

# **Projection of Christiania**

**Recommendation of strategies and concrete actions to take for a general improvement**

**November 2003**

## Conclusion of the audit

This proposition follows “Christiania in Perspective“, an extended analysis of Christiania as an organisational form, in which we have given special attention to its entrepreneurial value and creative dynamism, using a model of analysis usually dedicated to audit private companies.

We thus decided to leave aside its purely ideological or political aspect and to look at Christiania as a tangible living organism, creating value and meaning that we have tried to put in perspective.

We did however not forget to consider its historical value and influences.

In that process we pointed out an interesting parallel between Christiania and the United States at an early age which were built by “all the black sheep“ of Europe, kept throughout their history a minimal central state, cultivated creation and entrepreneurship and represented hope and alternative to the rest of the world.

We finally considered that Christiania was an interesting model of a self-managed society, relevant for private companies, and able to cultivate a strong creation and production rhythm.

As a fair diagnosis, this in-depth analysis has led us to identify the strong assets of the free city as much as we have allowed ourself to severely criticize some other aspects.

The final diagnosis is as follows :

- Christiania is the fruit of a healthy, creative and resistant dynamic,
- Christiania has produced a very original, valuable and well-knit urban fabric and organisation model.
- Christiania is a wise, self-managed, self-normalizing and self-funded long-term development project.
- Christiania is an inspiring, entertaining and free-style model of entrepreneurship and lifestyle.

So Christiania should be preserved, supported and maintained as a valuable national asset.

But :

- Christiania should persue its legalisation process to be better integrated in the Danish state.
- Christiania needs to regulate an inter-generational issue.
- Christiania has to preserve itself from too conservative or too commercial strategies.
- Christiania should challenge itself culturally and not sell itself short.

Before advising specific actions to be taken, we will first consider different strategic scenarios and explain why a solely urbanistic approach is not sufficient.

Then our recommendation will consist of concrete actions that should lead Christiania in the right direction.

## Strategy

Let's consider different possible strategies of valuing Christiania.

If the Danish Government decide to "close" Christiania, the implicit strategy of valuing Christiania will only consist in valuing it as "a place to live".

The strategy will then be one of regular urban planning of a regular neighbourhood without specific concern being made to the local population and culture.

This strategy could eventually be chosen if we take into account that the real estate market is currently very high in Copenhagen and that new construction should be made.

But because Christiania resists so well and the situation is so complex, "closing" Christiania will certainly require a few years and no emergency scenario can be wisely planned here.

On the contrary, an easy emergency real estate plan could be made in the area behind Christiania - further along Refshalevej after Margrethe Holm, because the area is still very empty and has no particular local life.

If, however, this strategy was chosen, it will possibly accelerate the gentrification process (normalisation) and, little by little, kill the cultural life and reduce the touristic value.

In twenty years time, Christiania will look like a normal area as urban planners will certainly be keen on rationalising the space well.

As a normal area, the real estate prices will reflect the level of the standard chosen in the architectural plan.

Concerning the potential financial return on investment in such a plan, it is difficult to measure the added value, all the more it is not recommended to make price projections at a time like now where prices are at an historical high.

If Christiania becomes a normal neighbourhood, we should add that Copenhagen will lose a major spot of attractiveness for international visitors.

It will also kill the hope symbol Christiania represents, especially in a country with such a high suicide rate.

So we decide to reject this scenario because it doesn't reduce any problems, damages all the other values of Christiania, and will probably be very time, energy, money and image consuming.

Even though the government were tempted to follow this road, the only way to do it would be through a scary, very unpopular police intervention, with the problem of moving an entire community, dealing with the media and so on.

This final solution would be a shame to see in a democratic European country.

Because very few politicians would want to assume such a decision, it would take a very long time to be made, if ever, and we think that the most likely scenario will end in a freezing of the dialogue between Christiania, which has already hired a lawyer, and the government. During this “freeze“, as hope and the ownership feeling will decline, as many of them are tired of resisting, Christianites will stop investing themselves in their place and in ten years Christiania will be devoid of psychological harassment.

That would be such a shame□

We consider that the current situation is at the beginning of this possible path.

If this scenario happens, we could also see Christianites defending themselves and resisting well by using legal arms□ creating a foundation, protecting their name as an entertainment and cultural services brand, and developing some of Christiania’s services everywhere in Copenhagen.

Christianites have a strong entrepreneurial skill.

So if the city doesn’t survive, the brand will certainly survive and still be strongly present in medias and in the country, all the more that Christianites have shown amazing talents to deal with the media and will be good at playing “political victims“ and gain audience by doing so.

(Philosophically, symbols have a natural tendency toward eternity□).

Another strategy could be to decide to preserve Christiania with its original flavour as a testimony to the 70’s culture and spirit. This would consist in valuing Christiania’s historical value in priority.

This strategy would eventually be the one of numbers of Christianites from the older generation.

But because culture is an ongoing movement and because Christiania’s aesthetic is already dated, we think that this strategy will lead to two possibilities. In twenty years time, Christiania will be either like an Amish village stuck in the past with a very stiff and consevative system, or like a theme park dedicated to entertainment and tourism, similar to Tivoli, with actors being hired to play old hippies, almost like in a Legoland□

Both scenarios are scary.

As we mentioned in the audit, this strategy will consist in a kind of museumification of Christiania and will kill its life.

Another strategy could be to decide to enhance Christiania’s “alternative“ value as a social and cultural experiment.

This strategy has been chosen by previous Danish governments and now proves insufficient□

Christiania’s “alternative“ culture has declined in quality for many reasons we explained in the audit, and socially, Christiania doesn’t provide a solution to more important current social issues like

immigration for example. And the current generation problem prevents us from considering Christiania as a pure place to resist and create, since a conservation dynamic has now entered the area.

So we also decline this strategy alone.

The fact that it is not possible to value Christiania under only one aspect is an immediate consequence of its dense, strong, original, and well-knit urban fabric, wrapping a resistant living organism.

As the situation appears quite complex, our strategy will thus consist in playing in a subtle way with and in involving Christianites' own dynamic.

Rather than trying to physically control Christiania, it will be about softly channeling its natural process through economical, legal and fiscal requirements.

So rather than offering flat solutions that may answer to problems one by one or improve aspects separately as we tested and declined through other strategy angles, we'll suggest various actions whose dynamic may have several positive consequences and open doors in the future.

As we said in the introduction of the audit, we want a maximum effect with a minimal implementation (homeopathical yield).

## Recommendations

### 1/ Negotiation of a territorial concession managed by a foundation.

Now that Christiania has stabilized its activities and has entered into a “normalisation process” by itself, these activities should be organised carefully in proper legal frames with regards to the Danish Law.

Rather than an obscure agreement with the Ministry of Defense, the Danish state should allow a renewable 6 year (between 5 and 7 years) territorial concession to Christiania.

The concession contract should mention the price to be paid by Christiania as a global fee rather than as a regular rent which provides to Christiania with the protection of tenants before landlords.

So a concession contract will allow the government to more easily put an end to the contract, if necessary.

This concession should be managed by a foundation, as some Christianites already want, so that the collective aspect is preserved and the power organisation becomes clearer from the outside.

Considering that a Danish foundation requires an initial amount of 250 000 DKK and that Christiania has a 600 000 DKK saving account, no new funding should be collected.

A foundation is not a private capitalistic structure so the value produced inside remains the property of the Danish state which we consider is an initial requirement.

A foundation is a flexible structure whose organisation can be tailor-made.

We suggest that the actual self-government of Christiania, with its meeting system and its few laws, should be duplicated as the status of the foundation.

A foundation has to be headed by a board. This question should be discussed with Christianites to see if they prefer to have every resident be part of the board so that the board is all the members of the foundation (the equivalent of the existing system) or if they want to elect a smaller board.

We recommend that a smaller board should be chosen, and, in order to avoid a local dictatorship or monarchy, regularly renewed, probably at the same interval as the concession contract with the Ministry of Defense. We suggest every 6 years.

Rather than politically elected, the board could be the equivalent of the existing economic group and the Faelleskassen, and should focus on the funding issue so that the decisions are still made through the Common Meeting with all members of the foundations i.e. every resident.

The idea of keeping the board budget-oriented will prevent the development of local political parties and power in Christiania so that Christiania doesn't compromise its anarchist touch.

So the board should just negotiate the internal contracts with the residents and the external concession contract with the state.

Concerning the rent paid by residents, they should be assimilated as the membership fee in the foundation. The foundation should have a small contract with each resident framing this membership. All residents, and only residents, will thus be members of the foundation.

These internal membership contracts should mention some specifications in case members fail to pay their fee. It is up to Christianites to decide about these terms.

In the future, we could also imagine that rather than a single price per head to be paid, a grid of prices should be built according to the size of houses, the number of persons who live inside, and, eventually, the amount of work that has been invested by each person.

This grid should allow a discount for the persons who work in Christiania so that it stimulates local investment, and maintain a cheap rent for the persons who cannot assert themselves so well outside of Christiania.

As an initial move, it is better to just duplicate the existing system in the foundation so that it is easy to implement.

Because the board of the foundation could be its economy group, it will submit the membership contracts, collect the membership fees instead of the rent, and manage the Faelleskassen and the local services.

The foundation should also write a proper contract for the employees of these services, as we said in the audit some of those jobs were not legally framed well.

A similar transparency should be required concerning the VAT declaration of the Faellekassen.

## 2/ Channel the hash market

Concerning the hash market, rather than legalizing it in Denmark, a special case should be made of Christiania, like previous governments in the history of the country have given a special tax free system to harbours in order to support the trade. These special conditions should be clearly mentioned in the status of the foundation and in the concession contract.

So the government should, in the frame of its concession contract, add a special clause to allow Christiania to have no more than 12 official licences to sell soft drugs, thus reducing the number of hash booths by half.

Then it will be up to the pusherstreet boys to arrange themselves to proportionally share the booths and the time they use them so that all of the current dealers still have the opportunity to sell, and don't fight with one another.

Those licences should be distributed by the board of the foundation, and we suggest that no member of the board should be allowed to use any of these licences, in order for the drug power remains outside the board.

This system could be tested on a four to six month trial basis during which the concession contract can still be cancelled.

Financial penalties could eventually be another means of pressure to reduce the hash market as the financial independancy is a strategic aspect of Christiania.

The "No Hard Drugs" policy should of course be strictly maintained.

An information desk about the medical effect of drugs should be required as a condition for the licences in order to inform residents and visitors about the medical consequences of drug consumption.

As it is not possible to prevent people from taking drugs, it is very important that they are aware of the consequences of what they do and moderate themselves accordingly.

This method would probably allow the Danish government to take a closer look at the traffic and obtain information about other traffic or activism (hard drugs traffic, islamist groups, etc.) going on in other parts of Copenhagen.

The hash trade should be internally taxed in order to collect a local "cultural fund" dedicated to support the cultural scene and educational services.

This fund should remain independant from the other funding systems Christiania already has.



The drug tax amount should be decided by Christianites.

We think that 500 000 DKK should be officially collected the first year as a test.

A clear planning of this fund should be proposed by the hash dealers.

As we mentioned several times in the auditing of Christiania, the cultural life has to be preserved, supported and even challenged.

We will recommend more ideas with regards to this below.

### **3/ Transform the internal funding system for constructions into a real Mutual Fund**

The existing internal funding system for buildings looks like a mutual bank.

We recommend that it becomes an official Christiania Mutual Bank or Mutual Fund.

According to the Danish law regarding mutual fund conditions, an optimisation will be planned so that the money circulates well in Christiania.

Rather than just building, this fund should be extended to the funding of local entrepreneurship and job creation.

### **4/ Deal with the aging of the population and the housing issue.**

As we mentioned several time in the audit, Christiania severely suffers from a generation issue, as younger people can't find a place to live in Christiania. The result of that is a decline in Christiania's life and cultural life and a slow closing of the community.

So we suggest that some new accomodation is made available, but that these new places should be only given to□

- people who are already involved in the local cultural scene.
- persons who work in Christiania.
- persons willing to develop a cultural project in Christiania.

It should be up to Christianites to decide if they want to build new houses and in which area, or if they prefer to split or increase existing ones. Nevertheless permits should be agreed according to the project of the new resident.

These new habitations should have a special membership contract that link their occupancy to the actual cultural place or project being held.

Then we would recommend that an authorisation is also given to build a small international residency house to temporarily rent rooms at a fair price to special guests related to the cultural scene (artists in residence, musicians, persons who are involved in a local project, etc.).

That should help to support Christianias international notoriety and network.

Generally speaking, we recommend that Christiania should request and obtain a permit for each project submitted.

This procedure should help to cultivate an ongoing dialogue between Christianites and the Ministry of Defense.

Finally, we suggest that all new construction should be administratively agreed by the Ministry of Defense and architecturally by the area meeting in order to preserve Christiania's aesthetic.

Because Christianites have built many houses in wood using older techniques, they have thus kept more ancient building know-how which tends to decline in Europe in practice.

Over the last decade, construction companies have concentrated and hired more and more unskilled workers to cut costs, so some precious know-how slowly disappears in Europe.

We suggest that Christianites should be encouraged to create a wood building/handicraft school and offer their services to architects designing fancy wood houses.

## **5/ Improve the landscape**

As we pointed out in "Christiania in Perspective", Christiania is a recycling city. Part of this process consists in storing and disseminating some objects and diverse bric-a-brac supposed to be useful for future constructions.

We also mentioned that this spreading was very typical of squatted places as a technique of spacial appropriation by the squatters.

But because constructions have severely slowed down over the last decade, some of this "stuff" has just been piling up and has become much less charming than the original bric-a-brac.

As this piling is part of Christiania's aesthetic, and rather than asking for a cleaning of the landscape, a gentle strategy could be to ask Christiania to collaborate in some way with a non-governmental organisation which has the know-how about second hand activities.

An association in Copenhagen called U-Landsforeningen Svalerne, which recycles second-hand products and support Third World development with its activity would be ready to share its know-how of the second hand circuit.

We suggest that the government make available a warehouse towards the end of Refshalevej, in the empty industrial zone, and mandate an association like this one to open up to second hand activity, recycle Christiania's stuff, and hire Christianites.

Because non-governmental organisations have a culture close to that of Christiania, the collaboration should be easy.

Concerning the pollution issue, as Christiania is a very polluted garden, we suggest that Christiania collaborates with non-governmental organisations or scientific researchers who work in the field of Phyto-remediation.

Phyto-remediation is a very promising field of research; it consists of using special plants which naturally recycle dirty particles in the soil, like for example heavy metals. Phyto-remediation is a very gentle and aesthetic technique.

As Christianites have been very good at keeping their place like a garden with wild nature, they could probably host some tests.

Again we suggest that this should be in the style of a collaboration between Christianites and non-governmental organisations or probably the biology department at university of Copenhagen.

Again we recommend collaboration with organisations who have a Christiania friendly culture and who would be able to transfer know-how to Christianites, as the general level of education in Christiania is quite low.

So for example, a small Phyto-remediation/gardening school or work shop could be initiated in Christiania in collaboration with an association/garden experiment like Vestergro in Copenhagen.

Concerning the car issue, we suggest that the city of Copenhagen take the initiative to optimise the parking spaces along Refshalevej. These spaces should be reserved for Christianites, but the road should be restored and more open to circulation.

A small tourist and visitor parking area could also be arranged by the city at the far end of Christiania, one behind Frederiks Bastion, the other one at the north Dyssen exit, close to the Steiner School.

On a general urban planning perspective of the city of Copenhagen, we would actually recommend considering Christiania as a potential bridge to bring life toward the empty northern industrial area.

We would also suggest that some of the old military buildings located in this area should be transformed into a major contemporary art museum, able to compete with major European institutions like the Tate Modern in London or the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, as we do think that Copenhagen lacks of a strong artistic institution to spread Danish creation abroad.

Another interesting urban planning idea would be to clean the water at Stadsgraven and create a beach around Margarethe Holm, as Helgoland is supposed to close down and the new beach along Islands Brygge is overly packed during summer time.

Urbanism should be thought of around Christiania and not inside, and should take advantage of the attractiveness of Christiania. So a cultural and leisure oriented plan could be developed around the area even better than the sailing club is not far.

## **6/ Challenge the local culture and preserve Christiania's aesthetic**

We already recommended several actions to support the local culture.

The most important one is to authorise Christiania to create new homes only for the cultural actors of the free town or for persons willing to develop a culturally oriented project in Christiania.

Because cultural activities are always hard to fund, it is a good thing that persons who initiate artistic projects have access to cheap rent.

Then we suggested that some of the drug money should be officially re-invested in the local cultural scene instead of escaping the city or the country.

Those two measures should drastically re-stimulate the local cultural life. But this will only be possible if Christianites feel that their future is not questioned anymore.

Nobody would want to fuel a ship if there are still signs of drowning.

Then we suggest that Christiania arranges a "think-tank" about how to value its current aesthetic and call for ideas from inside as much as from outside.

We suggest that fashion magazine, like "iii", contemporary artists like Superflex, Henrik Plenge Jacobsen, or Joachim Koester, "new music" venues like Rust or Stengade, should be discussing with Christianites in the frame of this think-tank.

Christianites are invited to organise an exhibition at the art centre Over Gaden in May and June 2004, so this exhibition could easily be an appropriate place for this think-tank.

If we recommend such a place of exchange, it is because we believe that a big part of the contemporary creation is produced out of recycling ideas and aesthetics of the past (e.g. the underground music scene in London is now bringing back in fashion and promoting old folk songs remixed by new DJ, young fashion designers paint on their clothes in a very hippie style, contemporary artists still search for alternatives, graffiti are now a recognized art practise, etc.).

So even if we mentioned several times that Christiania's aesthetic was quite dated, it has the potential to be updated, and we are convinced that the younger generation of Christiania will be intuitive enough to reshape a qualitative, fresher scene able to cohabit with the older generation.

Then, because Christianites are good entrepreneurs of small businesses, we think that the rejuvenating of the population and of the cultural scene should naturally stimulate the development of smaller local businesses and employment.

## **7/ Intellectual property strategy**

The more Christiania cultivates its own style, the more value it gains as a brand.

In this future projection of Christiania, we considered it as a tangible asset generating intangible assets.

So we recommend that Christiania preserves its label well by registering its name as a brand and its flag as a logo at the Danish Patent and Trademark Office, so that no bad copies emerge or opportunistic services are developed by non-Christianites.

## Conclusion

In some ways, the recommendations we have made have consisted in being more Christianite than the Christianites so that the government finds a way of smartly pressuring Christiania, thus restoring its authority there, in a very media friendly way.

Our position has been to be as positive as possible, searching for reconciliation rather than conflict.

At the same time being more Christianite than the Christianites is a very simple, obvious and efficient way of preserving Christiania's added value as a national asset. It is also a gentle way for the Danish government to restore its authority there.

As we are not part of the danish community and strongly believe in private initiative, our voice should be considered as an independant and distanced one by the Commission.

By restoring a dialogue and pushing Christiania to collaborate with non-governmental but non-Christianites organisations, we think that Christiania will have to open more and will little by little be better inserted in the Danish state.

In our audit we mentioned that Christiania had a very strong natural initiative but that it often needed a little "government kick" and pressure to move on.

We consider that most of the recommendations we made could be spontaneous initiatives of Christianites under the pressure of the government. So in each of our recommendations, we have suggested that Christianites keep the freedom to decide how those measures should be implemented. This is very important to us.

If Christiania were to refuse these ideas, it would drastically deteriorate the support they get from the media and thus give more authority to the Danish government. Because in any case, the Danish state will restore its authority, it should drive these negotiations in a mild way.

Fiscal penalties should be more efficient than police forces and, as we said in our audit, we trust Christianites to ultimately have a wise, positive, and constructive attitude.

Except that we have suggested a non capitalistic form to structure Christiania (the foundation) because the land remains a state asset, our proposition has been to look at Christiania as a living organism managing an on going project similar to private companies.

We hope the members of the Jury will be satisfied and use the ideas included in this somewhat liberal proposition.