

# ‘ON THE PRECIPICE OF A VOLCANO’: NEGOTIATING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE DANISH ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY CHRISTIANIA

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## ABSTRACT

Christiania is the name of a Danish alternative community. In this article I investigate how Christianites, members of Christiania, deal with internal tensions and conflicts. My empirical data suggests that Christianites have developed social mechanisms and practices, in which conflicts accumulate without being resolved. I suggest that these practices are related to the dominant position of community old-timers. In my discussion I employ situational analysis as means to presenting one crisis situation in Christiania. The crisis situation occurred during my fieldwork in Christiania in 2005 and 2006. The first part of my article is about the general features of social life in Christiania. In the second part, one ethnographic example will show how old-timers operate in a specific crisis situation. I use Max Weber's ideas on traditional authority to explain the dominant position of community old-timers.

KEY WORDS: social conflict, situational analysis, traditional authority, alternative community, old-timers.

## ANOTACIJA

Kristianija – tai Danijos alternatyvios bendruomenės pavadinimas. Kristianija buvo įkurta 1971 m. apieistoje karinėje bazėje, netoli Kopenhagos miesto centro. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip Kristianijos nariai sprendžia vidinius tarpusavio prieštaravimus ir kokį vaidmenį sprendžiant konfliktus vaidina Kristianijos senbuviai. Autoriaus surinkta etnografinė medžiaga rodo, kaip Kristianijos narių konstruojami socialiniai mechanizmai akumuliuoja konfliktus. Pagrindinė idėja yra ta, kad Kristianijos senbuviai turi autoritetą, bet neturi galios išspręsti vidinių interesų konfliktų. Pirmoje straipsnio dalyje pristatomas socialinis, politinis kontekstas, taip pat ir pagrindiniai Kristianijos ideologijos principai. Antroje dalyje situacijos analizė išryškina vidinių konfliktų pobūdį, priežastis ir Kristianijos senbuvių vaidmenį. Kristianijos senbuvių dominavimas aiškinamas remiantis Maxo Weberio tradicinio autoriteto (traditional authority) sąvoka.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: socialinis konfliktas, situacijos analizė, tradicinis autoritetas, alternatyvi bendruomenė, bendruomenės senbuviai.

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## Introduction

In this article I am interested in how ‘old-timer’ community members *in Christiania operate as figures of legitimate authority*. I will discuss how, despite the burden of ideological convictions, community old-timers are in a better position to interpret and manipulate collective ideals. The word ideology highlights dynamic, ambiguous and contested social fields which, in order to be reconciled with realities of social world, require some specific knowledge and experience. My argument in this article is that Christianites have created a social system in which conflicts accumulate progressively and without being resolved. I suggest also that this form of dealing with conflicts is related to the dominant position of community old-timers. Using some ethnographic examples I will show how community old-timers negotiate their dominant position, how they strategize and manipulate collective ideals in order to maintain the local regime of rules. My idea

is that the Weberian notion of traditional authority bears some relevance in explaining how old-timers acquire authority in Christiania. The process of accumulation of social conflicts reinforces the dominant position of old-timer members of Christiania community.

This article is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will talk about general features of social life in the alternative community, and thereby introduce the reader to the historical context, the main collective ideas and communal methods used to put the collective ideals in practice. In the second part, I will discuss a crisis situation from my fieldwork in Christiania<sup>1</sup>. The case is a social drama, which escalated after one fire accident. The fire accident destroyed one individual house in Christiania. The house could not be rebuilt, due to a recent legal ban on building new houses in Christiania. We will see how the social drama escalates and initiates tensions in Christiania and how old-timers play significant role in resolving tensions. I will use the concept of “situational analysis” posited by the Manchester school in social anthropology. “Situation is a critical point or complication in the history of a group, and most groups are subdivided into parts that possess varying degrees of autonomy”<sup>2</sup>, in which “we see how various parties and supporters operate and manipulate mystical beliefs of various kinds to serve their interests”<sup>3</sup>. By situational analysis I mean “a collection of events which the analyst is able to construe as connected with one another and which takes place in a relatively restricted time”<sup>4</sup>. The example that I intend to discuss in detail will deal with social consequences of a crisis situation, which occurred because of the natural causes. I will discuss various ways how community members dealt with the natural disaster.

### Historical context

The word ‘Christiania’ refers to a residential area and an alternative ‘community’ near the centre of Copenhagen. Christiania occupies approximately 49 hectares of state-owned land. Considering its small size, the area is densely populated. According to official sources, 878 people were registered as residents in January 2003. 700 people were ‘adults’ and the rest were ‘children’<sup>5</sup>. During the summer, due to guests and visitors, the area leaves an impression of a crowded and a densely populated urban neighbourhood. At the time of fieldwork there were 461 individual household units and 117 family household units, consisting of two adult persons and children. The majority of Christianites have established their homes in former military barracks and ammunition factories (at least 350 adults plus some children), others live in self-build wooden houses, which are constructed in artistic kind of shapes and scattered along the ‘lakes’<sup>6</sup>.

Christiania was established as a result of antiauthoritarian movements. In 1971, hippies, squatters and anarchists broke into the former military base, and proclaimed the ‘Freetown of Christiania’. Members of Christiania declared their beliefs in alternative ‘community’, consensus system based on self-government and without a supervising authority, kollektiv life style. Christianites have established and developed local communal institutions, such as, kindergarten, local hospital, bathing house, alternative enterprises, artistic workshops, bars and restaurants.

<sup>1</sup> I conducted a participant-observation type of study in Christiania from September 2005, until April 2006. Since then I have visited the community on multiple occasions.

<sup>2</sup> TURNER, Victor. *The Forest of Symbols, Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> GLUCKMAN, Max. *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966, p. 265.

<sup>4</sup> MITCHEL, Clyde J. Case and situation analysis. *Sociological Review*, 1983, vol. 31(2), p. 187–211.

<sup>5</sup> Christianiaområdets fremtid – helhedsplan og handlingsplan, Christiania Udvalget, Marts 2004, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Christiania area belonged to the Christianshavn borough of the Copenhagen municipality. Historically, the Christianshavn area was built by the Danish king Christian IV which included a fortification system, consisting of moats and ramparts. Until this day moats and ramparts are part of Christiania landscape.

The social life in the 'community' has been much televised and portrayed in numerous journalist articles. During the time of my fieldwork from September 2005, until April 2006 1859 newspaper articles were published in Denmark ([www.infomedia.com](http://www.infomedia.com)) on various topics and issues in Christiania. Christianites are famous in all of Denmark for staging peaceful, colourful and cheerful demonstrations<sup>7</sup> and for performances by the alternative theatre Solvognen. They are active in organizing music events. Wooden self built squatter houses, constructed from recycled materials, are praised by local and international architects for aesthetics of minimalist house design. Christianites are also credited for being ecology-minded.

Some objects, such as Christiania bicycles, produced in local alternative workshops, have earned Christianites a reputation for creativity and innovation. Moreover, Christiania is a world-wide famous tourist attraction. Hundreds of thousands of people visit Christiania every year to explore the alternative life-style. Christiania hosts much admired restaurants, bars and venues for music events.

From the moment it was established, Christianites faced a pressure from the government. The government identifies Christianites as 'illegal settlers' who have no legal right to occupy the area and, indeed, public support and admiration was not enough to bring about a more permanent resolution of the property rights dispute. Some makeshift agreements were signed between community representatives and state officials. Since 1971 at least two 'new' Christiania laws have been passed in Folketinget, the Danish parliament, with the most recent law being adopted in 2004<sup>8</sup>.

Members of Christiania were less successful in defending their case in the Danish law courts than in achieving public support. Back in the seventies, the High Court passed a resolution, in which Christiania claims for autonomy were rejected and which reinstated the Danish state as the sole owner of the area<sup>9</sup>. Subsequently, the ban for building new houses in the area was introduced. Recently, the government calls for reinforcement of law and order in the Christiania area was reflected in a new Christiania normalization strategy. Since the new law was introduced, Christianites were subjected to regular police raids, which succeeded in closing down the illegal open-air hash market. The new law has empowered the Palaces and Properties Agency<sup>10</sup>, to represent state's interests in the dispute.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, on 1 of April 1976 there were 20 000 people demonstrating against the liquidation policy near Christiansborg, the building of the Danish Parliament.

<sup>8</sup> According to the new Christiania law, introduced in 2004, Christiania should be normalized and become a part of 'normal' Danish society. The government imposed some demands. The local system of self government was labeled as 'corrupt' and should be replaced with 'transparent', 'efficient' and a 'responsible' model of administration with an executive council. The authority of local decision-making institutions, *fællesmøde* and *områdemøde* were to be curtailed in regard to decisions concerning the distribution of property especially. New residents had to apply for residency through the Governmental body, Palaces and Properties agency directly. In addition the ban on construction of houses was reinforced and all house renovation projects were to be approved by the Palaces and Properties agency. According to the government there was enough space for an extra 20 000 m<sup>2</sup> space for new building projects in Christiania. According to the authorities 'illegally built' houses were to be removed (Fremtidige Organisations-og Ejerformer på Christiania Området 2005)

To sum up it is not surprising that most of Christianites identified the normalization plans as threatening 'local way of life' and resolved to various means of how to obstruct government's actions.

<sup>9</sup> KRARUP, Ole. *The free town of Christiania and the role of courts*. Journal of the Sociology of Law, 1982, vol. 10, p. 31–47.

<sup>10</sup> Palaces and Properties (Slots- og Ejendomsstyrelsen, <http://www.ses.dk>) agency is under auspices of the Ministry of Finance and is responsible for administration of state owned property in Copenhagen and elsewhere.

What the authorities apparently lacked from the beginning and what members of Christiania enjoyed was public support from the Danish population<sup>11</sup>. The slogan Forsvar Christiania (Save Christiania) attracts many outsiders to join in and fight for Christiania's cause. For example, during my fieldwork some outsiders established one NGO, the aim of which was to defend 'the national treasure' in Denmark. Members of the NGO (some of them were members of other NGOs) raised money (actually they managed to raise approx. 400.000 DKK) and invested their time in reading official documents, writing critical newspaper articles and letters of support.

To say that the government is the only actor who opposes the existence of Christiania would be half of the story. Although, at the time of my fieldwork the opponents of Christiania did not have a formal organization, there were some individual voices critical of the alternative community life-style. Their preferred strategy is writing critical articles in Danish daily newspapers. Normally, critics emphasize the criminal nature of Christiania, the illegal soft drug trade, the irrational decision-making processes, and the high rate of social problems. People wearing t-shirts on which was silk-screened, 'just close that shit' appeared in streets of Copenhagen in spring 2005. I was not able to trace the origin of the t-shirts though my community informants and other community supporters said that "they must have been some right wing orientated construction workers".

When the new law was passed in the *Folketinget* community representatives were invited to participate in negotiations over the future of Christiania area. Eight senior members of Christiania were appointed to represent community interests in the negotiations with the state authorities and, in 2004, they established *Christiania Negotiation Group*<sup>12</sup>. In addition to that, the common meeting – the highest authority in Christiania – appointed two experienced lawyers: both with considerable experience in Christiania legal matters.

## Ideology

Members of Christiania share a set of utopian and anti-capitalist ideas. The main conceptual unit in the local ideology is that of a territorial village in the middle of the city of Copenhagen and political self-reliance.

The most important manifestation of the collective beliefs has been captured in the community manifesto. My informants stressed that the manifesto is the only written text which captures the main idea of the 'community'. The community manifesto dates back to 1971. It was written by a group of first timer settlers. It says that the goal of Christiania is "to create a self-governing society whereby each and every individual holds themselves responsible over the wellbeing of the entire community. Our society is to be economically self-sustaining and, as such, our aspiration is to be steadfast in our conviction that psychological and physical destitution can be averted. Devised by Sven, Kim, Kim, Ole and Jacob"<sup>13</sup>.

My informants referred to the community manifesto as having a symbolic value for the community life-style. The manifesto postulates the creation of a society, without physical and psychological destitution. This formula represents 'an ideal of the true Christiania'. On numerous occasions, I discussed with my informants what an ideal of Christiania should look like if Christianites were to enjoy a peaceful life. The ideal of the true Christiania is depicted as a utopian self sufficient village,

<sup>11</sup> NECHUSHTAN, G. *Ways of Changing: A Study of Alternative Communities*. Tel Aviv: Drukkerij Kibbutz Organisation T.K.M., 1987, p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> a.k.a CF, *Fremtidige Organisations-og Ejerformer på Christiania Området 2005*, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Collective Manifesto of Christiania 1971*.

like a face-to-face community, members of which 'know each other'. A model of an extended family is stressed. But in this case, the word 'family' would refer to the community as a whole and not to a specific kinship system. My informants emphasized the importance of mutual support, affinity with other human beings, and the surrounding environment, as well as the importance of consensus in making collective decisions. Consensus was used in a narrow political sense, as a form of self-administration or self-government of local resources, without the executive power either as formal leadership or council. So ideally, in order to make a decision, members of Christiania community assemble in *fællesmøde* and gloss their verbal or silent consent. My informants told me, that if there were some voices against the decision, then that decision would be considered as not valid and the issue would require 'another round of talking through'.

It is universally recognized, that under the circumstances of 'political pressure', it was impossible to practically achieve an absolute harmony and solidarity in the *fælleskab* ('community'). The corrupt nature of human beings, government pressure, and tensions between different generations of community members are the main obstacles why the perfect condition is not possible to achieve.

This, however, does not mean that Christianites have abandoned hopes in trying to put at least some of ideological principles in practice. I have documented highly sophisticated ideas on how to be politically self-reliant. At the centre of this notion is the local decision-making system and a regime of so called *regler*, *procedurer* and *systemer*<sup>14</sup>.

Politically, Christiania is divided into the so called *områder*<sup>15</sup>. At the time of fieldwork, the number of *områder* was 15. Each area has semi-autonomous decision-making institutions, the so called, *møder*<sup>16</sup>. Adult members of Christiania assemble in meetings to make important political decisions. In the context of this article the most significant meetings taking place within the Christiania area are *husmøde* (house meeting), *områdemøde* (area meeting), *fællesmøde* (common meeting). Christianites perceive *fællesmøde* as having a unique status in the political self-reliance since *fællesmøde* is an occasion where, ideally, all Christianites gather together to make collective decisions. Access to such meetings for outsiders is denied. Ideally, every Christianite should take a keen interest in decisions adopted in *fællesmøde*. *Områdemøde* is considered as having more authority than *husmøde*, but less than *fællesmøde*. But *områdemøde* remains an important occasion, where ownership rights of houses are negotiated and houses are distributed.

Private ownership of houses in Christiania is abolished and a model of collective ownership has been adopted. As a result, the inheritance rights are not exercised by members of the same family but require a consensus from neighbors in *områdemøde*. If a person dies or decides to leave than his/her family will receive no compensation for the house and family members will be able to claim personal belongings, such as, clothes, furniture, books, only. A local saying "I will not be able to bring walls along if I move away" exemplifies the fact that if a Christianite for some reason decides to move out the house will be taken over by *fælleskab* ('community'). Ideally, in the case when members of the same family decide to become Christianites they would have to apply for the house in the similar procedure as outsiders.

Furthermore, the notions *regler*, *procedurer* and *systemer* represent an ideological method of putting Christiania ideals to practice. These ideas had a power over peoples' conduct. Actually, I

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<sup>14</sup> The emic concepts *regler* (Sing. en regel; plr. regler in English rule/rules), *procedurer* (Sing. en procedure; plr. procedurer in English procedure/procedures) and *systemer* (sing. et system; plr. systemer in English system/systems) refer to methods of putting utopian ideals in practice.

<sup>15</sup> Sing. et område; plr. områder – (English area/areas)

<sup>16</sup> Sing. et møde; plr. møder – (English meeting/meetings)

was not able to record even a single *fællesmøde* in which people would not have a discussion over the implications of these notions. The usage of the concepts in everyday life and in community meetings surpasses the local notion of *drømme*<sup>17</sup>. In fact, my ethnographic data reveals that social spaces for *drømme* are increasingly limited; instead the social focus is on *møder* and *regler*.

It is not surprising that the rigidity of the regime of rules is even more obvious in experiences of newcomers, who stress that minds and hearts of community old-timers are preoccupied more with highly structured daily routines and established *regler* than with *drømme*.

To give the reader an example of how ponderous the notion of *regler* might become I will discuss an example from the B *kollektiv*<sup>18</sup>. Thereby, I would like to emphasize again that everyday life of the B collectivists<sup>19</sup> is structured by the notion *regler*. A person, who lives in the B collective, is expected to act in accordance with ‘mutual agreements’ and fulfil his/her ‘responsibilities’ as a member of the *kollektiv* and as a member of Christiania. A collectivist is expected to take part in every aspect of running the *kollektiv*. The word ‘little society’ (*et lille samfund*), that people use to describe the alternative life-style in the B collective, represents highly routinized social life in Christiania. One old-timer from the B collective told me once: “in other places around Christiania they fight, but in our place we are highly efficient (*systematiseret*)”. A collectivist is expected to know how to be in charge of the following *regler*: to pay the membership fee on time, to prepare dinner and to perform cleaning duties on time, to pay the water, electricity and gas bills, to clean the guest room and the collective spaces. In addition, participation in the administration of collective’s resources is expected, as well as it is expected that a member contributes with 5 hours of volunteer work per week in performing various tasks, such as running the bathing house. The distribution of responsibilities takes place during *husmøde*. An old-timer sends a list with collective tasks and collectivists would be asked to sign up for the duties.

Eating dinner together is the central routine moment in the collective. During this moment, collectivists would meet with each other and socialize. And this is why being absent from the dinner occasion is not considered as a positive attitude.

The food is cooked by a person who is responsible for taking “a dinner preparation shift” in the B collective. The table is large enough to room all collectivists (among them four children) and there is just enough room for maybe one or two guests. The dinner is to be served precisely at around 18.30 in the evening. A person is expected to participate unless s/he has a reason not to do so. In case he/she is absent from the dinner occasion s/he is expected to inform a collectivist who prepares the dinner, alternatively s/he writes on a blackboard, positioned in the common room, informing others that s/he is going to be absent. The preparation of food as well as other tasks is often framed as the ‘team work’ (sng. *hold*, plr. *holder*) of two people or more. For example one day shift includes: one collectivist on the team responsible for cleaning the common room and another doing shopping, cooking, serving food and washing dishes. The mutual agreement in the

<sup>17</sup> Sing. en drøm; plr “drømme” (English dream/dreams)

<sup>18</sup> The word *kollektiv* refers to a residential collectivity where a group of people chooses to live in a close proximity and to develop/share common responsibilities. The social bonds in *kollektiv* is based both on family relationship metaphors and, more significantly, collective responsibilities. The B *kollektiv* is one of the most politically significant social units. It controls one of the largest buildings in the area. In the three-storey former ammunition factory, it occupies the entire upper floor and the attic. On the ground floor and on the first floor there are spacious communal spaces (officially available for any Christianite). On the ground floor there is a movie theatre, which also served as the main venue for the common meetings. In addition to that the local bathing house is closely connected to the B collective. It is said that the B collective’s responsibility is to run work demanding and unprofitable bathing house.

<sup>19</sup> In this passage the word collectivist refers to a resident in the B *kollektiv*.

B collectives was that the expenses of shopping should not exceed the amount of 300 DKK. In a case it was exceeded, the responsible person was expected to cover the rest from his own pocket.

Ideally, there is an absence of surveillance among the collectivists. However this does not mean that control measures are absent. If a collectivist in the B collective fails to contribute with 5 hours of work s/he will have pay fines amounting to 25 DKK per hour to *timekassen*<sup>20</sup> (new comers ironically call it the punishment kitty or *straffekassen*). “We do not call you lazy in our collective, we do not say that you are stupid or asocial”, one old-timer told me during the house meeting, “but if you do not want to work 5 hours per week you have to pay”. The money saved up in the punishment treasury is used for financing festivities in the house and to cover expenses of renovation or reparation of various utensils. In addition, the isolated environment, where people live in a close proximity to each other, is a control mechanism in itself. Gossips and rumours can damage person’s good name.

This system could be extended to the social domain of the community lifestyle. Indeed, there are other *regler* about how to call in meetings, how to conduct them, who can call in, when to call in, when the meeting is legitimate and when decisions might be considered as illegal and so on and so forth.

The example of the regime of rules that I have described tells us about the methods that Christianites use to set the utopian community in practice. These methods neither rest on written texts nor *drømme*/idealism. Instead, the above discussed example from the B collective demonstrates that people in Christiania rely heavily on highly sophisticated regime of rules.

### **An ethnographic example**

In this part of this article I address one ethnographic example which will show how tensions in Christiania are redressed in a form of accumulation rather than resolution. In discussing this example I am using the situational analysis. The situational analysis will reveal the social significance of old-timer in dealing with local tensions. Tensions in Christiania are dealt through accumulation rather than resolution. Accumulation of tensions reminds me of a practice of storing old shoes in the closet. So, these tensions are stored in memory rather than resolved. I stumbled upon one story quite accidentally, during a dinner occasion, when one of my informants Martin, a 46 year-old, carpenter and social worker, told that as he was heading home from work he had met a woman who publicly accused Martin of ruining her life. Only when I spoke about the event to other Christianites did I begin to understand the social significance of this story.

There was a fire accident in 2003 as a result of which several houses burned down. Benjamin and his girlfriend (the woman who accused Martin) were the owners of one of the burned houses. Benjamin, 36 year-old and without any formal education, had a reputation of a troublemaker. As a result of this fire accident Benjamin felt that he had a right to build a new house. Benjamin also felt that the community was obliged to compensate for his loss and support his actions. This accident positioned Christianites in a difficult situation. On the one hand, they sympathized with Benjamin’s loss, but, on the other hand, Christianites felt that they were lacking official authority to build a new house. This was so because of a recent ban for building houses in the area compounded by the fact that the makeshift agreement, that gave Christiania autonomy, was about to expire. It was seen that building a new house might weaken the community’s position in the forthcoming negotiations with

<sup>20</sup> The emic notion *timekassen* refers to the notion of treasury. People expected to pay fines to the collective treasury (*kassen*) if they are not able to fulfill responsibilities.

the state. So, here we can see how Christianites are caught in a paradox from which they have to find a way out. Had they accepted the moral obligation and decided on building a new house for Benjamin, they would have jeopardized their own rights and would have weakened their position in the negotiations. But, on the other hand, Christianites could not simply reject Benjamin's claim because of the heavy ideological undertones that Benjamin used in arguing for his case. Thus, in subsequent debates, I was not able to record that Christianites were openly rejecting Benjamin's claim, though I documented very few voices that publicly supported him. This lack of support and unwillingness to reject left Benjamin in a confused and unclear situation. He decided to take matters in his own hands and he called for *fællesmøde*. Only about 15 people attended the meeting, most of these were his supporters. However the situation remained unresolved, because typically about 50 people attend *fællesmøde* and further there was no declaration of official support. Nevertheless as a consequence of his supporters rallying around Benjamin, Benjamin began to rebuild his house. Just as he had managed to construct a wooden structure for his house, predictably, his actions were noticed by the state authorities. The authorities sent him some official letters ordering the immediate removal of the structure. From that point on the situation escalated into a truly public matter.

Martin was among those who raised the issue in an *områdemøde* and it was found out that Benjamin violated *procedurer* for calling in *fællesmøde* (as Benjamin did not coordinate his actions with neighbours). This generated a new crisis. But this was also a moment where the influence and skills of Aage, a 55 year-old educated carpenter and community old-timer, played a crucial role. Though some Christianites portrayed Aage as overzealous member trying "harsh Stalinist" methods for implementing and control of *regler*, Aage's life long contribution to Christiania, and in particular to the development of the B collective, was undoubtedly recognized and respected, even by his harshest opponents. Prior to *fællesmøde*, called in by Martin and his supporters, Aage had not been involved in this matter in anyway. At the meeting Aage was publicly visible and he argued in a calm manner that Benjamin violated *regler* for building a house, since to do so requires a collective consensus. Benjamin spoke about that it was an official decision and Aage argued that it was not. People present at this meeting were persuaded at Aage's argument and agreed that Benjamin's actions were illegal. To add to the virtuosity of Aage's political performance Aage had promised Benjamin his support in finding a new house. The reputation of Aage, as a dedicated and hard-working Christianite was enough to convince Benjamin to accept the new decision.

In 2005, I observed Aage and Benjamin together in a friendly manner tearing the structure of Benjamin's house and sharing food and alcohol in the process. Benjamin and his girlfriend were allowed to temporarily settle in a little room next to the local supermarket. Aage's support failed to provide Benjamin with a new house.

In September 2005 there was a house available in Christiania. What made Benjamin furious was that the house was given to someone who had a very direct connection to the B collective. People who got the house were a couple of well-established Christianites, Lisa 40 year-old school teacher and Max, 45 year old carpenter. Lisa and Max had a very positive reputation among neighbours, in contrast to that of Benjamin, who, generally, was perceived as an aggressive and unpredictable person. But in the process of allocation of the house, it was not publicly clear that Aage directly supported Lisa and Max, or whether he was involved at all. Aage did everything in order to downplay his role in the process of allocating the house. He distanced himself from *procedurer* and refused to showing up *områdemøde*. Aage distanced himself by arguing that the house did not belong to the *område* where he lived, and therefore he had no influence.



But it is not difficult to see why Benjamin was furious and felt betrayed by the 'community'. Benjamin made his voice loud and clear that 'Christiania ruined his life'. This event threatened Aage's position in two ways. The first one had to do with Aage's personal reputation as a reliable old-timer, who is able to live up to his promises. Secondly, Aage was concerned that this issue might undermine his credibility to represent community's interests in the negotiations with the state. Rumours began to circulate that Aage was among those Christianites who wanted to save their necks and strike a deal with the Danish government and abandon true Christiania ideals. To save the situation Aage came up with some solutions. Firstly, it was discovered that the former youth house lay derelict and potentially could be renovated and used as a form of compensation for Benjamin. In addition to that Aage had an opportunity to introduce a new *regel* and he argued for a need of the so-called Catastrophe fund, which would pay compensations to members in cases such as Benjamin's. One more *fællesmøde* was held and Aage managed to persuade others that Benjamin's case threatens the public image of Christiania, and that it was a matter of collective importance that the compensation in a form of the former youth club should be offered to Benjamin. The so called *Catastrophe fund* was established. And, indeed, the fund allocated some resources to renovate the former youth club. This might have resolved the tension between Benjamin's interests and Aage's promises but it also escalated some new problems. The problem was that Aage bypassed the decision making procedure. Voices of people living next to the youth house were loud during the next *fællesmøde* and some announced that they would refuse to pay their membership fees if Benjamin, the notorious troublemaker, would be given the right to settle in their area. And the second problem was related to one more dissatisfied faction, which was connected to Martin. On the one hand, Benjamin and his girlfriend blamed Martin for being responsible for calling in the area meeting, but, on the other hand, Martin and his supporters accused Aage on the basis of ideological ground and wrote some critical articles in the local newspaper criticizing 'the structure of hidden leadership' in Christiania.

### **Discussion of the ethnographic example and concluding remarks**

In this example we can see how a natural disaster triggered a social drama in Christiania. It might be argued that the situation is about a minor event in the history of the alternative community. Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that such accidents happen on a regular basis<sup>21</sup> and Christianites are used to dealing with such events. Thus, the situation might lack force to seriously threaten the group from within. But it shows also that well-established Christianites are not able efficiently to resolve the conflicts. We can see how even such a minor event challenges the stability of the local order. Any attempt at resolution triggers a new conflict, which in its own way triggers a new one and so on and so forth. This process of accumulation has no end, and in a long run, it affects interpersonal relations in Christiania. I have multiple examples in my field notes of Christianites stereotypically attributing the lack of politically active citizens in Christiania to a closed and cold nature of the Danish people. However, after looking deeper in Benjamin's case, I find it difficult to accept this stereotype at the face value. I hope that from my description it is clear why Benjamin would be willing to maintain reserved relations with Aage.

The situational analysis highlights the social significance of the local regime of *regler, procedurer* and *møder*. These notions should be considered as the key words in the methods adopted by

<sup>21</sup> During the fieldwork I was able to record and document one more accident, this time related to social drama in Christiania during the 2005 municipality election campaign.

Christianites to put utopian ideals in practice. In our case we see little evidence of idealism. Instead, the situational analysis shows how much energy and power people in Christiania invest in designing *regler* and in searching for socially acceptable obligations. I have suggested that in my case the Weberian theory of legitimate authority possess some explanatory value. Max Weber, in his book *the theory of social and economic organization*, distinguished three ideal types of legitimate authority<sup>22</sup>. The first one is “based on rational grounds, resting on a belief in the ‘legality’ of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority)”. The second is based on traditional grounds, “an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them”. Finally, the last type of legitimate authority is based on charismatic grounds – “on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patters or order revealed or ordained by him”<sup>23</sup>. Here, I am not going to discuss my case in relation to the charismatic authority, since I want to emphasize some interesting parallels in relation to the legal and traditional authorities.

The local concepts of *regler*, *procedurer*, *systemer*, *møder*, *områder* might suggest that the alternative community is some kind of bureaucratic enterprise. Indeed, there might be a solid argument for such an assumption. We can see that in the crisis situation people’s actions evolve in a rigid institutional framework. I have mentioned and demonstrated how people address tensions through institutions of *fellesmøde* and *områdemøde*. We also see how the idea of the Catastrophe fund is introduced as a means of addressing potential conflicts. This shows some attempt at creating an ‘impersonal order’. ‘Impersonal order’ is the cornerstone notion in the Weberian idea of legal authority. According to this model, individual roles are limited to the social functions and divided according to the strict lines of competence, with clear cut individual positions in the hierarchical system and a system of punishment and rewards in the form of promotion.

However, it must be obvious that the strict limitations of impersonal order do not govern Aage’s actions. First of all, he does not occupy an officially recognized position. He is not a formal adjudicator, elected and empowered to reconcile a crisis situation. There is plenty of social space for Aage to navigate and make personal decisions, when to step in to ‘help Benjamin’ and when to distance in a case things do not run according to his plan. Here, I would like to suggest that the idea of regime of *regler* in Christiania has to do more with the highly routinized methods used to put utopian ideals in practice rather than with the bureaucratic nature in the Weberian sense. So if we applied the model of legal authority, it would provide us with only a superficial explanation. If we look at how actors operate in practice we should consider another type of legitimate authority – the traditional. I suggest that the concept of traditional authority has more explanatory power in my case. According to Weber traditional authority allows the possibility for “a system of imperative coordination, called ‘traditional,’ if legitimacy is claimed for it and believed in on the basis of the sanctity of the order and that the attendant powers of control as they have been handed down from the past, ‘have always existed’”<sup>24</sup>. In our case the idea of *regler* would stand for traditional authority which is in the continual process of being made. This tradition is oral and heavily rests on local ideology. However, ambiguous ideas might be in practice, they are closely linked to what is expected

<sup>22</sup> WEBER, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: The Free Press, 1964, p. 328.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 328.

<sup>24</sup> WEBER, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: The Free Press, 1964, p. 341.

from a Christianite. His/her advance in the local hierarchy will be judged on the basis of his/her abilities to fulfil them in a socially acceptable manner, that is, in respect to already existing local routines. In addition to that, we can see that *regler* in Christiania are not impersonal, as they would be in the case of a Danish bureaucratic organization. The local social drama discussed above shows that Christiania *regler* are closely related to personal qualities such as skills, knowledge and experiences. In this situation, we can see how Aage is able to navigate in the regime of rules, as a result of which decisions backed by less important members are declared illegal, promises are made, and reputations are saved or damaged. Aage's traditional authority can not be ignored. It allows him to bypass the already established system of rules, but in a manner which does not challenge the order of regime in Christiania. He bends the rules in order to defend them against internal critics and external pressure. Bending the rules also means an introduction of a new procedure, namely, the Catastrophe fund, which makes the Danish alternative community more rule-oriented. This strategy saves the day for Aage and allows him to represent community interests in the negotiations with the state. But there is a price to pay. The tensions accumulate and Aage has no power to resolve them.

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## **KAITA IR TĘSTINUMAS KRISTIANIJOS ALTERNATYVIOJE BENDRUOMENĖJE DANIOJE**

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### **S a n t r a u k a**

Straipsnis parašytas remiantis etnografiniu lauko tyrimu, atliktu Kristianijoje 2005-2006 m. Straipsnį sudaro dvi dalys. Pirmoje dalyje trumpai apžvelgiamas bendras Kristianijos istorinis, politinis ir socialinis kontekstas. Taip pat aptariami esminiai Kristianijos ideologijos principai. Antroje dalyje pristatoma situacijos analizė (situational analysis), kuri išryškina pagrindinę autoriaus tezė, jog konfliktai Kristianijos socialinėje sistemoje kaupiasi ir nėra efektyviai sprendžiami.

Kristianija – tai Danijos alternatyvios bendruomenės pavadinimas. 1971 m. grupė aktyvistų Kopenhagos miesto centre užėmė apleistą karinę bazę ir paskelbė alternatyvios bendruomenės manifestą. Nuo pat gyvavimo pradžios alternatyvi bendruomenė susiduria su vidiniais prieštaravimais, interesų konfliktais ir socialinėmis problemomis. Be to, Danijos valdžios požiūris į Kristianiją yra tradiciškai neigiamas ir ji siekia uždrausti bendruomenės gyvavimą. Kristianijos narių tikslas yra sukurti alternatyvią bendruomenę – „kaimo tipo gyvenvietę Kopenhagos miesto centre“. Idealiu atveju bendruomenės nariai siekia apriboti bendruomenės narių privačios nuosavybės teises ir sukurti alternatyvią sistemą, paskirstant vietinius išteklius. Iš esmės tokius tikslus galima klasifikuoti kaip utopinius ir antikapitalistinius. Kristianijos ideologiją būtina analizuoti dviem dimensijomis. Pirmoji – rašytinė, jai reikėtų priskirti bendruomenės manifestą, kurį, kaip minėta, 1971 m. sukūrė bendruomenės senbuviai. Būtent bendruomenės manifestas Kristianijos nariams įkūnija Kristianijos pradžią. Antroji apima kolektyvinius metodus, kurie, skirtingai nuo rašytinio dokumento, remiasi abstrakčiomis žodinėmis sąvokomis – vadinamosiomis Kristianijos taisyklėmis (Christiania regler). Autoriaus tezė yra ta, kad žodinės dimensijos egzistavimas sudaro prielaidas tradiciniam autoritetui atsirasti ir egzistuoti.

Antra straipsnio dalis – situacijos analizė. Socialinė drama kyla po to, kai Kristianijoje sudega namas. Konfliktas kyla neišvengiamai, nes bendruomenės nariai jaučia moralinį įsipareigojimą kompensuoti žalą nukentėjusiam nariui už prarastą namą, tačiau jie negali atstatyti namo dėl kolektyvinių įsipareigojimų valstybei. Situacijos analizė išryškina bendruomenės senbuvių vaidmenį, bandant suvaldyti susidariusius interesų konfliktus. Aiškindamas situacijos pasekmes, autorius vartoja Maxo Weberio tradicinio autoriteto sąvoką. Ši sąvoka yra tinkama aiškinti senbuvių dominavimo formą.