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Christiania – Legal and Criminological Issues Arising from Denmark's "Social Experiment"

R. Paul Davis

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1. *Introduction*

The Danes could hardly be accused of reticence in their approach to social policy issues. Of particular interest are their progressive approaches to crime control and treatment of offenders, including their setting up of Helstedvester, one of the world's first therapeutic community-type psychiatric prisons, and their liberality in some issues of decriminalisation.¹ One of the most interesting criminological events to have occurred this century, however, was completely unplanned; indeed the government at various junctures in the history of the "Free City" of Christiania has stringently opposed its continued existence.

The material presented in this article represents an attempt to provide for English-speaking audiences an impartial and analytical view of the issues at stake in Christiania. Remarkably little writing on the area has emerged in the European press: and with the exception of one note in the *New York Times*,² and a few fringe press mentions, North America has had little chance to learn of Christiania's development.

The issues which will be discussed here centre on the social and legal status of the experiment: it was commenced "illegally", and a

*The author was visiting scholar at the Kriminalistisk Institut, Københavns Universitet, during March-April 1978, where work for the present paper was undertaken. It is impossible to acknowledge all help received, but mention must be made of Niels Frimodt-Møller, Britta Kyvsgaard, Jørn Vestergaard, Fleming Balvig, Henning Koch and Berl Kutchinsky of the Kriminalistisk Institut. The author also wishes to acknowledge discussions with Professor Harold Finestone of Minnesota, Professor Nigel Walker of the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology, England, and Professor Brian Grosman of the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. Professor Brian Hogan of Leeds University made useful comments on an earlier draft. The project was supported by a research grant from King's College, Cambridge, U.K., and the Keasbey Foundation, and by facilities generously provided by the Kriminalistisk Institut of Copenhagen.

1. One example is the decriminalisation of the use of marijuana. On the other hand, gambling, until now totally illegal, is the subject of a burning debate by virtue of the government's plans to open casinos to attract tourist revenue.

2. "Danes Argue over Government Order to Raze 'Free City', an Alleged Haunt of Criminals and Addicts." *New York Times*, Sunday February 29, 1976

number of "social nuisance" arguments were used in opposition to those who saw Christiania as possibly the only development capable of solving many contemporary crises in Denmark. Firstly, however, a physical description of the area is called for.

II. *What is Christiania?*

Christiania is an area of about 50 acres on the artificial island of Christianshavn,³ about one kilometre from the centre of Copenhagen. It is occupied by between 600 and 1000 people, depending upon the time of year, most of whom are aged between 16 and 30. The buildings on the site, numbering about 200, are mainly concentrated in a "town" area, but stretch out along the ancient ramparts of the city into what has become known as the "countryside". A few of the buildings have been placed there by the *Christianites*,⁴ but the majority are the remains of an old military encampment, with laboratories, barrack-rooms, and arsenals comprising about 80 per cent of the available accommodation.

The majority of the population are considered in some way "undesirable" by the city outside. The exact population structure is transient and consequently unascertainable, but a rough estimate in April 1978 showed some fifty "hard" drug addicts, eighty unmarried mothers, about a hundred runaway children and a larger number of alcoholics, idealists (mainly disenchanting Marxists), students, and homeless foreigners, many of whom stay for only a short period. There is also a strong core of "indigenous" population, numbering maybe fifty, who have lived in Christiania for a number of years and profess to be looking for "a different way of living together".

The initial occupation took place in 1971, at the end of the "flower-power" culture of the 1960s, and today one can still see many remnants of this culture. The most powerful family in Christiania (although one of its stated aims was to create a classless society) are named *Løvetand*, the Danish equivalent of "dandelion", and many houses are named after Danish and Swedish flowers. Besides the human population, untold numbers of stray dogs wander around the community, and the ban on automobiles of

3. The island was constructed in the seventeenth century by King Christian IV, as part of the city's seaboard defences.

4. Many of the new buildings are highly original and futuristic in design. See N. Wates, *Support Christiania* (1978), 167 *Architects' Journal* 142

any type has led to a considerable equine population being installed — mainly in the same living quarters as human beings. A subsistence level is theoretically maintained, although in fact a number of inhabitants live in dwellings which could only be described as “luxury apartments”, and a few have even installed telephones.

The ideals of the community, then, are based on an alternative way of living, free of the materialistic aspirations of the outside world, where each and every one is free to behave as he pleases (within certain very wide limits), and where those rejected as failures by the outside society are accepted as ordinary citizens.

III. *Christiania's relations with the outside world*

Until the summer of 1971, there were still some remains of military occupation on Christianshavn, although about 8,000 square metres of the island had been clear since 1969. This part of the island was forcibly occupied by local residents in Christianshavn, who arranged it as an adventure playground for their children.

The final evacuation by the military, however, was not completed until 1971, and then only under pressure from the local Council and the Ministry of Culture. Such a large area of land so close to the city centre was of course not only prime real estate, but also highly desirable property for commercial or cultural development. Unfortunately, plans for the future were only vague, as whilst the local authorities were considering commercial and residential development, the Ministry of Culture had its mind set upon building an Opera House and a College of Architecture.

The duality of interest was the undoing of both authorities. When the final evacuation was brought about, neither authority was ready to take over and begin development, and widespread vandalism and looting by local residents occurred. Meanwhile the “slumstormers”, a pressure group of homeless Copenhageners, formed their own plans for the site, and following an initial occupation by about a hundred of them in September 1971, the population multiplied by some five times in the next three months.

The authorities did not adopt a clear policy towards the occupation immediately, thus after a great deal of bureaucratic debate, and negotiations carried on through the Ministry of Culture, an agreement was made that the *Christianites* should each pay 50 *Kroner* (about \$10) for water and electricity. Conflicts arose,

however, due to the Ministry's desire to postpone all firm decisions, which the Christianites felt stood in the way of their arriving at "understandings" with the social welfare agencies and the police. In early 1973, eventually, after a few weak-hearted attempts at eviction, the *Folketing* (the Danish Parliament) officially recognised Christiania as a "Social Experiment".

Meanwhile, some thought was given to the eventual use of the area, and it was promised that an "idea-competition" should be set up, to encourage planning for the adaptation of the area. It was apparent from the proceedings of the *Folketing* that the experiment could continue until the outcome of the competition was announced: it was envisaged that this would take about three years.

In late 1973, however, there was a change of Government, and Paul Hartling's right-wing administration (*Venstre Danmarks Liberale Parti*), strong opponents of Christiania, decided to interfere. The cost of demolition of the buildings was only a half of that of making them fit for use, and the former alternative was chosen. Public pressure intervened, however, and in 1975, after more governmental changes, Anker Jørgensen's *Socialdemokratiet* (Social Democratic) government granted 400,000 Kroner from public funds for the repair of Christiania's buildings. This figure is, incidentally, less than 3% of the the original estimate of the cost of repair. The right wing administration, however, had retained control of the Parliamentary Finance Committee, and the payment of the money was blocked. Later the same year extensive fire precautions were demanded by the City Administration, and the *Christianites* themselves raised the necessary funds from the public.

The government nevertheless demanded that the area be totally vacated by April 1st, 1976, although the confrontation this would have caused was avoided by a decision in the preceding week that Christiania should instead be "unwound without unnecessary delay". The legality of the government's action in failing to keep its obligations under the agreement for a "social experiment" was taken eventually to the Supreme Court in March 1978, and the *Christianites* lost their claim.⁵ Again the forces of destruction were mobilised, again there was a protest, and again, now, the government has provisionally decided to allow the experiment to continue for a further two years.

5. "Danish Hippies Lose Claim to Barracks." *The London Times*, February 3, 1978

IV. *Comments.*

Whichever side one takes, or even if one is impartial as regards the issue for or against Christiania, it is impossible not to be censorious of the activities of all three civil authorities involved in this struggle. In the first place, the Ministry of Culture and the local *Kommune* were gravely at fault in pressing for the area to be cleared when they did not have the facilities to take over and develop the site immediately. Likewise, if they once decided firmly that they did not want the *Christianites* on the land, then they should surely have made themselves more effective against the early squatters, instead of taking only half-hearted measures. Above all, temporary decisions were clearly a wrong approach: to allow the *Christianites* to stay, to fix a rate for water and electricity (which, incidentally, has never been paid fully) was to create a form of estoppel against future action, which even if theoretically negated by the agreement that Christiania could last only so long as the outcome of the idea-competition was still pending, gave rise to a great deal of emotional public censure of the authorities.

It is, also, simply unjustifiable that the authorities have changed their minds so often during the course of the experiment, and have fluctuated so uneasily between regarding it as an important attempt at creating a new way of life, and simply another ghetto. For by creating this insecurity, they have greatly hampered the attempts of the residents to proceed with their setting up of an orderly community. A positive decision one way or the other, which was *not* altered at the time of confrontation, would have been fairer not only to the residents, but also to the public.

V. *The public support — an analysis*

Despite the small population of Christiania, the large demonstration in 1976 to protest against the threat of closure was attended and supported by some 30,000 people, many of whom joined in an impressive symbolic gesture of linking hands so as to form a complete ring around the “free city”. Why was public support so high? The answer seems to lie in a mixture of two particular needs in Danish society at this particular time, and a profound political discomfort. Copenhagen is, of course, the archetype of a modern city, with slums and luxury areas, immigrant populations and alcohol problems, industry and commerce, so much of it symbolic of the so-called “rat-race” arising from mass pursuit of material

and financial success goals. As in most similar cities certain sectors have begun to envisage what appears to them as a more ideal kind of existence: one of a small community with shared values and more personal success goals: a lack, in fact, of the need to keep up with one's neighbour. Perhaps such feeling is strongest amongst students, although certain notable Scandinavian intellectuals have in the past two decades put forward strong arguments along the same lines.⁶ In addition to those who actually aspire to this status, there are others who can see the benefits for certain sectors which do not include themselves, whilst those on the political right are largely opposed to any regime which would tolerate such standards. In a society, therefore, where significant numbers of people are questioning current values, Christiania is seen as an important experiment in living with a different philosophy.

The freedom of Christiania, though, to the annoyance of many politicians, has attracted a great number of real drop-outs: narcotics addicts, alcoholics and the like. Although the presence of a concentration of them is regarded as undesirable, the city of Copenhagen has to acknowledge that there are worse slums and populations elsewhere in the metropolis about which little is being done — Vesterbro, Nørrebro — and which house, or at least contain, some 5000 hard narcotic addicts. The problem is serious, where the total population of the city is only about one and a half millions. The city's institutions can only contain 500 addicts, and there is thus a great awareness of the need for action on behalf of the remainder. Not all have gone to Christiania — its junkie population varies between ten and a hundred, few of whom stay long. But again, at least, it is a valuable experiment in providing a different social milieu for these people. This topic will be discussed in more detail later.

The third factor behind the public support, although perhaps a little more ephemeral than the two proposed thus far, has been voiced by a number of influential city politicians and academics. Denmark has eleven political parties represented in the *Folketing*, for a population of only five million. Thus there is almost inevitably in each assembly a coalition, and usually a decision of the government is unpopular with more than one half of the population,

6. Perhaps the best-known exponent of this view, however, is the Austrian Ivan Illich, *De-schooling Society* (New York: Harper-Row, 1971). Professor Nils Christie, Director of Criminology at Oslo University, has been an outspoken proponent in recent years.

if it concerns a controversial issue. For a number of years, however, governments have had their way on all issues. The question of Christiania came to be the biggest political debate of the decade, and many people felt that, on this issue at least, the government should not be allowed to tread on a majority view. Sometimes, it was felt, the minority government should recognize its position and bow to the majority will.

As time has passed, one further important issue has arisen. By far the most exciting developments in Denmark in the fields of progressive theatre, music and cinema, have been taking place inside Christiania, which has its own cinema, theatre, and assembly hall. Thus the point is often made that it will be a sad loss to contemporary art if Christiania is destroyed.

VI. *Criminality and Christiania*

Questions pertaining to criminality affect Christiania in two ways: first, the prevalence, or alleged prevalence, of criminality, has been used as an argument against the continued existence of the "Free City" by opponents; secondly, the inhabitants include a number of ex-prisoners and other persons who would normally have been placed in institutions. The *Christianites* claim that their "acceptance" method of dealing with these people is superior to that employed by the wider society.

1. *Criminality as an argument against Christiania*

Over the first few years of the existence of the experiment, most of the early political points made against it were discredited, and by 1975 only three strong arguments remained. The first was that the action of the *Christianites* in taking over the site and establishing an illegal community there amounted to "*selvtægt*", a word which literally translated means self-help, but which is perhaps better translated as "taking the law into one's own hands." The area was private property, belonging to the Ministry of Defence, and the residents of Copenhagen felt very strongly that whether this was desirable or not, it was illegal, and it seemed, particularly to the more conservative owner-occupier class, unjustifiable that these people should be allowed to go free having committed acts for which others would undoubtedly be imprisoned. This argument is valid to this day, and of course is difficult to counter, except possibly on a very wide interpretation of a defence of necessity!

The second point of contention was that the *Christianites*, unlike the rest of Copenhagen, were not paying rent for the property, nor the cost of supplying them with electricity, water and other services. Originally it was agreed with the City Council that some payment, *per capita*, was to be made, but some 200,000 *Kroner* (about \$460,000) now stands unpaid. The point again is incontestable in principle, for it is true that the amount remains unpaid, but one factor which has served greatly to ameliorate the situation is that even conservative estimates indicate that Christiania has saved the state more than ten times that amount by containing persons who would otherwise be in institutions.

The third argument, after a period of desuetude, has recently come back into vogue, following an incident in which five drunken Greenlanders were arrested for murder in Christiania. Everyone assumed, and it appeared obvious, that with the large number of delinquents in the area, there would be a disproportionate number of offences committed. This allegation made good political capital until January 1976, when the Newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* published a table from a confidential police report, regarding the extent of criminality in Christiania. The report had been leaked from the police department to the press. Criminologists working at the Copenhagen Institute of Criminal Science had the impression that criminality rates shown were higher than could possibly be achieved by any community, and so conducted their own study.

The police report contained comparative figures for Christiania and the rest of Copenhagen, based on the concept of "*kontakter*" (contacts) which had not previously appeared in police statistics. Further analysis of this concept proved that it referred to nothing more than conversations or any other kind of interaction between the police and persons in an area, and thus bore little relation to criminality.⁷

For actual offences, however, the criminologists discovered a remarkable coincidence. Even in the police figures, the crime reports for Christiania amounted to almost exactly 0.2% of those for the whole city. The land area of Christiania is 0.2% of the city. The population of Christiania, also, is 0.2% of that of the city. Further, drawing from the police records, it was possible to demonstrate that for both violent and non-violent offences the crime rates in

7. See Anders Nyholm, "To Kriminologer" Vildledende Politi-Rapport Om Christiania." *Informations Kronik*, 17-18 januar 1976

Christiania were only one sixty-fourth part of those for an area of comparative size, Vesterbro, which is regarded by virtue of its large immigrant and slum population as the worst area of the city.

These statistics, when published, were enough to quiet the allegations of criminality by the police and by the right-wing political parties, both of whom thus appeared to admit their opposition to Christiania was rather on principle than on reality. The statistics may have sufficed to quiet objection: there are, however, a number of reasons which negate their value as objects of serious criminological research.

1. As official statistics, they are of course prone to bias. It is extremely likely that the police, being largely opposed to Christiania, would be more alert to find incidents and report them if they supported their preconceptions.

2. In contrast to the first point, there is good reason to believe that the reporting patterns in Christiania will be different to those in the rest of the Copenhagen area. In the table of comparative statistics, the following figures appeared:

TABLE 1. Reported offender in Christiania and Vesterbro for a sixteen- and one-month period respectively. (excerpt) ⁸

Offences against the Penal Code. ⁹	Christiania (16 months)	Vesterbro (One month)
1. Burglary & attempted burglary	0	23
2. Theft	14	21
3. Mugging (' <i>rulleri</i> ')	1	8

In the early days of Christiania, the police who did enter the area were opposed quite strongly to its principles, and when called upon to investigate one offence, quite often would find, or look for, evidence of other offences which the Christianites would rather not have had discovered. In particular, there is a very liberal attitude towards smoking of hashish, although hard drugs are not wanted and "pushers" are likely to be assaulted and thrown out of the area, if not handed to the police. Further incidents involving the *uropatruljens*, the special drugs squad, caused great hostility, and it

8. F. Balvig, H. Koch, and J. Vestergaard, *Politiets Virksomhed I Christiania-området* (Copenhagen: Kriminalistisk Institut, 1976) (stencil)

9. Offence-labels are approximate translations by the author.

is therefore possible that very few offences within Christiania are now reported, or were reported at any stage during the development of the community.

3. The nature of the social order in Christiania is such that conventional labels, for example theft, burglary and mugging, the examples given in the table above, lose their significance and relevance. There is, in many parts of the "Free City", no such thing as private property; everything is regarded as communally owned, and it is quite accepted that a person may have something one day, and the next it may be gone. Likewise, it is also accepted that if apartments are left for a few days, not only will they be stripped of their contents but also someone else may move in. The few privately owned apartments, of the more luxurious variety, are inhabited by some of the most powerful leaders in Christiania, and a great deal of respect is accorded to them by the ordinary *Christianites*. There is, with this kind of system, no demand for the existence of an offence of theft, or burglary, and so far as the majority of *Christianites* is concerned, mugging would be pointless as few people either carry or own anything worth stealing.

The question of the true extent of criminality in Christiania, therefore, remains unresolved, and as relations between the inhabitants and the police deteriorate, the chances of realistic figures emerging fade. There is still, however, a great deal of anecdotal evidence of various forms of assault and robbery of outsiders: a considerable amount of violence was narrowly avoided by the present author. However it may well be that *Christianites* are not to blame for much of this, but instead outsiders, knowing of the slack policing and liberal atmosphere of Christiania, enter the sanctuary to commit various offences for their own personal gain. The murder referred to above, when the Greenlandic perpetrators come to trial, may spark off another wave of criticism along these lines.

2. *Police relations with Christiania*

Until about two years ago, conflicts were reported almost daily in the Danish press involving *Christianites* and the police. The *uropatruljens*, in plain clothes, showed a great deal of interest in the activities of residents, and apparently were responsible for a certain amount of harassment. An unpublished study by Vestergaard, Balvig and Koch of the Institute of Criminal Science collected over 100 reports of unlawful searches and break-ins by the police in less

than two months. Of course anecdotal material is not conclusive, but the inference drawn by the authors was that with so much evidence available, it is probably the case that at least some illegal harassment was taking place. The study was not published because the police refused to comment, and a volatile political situation made it unwise at the time for only one side of the story to be made public.

The event which caused most controversy occurred in May 1976, when four *uropatruljens* officers lost control of the situation in a Christianian cafe and shot an illegal immigrant from Finland in both legs. This precipitated a near-riot in the city, which quietened down only when the officers managed to leave with the man. Following heavy criticism in the press¹⁰ the *uropatruljens* ceased to patrol the area.

On a number of previous occasions, the Christianites had attempted to formalise relations with the police, on practical grounds. Their major complaint was that the police were in the habit of arresting persons in the area, without telling anyone why, or what was likely to happen to them. In a small community, however, nothing can happen without being seen by someone, and the nature of the social setting is such that people always care about what is happening to a missing person. In Denmark, there is a ruthless expulsion of foreigners who are convicted of even minor offences, and of course if a person was to be expelled, the *Christianites* would have good reason to want to know about it, so that they need not search for the person or fear worse. It is important to remember in this context that many of the residents of Christiania are unstable, mentally and physically. Only recently, however, have any movements been made to ameliorate this difficulty: the government is planning to set up a "contact-board" for negotiations between Christiania and the police.

Following the public debate on the shooting incident, the *uropatruljens* have made only occasional drugs raids, or searched when a particularly dangerous criminal was at large. It may have been that the police realised that they were receiving bad publicity on account of their intervention, but an equally plausible theory is that they decided to allow the situation in Christiania to deteriorate. This of course would give more ammunition for the opponents of the experiment. This idea is given some weight by three incidents in

10. *Informations Kronik*, "Hvem trak først i Christiania? Skudeepisoden i Christiania lørdag den 15. maj 1976." 22-23 May, 1976

the recent past: two where Christianites have captured morphine pushers, and have stood at the entrance to Christiania, asking the police to deal with them, and have been refused assistance; and the other where a very dangerous mental patient broke into a house. In this latter case, despite repeated requests for assistance, the police replied that as Christiania was outside the law they must deal with the matter themselves.

VII. *Christiania as an experiment in crime control*

In defence to allegations of social nuisance against Christiania, its supporters have pointed to the fact that many of its inhabitants would be committing many more offences were they not living in the community. Apparently, historical tradition has made it difficult for many Copenhageners to believe this. In most cities, there is an area, within the walls, where the very dregs of society are forced to live together in the worst conditions, and having no other form of assistance have been forced to resort to petty theft, prostitution, or begging. This was the image which was accorded to Christiania, but the spirit in which the area was formed, and its social structure, mean that in many ways it is precisely the opposite. The opportunities for crime are limited not only by the fact that everyone knows everyone else in the central parts of the community, but also by the low incidence of opportunity or motive for crime. The positive aspect of Christiania is that, although it has a very low material standard of living, it does present a chance of an alternative to many young people who might otherwise spend a greater proportion of their lives going from institution to institution. Berl Kutchinsky has commented:

In Christiania, a social loser may become a winner, a drug addict may become a person who can help cure others.¹¹

In the absence of a labelling phenomenon, it appears that many people who would otherwise have a very poor chance of recovery from a bad start do find a level of adjustment. The difficulty is to decide how many of these people, who might otherwise have adjusted to the norms and expectations of wider society, are kept at the *Christianites'* level. This problem must be particularly acute in the case of runaway children.

One area in which Christiania does appear to have had some

11. In Plum, Niels Munk, *Hvad med Christiania?* (1975) Copenhagen; Eget Forlag

success, however, and where the problem of “keeping people down” does not arise, is in dealing with “hard” drug addicts. This question may be examined a little more closely.

VIII. *Christiania and the ‘junkie’*

As the focus of attention in recent years has moved further to the social environment of addiction, and away from a pathological model, milieu therapy, community treatment, and so on, have become commonplace terms. Synanon,¹² a community which bears many comparisons with Christiania, is almost a household word for progressive drug therapy in the U.S.A. A community of young people like Christiania inevitably has to find a way of dealing with its drug problems, and it is to this social adjustment that some attention will be directed here. First, however, it is necessary to set the situation in context.

There are, according to official estimates, about 5,000 “hard” narcotic addicts in Copenhagen, mostly using morphine, and occasionally heroin. Cocaine is considered a luxury, being not only expensive but also highly unsatisfactory from the point of view of the “hard” addict due to its short-term effects. Marijuana, hashish, is widely used in Danish society, among young and older people, and its use and possession for private use have been decriminalised. However, it is an offence, although rarely prosecuted except when very large amounts are involved, to trade in the drug. An indicator of the level of acceptance is the open use of hashish in Denmark’s prisons, by inmates, despite the official prohibition.

Perhaps a hundred of the morphine addicts go regularly to Christiania, and a smaller number live there: in April 1978 the number was in the region of fifty, although this may drop as low as ten in the winter. Those who visit the area largely do so not to obtain supplies or to use them, but because of the social environment: the presence of music, other users, and most important a supposed level of tolerance of users.

From the point of view of the leaders in Christiania, however, there is a difficult contradiction in philosophies. The area is free, one is entitled to do as one pleases, but on the other hand the thing which has held Christiania together has been the sense of community, the effort to build a new way of living, where everyone

12. A readable account of Synanon may be found in L. Yablonsky, *The Tunnel Back: Synanon* (New York: MacMillan, 1965)

is accepted as a person and no-one is inferior. However, the "junkies" have presented the biggest challenge to this, as although it is highly convenient for them to be able to do as they please, they are of course not as acceptable as other members of the community because they are not available for, or interested in, any kind of work to help the other residents.

In an attempt to solve this problem, the *Christianites* adopted a hard-line approach to the addicts. They are free to come and go as they please, but dealing in hard drugs is strictly forbidden, and "pushers" are ruthlessly sought out and expelled or turned over to the police. The usual pattern observed, although not stated as official policy, seems to be for the Christianites to beat up the "pushers" before they attempt to hand them over to other agencies.

Meanwhile, the use for a short period of the morphine by those who live in Christiania, but go elsewhere to buy it, is tolerated, although this is not allowed to become a permanent situation. Addicts who come into the community are expected to drop consumption: a few achieve this alone, but arrangements have to be made elsewhere for the majority. The community has its own doctor, who in some cases arranges for methadone maintenance, although more addicts are sent on either to clinics in Jutland or therapeutic communities in Sweden.

One interesting experiment was the much-heralded "Trip to Egypt", although it is extremely difficult to gather information about what actually happened. Two young Danes, a doctor¹³ and a social worker, with particular interests in Christiania, gathered together all the resident junkies, about 30, and after a month's arranging took them all on a 90-day trip to Egypt, gradually taking down their dosage. By the end of the trip, apparently, well over half had been reduced to a minimal dosage, or to nothing. But the return to Denmark proved to be the breaking-point for most, and apparently all are now once again using standard dosages.

Probably the alcohol problem in Christiania is larger than the drug problem, although less attention is paid to it. Most, if not all, residents drink heavily, and about 95% use marijuana. Much of the community has an atmosphere of degeneracy, greatly emphasised by the apparent emphasis of daytime drunkenness.

13. Dr. Frimodt-Møller, to whom I am indebted for information regarding the experiment.

IX. *The importance of Christiania in drug therapy*

The events in Christiania, and the results of the drug policies adopted, hold some useful indicators for outside society. First, and perhaps most important, the completely liberal use of and sale of hashish has not caused any increase in the incidence of hard drug usage: it is probable, though far from provable, that the creation of a free market in "soft" drugs has prevented many people who use the softer drugs to solve personality crises from coming into contact with, and becoming the prey of, dealers in morphine and heroin.¹⁴ This, it may be noted, apparently happens despite the fact that many of the resident junkies earn their "fixes" by dealing in hashish.

Secondly, a number of ex-addicts live in Christiania, having been non-dependant for varying periods of time. Not only are they in a good position for constructive influencing of the dependants who come into the community, but the search for a different kind of life, with a small, caring community spirit coupled with mutual acceptance and tolerance, provides a social milieu capable of taking off the pressures of the wider society, and filling the personality gaps which lead many into drug use in the first place. The demands of Christiania that each person find his rightful place in the societal machine, not to adhere to a set of unsuitable demands made by an environment in which the ex-addict feels inadequate, may be a more suitable base for self-motivation within a treatment programme, and the community also provides a substitute for the drug when that has gone but other social problems remain.

Lastly, Christiania, like Synanon, has a possibility of permanence, and so in its way holds out a hope of a future to the ex-addicts, unlike many traditional therapies which are nearer to the medical model, of cure followed by release into ordinary community life. The community provides a total environment in which the addict is wanted, but as a person, not as a junkie. The prospect of a permanent home, free from previous pressures, may have much to do with the successes Christiania has had in arranging treatment and rehabilitation.

X. *Principal and Practice: a conclusion*

Christiania, then, can claim some success with a minority of its

14. The lesson was well learned by the *Kommune* in central Copenhagen. They bought one of the major hashish trading clubs in order to exclude hard drug pushers. See R. P. Davis, and N. Frimodt-Møller, *Developments in Danish Control of Petty Crime* (1978), 142 Justice of the Peace 573

“undesirable” inhabitants. But for the rest, I would question in conclusion whether Christiania is really achieving its aims and ambitions as set out at commencement, seven years ago. To recapitulate, these consisted of rejection of the materialistic and capitalistic values of modern Denmark, the creation of a classless society, and mutual tolerance and understanding of all people. Some of these aims in their simpler forms have clearly been followed — most impressive, perhaps, is the emphasis on recycling. Almost everything in Christiania has been thrown away by someone outside: the cinema, for example, has been completely furnished with material from a demolition site in central Copenhagen. But what of the wider issues — the classless structure, the society of mutual toleration and understanding?

It is true that about 85 unmarried mothers, fifty chronic alcoholics, a number of drug addicts, petty criminals and Greenlanders find refuge within the old barrack buildings. But the class system in Christiania — it would perhaps be better described as a caste system — is, if anything, more rigid than that in the outside society. By and large, the junkies are at the bottom of the pile, living as they do in unlit, unfurnished old rooms, and spending, as junkies the world over do, each day in pursuit of sufficient capital to purchase the next fix.¹⁵ This puts them at a special disadvantage, and has caused grave problems to the more idealistic social leaders in Christiania. The junkies, by virtue of their unwillingness and inability to contribute to the community effort of Christiania, have come to be regarded as “leeches” on the community!

Another group which has caused considerable problems is the children, both in the form of those born in the community, and even more so as young runaways. There were early attempts to set up a school in Christiania (Danish law, conveniently, would have allowed this) but these have now been abandoned and there exist only a nursery and special provision for three mentally handicapped children. The *Børnemagt* (roughly translated, this means “power to the children”) caused one of the first crises in Christiania. A small group of teenagers had been living in the city of Copenhagen, in derelict property, before Christiania was founded, and had formed this organisation, one of whose basic concepts was that all persons

15. A single six-hour “fix” of morphine costs about the equivalent of \$340.00 on the black market. With hashish retailing at around \$2 per ounce, a considerable volume has to be handled in order to make enough profit for one morphine capsule.

over the age of twenty years were “adult fascists” (*voksen fascister*). They moved into Christiania, but refused to have any contact with the adult members of the community, until a rapport was established following a mass Christianian defence of the children from the police, who arrived on the scene, to arrest thirteen children, in a force of over a hundred plus dogs! Increasing and improving contacts led to the setting up in the city of the *dojnkontakt*, an organisation with doors closed to the police, which attempts to help young runaways to solve immediate problems by accommodating them, and also offers long-term assistance. Christiania now almost automatically sends children coming into its “jurisdiction” to the *dojnkontakt*.¹⁶

A related problem has been the number of unmarried mothers and small children who find a refuge in Christiania, most of whom live together in one small community of old workmen’s mobile cabins on one of the ramparts away from the centre of Christiania. Christiania simply cannot cope, medically or emotionally, with the problems of such mothers, and is now making a positive effort to discourage similar mothers from moving into Christiania.

The fact that Christiania “cannot cope” with certain types of problems, certain types of person, has grave implications for its theoretical basis. For now there are people which it too rejects, and grave conflicts have arisen because of the rift between the active group, who want all to work together for a better society, and the passive groups, who see Christiania as a place to live “without hassles”. Vibeke Løvetand, one of Christiania’s strongest spokesmen, and wife of Per Løvetand, widely known as the “Mayor” of Christiania, told also in a interview of the problems dealing with unemployed people receiving social assistance from the state. Once they have received their social security, and have bought a certain amount of beer, they see little point in working for Christiania unremunerated. The presence of some 55% of the population of Christiania’s residents at the weekly social security hand-out, too, suggests strongly that despite the ideals of self-support, Christiania is in fact an institution largely dependant upon the outside society for its support. Even more surprising is the discovery that a number of residents have full-time paid jobs in the city!

16. For a more detailed discussion of the particular problems of family structure in Christiania, see R. P. Davis, “Families without Law — Social Structuring in Denmark’s ‘Social Experiment’.” *Family Law* (forthcoming)

Against a background of so much rejection, so much shunning of problems, the theoretical background of Christiania, the idealistic inception of the type of society it was to become, looks distinctly uncomfortable. The sad truth is that Christiania in many ways gives the lie to those criminological theorists who assert that in the more perfect society, free of the materialistic aspirations and property-oriented pursuits of the present western world, crime will become obsolete. These assumptions of the left, convincing in theory, look facile when viewed in the Christianian context. For what is abundantly clear is that, even when free of these values, any group of people living together need rules for the regulation of their society, no matter how much tolerance is preached, and due to fundamental human differences there will always be those who break those rules. Aside from the firm ideological background and dramatic genesis, it is instructive to ask whether Christiania really differs so much from an American black ghetto — Harlem being the archetype — where subcultural values are very much to the fore, and perhaps the most heinous crime is asking for the assistance of the police.

Tolerance of all social problem types was found by the *Christianites* to be prejudicial to the structure of the free society they sought to create. The repeated rejection of children and single mothers, and the handing over of junkies to clinics, and pushers to the police, signify an inability in the so-called liberal society to deal with the very problems it alleged were caused by factors supposedly eliminated from Christiania. Thus, the rejection of these social types is significant as an admission by the *Christianites* themselves that their model society is not, in fact, a complete answer to the problems of modern Danish society. They (the pushers, junkies, unmarried mothers, children), are *your* problems, not ours, they say to the outside world. Yet what would have been the reaction eight years ago to one of the more idealistically motivated leaders in Christiania to the suggestion that “the best way around a problem is to ignore it”?

Equally significant is the failure of the economic ideals of Christiania. Far from rejecting capitalist values, the community has developed not only a *petit bourgeoisie* of restaurateurs and shop-owners, but also a definite upper-class leadership.¹⁷ On one

17. *Accord*, Salmon, Elon. *Out of the Way: A Social Experiment* (1976), New Society (10 June) 586 at 587

occasion I asked where to find *Mælkebotten*, one of the more elite areas of Christiania, and home of the *Løvetand* family. “Don’t ask me, I’m just a poor little Indian. You can’t talk to everyone around here. Them’s the leaders you’re talking about,” was the reply. So much for classlessness.

Christiania has survived for so long because it is a phenomenon, because it is different, controversial, unusual. But as it becomes more obvious that the original ideas which so endeared Christiania to the Danish public have failed, or faded, the area becomes more likely to be viewed as just another slum in the heart of the big city. Christiania has already failed: and the day it fails in the minds of the people, it dies.