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Doing their own Thing

Squatting Movements in Copenhagen and Stockholm during the 1970s

ABSTRACT

This article offers a comparative assessment of squatting and urban occupation in two Nordic cities, focussing upon the much profiled example of Christiania in Copenhagen and the lesser moment of squatter agitation in southern Stockholm during the 1970s. Firstly it examines the two cases against a backdrop of crises in the Nordic welfare state, and especially its housing model. Secondly the article places the experience of Christiania and Stockholm within the context of both the 1960s counterculture, as well as the community activism of the 1970s. Finally the comparison of Christiania Free Town in Copenhagen and the quarter Mullvaden in Stockholm emphasises the importance of creative practices to squatting and community activism during the 1970s. This theme has often formed the background of traditional studies of the political struggles mobilised by squats. However, the following discussion reveals that creative activists often played a significant role in forging international networks that carried the ambitions of alternative living beyond their local contexts.

During the 1970s grass roots movements emerged in European cities whose protagonists occupied and squatted vacant and forgotten buildings. City spaces in flux, abandoned or awaiting redevelopment by municipal governments distracted by their preoccupation with the newly emerging problem of suburban anomie, were rich pickings for a youth movement that gave expression to a sense of urban dislocation symptomatic of the transition to post-industrial society. The act of squatting quickly became aligned to the new alternative living movement that articulated disaffection with both the structures of old modernity, as well as the new expectations of flexible consumer capitalism. The following article offers a comparative assessment of this experience in two Scandinavian cities, focussing upon the much profiled example of Christiania in Copenhagen and the lesser moment of squatter agitation in southern Stockholm during the 1970s. The Nordic countries provide an interesting, if underworked context, for this discussion. Perhaps unsurprisingly the experience of urban anomie has been less closely explored in countries where the benevolence of the welfare state allegedly shielded against the urban problems

witnessed in the Anglo-Saxon world. The presence of tenacious squatting and communal living experiments in these countries is therefore noteworthy. Thus the first part of the article examines the two cases against a backdrop of crises in the Nordic welfare state, and especially its housing model.

The article also places the experience of Christiania and Stockholm within the context of both the long 1968 as well as the community activism of the 1970s.¹ These activists were young with strong affiliations to the 1960s cultural movements. Their ambitions were as much for space to realise creative freedoms, as for equality in housing. The article's substantive discussion focuses upon their engagement in creative cultural processes, and especially street theatre, whose input has often formed the background in traditional appraisals of political agitation in social movements. In this sense the discussion benefits from insights emanating from the new social movement studies. Such work has examined the array of protest movements, including squatting and communal living, alongside feminism, peace and gay movements that emerged during the 1970s to displace class-based political mobilisation. Participants in these movements have been distinguished by their preoccupation with "new identities and lifestyles" rather than traditional quests for political responses.² This corresponds to the emphasis placed in the following discussion upon the occupier's quest for space to realise a creative vision. The influence of creative practices over community activism during the 1970s reveals a complexity emphasised in historicised appraisal of the new repertoire of protest. In particular, the actions of a diverse, yet highly tenacious, group of community artists in Christiania and Stockholm, points to enlightened self-interest as a resource of collective activism.³ Moreover by focussing upon cultural complexity and interweaving motivations that influenced the two examples of urban occupation, creative imperatives, usually perceived as secondary to traditional political motivations for protest, can be seen as sustaining the narrative of urban action beyond the immediate context of the squats. As shall be shown, our street theatre protagonists played a part in developing and sustaining networks of community activism across national boundaries.

- 1 John Davis/Anette Warring: Living in Utopia. Communal Living in Denmark and Britain, in: *Social and Cultural History* 8:4 (2011), pp. 513–539, p. 513. Flemming Mikkelsen/Rene Karpantschof: Youth as Political Movement. The Development of the Squatters' and Autonomous Movement in Copenhagen 1981–1995, in: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25:3 (2001), pp. 609–628; Flemming Mikkelsen: Contention and Social Movements in an International and Transnational Perspective. Denmark 1914–1995, in: *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12:2 (1999), pp. 128–157; Hugo Priemus: Squatters in Amsterdam. Urban Social Movement, Urban Managers, or Something Else?, in: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 7:3 (1983), pp. 417–427.
- 2 Francesca Polletta/James M. Jasper: Collective Identity and Social Movements, in: *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001), pp. 283–305, p. 286.
- 3 Polletta/Jasper, p. 209.

Alternative Living and Alienation from Nordic Welfare Housing

By the end of the 1960s, the ideal of Scandinavian urban democracy was challenged on a number of different fronts. In the new suburbs the scale of the system-built housing schemes soon elicited criticisms that new estates contributed to a fragmentation of communities and growing social anomie. Where post-war urban planning and architecture had been praised initially for its pragmatic and democratic approach to modernism, these qualities were less discernible as it was rolled out on an industrial scale in the new suburbs. Even the most emphatic protagonists would complain that during the 1960s the early subtleties of Nordic Functionalist planning, with its hallmark emphasis upon neighbourliness and vernacular design, were increasingly lost from view.⁴ The problems of alienation were not confined to the new suburbs and from the 1970s the impression that metropolitan Scandinavian cities, with their historic late modernity, had escaped the exigencies of Anglo-Saxon urban blight, was increasingly qualified.

Changing attitudes to tenant participation were central to this shift. The Scandinavian social housing model had hitherto been characterised favourably as predicated upon high levels of tenant engagement and activism. In Denmark tenant activism was the legacy of post-war co-operative housing principles supported by successive social democratic governments. This had nurtured a “supportive clientilism” that appeared to work remarkably well for the two decades after the Second World War. By 1970 the notion of “*boligdemokrati*”, the residents’ statutory democratic principle, was enshrined in legislation.⁵ But this was no new beginning. Rather the act built upon at least twenty years of informal praxis evident across voluntary housing associations in Denmark. 1970 therefore signalled the pinnacle of the legitimate participatory model that had underpinned this success story since the Second World War.

Whilst the Danish social housing model was distinguished by the degree of voluntarism embedded within housing associations, Sweden, with its state-directed model nonetheless also relied upon a high degree of tenant involvement that was deeply embedded in Swedish civil society.⁶ In both countries the legacy of tenant activism in social housing was to be openly contested during the “long 68”. Historically social housing had been mobilised by social movements that strove for equality in housing, but this process did

4 Natasha Vall: *Social Engineering and Participation in Anglo-Swedish Housing 1945–1976*. Ralph Erskine’s Vernacular Plan, in: *Planning Perspectives* 28:2 (2013), pp. 223–245, p. 228.

5 Lorna Goldsmith: *Comparative Dimensions of Social Housing in Aarhus and Newcastle, 1890–1979*. The Problem of the Political Culture of Two Social Housing Systems: Northumbria University PhD thesis 2007, p. 93.

6 Jim Kemeny: *From Public Housing to the Social Market*. Rental Policy Strategies in Comparative Perspective, London 1995, pp. 77–88.

not anticipate the more complex freedoms expected by the new youth movements. In the context of broader generational shifts, this model of participation was judged as both patriarchal and overly normative, favouring the ideal typical tenant, usually the male householder of a three roomed rented apartment designed for a nuclear family unit. The Cultural Left's intellectual critique also detected a drift towards a profit-based housing system through the (especially in Sweden) emphasis upon indirect ownership. The social movement roused by the fight for better housing conditions at the start of the twentieth century had, for such critics, been incorporated by the welfare state and emasculated by the 1960s. The appearance of fatigue with participation in housing was therefore read as an effect of detachment from the political culture of the legitimate participatory system. The creation of the Christiania Free Town in central Copenhagen, where activists created a community with no public housing norms or planning controls, was understandably taken to signify the "end of the idyll" for the Danish participatory housing model.⁷

That urban protest arose in metropolitan areas was less predictable in the Scandinavian context. Whilst Denmark's moment of 68 can usefully be compared to that of France and Germany, with Copenhagen functioning as the epicentre of an intellectual movement that connected to concerns of international student protests, this was not reproduced throughout the region. Sweden and Norway's moment of 68 has been characterised as largely anti-metropolitan. Moreover, during the 1960s Stockholm's student occupation was comparatively ephemeral. At its height, Olof Palme, then Minister of Education, famously negotiated with students at Stockholm University over a cosy cup of coffee and ginger biscuits.⁸

Despite the mild character of student protest, urban politics during the 1970s were not without confrontation. In Sweden, for instance, alternative neighbourhood groups emerged during the late 1960s in response to the replanning of central Stockholm. The rebuilding of the central area, Norrmalm, was highly controversial and changed the urban landscape radically. The emergence at the same time of new suburbs such as Vällingby, which had initially been widely celebrated, temporarily diverted attention from the changes underway in older parts of the city. Thus there had been little public opposition to the initial destruction of historic areas and the municipal social democratic leadership were largely unencumbered in the development of their reconstruction strategy.⁹ This unravelled during the late 1960s when a number of "neighbourhood groups" emerged across the city coalescing to protest over the impact of re-planning. In 1971 the

7 Nils Finn Christiansen: Denmark. End of Idyll, in: *New Left Review* 1:144 (1984), pp. 5–32, p. 19.

8 Terry Anderson: 1968. The American and Scandinavian Experiences, in: *Scandinavian Journal of History* 33:4 (2008), pp. 491–499, p. 494.

9 Ulf Stahre: *Alternativa Staden*. Stockholms Stadsomvandling och byalagsrörelsen, Stockholm 1999; Ulf Stahre: *City in Change*. Globalisation, Local Politics and Urban Movements in

pivotal *Alternativ Stad* (alternative city), aligned to both the environmental movement and the New Left, deployed a complex telephone network to mobilise action against the felling of five ancient elm trees in central Stockholm. The occupation and heroic rescue of the trees attracted widespread media coverage. Whilst loosely aligned to the student movement, such groups were primarily concerned with pressing local issues and especially the need for better children's play areas in the city. However, local concerns often meshed with a generic protest narrative concerning the commercialisation of society.¹⁰ The evidence from these local activists suggests that a more textured approach to the 1960s social movements in Swedish cities might be useful. Despite the national image of diffuse and peripheral agitation, local concerns were often important as the initial drivers of direct action in metropolitan areas. Moreover, the image of a mild state response to urban protest does not reflect the experience of the squat at Mullvaden, where 150 mounted police were mobilised to clear the occupiers at Krukmakargatan.

The occupation at Christiania also took place against a contested local planning discourse which provided a platform for a wider critique of Danish welfare society. In Denmark, as in Sweden, the majority of social housing projects were designed according to Anglo-American town planning principles influenced by Sweden's "People's Home" democratic model. Many champions of Danish welfare housing were nonetheless dismayed by the noticeable decline in the original sense of participatory influence in social housing by the 1960s.¹¹ Steen Eiler Rasmussen, for instance, a key figure of modern planning in Copenhagen and the creator of the much admired public housing scheme in the New Town of Tingbjerg, championed Christiania as a solution to the problems of planned cities by the 1960s. For Rasmussen, the settlement demonstrated the full possibilities of democratic user participation, as he argued: "You should not tear it down, you should build up our society, so there will be no need for any Christiania in the future".¹² Contemporary exponents of community architecture, such as Ralph Erskine, likewise praised Christiania as an ideal of democratic user participation. Erskine, the architect responsible for the acclaimed Byker Wall Estate in Newcastle was also a forceful exponent of Swedish post-war Functionalism. However, his early advocacy of user participation as a reflexive process was radicalised by the 1970s, when he publicly championed instances of urban occupation and squatting (including Christiania and Mullvaden in

Contemporary Stockholm, in: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28:1 (2004), pp. 68–85.

10 Stahre, *City in Change*, pp. 74–76.

11 Goldsmith, p. 209.

12 Sophie Signe Bøggild: *Happy Ever After? The Welfare City in between the Freetown and the New Town*, in: Håkan Thorn/Cathrin Wåsshede/Tomas Nilson (eds.): *Space for Alternatives? Christiania 1971–2011*, Vilnius 2011, pp. 93–132, p. 108.

Stockholm) as legitimate expressions of authentic user participation.¹³ Like Rasmussen, Erskine's response to squatting of community architecture contained a central ambiguity. Whilst these urban occupations could be recognised as symptoms of a crisis in modernist planning, this generation of architects and planners continued to be drawn to modernism as the preferred mechanism to foster the idealised user engagement discerned in the alternative living movement.

That Swedish incidents of neighbourhood activism have had a less prominent place in the historiography of Scandinavia's 1960s counterculture than comparable agitation in the Danish capital is nonetheless understandable. Denmark is a more self-evident site for interest in communal living and squatting and is extensively documented. The Free Town of Christiania is also closely aligned to the intellectual milieu of the 1960s, reflected in the links it sustained to anchor publications, such as *Ny Samfund* (New Society) from 1968, that in turn were offering decisive criticism of the Danish welfare housing model.¹⁴ Whilst Christiania's prominence has led it to be viewed as a caricature of communal living, its importance as a contemporary reference point for countries like Sweden is clear. As shall be shown, the activists' networks sustained through contact with this pioneer settlement were to be fundamental to nascent European community action networks. Moreover, Christiania's prominent public profile helped to make visible the importance of transnational influences and especially the extent to which the Nordic countries drew upon the earlier forms of alternative urban living pioneered in America.

Christiania: 1971–1980

Christiania's narrative is well known.¹⁵ In 1969 a number of young "dispossessed" residents of nearby Christianshavn, a city centre island suburb whose run-down housing had become a magnet for young people and bohemian society, broke through the barricades of an abandoned military barracks in the centre of the city inaugurating arguably the most tenacious communal living experiment in the developed world. Initially the occupation appeared to be an opportunistic response to a planning oversight. The land was formally owned by the Danish Ministry of Defence. Following their withdrawal in the spring of 1971, there were no state or local authority plans for this space. The first occupiers, searching only for alternative play areas for their children, neither deployed a protest narrative nor claimed that the space required protection from municipal intervention. This opportunistic use of empty land helped to distinguish Christiania from other con-

13 Vall, p. 15.

14 Davis and Warring, p. 515.

15 Håkan Thörn/Cathrin Wasshede/Tomas Nilson: Introduction: From „Social Experiment“ to „Urban Alternative“ – 40 Years of Fesearch on the Freetown, in: Thorn/Wasshede/Nilson, pp. 7–38.

temporary squats: it remains the only autonomous “Freetown” created and retained in the centre of a European capital city.¹⁶

Thereafter the pioneer settlers were soon joined by others, dissidents and minority groups, students and “slum stormers” who came out in ever increasing numbers and started to settle in. The retrospective ambition to create a Free Town was soon articulated. By Christmas in 1971 the settlement had formalised their ambition to build “a self-ruling society where each individual can develop him or herself freely”.¹⁷ Christiania’s numerous cultural institutions arose quickly and included the assembly house where the various working groups could convene, a weekly paper, a shopping centre and numerous cafes. Christiania as a space for creativity was an early feature: music, theatre and art spaces were quickly established. News of its festivals and creative happenings was broadcast via “Radio Christiania”, which was housed in the settlement’s “communications factory”.¹⁸ Despite enjoying favourable academic and international attention, the ensuing decades witnessed repeated agitation with the police, as well as a number of political campaigns to clear the area. To date these have not been successful. Christiania remains a dynamic site of communal living where there is no private ownership. New “occupiers” can still join the Freetown by applying to the central residents’ committee for permission to occupy dwellings as they become vacant.¹⁹ However, with the progress of waterfront regeneration in areas near the site, economic and corporate pressures are likely to ensure that Christiania’s presence remains contested.

Initially Christiania evoked an ambiguous response from the Danish government. As elsewhere in Europe, a division emerged between critics preoccupied with squatting as urban criminality and sympathisers for whom this provided evidence of a deeper crisis in the housing and welfare model.²⁰ In Denmark the social causes and consequences of Christiania remained a preoccupying political and social concern of the conflict that was played out in both municipal and parliamentary politics.²¹ The division between pro-

16 Håkan Thorn: *Governing Freedom. Debating the Freetown in the Danish Parliament*, in: Thörn/Wasshede/Nilson, pp. 68–98, p. 68.

17 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 1058 Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen: Per Løvetand. Case 4, *The Free Town of Christiania, Presentation to April 1978 Conference*.

18 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10575. *Aktioner og fester på Christiania 1972–1981*.

19 *Property in Christiania*, at: <http://www.christiania.org/info/nar-en-bolig-bliver-ledig/> (accessed on 2 July 2013).

20 Priemus, p. 417.

21 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 1058. *Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen Per Løvetand Case 4, The Free Town of Christiania Presentation to April 1978 Conference*. In May 1972, the ruling Social Democratic Party responded to the presence of the settlement by creating a negotiating committee to secure Christiania as an officially recognised „social experiment“. This comprised a three-year planning competition for the future of the area and gave the settlers a de facto residency agreement until 1976. However, in 1973 the Social Democrats were

tagonists (broadly characterised as social democratic, Communist and Socialist) and its detractors (the centre-right coalition and new populist parties) has underpinned claims that Christiania articulated a new polarisation in Danish politics that helped to erode the social democratic consensus of the post-war years. As such Christiania arguably claimed disproportionate attention in Parliamentary debates where it also served to articulate the vision of the new populist politics. Christiania and its unruly inhabitants symbolised the ills of the past, particularly the 1960s, and the social democratic legacy. It was claimed that this had bequeathed Denmark with workshy dependents whose sham freedoms were a thin veil for baser hedonisms, urban squalor and degeneracy. These sentiments were echoed by Copenhagen police authorities who frequently claimed that the site was the centre of the city's drug trade where tolerance of hash had attracted other criminal fraternities to the area.²²

Christiania nevertheless enjoyed popular legitimacy outside parliamentary politics because it resonated with a number of contemporary social anxieties. For instance, it was widely endorsed by Copenhagen's residents associations in nearby Christianshavn, on whose island Christiania is located. Further afield in Vesterbro and Brumelby, letters were written by residents expressing their support for the settlement. To an extent these provide evidence of the dissatisfaction with the Danish housing model suggestive of the fallout from the successful participatory system of the post-war years. Members of Christianshavn resident association encouraged active co-operation with the settlement as a means of presenting a united front in the face of municipal plans to clear the city centre of its older quarters and working-class inhabitants.²³ Likewise at Brumelby resident support was underpinned by the hope that the occupation would stymie the systematic municipal destruction of Copenhagen's "open and free areas". They further anticipated that the action would mobilise "resident solidarity" across Copenhagen and beyond. Thus aspects of the supposedly defunct participatory housing model could be revisited in the face of state housing policies that threatened to marginalise its traditional constituents. Christiania Free Town both legitimated, and gave expression to, the wider concerns of Copenhagen's resident associations.

ousted from government following the historic „landslide election“. This brought a number of populist parties into Danish politics. The new Liberal/Conservative coalition government quickly rescinded Christiania as a „social experiment“. Rene Karpantschhof: Bargaining and the Barricades. The Political Struggle over the Freetown of Christiania, in: Thorn/Wasshede/Nilson, pp. 38–68, pp. 43–44.

- 22 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10585. Notitser, inberetninger og rapporter fra Københavns Politi 1975.
- 23 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10683. Christianhavns beboereforening 30 November 1975, Brumelbys beboereforening 04 December 1975.

The public profile of the settlement was also elevated by support from a number of prominent academics. As we have seen planners like Rasmussen viewed Christiania as a counterpoint to the problems of the planned city. Likewise Berl Kutchinsky, Professor of Criminology at Copenhagen University, and a recognised authority on the public health effects of pornography, had publicly endorsed Christiania as a social experiment that could rehabilitate drug users lost to orthodox institutional intervention. His evidence was cited at length during the parliamentary debates of 1973.²⁴ This contributed to a growing public profile of Christiania that perhaps had limited bearing upon the day to day existence of its settlers. But the boundaries between internal and external representation were often blurred as settlers intervened in creating this profile. Per Løvetand Iversen, for instance, was a pioneer settler who quickly took steps to encourage critical public scrutiny of the settlement's qualities both nationally, as well as internationally. He was especially concerned to draw attention to its potential for successful citizen activism. In 1978 Løvetand Iversen took part in a collaborative project with Kai Lemberg, Copenhagen-based economist and town planner, that brought together a number of authors, activists and academics in an "Alternative Living Project" funded by the United Nations University. Lemberg's introduction provided the Danish and international context for the settlement, attributing its presence directly to the "psychological stresses" experienced during the transition to post-industrial society.²⁵ Løvetand Iversen reinforced the characterisation of Christiania as a counterpoint to this malaise, describing its citizen activism as well placed to militate against further post-industrial stresses.²⁶

Whilst the efforts of Lemberg and others like him nurtured a positive public characterisation with growing purchase internationally, social relations within the settlement often betrayed the ready appeal of citizen activism anticipated by its protagonists. By the middle of the 1970s outside observers were noting that Christiania was broadly inhabited by a young population divided into two social groups:

The free town is composed of mainly two categories of inhabitants; young people with a voluntaristic, idealistic, political motivation to live in the Free Town and young

24 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10575. Per Løvetand Iversen: material vedr Christianias forhandlinger med myndigheder 1973–1976; Folketingets forhandling (390) 6239, 1973.

25 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 1058. Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen, Kai Lemberg: Dominant Way of Life in Denmark and Theoretical Framework, in: United Nations University project, „Alternative Ways of Life“ (1978).

26 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10575. Per Løvetand Iversen: material vedr Christianias forhandlinger med myndigheder 1973–1976; Per Løvetand: En Christianits bekendelse, in: Politikens Krønike, 2 June 1976.

people more or less forced into it by poverty. Emerging activist groups take care of the worst drug addicts and have been able to keep the Free Town almost free of drugs.²⁷

Whilst social workers and criminologists including Kutchinsky praised the role of activists in rehabilitating drug users, others were more critical. For instance, Inge Kroch, Christian Democratic member of the Parliament, visited the site in 1976 whilst researching an article later published in *Fyns Tidende*.²⁸ She recalled entering the site and hearing foreign languages; a Spanish man she met explained that the political problems of his own country had forced him to seek refuge in Christiania; a German man explained that such a life would be impossible in Germany. She ruminatively described buying a sesame loaf from a man who had recently returned from the Ashram; she recognised children known to her through her work with social services. Her conclusions were ambiguous and significantly probed the benefit of the settlement beyond a select enclave of engaged activists. For Kroch the younger more vulnerable inhabitants had not sought out Christiania as potential for citizen activism and cultural fulfilment, but because they themselves had no alternatives.

The tension Kroch discerned was further underlined during the “junk blockade”, a local response to the escalating hard-drug culture in the area that took place between 1978 and 79. Following an unsuccessful and highly unpopular attempt to collaborate with police authorities to stamp out hard drugs, the community formed their own patrol to expel dealers and users, especially of heroin and specifically from a building known as the “peace ark”, which had become an internal squat in a dilapidated building, an unsanitary centre of hard drug use and trade. The junk blockade was a celebrated success by its protagonists, but it also helped to articulate the schisms between the activists and Christiania’s more itinerant inhabitants. As one disgruntled “anarchist” wrote in response to the action:

[...] these old Christianites [...] are nothing more than ‘power pushers’, superactivists that wish for economic and political power [...] they are now talking about a governing body...nearly all the other Christianites are against this idea. For these superactivists we others are just tin soldiers to be manipulated, moved around and exploited. Power pushers or superactivists have taken over everything and taken credit for the campaign against junk, drugs etc. But really it wasn’t just these old Danish superactivists who did the work. It was new Christianites, foreigners, hippies and

27 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10585. Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen, Publikationer 1969–1992, „Christiania“.

28 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr 1058. Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen; Arkiv Nr. 10575; *Fyns Tidende* 12 October 1976.

hash pushers ... The superactivists have said that there are too many Germans in Christiania, but the superactivists have been discriminating against foreigners.²⁹

Aspects of this tirade echo Kroch's external appraisal of social relations within the settlement. These were to resurface in Borge Madsen's later appraisal of Christiania's social stratification as a division between activists (the holy ones); liberalists and Trash. As a product of capitalist fragmentation Christiania had rendered "the Trash" powerless, whilst others, the "holy ones" (or the "superactivists"), had exerted choice in their dislocation from society.³⁰

Although these assessments help to qualify the narrative of Christiania as the progenitor of "citizen activism", such internal schisms did not deter international admirers and generally the settlement remained a celebrated reference point for emergent community action networks. During the first half of the 1970s, this movement found expression in the intellectual context of anarchist groups and publications. In 1974 an anarchist praxis seminar was held in the settlement which hosted visitors from Tennessee to disseminate their experience from a farm collective with 1200 inhabitants. These practical examples of alternative living were interspersed with presentations that traced the intellectual roots of the movement back to the Paris Commune and forwards to the June 1967 Congress on Freedom's dialectic in London, and to the contemporary uprisings in Gdansk.³¹ The anarchist affinity with Christiania is unsurprising, but the intellectual underpinnings of the alternative living movement were essentially piecemeal. As noted by Sorte Tusse writing in *Det Ny Samfund* in 1978, Christiania was noticeable for its production and utilisation of art to express its vision for an autonomous creative space. But this evolved without reference to a self-conscious political ideology.³² As the decade progressed the focus upon praxis and creative activism grew more pronounced. At the same time the movement's intellectual grounding principles, political or otherwise, remained unremarkable. This community activism evolved through affinity with both anarchist groupings and the New Left, but without coherent intellectual or political priorities. The fragmented characteristics of emergent community action can be likened to the Deleuzian concept of the rhizome, as sustained by diffuse rather than linear action. With this in mind it is clear that the diverse characteristics of the alternative living movement by the later 1970s

29 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr 10585. Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen: Christiania en fristad ikke en fristat! 1979.

30 Borge Madsen: Sumpen, Liberalisterne och de Hellige. Christiania-et Barn af Kapitalismen. (1980), cited in Thorn/Wasshede, p. 19.

31 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10575. Aktioner og Fester på Christiania: Alternativ Samfund og Anarkisternas Praxis, in: KoKoo 2 May 1975.

32 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10585. Privat Arkiver Jakob Reddersen. Sorte Tusse: Al Magt til fantasien, in: Det Ny Samfund 52 1978.

may have corresponded to a general decline in the level of direct action that had been evident at the start of that decade. Equally, however, this fragmentation may also have assisted creative activists to progress their ambitions for a network of community action that connected disparate local instances of urban occupation.³³

The creation of the “International Community Action in Europe” network, launched in Sweden in 1975, at the symposium of the International Youth Federation for Environmental Studies and Conservation, exemplified this drift towards a loose set of organising principles. Although the self-governing Freetown of Christiania was an important influence, the community action network had no identifiable intellectual agenda, rather it sought to draw links and build international networks between the localised and specific nature of community action thus far.³⁴ In this context Christiania attracted many new supporters, particularly from the United States. In 1977, for instance, the Danish settlement hosted a meeting of the newly formed community action network at which William Harris, a college lecturer from Vermont, participated. On returning to the United States he wrote thanking his hosts, recalling wistfully the “wonderful situation in Christiania. A group of people living decently and working hard on the land the state owns [...] Copenhagen is clean and safe, as New York was 30 years ago”.³⁵ Participants at the meeting included artists, educators, self-proclaimed “activists”, as well as architects and planners.³⁶ This diversity, and the corresponding absence of a comprehensive political strategy, supports the claim that the formation of the “short-lived” international community action network was a peak after which activism declined as the counter-culture dispersed and matured.³⁷

As observed some years later “Christiania has become almost bourgeois Danish modern [...] as the drop outs settle down to work, the counterculture [...] normalises.”³⁸ But the contribution of the individual creative activists, who carried the ambitions of the alternative living movement forward beyond 1975, remains noteworthy. In 1979, for instance, another visitor wrote from Christiania effusively describing the experience:

33 Gilles Deleuze/Felix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis 1987, pp. 3–26. This comparison has also been evoked in work on recent Left social movements such as „occupy“, which Peter Funke claims have been limited to symbolic acts of resistance by their fragmented and diverse characteristics. Peter Nikolous Funke: *The Global Social Forum Rhizome. A Theoretical Framework*, in: *Globalisations* 9:3 (2012), pp. 351–364.

34 Nick Wates/Charles Knevitt: *Community Architecture. How People are Creating their own Environment*, London 1987, p. 31.

35 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10683. Report of the 1977 Community Action Conference Christiania Copenhagen, 20–26 May; Letter from William Harris Middleburg College Vermont 1977.

36 Ibid.

37 Wates/Knevitt, p. 31.

38 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10683. Newsweek: 19 April 1989.

There's so much happening in Scandinavia that we just have to write it down just to keep it straight ourselves [...]. The Community Action Group (international) here in Copenhagen meets once a week [...] Stockholm is also blossoming. More good news, River, an American Clown and mime artist in Stockholm is with us in spirit. He's in the States at the moment but has written to Herman Prigan from Vienna, the man largely responsible for the street theatre festival in Vienna last fall [...] There are already two groups here [including] Jordcirkus; they were on tour in central Europe this autumn.

The sense of a community with mutually recognisable interests and transnational contacts is clear. This underlined the importance of art, and especially street theatre, as a noticeable element of the Nordic experience.³⁹

The importance of itinerant creative activists as the carriers of the international community action network was not without precedent in Christiania. Art had been a significant characteristic of the squat from its inception. Solvogngen (the Sun Chariot), Christiania's street action theatre, made a noticeable contribution to defining the settlement as a creative space. The theatre group predated the Free Town and has been located against a backdrop of action theatre that emerged as part of the 1960s counterculture in Denmark and elsewhere. In particular, America's Living Theatre and its work with street theatre and audience participation, was an important influence for the growth of European action theatre during the 1970s. Solvogngen's members had moved out to Christiania early during the 1970s, from where they planned and executed notable performances such as "The Christmas Army of Solvogngen" in December 1974. This piece of street action theatre involved hundreds of participants, all dressed in red Santa Claus costumes, marching the streets of Copenhagen with a huge "Trojan" *papier mâché* goose, acting out the story of Santa Claus whilst staging a protest cum audience participation piece about the commercialisation of Christmas.⁴⁰ Solvogngen was crucial because it transcended the squat and engaged audiences beyond Copenhagen, notably in Sweden. In all, Christiania's highly profiled contribution to creative life beyond the squat may help to explain its longstanding ability to evade clearance. Whilst critical of its social characteristics many nonetheless embraced its cultural capital. In 1978, for instance, following the Parliamentary decision to close Christiania, a representative from the Christian People's Party conceded that the settlers should be allowed to remain to celebrate Christmas

39 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10575. Aktioner og fester på Christiania 1972–1981, Anonymous letter from Christiania.

40 Nils Vest Film: Teatergruppen Solvogngen aka Chariot of the Sun, at: <http://www.vestfilm.dk/christiania/solvogngen/chariotofthesun.html> (accessed on 2 July 2013)

“out there”, and “maybe even New Year”, in recognition of the rich and joyous cultural activities they sustained.⁴¹

Visual art has also been a significant part of Christiania’s historical culture. Recently the Danish Cultural Institute curated an exhibition of Christiania in Art, which included the work of 28 artists with a connection to the Freetown. The retrospective collection of poster art was an important component of the exhibition, in addition to the external representations, such as the portraits by acclaimed Danish photographer Charlotte Østervang.⁴² Østervang’s work includes striking black and white portraits of Christiania inhabitants such as Greenlander Don Corleone, believed to be a reincarnation of Alexander the Great, and Eske the goldsmith, designer and “old school” skate boarder, pictured naked next to his friend Zid, who together drive the campaign for legalisation of cannabis.⁴³ These remarkable portraits do little to detract from the overall sense that the settlement has predominantly been inhabited by self-proclaimed outsiders, who make striking subjects for Østervang’s portraits.

Similarly insider art has often reinforced Christiania’s function as space where the ambitions for otherness and escape can be realised. A significant proportion of the poetry generated by resident artists has addressed the challenges and joys of communal living, often revealing the life of a Christianite as both liberating and frustrating. In particular resident women poets have conveyed their sense of refuge from the outside world of patriarchy and oppression.⁴⁴ In other respects Christiania’s cultural institutions, such as Bøssehuset, the permanent home of *Bøssernes Befrielsen Front* (The Gay Men’s Liberation Front), serve to underline its importance as a site of wider avant-garde counter-cultural activity. Bøssehuset’s status in Christiania has long been anchored in its function as a cultural institution frequented by residents, but also by visitors from all over Denmark and beyond, to attend performances, theatre, film and cabarets hosted at the venue.⁴⁵ Likewise the Grey Hall, home of Solvognen and Christiania’s largest concert venue, was established as a key meeting place for the international street-theatre movement by the middle of the 1970s. Nevertheless, despite their noticeable presence, the creative institutions and practices that Christiania sustained have generally provided a backdrop for political conflicts that underpinned the highly profiled story of the pioneer settlement. The following comparison with Stockholm reveals that creative activists, many with links

41 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10683. Forslag til Folketingets beslutning af nedlæggelse af Christiania 2.11.1978, in: Folketingets Forhandlinger II, 1978–1979.

42 Det Danske kultur institut: Christiania in art, at: <http://www.dankultur.dk/Default.aspx?ID=4709> (accessed on 2 July 2013).

43 Charlotte Oestervang: Freetown Christiania, at: <http://www.oestervang.dk/photos/Freetown%20Christiania/> (accessed on 2 July 2013).

44 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10683 Musik Fond, Sange, Poesi.

45 Cathrin Wasshede: Queer Perspectives in Christiania, in: Thorn/Wasshede, pp. 181–190.

to the street theatre movement in Christiania, often played a decisive role in mobilising direct action to occupy urban space.

The Campaign to Rescue Mullvaden and Urban Occupation in Stockholm

The occupation of the “quarter” Mullvaden in Stockholm began in the autumn of 1977. The buildings on Krukmakargatan were constructed in the 1880s and privately owned until 1973 when they were purchased by the municipal housing authority. Krukmakargatan is in the southern part of Stockholm and close to Hornsgatan, a thriving cultural quarter supporting a young and self-consciously bohemian population. Its significance to the city’s alternative scene was established from the late 1960s when *Alternativ Stad* mounted a successful campaign to stop the destruction of older buildings threatened by reconstruction nearby.

By November 1977 sixty people were living in the four houses comprising the quarter Mullvaden. The houses had been condemned by the housing authority as structurally unsound and identified for demolition. Micke Berg, a young photographer who had recently returned from Christiania, was amongst the occupiers. As he recalled “Mullvaden was more than four houses [...] it was a place where those who wished to could appreciate that our modern society is completely idiotically organised”.⁴⁶ Berg’s recollection of Mullvaden as a self-evident and much anticipated crisis of Swedish urban modernity belies the more haphazard reality of contemporary mobilisation, at least initially. As elsewhere a range of interests coalesced during the occupation in 1977. Moreover, in contrast to Berg, many contemporaries were noticeably surprised by the direct action taken at Mullvaden. Linje 19, Stockholm’s youth radio channel acknowledged this as: “rather unusual behaviour in Sweden where people usually use the democratic processes to mount their protests.”⁴⁷ Superficially the occupiers were quick to harness a language that indicated they were mobilised by, or wishing to tap into, a wider societal critique of planning and housing policy. One notable slogan captured by Berg’s striking photo montage read: “Make plans for people not for money.”⁴⁸ But a number of often diffuse ambitions were discernible amongst the occupiers. Some were original residents inhabiting the rather dilapidated buildings. But others had moved to the area because they felt passionate about the rescue of Mullvaden.⁴⁹ Ceci Wickham had been contacted by the Mullvaden “action group” who asked for help to occupy the empty flats. She was not deterred by the rudimentary living arrangements: the four houses and sixty occu-

46 Micke Berg: *Retro*, Helsingfors 1999, p. 34.

47 *Aftonbladet*: 23 November 1977, illegible pagination.

48 Berg, p. 37

49 *Aftonbladet*: 2 November 1977, p. 7.

pants shared one kitchen for an entire year. Many occupants were women, some of them very young. Fifteen year old Marika had been working as a waitress in the old town when her mother had encouraged her to join the occupation. This was her first experience of living away from home and she described how they loved the old buildings with their stoves, high ceilings and uneven walls that they adorned with tapestries and posters.⁵⁰ Eva Bygren was only 13 when she started hanging around the area. As a politically aware teenager she thought the campaign to save these lovely old houses super cool. This was no mere youthful fancy, but proved to be a departure for the beginning of a decade of collective living for Eva. Following the clearance in 1978 Eva joined “a group of hippies” and left Stockholm to join the Skogsnäs Collective in rural Norrland.⁵¹ These youthful reflections contrast to those of Doris, a 40 year old Finnish ballet dancer, who remarked pointedly that “it is possible to be an occupier without being a twenty-something hippie wearing the obligatory Palestinian shawl.” A single mother with two children Doris described herself as “very isolated” before joining the occupation at Mullvaden where she met many friends and felt she had something to strive for.⁵² The noticeable presence of single women and their children amongst the occupiers has been likened to Christiania, where women’s collectives were very prominent. This characteristic allowed both sites to resonate with the alternative living movement’s wider critique of traditional family structures.⁵³ But for occupants who described themselves as homeless the motivation was more likely strategic: the autumn was coming and the buildings were warmer than alternative sources of free housing.

Reaction to the occupiers at Mullvaden was also mixed. For sympathisers, such as journalist Gunilla Wettergren, the agitation was a long anticipated confirmation of Alva Myrdal’s claim that housing forms should shift to accommodate the needs of families with women as productive and economically active citizens.⁵⁴ Wettergren further read the occupation as a legitimate outcry against the corporate characteristics of Swedish housing policy that was moving inexorably towards individual ownership. But the response from Sweden’s tenants’ association was critical of the direct action taken at Mullvaden. They advocated legitimate political processes as the means to influence housing policy, but also complained that the occupants were middle-class dilettantes who had

50 Dagens Nyheter: 21 September 1978, p. 2

51 Ramp: Alternativ livsstil- husockupering och boende i kollektiv, at: http://vetamix.net/video/ramp-alternativ-livsstil-husockupering-boende-kollektiv_1942 (accessed on 2 July 2013). Skogsnäs was one of the many environmental; countryside-based collective houses established in Sweden during the 1970s, many of them declared themselves as „co-operatives“ and were thus eligible for state subsidy.

52 Expressen: 22 September 1978, p. 7.

53 Berg, p. 37.

54 Aftonbladet: 1 November 1977, p. 2.

jumped the housing queue, disadvantaging working-class tenants without the cultural resources required for entry into the esoteric world of collective living.⁵⁵ The class and generational shifts experienced by popular movement in Sweden by the 1970s were thus made visible. The established tenants' movement was historically connected to the Social Democratic Party. In Stockholm the tenant's association was therefore aligned to the consensus over the reconstruction of the city, including the destruction of older areas such as Mullvaden's. By 1978 the municipal authority enjoyed political support for the clearance and naturally promoted equality in housing as the overriding concern. When it transpired that the houses were not, as had been claimed, structurally unsound, they were blamed for standing in the way of the city's welfare provision. Such old houses could not possibly be adapted to suit the needs of either families or disabled people. Thus demolition was unavoidable in the interests of promoting a fair and equal society. The occupiers were cast as obstreperous teenagers, standing in the path of equality in housing and motivated by individual and spurious escapism. After their removal the momentary "psychosis" the occupation evoked would soon subside. After all, the occupiers were unlikely to engage with the real struggle against property speculation, which was in reality no "cosy tea party".⁵⁶

Despite such criticisms the political response to the occupation at Mullvaden did not reflect the pronounced polarisation that Christiania evoked in Copenhagen. Whilst the occupiers enjoyed some marginal support from the local Communist Party, on the whole the consensus that underpinned the earlier destruction of historic areas was also maintained at Mullvaden. Although it took twelve months to realise, action was decisive and unanimous. Whilst Christiania enjoyed much greater public prominence, and thus presented the Danish local and national authorities with more protracted difficulties, the contrast to the successful clearance of Mullvaden in Stockholm is interesting. It provides a marked departure from the characterisation of Sweden's "moment of 1968" a decade earlier, as a negotiated experience over coffee and ginger biscuits. The 'storming' took place on Monday the 18th of September 1978. 150 mounted police were mobilised with additional back-up from police forces in Gothenburg and Malmö. It took two days to empty the building. By then there were 125 occupants, 50 of whom were identified as the leaders of the protest. Many onlookers felt the police had exerted unnecessary force (although nobody was recorded as injured as a result of the action). Demolition was expeditious and the buildings were replaced quickly with flats that boasted lifts and spacious modern living facilities.⁵⁷

The initially diverse characteristics of the occupiers were subsequently eroded as a noticeable inner core created the Mullvaden "action group" and cemented their posi-

55 Aftonbladet: 23 November 1977, illegible pagination.

56 Ibid.

57 Dagens Nyheter: 19 September 1978, p. 3.

tion as leaders of the occupation. Many occupants shared the view that the occupation's importance was more wide-reaching than the immediate concern to rescue the buildings. The "action group" was intended to represent Mullvaden's wider vision of an alternative way of living that would provide a clear contrast to the lives of "ordinary" Swedish tenants living a life of isolated urban anomie. At the very least these ambitious activists expected to initiate a wider discussion about housing policy in the city.⁵⁸ These intentions find echoes in Løvetand Iversen's ambition for citizen activism in Christiania, but the Stockholm case involved a more pronounced role for individuals committed to using art as a means to profile their vision. In addition to a "balloon subcommittee", responsible for organising parties when life in the squat became just too arduous, the centrality of Mullvaden theatre group has been widely acknowledged. Vivi Havia, for instance, was quick to understand the importance of creative activism to the lead occupiers. Havia joined the occupation one month after its inception. She had recently arrived from Norway and as a newcomer in Stockholm felt an affinity with the occupiers at Mullvaden.⁵⁹ But by December the "action group" had adopted a policy of interviewing new occupiers and she was rigorously interrogated before becoming an accepted member of the occupation. Only engaged activists with a genuine interests in the ambitions at Mullvaden were welcomed, itinerant "action seekers" and alienated drug users were turned away as hapless "slumstormers" were less likely to realise the creative ambitions of the occupiers at Mullvaden.

This selective strategy at Mullvaden can be distinguished from Christiania's function as a social refuge for Copenhagen's outsider groups. In part this difference may be attributed to the predominance of creative practices within the occupation at Mullvaden, which early on allowed the occupiers to inhabit both legitimate cultural milieu of Stockholm as well as its bohemian outsider fringes. Jordcirkus, for instance, which produced the *Mullvadsopera* and was responsible for the hallmark use of street theatre to underpin urban demonstrations, was led by prominent figures in Stockholm's legitimate cultural milieu including the actress Marika Lagercrantz. She is the daughter of Olof Gustaf Hugo Lagercrantz (critic, writer and editor of *Dagens Nyheter*), and a founder member of the theatre group. She joined the Mullvaden action group in conjunction with the recording of the *Mullvadsopera*.⁶⁰ As Jordcirkus evolved its founder members forged the creative activism that was to sustain the occupation for a further twelve months. According to Berg this tenacity would have been impossible without the injection of creative energy from Jordcirkus, underpinned in turn by the activism and unbridled energy of a man with exceptional enthusiasm and organisational abilities: "the man who started

58 Aftonbladet: 23 November 1977, illegible pagination.

59 Tidningen Södermalm: Mullvaderna 20 år efteråt, 20 September 1998, pp. 12–13.

60 Berg, p. 34.

the group was an immigrant, an American named Chris Torch”.⁶¹ Torch travelled to Europe in 1975 with Living Theatre, America’s oldest and most established experimental theatre. Together with Lagercranz (and others), he used performance to raise Mullvaden’s profile in a manner that arguably helped the occupiers evade eviction until 1978. As the police approached the houses on the decisive day they were met by a circus act staged by Torch and Juan Aristegui, the acclaimed Spanish/Swedish actor. Momentarily thrown the mounted police retreated to rousing cheers from the many onlookers. A lone policeman returned carrying a telegram addressed to the occupants that read “long live Mullvaden from the people of Christiania”.⁶² In this way the capitulation at Mullvaden assumed a performative quality that complemented Jordcirkus’ highly profiled staging of the *Mullvadsopera* in the weeks leading up to the clearance. This combination of protest, action theatre, social commentary and circus allegedly attracted an audience of 10,000 in support of the occupants. The opera was a street performance but was also recorded and played at *Moderna Museet* in central Stockholm. In Havia’s recollection this creative activism benefited the occupation by providing self-explanatory framework for their life in the squat. There was no need to develop a coherent political concept when action-based street theatre could be used to sustain the morale of the occupiers and raise support through audience participation outside the houses. As she recalls, once she was accepted by the squat she joined a highly organised and mobilised zone of cultural activity.⁶³ Unsurprisingly, Jordcirkus outlived the occupation, subsequently moving its willing troubadours to diverse locations in Stockholm.

As they dispersed so the news of their operatic representation attracted sympathisers of Mullvaden and its street theatre protagonists beyond Stockholm. Thereafter the group travelled abroad, to Copenhagen and elsewhere, subsidising their creative enterprise in part from funds generated by sales of the recorded *Mullvadsopera*. As observed from Christiania, Torch and his associates were helping to transfer the message about community action from the now vanquished occupation to an international platform, merging the ambitions of creative activism with alternative living.⁶⁴ One could concede that this process helped attract attention that exaggerated the significance of the otherwise small-scale occupation in Stockholm: in London representatives of the Squatters’ Union mounted a demonstration in support of Mullvaden outside the Swedish embassy. Likewise in Copenhagen, one hundred demonstrators from the Free Town of Christiania gathered outside the Swedish embassy confronted by mounted police.⁶⁵ The response in

61 Ibid.

62 Dagens Nyheter: 19 September 1978, p. 3.

63 Tidningen Södermalm: 14 September 1998, pp. 12–13.

64 Rigsarkivet København: Arkiv Nr. 10683 Report of the 1977 Community Action Conference, Christiania Copenhagen.

65 Dagens Nyheter: 19 September 1978, p. 3.

London and Copenhagen is suggestive of the largely informal, transnational networks that underpinned these moments of urban activism. Whilst short-lived such developments undeniably benefited the individuals perceived to be carrying forward the ambitions of the squat. Chris Torch and Jordcirkus were celebrated as heroes of the alternative living movement in the decade after the clearance at Mullvaden. Moreover, the subsequent careers of Mullvaden's action group, such as Torch and Lagercrantz, were arguably enriched by their earlier urban activism. Jordcirkus remained active until 1991. Thereafter Torch enjoyed success in the field of government-funded European cultural policy, notably as artistic director at Intercult, a Swedish production and resource institution focused on intercultural performing arts. In this sense his career reflects the established path from bohemian cultural activism to professional creative leadership.⁶⁶ However, as Berg noted, this route was not open to all. There was a clear disparity between the experience of the inner action group and Mullvaden's younger members: "many of them were completely destroyed by the capitulation at Mullvaden and I have a feeling that life has gone rather badly for them."⁶⁷ In many ways this rueful admission recalls the tension between Christiania's citizen activists and its dispossessed inhabitants.⁶⁸ At the same time the experience of the career activists, including Berg and Torch, also underlines that the urban activism of the late 1970s was nourished by highly mobile, arguably nomadic individuals, whose creative ambitions successfully spread the ideals of neighbourhood activism beyond the squat.

Conclusion

Seen against the context of crises in the Nordic welfare housing model, both examples confirm the view of urban activism as an effect of alienation from the participatory expectations of Scandinavian social housing and planning, particularly amongst the young. Moreover, both cases could be seen as reflecting the fragmentation and challenge to the modernist planning discourse. Christiania was self-consciously "planless" and mobilised support amongst established figures in Danish planning, for whom the settlement represented a challenge to the hegemony of modernist planning. Mullvaden was located against consecutive protests against the modernist replanning of Stockholm. Whilst the occupation failed to rescue the "lovely old houses" at Krukmakargatan, local observers suggested that its impact was longstanding. After Mullvaden the Stockholm authorities allegedly pursued a softer and more sympathetic approach to reconstruction, especially

66 Chris Torch, *European Museums and Interculture: responding to challenges in a globalized world*, at: <http://www.europeanmuseumforum.info/elibrary/21-christorch.html> (accessed on 2 July 2013).

67 Berg, p. 34.

68 Thorn/Wasshede/Nilson, p. 19.

where the destruction of historic buildings was concerned.⁶⁹ Both cases can moreover be situated against the legacy of the 1960s countercultural movement which they sustained links to. In Christiania this was more pronounced given that the settlement was much larger and had been initiated at the end of the 1960s, forging links and contacts with key representatives of Denmark's counterculture thereafter. National differences also pertained in so far as Sweden's countercultural movement has been characterised as milder and less clearly centred upon the metropolitan urban radicalism in Denmark. However, the sustained incidents of youth led neighbourhood activism witnessed in Stockholm during the 1970s, including repeated acts of occupation, suggest that consensus surrounding Sweden's inert counterculture might be tempered by more local and specific empirical case studies.

Notwithstanding some clear national differences, there was a noticeably loose reliance upon political strategy across both cases. This was made clear in the connection to the community action network by the end of the decade. As observed by contemporaries this evolved without an underpinning political or intellectual strategy. Despite this loose affinity to political movements, there were two overarching characteristics that invite comparison across these examples of squatting and occupation. The first was the prominence of creative activists, and especially those with a background in Left theatre. The second was the evolution of internal social stratification, which arguably helped to promote certain types of activism at the expense of others. In Christiania this was reflected in the much remarked upon dissonance between citizen activists and alienated hedonists; whilst in Mullvaden we observed how an inner core of occupiers selected members according to their suitability as engaged and committed activists. This stratification may have helped to nourish a community of motivated and mobile members for whom alternative living and community action functioned as a platform to forge connections between otherwise localised examples of street theatre and urban performance. Thus despite the wider attrition of direct action in the urban environment by the end of the 1970s, community activists sought to sustain the language of alternative living as an international conduit for their creative practices.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, both cases attracted occupiers who were predominantly young and who correspond to the wider generational shift which threw up challenges to traditional and especially political, modes of protest movements. Virtually all of the original activists were under forty. The desire to attain space for accommodation and cultural creativity was central to Christiania and Mullvaden. This could be interpreted as instances of a wider youth-led cultural revolt that swept the western world during the late 1960s. But these places were more than Nordic "Haight Ashburies": both were also signalling the apparent failure of social democratic welfare states to respond to profound shifts in lifestyle, family structure and a generational revolt against urban

69 I am grateful to Hans Willgren for this insight.

planning. The inhabitants of Christiania and Mullvaden wanted to *do their own thing* inside space which *they* controlled. The alternative society they aimed to achieve was distinguished by a prominent role for drama, art and music as well as a loose adherence to anarcho-socialist ideals of sharing and communality. They shared this vision with numerous other groups of young people throughout Europe and North America. But they lacked a consciously articulated ideology or schema for political mobilisation: theirs was a movement that was an expression of the rhizome of radical cultural practices that connected many young people in western society during this period, which witnessed the emergence of disenchantment with the post war social settlement. Theirs was a quest for new ways of living in cities, a search for a new urban social and aesthetic structure.

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