiania is *about,* and Hansen noted the lack of a Christiania doctrine. We believe, however, that the agreement with the state and more recent developments such as the destruction of Pusher Street pose questions about the nature of Christiania today and its relation to youth and urban movements.

Research Design

Methodology

The aim of this project is to analyse the effects that the normalisation process has had and continues to have on Freetown Christiania. The approach we take is that of interpretive-critical social science. We aim at a description or interpretation of the practices of Christiania in relation to our three key concepts. Interpretive social science produces "'*historically situated tales' of what particular people do in particular places at certain times; 'reasoned interpretations' of what this conduct means for social actors*" (Gephart, 2018). The '*reasoned interpretations*' that we produce here are critical in the sense that they may be contradictory to the self-understandings of the agents under study and their intention is to offer new conceptual tools to understand and reflect on that understanding. Our descriptions of Christiania are critical reconstructions of the history and practices of

the community that aim towards greater understanding that the effects of neoliberal normalisation will have on Christiania. These reconstructions can only ever be partial; however, we hope they bring to light some new perspectives not only on the effects of normalisation on Christiania, but also of neoliberal policy globally on urban development and democracy.

Reconstructive Critique

The method or model of analysis used in this project is based on the work of critical theorist Robin Celikates. In *Critique as Social Practice* (2018) Celikates contends with a fundamental issue within both critical theory and sociology, namely the normative justifications of critique. Celikates distinguishes between two models of critical social research, the model of "the break" and the model of "symmetry", represented by Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski respectively. The model of the break has its roots in classical sociology going back to Durkheim. It implies an epistemological gap between the social science researcher and the agents which they observe. The researcher by virtue of their scientific education and their outsider perspective gives them a privileged epistemological position from which they can acquire knowledge which is beyond the grasp of the agents themselves.

Celikates criticises this model for espousing a kind of dogmatic scientism. It underestimates the reflexive and critical capacities of the agents and overestimates the capabilities of the social sciences by postulating some kind of scientific standpoint which exists outside of the practice that it is analysing. The model of symmetry on the other hand is best exemplified by the Ethnomethodology of Luc Boltanski. Ethnomethodology maintains a radical renunciation of the epistemic privileging of the scientist. It emphasises the critical and reflexive capacities of ordinary agents in their everyday lives and focuses studies on the manner in which agents regularly critique and justify their everyday practices. Celikates shows us however that this model too is deficient as it ignores the possibility that agents may be structurally impeded in their reflexive and critical practices. Material conditions inhibit the ability of an agent to question the established norms by which they live. It is difficult for example to reflect on whether or

not the share of childcare duties performed by one's wife reflects an oppressive and misogynistic social norm, if one is struggling to feed their children. There exist also what Celikates calls "*structural reflexivity deficits*" (p. 124) situations in which an agent is unable to reflect on a situation or problematise it due to said situation being legitimised or naturalised by the existing social order. This is what other writers may call *ideology*.

In order to escape *the break/symmetry* dichotomy, Celikates proposes that we instead look towards a model of critical social theory which respects the critical and reflexive capacities of ordinary agents while also recognising that those agents may lack the material or conceptual tools to reflect on their norms and practices. He calls this the model of *Reconstructive Critique*. On this view the aim of the social theorist is not to stand outside of social practice and offer up explanations, nor is it to uncritically analyse the behaviour of agents from within their practice, but rather it is to "*foster the capacity for self-reflection and critique, and thus to develop the analysand's ability to take up the role of analyst or critic herself*" (p.148) In pursuit of this aim, the critic or theorist will offer up interpretations to the agent or subject based within the agents own self-understanding. The critic will reconstruct the problematic situation using their own theoretical knowledge in order to reframe the situation or open it up to new conceptual routes of understanding. The success or accuracy of this reconstruction will ultimately be determined by the agent's themselves, but the ultimate aim is to offer up new conceptual tools for the agent and to spark self-reflection and critique.

Reconstructive critique is a model of social theory which aims for radical social transformation, whilst respecting the autonomy and capabilities of agents and their practices. In this project we will aim to use the model of reconstructive critique to come to an understanding and analysis of the practices of Freetown Christiania and how the neoliberal policy of the Danish state affects the radical and critical potential of those practices. We aim at a critical redescription or reconstruction of the development of Christiania in terms of our three key concepts: radical democracy, prefigurative politics and alterity. The purpose of such a reconstruction is to hopefully come to a novel understanding of Christiania as an alternate form of urban development and democratic community based on the empirical practices of its members and their self-understandings.

Data Analysis

Due to the critical and interpretive nature of our research we have pulled from a wide variety of sources for our data and analysed this data using a variety of methods. We have backed up our interpretation of Christiania's practices using interviews, policy documents, legal statutes and academic discourse ranging from geography to semiotics (Loddo, 2017). Our aim of presenting a broad and reasonable interpretation of Christiania necessitated a use of varying forms of data, especially when considering the lack of demographic information from Christiania.

Limitations

The focus of this paper is scrutinizing the state of Christiania through three interrelated perspectives, aiming to draw on new possible theories that encapsulate Christiania's survival within a highly neoliberal context. However, one significant limitation to this study is the lack of primary data obtained through interviews, drawing on insights of residents of the area. This limitation can possibly be attributed to a context in which *Christianiter* have been fighting against the state since the early 2000's fostering a climate of distrust amongst the community.

As a result, whilst this research attempts to encapsulate Christiania through historical accounts by drawing on existing academic literature, media and policy analysis, an absence of direct and legitimate resident perspectives leaves a gap on how normalisation has been interpreted and experienced at individual levels. Overall, the struggle of *Christianitter* in combating state interference from the late 80's in the battle against neoliberisation has left a sense of unease within the residents, which have been framed by media outlets, discouraged by politicians and threatened by police forces in a battle for survival. Whilst this has shifted their view towards compliance, especially in tackling set agendas enforced by the state, it has limited the scope of this research when it comes to tracking principles of autonomy, communal living and environmental management during the unfolding of neoliberisation. This limitation prevents the study from grasping a complete analysis, as it becomes challenging to track long-term effectiveness in

opposing mainstream governance as well as possibly overlooking how self-governance was impacted during such transitions.

The purpose of the critical reconstruction that we offer here is to interpret the practices and norms of Christiania with regard for the self-understanding and critical capacities of the agents, whilst also recognising that they may be restricted in their critical capacities for a number of reasons. This method is intended to be critical and dialogical. We have however, been restricted in our ability to obtain much data surrounding the self-understanding of the *Christianitter* themselves. While there is a large volume of interviews of residents available, these often focus on Christiania's experience with the government and less surrounding what *Christianitter* feel makes Christiania different from typical Danish society. Due to the scope of this project and the hesitation of many *Christianitter* we may not be able to fulfil the dialogical aspect of our method. Ideally, we would be able to put our interpretation to the community itself in a critical dialogue.

Theoretical Framework

We have chosen to reconstruct Christiania and its relationship with the state in terms of three key concepts: radical democracy, prefigurative politics and alterity. Through an elaboration of these three aspects of Christiania, we aim to reconstruct and comprehend Christiania and its struggle against normalisation. Our chosen concepts, while distinct, are interrelated and interdependent. All three considered together should paint a sufficiently comprehensive picture of Christiania for our purposes. Through the lens of *radical democracy,* we show Christiania to be an example of democratic practice which escapes the boundaries of current liberal conceptions. In *prefigurative politics*, we show how Christiania aims at transformative social and political change by prefiguring, enacting and practising, possible alternative forms of life and development. In our *alterity* section, we trace Christiania's development as a space for 'otherness', such as ethnic and sexual minorities and subcultures wishing to exist outside the restrictive social norms of typical Danish society.

i) Radical Democracy

The notion of *radical democracy* has been formulated by many theorists in recent years as a direct critique of the modern conception of liberal democracy. Pulling from a long tradition of western writers from Machiavelli and Rousseau through to Marx and Mills, radical democratic theorists have proposed and elaborated on inherent contradictions between the democratic and the liberal tradition. Radical democrats propose that democracy cannot be identified merely with the formal structures of the liberal state such as election and parliaments. Democracy is rather the continuous and reflexive practices of the people who contest and reconstitute the social norms and organisation of the society in which they live. On this view democracy is not a system of government, but a process by which the people or *demos* manifest their will.

Chantal Mouffe's conception of radical democracy is of a democracy without foundation. She believes the liberal obsession with grounding democracy on notions of human nature, 'universal reason' and 'the rational autonomous subject' (Mouffe, 1995) to be hopeless. She also believes that the project of grounding democracy in these liberal notions essentialises the individual, foreclosing on the possibility of radical change and intersectional social struggles. (Mouffe, 1989, p. 35) Critical of the form of deliberative democracy proposed by Habermas, Mouffe suggests that radical democracy should embrace difference and contestation as these are the basis of political and democratic life.

Conflict and contestation are the basis of democratic practice. Radical democratic theory has as a result focused heavily on the topic of civil disobedience. If democracy lies in the power of the *demos* to remake itself through practice and contestation, this poses a radical challenge to the liberal conception of civil disobedience. Celikates proposes (2016, p.136) that a radical democratic notion of civil disobedience need not be so 'civil' if by that word we mean 'well-mannered' or 'polite'. He contends that 'civil' should be conceived in the more political sense as relating to 'citizen' or *civitas*.

> "*The main radical democratic claim is that civil disobedience is legitimate not as constraint on, but rather as an expression of, a democratic practice of collective self-determination*." (Celikates, 2016, p.139)

The idea that protest and participation is important to democratic life is not a controversial claim. That civil disobedience, contestation and even non-peaceful protest are *constitutive* of the pluralistic democratic society which we claim to live in may however be. Radial democrats would contend that democratic practice inherently escapes the boundaries set by liberal institutions and it is through these practices that the people assert their rights and will.

ii) Prefigurative Politics

Prefigurative politics is an ideology based and shaped by the means it employs, embodying the kind of society they aim for, through their practices, eventually leading to the goal or outcome expected, that must firmly align with their actions. Therefore, the means this movement employs, follows a "value-rational" logic performance guided by values rather than instrumental efficiency (Leach, 2022:1). Prefigurative motivation has mainly been theorized through the means of pursuing social or revolutionary change, seizing hierarchical or power structures for the sake of the masses. This prefigurative approach aims for a new society with new structures or habits that counter exist unbalanced ones, embodying their desired sense of fairness through direct action and not leaving it up to a power figure demanding others to apply this change. Although this approach can be traced back to First World War insurgencies, it was first properly articulated in the 1960's, mainly in women's rights movements, environmental movements and indigenous rights, and currently, in the fight against global Neoliberization (Day, 2005; della Porta et al. 2006; Graeber, 2009).

Such movements focus largely on a more participatory culture enhancing self-governance, participatory democracy and a de-centralized structure encouraging socio-political structures such as communes, people's assemblies and direct-action networks (Leach, 2022:1). This organization often leads to "temporary autonomous zones" or spheres, that should not be measured in terms of popularity or their ability to replace the hegemonic system, but rather through their stability and the purity of the movement (Leach, 2022:2). Not much research has focused on larger scales of this movement, yet smaller case studies

show that despite these being sustainable in their ideologies, their original vision of the future to replace hegemonic mainstream systems is never fully met.

iii) Alterity

The concept of alterity is used in many fields with varying definitions and uses (Muhammad, 2023). Whilst the simplest definition of alterity is merely the actuality of difference, it is conceived in social sciences as a process of 'othering' whereby a group is constructed and framed as different to the dominant social, political, cultural order. It is a two-way process where the position of 'other' is given and also accepted and appropriated/embraced by the subjects:

'Alterity is then a double process of placement and perception' (Madsen, 2011,p.146).

The concept of othering stems from post-colonial theorists but can be used to understand systemic conditioning and identity formation in many social contexts (Jensen, 2011), and how marginalisation and identity influence power dynamics. Alterity can lead to the construction of, often intersectional, collective identities where socially different, excluded and marginalised individuals come together under the process of othering to form an identity of alterity in opposition to the other group (Hastings and Manning, 2004). Collective identity and a sense of 'we-ness' is inherently a precondition to fostering collective action, manifesting in potential social movements as a response to the process of being othered, where marginalised counter-cultural groups are resisting the dominant groups and their beliefs/social structures (Snow and Corrigall-Brown, 2015, p.175,).

Alterity creates an 'us vs them' relationship (Muhammad, 2023) which is critical to the entire lifecycle of social movements including creation, recruitment, participation, mobilisation and socio-political outcomes. Counter-cultural 'othered' groups aim to challenge dominant norms and society with the aim of fostering social change. There is also power to be gained by reclaiming identity and difference as an act of resistance to oppression and discrimination.

Analysis I

Reconstructing Christiania

Christiania as Radical Democracy

Radical democracy as a tradition or political philosophy is formulated in recent years as a critique of liberal democracy. This section will aim to show how Freetown Christiania, through its history and practices, embodies the same such critique and can be in our view labelled a radical democratic community. For the purposes of our argument, I have divided the reconstruction of Christiania as a radical democratic project into two parts. Firstly, we will investigate the political subject and the internal practices of Christiania which emphasise the irreducibly pluralist and contested nature of its system of direct democracy. The second part addresses the idea of Christiania as itself a form of political contestation against the hegemonic liberal nature of the Danish state. Christiania serves not only as an example of alternative political practices, but also a challenge to the existing order.

From its inception Christiania has been founded on the idea of self-management and autonomy. Much of the impetus for the radical new reimagining of a society based on autonomy came from the original occupants and their relations to the new social movements of the 60's and 70's. In relation to Christiania many of the early squatters were aligned with emerging youth rebellions in the US and Europe. (Karpantschof, 2011) They espoused a variety of political leanings, but most explicit was a strand of anarchist and autonomist thought, which emphasised the constitutive power of the individual within a collective community. The bottom-up, horizontal nature of political power is integral to the vision of Christiania and is laid out most distinctly in Christiania's founding mission statement:

> *"Christiania's objective is to create a self-governing society, whereby each and every individual can thrive under the responsibility for the entire community. This society must economically rest in itself, and the joint efforts must continue*

> *to be about showing that psychological and physical destitution can be diverted."* (How Christiania's self-management work's. (n.d.))

The mission statement's noting of '*psychological and physical destitution'* is typical of the kind of alienation many felt and attributed to the over-formalised and dehumanising nature of modern society and capitalism. In order to combat this the inhabitants of Christiania maintain an open, inclusive and anti-hierarchical decision making structure. This direct, participatory form of democratic decision making emphasises the inclusion of all members of the community: "*In Christiania you are never cut off from influence on the development in your local environment, even if the social status for example is alcoholic, foreigner, physical or psychological handicapped*." (How Christiania's self-management work's. (n.d.)) Christiania emphasises the inclusion of those who may be deemed 'other' in typical Danish society, noting specifically that exclusion from decision making risks further '*falling out'* of society, further marginalisation and further alienation.

Christiania's direct democracy is practiced through a series of community meetings in which all are allowed to have their say. Foregoing the typical hierarchical and formalised structure of typical liberal democracy, *Christianitter* participate directly in decision making, again regardless of perceived social status. The autonomous culture of Christiania reinforces its direct democratic nature, as it is recognised that rules which are not overwhelmingly agreed to, will not be followed even if passed. Because of this, meetings are often 'chaotic' and many are needed before decisions are arrived at. (How Christiania's self-management work's. (n.d.)) The results of these meetings achieve their normative force purely through collective agreement and consent. The 'laws' of Christiania are thus always contestable and are justified through the practice of members.

The informal democratic practices of Christiania aim at a truer vision of democracy which emphasises consent, autonomy and freedom. The direct, participatory nature of Christinia cannot eliminate hierarchy or power relations, what it does however is make those hierarchies visible and contestable by all. This is an example of what Chantal Mouffe would call *agonistic pluralism*. (1999) Mouffe claims that liberal democracy fails in it's aims of reaching rational consensus because it assumes the identities of it's participants

prior to reaching said consensus. (1995) It relies on a preconceived ideal citizen or vision of the good life prior to entering democratic debate. This is doomed to failure for Mouffe as individual identities and values are constituted through practice rather than prior to it. They are unfixed and contestable. They are also often irreconcilable. The irreconcilability of identities is vital to Mouffe, who encourages us to embrace this difference. This difference means we may never reach an objective, rational consensus but merely the hegemony of one view over another. Rather than stare in dismay at this fact we ought rather to open up the process by which these hegemonies are created. Mouffe aims at a radically plural democratic vision where difference is to be embraced, and any consensus is to be contestable.

Christiania's model of direct participatory democracy is an excellent example of the radical democratic vision proposed by theorists such as Mouffe. It is one which respects the autonomy and identity of its citizens who constitute their community through radically open and contested debate which does not presuppose some ideal goal or end, but rather continually renews itself in an open-ended, reflexive process of democratic practice. Freetown Christiania has not only embodied radical democratic practice with regards to its democratic self-management and egalitarian values, but also by outwardly asserting its autonomy and legitimacy against the Danish state. For radical democrats, democracy exists not merely through elections or parliamentary debates, but through the wide and various practices of contestation by the people. The history of Christiania's initial illegal settlement of military land and its long battle with the state imply and assert a notion of civil disobedience as the democratic self-determination.

The liberal justification for civil disobedience endorsed by Rawls and Habermas is summed up neatly by Rawls as: "*a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law, usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government*" (Rawls, A Theory of Justice, 364–66) It must also appeal to the '*sense of justice of the majority'* and remain '*within the limits of fidelity to law*'. From the liberal perspective espoused by Rawls and generally endorsed by Habermas, the settlement and defence of Christiania would be deemed morally unjustifiable and contrary to the social contract upon which modern democracy is founded. To say this

would seem to us reductive and contrary to the genuine intentions which Christiania seems to pursue. The liberal notion of civil disobedience is far too restrictive to incorporate the form of genuinely radical democratic contestation practised in and by the community of Freetown Christiania.

Robin Celikates proposes a radical democratic notion of civil disobedience as oscillating between symbolic politics and real confrontation. (2016) While the liberal notion of civil disobedience allows for this symbolic nature it ignores the necessity for genuine practice and contestation of established norms. Using the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr, Celikates asserts that while civil disobedience is inherently symbolic, it can only be so when it creates real moments of confrontation. The objective of this confrontation while partially symbolic is to force a crisis or re-evaluation of established social norms.

> "*civil disobedience thus emerges as an essentially collective and political practice of contestation, in which the vertical form of state authority – constituted power – is confronted with the horizontal constituting power of the association of citizens or of those who are governed."* (Celikates, democratising cd, 2016)

This radical democratic image of civil disobedience as political contestation embodying the constitutive power of the citizenry is a much more expansive one. It allows for a reconsideration of broader practices such as squatting, not as mere criminality, but genuine political contestation.

The settlement and development of Christiania, while certainly different from civil rights sit-ins, fits this image of radical democratic contestation. Christiania through its sheer existence confronts the Danish state with the existence of alternate forms of life and politics. It is symbolic in its appeal to a future in which our ways and practices could be other. It is also genuinely confrontational through its illegal settlement of government land and its genuinely practising those alternatives modes contrary to Danish law. Karpantschof (2011) notes that Christiania would never be allowed to exist freely as it was an intolerable provocation to the Danish state for a number of reasons. 1) Christiania

disavowed and dismissed the notion of private property 2) Christiania challenged the jurisdiction of the state over its territory 3) the lifestyle of *Christianitter* was repugnant to traditional, bourgeois Danish society and 4) Christiania sat directly in the centre of the capital city Copenhagen, less than a kilometre from the Danish parliament. This provocation along with the internal democratic structures of Christiania form the basis of its radical democratic contestation and the assertion of the constitutive power of the people in democratic society.

Christiania as Prefigurative Politics

Building on Radical Democracy a Prefigurative politics approach to Christiania will highlight and picture civil disobedience, adding a more practical understanding of symbolic politics and real confrontation exposing practices challenging state control both directly, and indirectly. Therefore, the paper will initially explore how goals since its foundation have mainly been pursued through its ongoing practices rather than instrumental success, demonstrating that alternative ways of living can be successful not only through tangible measurements but through performance and collective action. Thus, features of Christiania's practices will be scrutinized through a prefigurative politics, differentiating this movement from others, such as its strong focus on horizontal decision making and the ability of maintaining purity within the movement. Embodying direct action without a need for a power figure or leader, dictating top-down roles, the previously mentioned lens will pave an understanding on how self-governed socio-political structures, commons and informally structured networks are at the core of this community, stressing decentralization and active participation.

Freetown Christiania was born as a result of Danish housing shortages and rapid urbanization in the late 1960's, as well as serving a critique to the governments use of space and lack of affordable housing. This previously abandoned military base, also served as a good ideological landmark to counter war ideals, serving as a cornerstone to counter cultural ways of living outside state control or regulations, emphasizing autonomous lifestyles and self-governance. Despite initially being a 'social experiment' in 1972 through negotiations and tolerance of the Danish state considering widespread homelessness, it allowed a law to pass in 1973 permitting squatters to live in Christiania.

Through the lens of a prefigurative politics, Christiania was thus born with the intention and ultimate goal of reconstructing a society which core values lie behind not only their objectives, but also the sustainability of practices. Thus, showing the state how alternative lifestyles are all encompassing and can operate successfully outside state control, or in tension with the state, to achieve its goals through direct participation of protestors, activists and residents (Traganou, 2022, p.147). In this view *Christianitter* operate through a "value-rational" logic with the ultimate goal of emphasizing actions through social bonding and direct action, claiming the rights of land, through a governance of commons rather than instrumental efficiency typical of institutionalized settings, prioritizing top-down rules and their enforcement through capital and labour (Leach, 2022, p.1). This logic can be seen through Christiania's practices such as opening up community gardens, renewable energy strategies, recycling of water and compost of kitchen refuse drawing a clear separation between enclosures, (typical of capitalist centres) and commons (Traganou, 2022, p.147).

Christiania's first grounded decentralized strategy aimed purely at continuing and ensuring its sustainability through direct action, which was the '1991 Green Plan', aiming to preserve and show respect for the culturalist and historical embankments of Copenhagen. With 4 more main objectives and goals (than the already mentioned) *Christianitter* strived for; (a) the starting point, (b) self-administration, (c) a town for the future and (d) the eco-evaluation (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991).

The starting point (a) was the situatedness of Christiania at that point, aiming to repurpose the military base creating a culturally rich landscape out of the 300 years of Christiania's land previously being a grey and dark area of Copenhagen. Self-administration (b) called for responsibility and again, direct action, incentivizing *Christianitter* that if they strive for change, they should act up, not only for themselves, but with the core of solidarity in practice, helping each other and extending interests beyond oneself into the community. Thus, (c) came as a challenge to a more neoliberal or chic way of living where "People…are left sitting on their flat, with a bird in a cage, a picture of a cow on the wall, and a potted plant on the windowsill" (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991). Paving an irony and a critique of how people want to be close to their roots

and have the illusion of being around nature, yet distance themselves completely from it in the most unnatural ways, following trends and superfluous ways of living. As a result, this plan aimed at increasing the network between humans and wildlife, letting nature pave its way in some areas, whilst planting new trees and bushed in others, for pets and children parks. Moreover, oxidizing the water with solar cells, wind-mill driven fountains and water steps, better ways at dispensing rubbish and clean the water spillage through collective participation and low-energy houses powered by solar-energy collectors and heat stores to be included in embankments.

The eco-evaluation (d) aimed at examining already existing sustainable practices in Christiania, and how to improve them. The first, being the collection of rubbish through direct, local and decentralized collection in every household re-circulating about 50% of overall waste (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991). Instituting and increasing compost production and establishing new waste handling installations with local working places, Christiania aimed at recycling 80% of all household waste. With a central and almost finished sewage system, water waste un the outer areas would be handled between; excrement to decomposing and grey spilling recirculated through natural root zone installations (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991). Earth toilets with little to no water consumption alongside water-metres in bathtubs and the reuse of rainwater made christiania to a large extent independent of city life services. However, key to Christiania's organization is how in a representative democracy, lifestyles are hard to change, as decisions are made centrally and local adjustments become a hastle to nearly impossible for some. As a result, self-deciding and direct influence via slow-structures and de-centralized decision-making led Christiania to form the Umbrella Organization, a network of self-administration groups; electricity, water, sewage, gardening, building & maintenance, rubbish handling, ecology, building advice and a 'get money group' (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991).

Interestingly, Christiania has been theorized as a 'un-intentional eco-village' where their objective was not necessarily achieving a successful carbon-neutral footprint all over Christiania, but rather motivated through this ' value-rational' logic, where desire from sustainability mainly derived from competing against the Danish state's desire and

marketization of wanting to be the greenest country in Europe (Winter, 2016, p.132). Whereas Christiania may not fit the boxes of 'green' or 'sustainable' in theoretical perspectives, their commitment to systematic change, in opposition to unjust and exploitative political-economic structures show this squat exhibits plural notions of sustainability outside of currents sustainable traditions (Winter, 2016, p.131). As previously mentioned, Christiania's approaches fall outside conventional sustainability practices, alongside their aims, which is not to be encapsulated under 'green squats' or 'green cities', which would be a form of marketization encouraging possible tourism, but rather fight against this same principle, exposing the irony of wanting to be attached to ones routes, yet falling prisoner of systematic change and superfluous lifestyles.

In 2005 Christiania was termed the 'Green Lungs of Copenhagen' , hosting a 'Climate Bottom Meeting' during COP 15 making Christiania a significant space for climate justice movements (Chatterton et al., 2013 and Mason, 2013). When asked about sustainability and environment in interviews and ethnographic search, researchers were often met with "what is that…we don't have that here", "most people here are too poor to care about the environment:" and "our dirt is toxic because of the military weapons" (Winter, 2016, p.134).

Whereas Christiania never intentionally wished to be marketed as 'the green lungs of Copenhagen' or be a reference in climate movement spaces, the '1991 Green Plan' emerged as a response to the previously mentioned contestation of Copenhagen marketization of being green as well as *Christianitter* not being fully represented in local plans (Hellstrom, 2006). Here, the government aimed at merging urban and rural parts of Christiania, where the 'Green Plan' became a way of drawing them together, reasserting their autonomy in the fight of Copenhagen attempting to merge these lifestyles that would essentially normalize and erase diverse ways of living (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991).

As a opposed to 'The Green Plan' which could be argued were indirect ways of opposing the states control over the territory, direct ways of further combating the states occasional manipulation of Christiania were done through a series alternative imaginaries and practices following the 'Green Plan'. This was done through the creation a parallel society to that of a neoliberal consumer culture through trajectories such as alternative

knowledge production, disengagement and sometimes engagement with local authorities (Winter, 2016, p.138). Here, opposition to perceived global injustice is pursued through specific events "no mental or physical pollution" where no advertising may be used in Christiania, prioritize neutral trails, reuse materials, car free and no use of hard drugs or crime (Winter, 2016, p.138). Especially important for founders was this 'no mental pollution' idea, battling social conventions where people are not lured or enticed; "there are no hotels and no city marketing initiatives" as well as "lack of pressure for consumption and commodification" (Winter, 2016, p.139).

Christiania as a Space for Alterity

To understand the identity of Christiania at its foundation in 1971, we turn to the original inhabitants who broke into and squatted, the abandoned barracks. It was a group of young people, one of whom being Jakob Ludvigsen, a 25 year old journalist and creater of *Hovedbladet*, an alternative Danish newspaper (Thorn, Wasshede and Nillsen, 2011). In an interview with Lasse Højsgaard published in 2013 for *Journalisten*, Ludvigsen described himself as an 'anarchist' and 'anti-authoritarian', and his newspaper as 'I do not want to say on the side of the revolution, but over in that direction'. The paper itself was anti-hierarchical, and anyone could participate and be featured. Speaking on the invasion of the barracks, Ludvigsen described that they 'had clear intentions that a new civilisation should be built here'. Taking these quotes, we can form a clear understanding of Christiania as a social movement, stemming from alterity, with the intention of constructing a countercultural community, different and separate from dominant society in Denmark. The early inhabitants can be understood as 'other' due to their alteric political beliefs of anarchism, anti-authoritarianism, anti-consumerism and anti-capitalism, opposing the Danish state and broader society. These counter-culturalists wanted to create an alternative utopian community of communitarianism and reject mainstream ideals.

In the days following the birth of Christiania, *Hovedbladet* published an article titled 'The civilians captured the military's banned city', where the newspaper suggested that it should be an alternative city resulting from previous experiments in coexistence and

togetherness (Højsgaard, 2013). This declaration, framing Christiania as an alteric city different to Copenhagen, worked as an advertisement attracting many different people with differing identities, motivations and goals. We will attempt to show how these people were subjects of othering and subsequently that Christiania can be understood through the lens of intersectional alterity. From the beginning, a clear 'us vs them' attitude was apparent, with 'them' being the military, the Danish state and dominant societal norms at the time.

The early squatters of Christiania were a collection of 'hippies, slum-stormers and the others' and quickly expanded to include young people unable to find housing. The common denominator amongst these people was disillusionment with dominant society and a desire for change in the form of 'community and freedom' (Christiania.org, 2004). As Christiania developed it attracted members from marginalised groups, including immigrants and queer people, due to its atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance. It was a space where subjects of 'othering' could come together to form the collective identity of being a *Christianitter*. The attitude of Christiania emphasised freedom to be and do as you please, as long as it doesn't cause harm to anyone. The motto 'Live and let live' exemplifies the ethos of acceptance and freedom (Wasshede, 2011).

An example of a marginalised community that found place in Christiania is the community of gay men. In 1973 *Bøssehuset* opened where The Gay Men's Liberation Front was centred. This house served as an important cultural and political site for both queer artistic pursuits and activism. In an interview for Cathrin Wasshede (2011), a gay man highlights the atmosphere in Christiania describing how it 'demands open mindedness from you.' This group which had faced discrimination and othering found refuge in Christiania and were able to embrace their identity and express themselves in an alteric way through fashion and art: using make-up and drag as an activism tactic (Wasshede, 2011). Ethnic minority groups and immigrants subject to cultural and racist othering also found place in Christiania, with the town hosting events in solidarity with ethnic minority groups in their Grey Hall such as 'support events for the Indians at Big Mountain in the United States' (Christiania.org).

Christiania was an alternative community for people who had been marginalised and felt their identity was 'other' to dominant Danish society. Christiania positioned itself in opposition to the Danish state, in fact as a completely separate entity with its own governance, laws and economy. The autonomous city functions outside the formal structures and institutions of the rest of Denmark. Christiania's internal governance is constituted of direct democracy and collectivity. They even have their own social services, educational and healthcare institutions which are collectively managed (Vanolo, 2012). Christiania had constructed itself as completely other and alteric to Denmark, shown by a sign stating 'You are now entering the EU' as you exit the grounds. Although Christiania is open to all, the physical boundary with the rest of the city highlights the desire to be a separate and opposing entity to the State.

The Freetown goes directly against aspects of Danish law, particularly shown through the controversial acceptance of cannabis consumption and sale, which is illegal nationally (Vanolo, 2012). Drug users can also be understood as a marginalised or 'othered' group who have been let down by society. The state's alteric relationship to Christiania has been dynamic since its formation and provides insight into how the Freetown is viewed as other. In 1973 it was given the status 'social experiment' and allowed to continue until a use for the land was decided (Christiania.org). This tolerance from the state could be attributed to the peaceful nature of the perceived 'hippies' and the social democratic government at the time, but it also follows theories of exotification of the other resulting in a curiosity and desire to see how the alternative city would function (Said, 1978). However, this was short lived and already in 1973 the state began its plans to clear Christiania, starting the alteric relationship and culture/space wars that would follow, culminating in normalisation under the neoliberal state (Hansen 2011).

Analysis II

Normalising Christiania

The second part of our analysis will explore the impacts of normalisation on Christiania and whether the process has limited its political, organisational, and expressive manifestations of our three theories. Our critical interpretations aim to evaluate the constitutional impacts on internal processes, external expressions and perceptions, effects on autonomous and radical ideals, impacts of regulations on practices, exclusivity and hypocrisy within Christiania and neoliberal commodification. The section tries to interpret whether the commodification and legitimisation of Christiania has forced it to default on its radical, utopian vision it was formed on, what the neoliberal state wanted to achieve and whether they succeeded in their mission.

Radical Democracy and Normalisation

After decades of struggle, protest, negotiations and renegotiations, in 2012 a deal was made between the Danish state and Freetown Christiania. This deal, while controversial, was overwhelmingly supported by the residents of Christiania. This section will analyse the effects that this deal has had on the radical democratic practice of Christiania. While normalisation as a government policy and socio-political process had been in motion long before 2012, it is fair to say that the deal made has epitomised this process and fundamentally altered the constitution of Christiania. The process of normalisation seems also to have made explicit the contradictory nature of many of the practices within Christiania as it has developed over time.

The major change from the agreement was the agreed sale of Christiania to the residents for a sum of 76 million kroner. The land would be held in trust by a foundation which represented all of the residents. The board of this trust is made up of eleven members, six of which must be residents. The state also maintains what could be considered a veto power on board decisions, although Christiania officials appear to believe that the state would refrain from any such usage. (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015) The foundation is intended to be an extension of the will of residents and decisions are still intended to be

made by consensus, however now a majority vote will be sufficient. While the implementation of this new formalised structure has been underplayed by residents, a small, centralised decision-making council along with potential veto power by the state is clearly a radical departure from Christiania's initial vision. The foundation website itself states the aim of the fund to be "*In connection with its activities and the further administration of any adjacent areas, the foundation aims to maintain the Christiania area as an alternative residential and commercial area and a cultural, social field of activity with a socially diverse group of residents*." (Translated by us, Christiania.org) The picture of Christiania presented here as an alternative residential and commercial area seems to be a correspondingly thorough rhetorical departure from the historical ideals of Christiania.

Despite this, residents seem to view the foundation as a simple legal instrument which ensures the legal ownership of the land and christiania and representation in dealings with the state. Of more concern to the residents of Christiania appears to be the potential of gentrification and commercialisation of the area. (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015) The 2012 agreement, while permitting The Christiania Foundation to construct new housing and services on the land, requires that they follow the typical planning regulations of Copenhagen municipality, specifically including aspects pertaining to the provision of social housing. Prior to the deal housing was allocated in a highly local and informal process with the ultimate decision lying with the local area residents. Normalisation has led to scrutiny of these practices' lack of transparency. Residents worry that the formalisation and regulation of housing may lead to conflict or neglect of their communities. "*There was this talk to make all housing in Christiania into social housing but it tends in some places to make people not caring of where they live, they don't have personal responsibility of where they live because some-one is gonna come to carry it*." [(Interview with activist, 30 July 2012) Coppola and Vanolo, 2015, p.1162]

Others express worries that newcomers will not buy into the 'Christiania way' and may treat the community as merely a place to live. Such attitudes seem to reflect a conservative attitude among Christiania residents who view new members as a threat to their community. No longer the radically open, democratic experiment, Christiania seems to

present what Traganou (2022) calls '*The paradox of enclosed commons'*. The lack of porosity and renewal of the members within the community, along with the prevalence of narratives which seem to 'other' people not from the community has seen Christiania come to reflect certain aspects of the society which they intended to escape from and improve on. The radical openness and possibility of participation has been widely restricted as it becomes increasingly difficult to gain residency.

Amouroux (2009) has noted that the persistent efforts of the government normalisation policy has initiated an internal process of normalisation among the residents of christiania themselves. Amouroux claims that the internal process of normalisation "emerges initially as the state's desire to control space. Privatisation will allow the state to regulate which citizens have a right to live in the city centre." (2009, p.261) As an example of this internal normalisation Amouroux details a specific conflict which occurred in Christiania while resident for their fieldwork in 2004. While a resident, Amouroux lived in Karlsvognen, a large three storey building, squatted in the 1970's. The house previously housed a large number of activists. By 2004 however most people had moved out and the remaining residents transformed the building into spacious apartments. A group of young homeless Christianniter proceeded to squat the basement of the building. The current residents Palle and Karen were outraged and called the squatting an 'invasion' (p.242). This incident sparked much debate in Christiania as the young men asserted their right to live in the community they were born in and the residents asserted that they have the right to choose who lives in their house.

The young squatters were refused the right to live in the basement. They reasonably argued that the community was hypocritically enacting the same exclusionary reasoning of the Danish state. While the residents eventually came to accept the squatters, they remained defiant in their refusal. "*Karen explains that squatting is not allowed in Christiania, and continues in response to my concern that her stance is hypocritical, 'people here are sensitive to criticism and are always on the defensive'*." (p.244) Amouroux notes that this incident exemplifies the logic of normalisation as a practice upon which Christiania was founded, squatting, has become prohibited. As the

normalisation process continues, the christianitter who confronted the state and danish society, asserting their power and vision for an alternative, have come to view themselves closer to the mold of the liberal rights-bearing citizen.

The normalisation process has not only resulted in the formal-legal integration of Christiania into the wider Danish state, it has also resulted in a process of social normalisation whereby Christiania residents have come to move away from the more radical contestatory and provocative practices upon which the community was founded. While this 'moving away' has come as a pragmatic response to the pressures of the Danish neoliberal state, Christiania's preoccupation with its own survival has led to a situation where its "*connection with the struggles of its surrounding society has become less visible*" (Traganou, 2022, p.157)

Prefigurative Politics and Normalisation

This section of the paper will aim to examine how neoliberalism and normalization have commodified Christiania, and how these new circumstances have affected the radical and utopian vision from which Christiania was founded upon. Through the lens of a prefigurative politics the paper will analyze how state interference with Christiania throughout time may have been determinant to their practices, configuration, and decision-making, putting pressure within the squatting movement eventually leading to a single outcome where *Christianitter* are forced to adapt to neoliberal policies. In order to properly track state developments in standardizing Christiania's territory, a thorough examination of the amendments and acts pushing the community's normalization is required, where the following passage will aim to review how these efforts pushed Christiania to a one-mold model with little power over decision-making.

Christiania has been pressured to normalize since 1989, pushing for it to follow the national plan directive and local plans of the Ministry of Environment, issues pertaining specifically to this area (Social-, Bolig- og Ældreministeriet 1989, clause I). This act enabled the development of the area of Christiania as a sustainable neighbourhood in accordance with the Copenhagen planning carried out for this area indicating Christiania

to adapt and compromise to maintain its existence. Mainly pushed and enforced by the government, Christiania's reaction was little to none, continuing their practices, yet aware that the state was to interfere further if things were not to change.

The 2002 amendment following that of 1989, was part of the government's efforts to further regulate Christiania, reducing its autonomy and standardizing stricter rules without *Christianitters* having much of a say lacking political or legal power in the decision-making. In this case, the state primarily targeted 'pusher street', the illegal hash market, as well as the illegal construction of houses, where Christiania was threatened to be put under general Danish legislation.

Two years later, the 2004 amendment sparked strong resistance within the community, marking a strong step towards Christianias normalization process, where again residents had little power to prevent its enforcement. This amendment did not take into consideration the residents of Christiania, pushing for development visions incorporating mixed-use urbanisms, sustainability notions and social mix. In essence, whilst directly not affecting the homes of the more vulnerable societies, it repercussed on the community, replacing lifestyles and socializing, whilst also being the first steps towards gentrification and displacement. Specifically in focus, was the planning of spaces which should be the same as in the rest of Copenhagen, which could only be performed through a general change in ownership stated by Venstre, Dansk Folkeparti and Konservativ Folkeparti, all right-wing parties (Forsvarsministeriet, 2004). This 2004 amendment directly spelled out the regulations that Christiania was meant to follow in a development document, explicitly stating the exact outcomes and patterns that were meant to be adopted (Social-, Bolig-, og Ældreministeriet, 2004, clause I).

As the property was still owned by the military up until the 2002 amendment, later changing ownership to the Palace and Property Agency, the state still owned the land, now planning on how to commercialize it. Whilst in the 1989 act citizens of Christiania were permitted to live in the area based on their legal right of staying in Denmark, the 2004 amendment forced residents to prove their right to use the space, having to prove their motives whether that would be for business or residence. This further threatened

the livelihoods of vulnerable societies that lived under Christiania's laws, falling parallel to that of Copenhagen and Denmark, without being protected the Tenancy Act or Business Tenancy Act. Whereas Christiania's cornerstone was to provide shelter to the homeless, this amendment emphasized ownership, stressing residents to provide solid reasons on why they would be eligible to live in this area.

From the 2004 amendment up until 2008, *Christianitter* remained unresponsive to the harsh amendment, mainly due to a lack of consensus in the community, as well as a common feeling that this was an attack on their lifestyles and their implementation of the amendment. In 2007, during the time Christiania remained unresponsive of the amendment, Cigarkassen, a single-family home was destroyed by police, despite a court was still pending on what was meant to be done. Despite winning in court, two days later after the incident, *Christianitter* still felt the government would keep pushing, considering this was also the first-time police took action in Christianias territory. Influenced by police actions and constant government pressure, Christiania finally answered 'no' to the 2004 amendment, considering an ultimatum was given after all these years on whether to strictly adopt the changes.

Along with the ultimatum in 2008, a bicycle proposal was initiated by the government, crossing through christiania, which was fiercely protested and opposed by residents who believed it would alter the slow-paced lifestyle that Christiania is founded upon, whilst putting residents on danger as they walked through. Christiania acknowledged the fact that they got a lot of negotiation time up until 2008, where their consensus democracy model, a slow process, in which all voices are heard and given equal weight, eventually managed to make a deal with the state acceptable to both parties by 2011. The 2011 agreement resulted in the solidification of the 2004 legal directive stating that Christiania's ownership had to be changed for developments to be enforced. The Christiania Fond was created out of negotiations following rulings in 2006 and 2009, mainly disputing the ownerships of the land where on the one hand, Christiania claimed it to be of the community, yet the state ruled in favor of the land being owned by the government. As a result, this fond was in charge of gathering the money, owning the land and managing it on behalf of *Christianitter* ensuring its survival on the long run.

Eventually the deal led to the fond owning the land, being separated into 3 sections, some land being leased, where the main outcome was a transparent housing allocation process and full cooperation with the state in all legal matters, stressing specifically construction and 'pusher street' control. This ongoing fight for survival eventually led to the deal being carried out between Christiania and Realkredit, securing a loan of 55 million dkk with interests following 30 years allowing Christiania to pay it off by 2012, setting a new stage for a privatized Christiania. This meant that Danish law applied to Christiania fully, where stress was applied specifically to the area remaining open to outsiders and to maintain and carry on their environmental practices, however, with stricter conditions that meant having a plan and goals attained at specific points.

When looking at a prefigurative politics perspective in the eyes of Christiania, the practices which essentially embodied the movement were now strictly regulated. Whilst previously the movement strove for independence and direct action guided through motivation and ideology, now, an agenda had to be fulfilled, not Christiania's but the states. This logic-driven ideal society that Christianitter were proud to symbolize had now been replaced by instrumental success, having to fit into the state planning quotas as that would mean 30 million dkk would get deducted from the agreement, essential for their survival. Not agreeing with the deal would have meant a detrimental failure for Christiania, unable to pay the price for their community's survival, which the state knew, unless they were to follow the 2004 amendment, now stricter than before. Thus, one of the features the community had previously, which is not that spoken about is the lack of external private or public actors involved within the community, whereas previously actors such as the Military and the Palace and Properties Agency (owning the land) might have been passive yet still in control, actors such as Freja a/s, Foldschak and Forchammer, Christiania Foundation, Realdania, KAB, private consultants, Local Council and much deeper state interference, specifically of political parties, now were all connected and had power over the territory.

Christiania's configuration and alternative legislative procedures in motion, previous to 2011 had now been erased, placing Christiania in line with essentially all urban squatting movements, not erasing their uniqueness within an inner context, but for all tourists and

new visitors Christiania was a part of Copenhagen and the states strategy to preserve uniqueness in the city life. As a result, the state managed to preserve Christiania as a sort of marketing strategy, now completely in line with state regulations and with little bargaining power, where protests such as the 2008 bicycle path proposal has been respected somewhat, incorporating routes that would not harm its residents. Hence, prefigurative politics stresses horizontal decision-making, which is still preserved in Christianias democratic consensus-model, has been challenged, where, whilst some residents have not agreed to procedures enforced by the state, monetary threats have pushed the community to spots with little interpretation over the outcome. This means that whilst the model is continued, external threats putting Christianias livelihood in danger will always dominate the model despite residents having very different approaches to the subject. This is also what makes Christiania unique, where despite clashing approaches on a subject, residents will always prioritize the well-being of the area, especially if it regards its survival. Thus, Christiania's model in the lens of a prefigurative politics approach strives on the opposition to top-down decision-making models, now, partnering with the state enforcing such rules, despite knowing Christianias ideological stances.

Whilst *Christianitter* have opposed state models through their practices, residents have not voiced out concerns such as top-down enforcing of mechanisms where instead of being handed goals to follow, a list of outcomes or goals could have been created and displayed to the government by *Christianitter*. Despite going against their logic of not striving for instrumental success, this will pave a way to top-down mechanisms *Christianitter* may not want, eventually welcoming goals they never would have wanted to pursue. Another feature making Christiania different to other squatting movements are their commons, still maintained through their sewage, recycling and living standards, yet now challenged as private and other external actors have become more involved within the area. Commons strive through self-managing and governance, whilst still being self-governed and managed by the community, the state has power to introduce sewage systems and other utilities revoking certain power over the commons. Christianias efforts to follow through goals such as those mentioned in the 'Green Plan' are clear examples of how their ideological drive is still instrumental in their community, despite being

challenged by amendments carried out in the early 2000's stressing standardization of urban norms.

Whilst it can be argued that Christiania has been cornered into fitting a one-mold state model, following urban planning models, not only of environment and sustainability, but also of self-governance, *Christianitter* have preserved one of the main aspects of a prefigurative politics, mainly, the purity of the movement. Whilst practices have been standardized, where according to prefigurative politics, the group embodies what they perform and how they perform, Christiania has been standardized as their practices follow thoroughly national legislative procedures, yet, the main goal of the community has been maintaining a collective identity. Nonetheless, to a large extent Christiania now is no longer a case of prefigurative politics, having given up radical ideologies making it different from Copenhagen, which has always been key to *Christianitter*, that now no longer fight the state and rather prefer them as an ally.

Alterity

The normalisation plan brought into action by the neoliberal conservative government that came into power in 2001 came as a part of their urban transformation and gentrification scheme. Their main aims were to rid Christiania of 'Pusher Street' and cannabis sales, privatisation of the land and businesses and enforcing private property rights (Hansen, 2011). This coalition between the *Venstre* party and the *Dansk Folkeparti* combined 'economic liberalism with cultural conservatism' and brought a new wave of 'othering', particularly of immigrants, but also of Christiania and its citizens who did not abide with Danish law and taxes (Amouroux, 2009, p.110). Their vision for Christiania was for it to integrate legally, politically and socially with Copenhagen, with minimal importance given to maintaining cultural and social diversity. They wanted to make Christiania profitable and marketable by making them a more agreeable and less radically alteric version of themselves, with minimised activism and opposition towards the state (Amouroux, 2009).

Our analysis of the impact of neoliberalism and normalisation on Christiania is bifold: has the city become less alteric, and is it viewed as less 'other'? The first question is difficult to answer in terms of demographics as Christiania does not publish demographic statistics. Therefore, we use their online advertisements for political, cultural and artistic events to assess whether their engagement in acts of alteric expression and resistance has declined. We also use interviews to gauge *Christianitter's* opinions on the change. Finally, an explanation of our findings is offered, explaining why alterity has been allowed to remain a key feature of Christiania under normalisation.

The integration of Christiania into the formal urban governance structures has limited its political and legal alterity. It no longer adheres to its own anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist ethos and cannot be viewed as being a successful oppositional resistance to the state, as it has been normalised and legitimised. It's position of deviant alterity has been diminished. This is highlighted by resident Allan Lausten in an interview with Siri Franceschi for the *Information:*

'There is a Christiania before and after 2011 – the agreement has had large consequences.'
(Franceschi, 2021) (translated by us)

His statement suggests that the impact of normalisation was stark and Christiania before and after are not comparable. He goes on to describe how the regulations placed on them have eliminated the freedom and anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment alterity they exhibited before:

'We can no longer call ourselves a free state because so many authorities have influence over the things we do. We have to apply for approval for everything, and everyone is scared of giving permission for something which they maybe aren't allowed to.'

This quote shows how normalisation has reduced Christiania to almost just another urban neighbourhood in Copenhagen, that must also follow rules and regulations of the state. This goes directly against the alteric aims of separation and difference from the rest of Denmark.

One of the main successes of normalisation was the removal of Pusher Street. Christiania's acceptance of cannabis sales was a direct act of alterity and opposition to the Danish state and legal systems. However, the residents still smoke cannabis openly and many of them wanted Pusher Street gone too, with resident Ole Lykke saying:

'It would ease the energy so much if Pusher Street was gone. It has blocked so many things in Christiania.'
(Franceschi, 2021)(translated by us)

Pusher Street had caused excessive disputes and violence, and many *Christianitter* were in agreement, shown by approximately 200 (1/5 of the population) signatures on a campaign trying to close the street, called 'Nok er nok' (Enough is enough) (Franceschi, 2021). Therefore, although this did diminish the deviant alterity of the city and align Christiania more closely with the rest of Denmark, it was supported by many residents and perhaps not a part of their alteric identity most valued by them.

Despite the state's normalisation process aiming to adapt Christiania into a less radically alteric space, the residents still participate in activism and displays of cultural and identitarian alterity through the form of art, music, theatre and performance. It is still a place of alternative urban living and creative alterity. Recent events include a celebration of the anniversary of the Zapatistas' occupation of Chiapas in 1994, music festivals and 'The nature around us' exhibition (Christiania.org, 2004). However, based on what they advertise on their website, the focus now seems to be on music and leisure events rather than political activism. The political identity of Christiania seems to have been somewhat minimised as it has been assimilated into wider society. However, the alteric nature of identities and culture within Christiania is still very much alive and the residents still perceive themselves as 'other' and 'othered' to and by the dominant society. *Christianitter* Tanja Zabell exemplifies this in an interview, stating:

'Many exciting people live here.'

'We are a group of ugly ducklings out here, which can be a big challenge. But when it works, when we dare to dare, give each other space, accommodate each other, and prioritise the community, then we lift each other and become beautiful swans.' (Franceschi, 2021)(translated by us)

Christiania remains a place of alterity: a place for socially excluded and rejected people with countercultural and defiant ideals for communal living and freedom of expression. Neoliberalism recognises the potential of Christiania's alterity for branding and commercial success. The countercultural identity is maintained and commodified under the neoliberal capitalist order to create a product of alterity that is slightly censored and therefore a marketable tourist attraction that is exciting yet palatable to the neoliberal and conservative ideals. Christiania serves as a symbol of alternative sustainable living and a nostalgic relic of a rebellious past. The Freetown attracts over half a million visitors per year and has become one of Copenhagen's biggest tourist attractions (Rundtidanmark.dk, 2022). By neutralising aspects of Christiania's political resistance and state opposition, it has been allowed to survive under the neoliberal government (Amouroux, 2009).

Discussion

Throughout this research we have seen that the process of neoliberal normalisation has greatly affected the practices in Christiania with regard to our key concepts. In terms of alterity, Christiania has remained a space for those identifying with alternative lifestyles, the radicality of this has however been watered down in a neoliberal society where alterity appears acceptable as long as it can be commodified. Through a prefigurative lens, sustainability practices have shifted, whilst remaining green and sustainable, encouragement has been replaced with enforcement, where practices are not performed through participation and collective action, but rather to fulfil the state agenda. According to a radically democratic perspective, the reticence to recognising new community members, formal changes to the democratic decision-making process and lack of contestatory practices have diminished Christiania's challenge to the neoliberal logic of development. However, it is important to consider new debates and discussions within this subject, where a governmentality of unease fostering domination through a constant sense of urgency and instability, consolidates authority through institutions and laws pushing vulnerable populations to a single outcome (Bigo, 2002).

Constant pressure within the community has also brought about several contrasting voices, especially amongst residents, which are twofold when it comes how Christiania's survival is perceived. Whilst some view amendments passed through 2004 and 2011 as a positive and good deed from the government, as well as giving residents time from 2004 to 2008 to enforce and apply normalization standards, giving consensus democracy a chance. Others have viewed normalization as restrictive to the collective decision making and DIY attitude which is the corner stone of the community. The agreement with the state, while certainly viewed as a pragmatic decision prolonging the survival of Christiania has coincided with a logic of internal normalisation which has in practice brought Christiania much more in line with the rest of Danish society.

The recent removal of Pusher Street exemplifies how the logic of normalisation has progressed. The criminalisation of cannabis by the Danish state centralised the trade around Pusher Street in Christiania. This highly lucrative trade attracted many organised criminal elements throughout the years. This brought a large police presence and gang violence to the streets of Christiania. After long debates and struggles, the residents finally agreed to the removal of Pusher Street with the aid of the government in early 2024. (Hansen, 2024) For many Pusher Street symbolised the alternative and autonomous nature of Christiania. The clear defiance of the state's prohibition on cannabis embodied Christiania's contestatory alternative practices. The conflict created through this contestatory practice caused issues for the residents which they deemed no longer acceptable. Residents are no longer willing to deal with the consequences of contesting state authority.

More research could certainly be done regarding why the *Christianitter* have finally given in to the state pressure. Aging population, increasing prosperity and simple exhaustion may all play a part. Possible future research could also be done on residents' failure to engage with the youth of today and with social movements beyond the borders of the Freetown. No longer playing the role of a radical alternative community which contests liberal notions of democracy and autonomy through the prefiguration of sustainable and egalitarian society, Christiania has shifted with the times. Christiania continues to be a site of political organisation and expression and its practices, while diluted, continue to

be an example of an alternative way to live with and in a sustainable community. Christiania remains a symbol of the spirit of youth rebellion in the heart of Copenhagen.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this research the main goal has been to reinterpret Christiania through the use of three different lenses, offering new insights on its evolution from pre- to post-neoliberisation. This project has been motivated by the realisation of a significant gap in literature, particularly in a neoliberal setting where creative frameworks are crucial to refine and encapsulate the movements complexities. By drawing on a historical view, the research aims to encompass Christiania within a general framework of squatting movements, focusing more thoroughly on its uniqueness in surviving within a context of pressure, whereas other Danish movements have failed to adapt. Its complex relation with the state due to its symbolic political practices, organization and decision making have made Christiania a good case study when examining how social movements ought to adapt, as well as the consequences faced if maintaining and enforcing its radical original stance.

Christiania presents an interesting case of a community maintaining its autonomy in governance and decision-making largely free of direct corporate and state control. Its self-regulation and alternative laws have throughout time played a crucial role in ensuring its survival for decades. Despite this, increasing state pressure targeting its autonomy has incorporated a variety of private and public actors that have gained substantial control over the territory throughout time. Concrete examples of this have been recurring police interventions in areas such as ‘pusher street’ and illegal constructions, legal disputes, that have occasionally been resolved in the court’s favour, leading to an independent fond created specifically for residents' representation and the legal acquisition of land.

However, such instances, raise compelling questions regarding how truly autonomous social movements will survive in the future, within contemporary contexts, as neoliberal structures followed by state mechanisms manage to interfere creative independent initiatives. As a result, Christiania’s development throughout time navigates through the delicate balance between preserving its own unique purity as well as submerging the

external pressures of sustaining a community in a ever-changing society which seems to give less priority to alternative lifestyles with more inclusive approaches to diverse communities.

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