



Guidelines for supervisors

The form below lists a number of areas which we would like you to consider when you give feedback to the Scholars on the final report. Please do use the template, expanding on any point if necessary – it's always helpful to have some detailed narrative comments to explain your thoughts on their work.

TITLE OF PAPER:

How do Local residents in Metalkova (Slovenia) and Freetown Christiania (Denmark) Perceive Leadership in Local Governance in 'Autonomous Heterotopian' Societies?

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Please make comments related to the following:

Argumentation and understanding

- Quality and breadth of literature review:
- Research question:
- Understanding and application of method:
- Data collection and data analysis:
- Identification of research gaps and shortcomings:
- Discussion of further research.

Analysis (and methodology):

- Depth of interpretation:

- Theoretical and conceptual clarity:
- Justification and reflexivity in relation to the methodological design:
- Thoroughness of analysis:

Organisation and presentation:

- Expression and writing:
- Coherent and consistent structure (with appropriate sections, titles and subtitles):
- Citation and bibliography

POSTER:

- Structure (good transitions between sections; logical flow)
- Expression and writing:
- Appropriate use of text (no text heavy posters):
- Appropriate use of visual elements:
- Balance between textual and visual elements:

How do Local residents in Metalkova (Slovenia) and Freetown Christiania (Denmark) Perceive Leadership in Local Governance in 'Autonomous Heterotopian' Societies?

Authors: Regan Newton and Akhila Potluru

ABSTRACT

This research examines leadership and governance structures in the cities of Metelkova (Slovenia), and Freetown Christiania (Denmark) through Foucault and Miskowiec's concept of heterotopia. Heterotopias are distinct spaces that exhibit "otherness" in terms of their appearance and function while maintaining a connection to the surrounding urban environment (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986, p. 24). Siegrist and Thörn (2020, p. 1840) build upon this framework and label heterotopias that are intentionally produced as "autonomous heterotopias".

Through semi-structured interviews and informal interviews with local residents and ethnographic observations, this research explores how local residents in Metelkova and Freetown Christiania perceive leadership in local governance. We use this methodology to allow participants to explain, in their own voice, the leadership practices in governance in Metelkova and Freetown Christiania.

By employing a Foucauldian lens, this study finds that unique leadership models and community-driven decision-making processes are central to the governance of these autonomous heterotopias. The findings of this research will contribute to a better understanding of how these spaces maintain their "otherness" within larger urban contexts and offer insights into alternative forms of community-driven governance and leadership.

1 . Introduction

This project explores how local residents in Metelkova (Slovenia) and Freetown Christiania (Denmark) perceive leadership in local governance. By employing semi-structured and informal interviews, with local residents as well as ethnographic observations, we argue that Metelkova and Freetown Christiania embody characteristics of heterotopias by providing alternative modes of living, artistic expression, and community organisation. Their leadership model places emphasis on autonomy, self-governance, and community-led decision-making.

Foucault and Miskowiec's (1986, p. 24) concept of heterotopia refers to spaces that are distinct from the surrounding environment, characterised by their "otherness" in terms of appearance and function. These spaces, although different, maintain a connection to the more conventional urban areas, i.e. despite being 'other' they remain connected to the surrounding city. This concept has evolved, and over time we see an emergence of the term 'autonomous heterotopia' which Siegrist and Thörn (2020, p. 1841) defines as "*an intentionally produced, counter-hegemonic mode of ordering urban space*".

In Europe, there are two key examples of autonomous heterotopias: Metelkova in Slovenia and Freetown Christiania in Denmark. Metelkova is an alternative cultural space that was established by activists after the Yugoslav army left 7 buildings on a single site behind in 1991. Although in 1997 Metelkova became a recognised cultural/art hub, the area still exists in a legal grey area and is very distinct from the surrounding city of Ljubljana, making it an example of an autonomous heterotopia (Ntounis & Kanellopoulou, 2017). The creation of this space reflects activists' rejection of neoliberal ideologies, aligning with Siegrist's definition of "counter-hegemonic ordering of urban space" (Siegrist & Thorn, 2020, p. 1841).

Similarly, Freetown Christiania is a self-proclaimed autonomous neighbourhood in Copenhagen, Denmark, established in 1971. It operates under its own legal system while coexisting with Danish and Copenhagen laws (Anthony, 2004). The community practises direct democracy and consensus decision-making, with individuals assuming responsibility for law enforcement and decision-making processes. Christiania's legal system operates alongside the official jurisdiction, resulting in inter legality and the acceptance of the community (Ntounis & Kanellopoulou, 2017).

A crucial question arises concerning the governance of these autonomous heterotopias: "How do they organise and structure local leadership to govern themselves?" To address this question, an exploration of residents' perceptions of governance and an understanding of visible forms of leadership are necessary. The examination of leadership and governance perceptions is essential for comprehending how these places maintain their 'otherness' despite their location in the heart of larger capital cities like Ljubljana and Copenhagen.

To investigate this question, in-depth and informal interviews were conducted with local residents who define themselves as members of these two communities. For many participants, 'being a member' of these communities meant living within these spaces, and having the right to opinions about how these spaces are organised. Additionally, small-scale ethnographic observation in both Metelkova and Freetown Christiania was undertaken to gain insights into the governance structures and dynamics (Rashid et al., 2015).

This research explores the idea that the governance of these autonomous heterotopias relies on unique leadership models and community-driven decision-making processes. Through our research, we explored the intricate mechanisms by which these places sustain their "otherness" while existing within larger urban contexts. Foucault and Miskowiec's notion of Autonomous Heterotopia will be used as a lens through which the researchers can analyse this topic.

2. Contextualisation and Previous Literature

i. Metelkova

Located in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Metelkova is "a squatted area of more than twelve thousand square metres that is today recognised as a self-organised autonomous zone" (Kovič, 2021, p. 1). Consisting of seven buildings dedicated to the promotion of culture and art, Metelkova hosts a number of "bars, clubs and venues for performances, political meetings and exhibitions" (Siegrist & Thörn, 2020, p. 1846). It offers a space to explore an alternative model of social organisation and to escape dominant neoliberal ideology and city structures (Siegrist & Thörn, 2020, p.1847).

Metelkova emerged in 1993 when activists squatted the military barracks in the territory. Autonomous squatting emerged in the 1960s in the counterculture movement, however the emergence of Metelkova must also be understood in the context of the post-Socialist movement in the 1990s (Siegrist & Thörn, 2020, p. 1843).

Previous research by Gržinić (2007, p. 566) and Breznik (2008, p. 53) on leadership in governance in Metelkova has utilised a top-down perspective:

focusing on the regional and national governing of the area rather than agency *from below*, meaning that practice, acts of conflict and construction of meaning and identities of actors within Metelkova are largely neglected. This perspective risks

reducing autonomous spaces as sites of governmentality and repression rather than conflict and construction of meaning (Siegrist & Thörn, 2020, p. 1839).

Building on this work, we designed our own research to focus solely on the perspectives and perceptions of local people in Metelkova: how do they perceive leadership in their governance? We felt this was an appropriate way of analysing leadership within Metelkova as the space is organised around constructing alternative collective identity through community building and resistance (Siegrist et al, 2020: 1851).

ii. Freetown Christiania

Established in 1971, Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen was founded based on the values of the 1960s cultural revolution, including anarchism, the squatter movement, and social activism (Vanolo, 2013, p. 1788). The community boasts a number of services, healthcare, kindergarten, cultural activities, and other small businesses. Notably, Christiania attracts attention for the sale of cannabis by its residents on Pusher Street (Vanolo, 2013, p. 1789). Christiania challenges neoliberal logic by providing a space to resist established social structures and reject waged work, corporate control, and privatisation. It represents an ongoing experiment that combines market and autonomist logic, resulting in place-specific practices and institutions that can be described as "relatively autonomous spaces" or "relatively alternative practices." Despite its limitations and contradictions, Christiania continues to symbolise protest and resistance, offering an alternative to the dominant narrative of neoliberal globalisation (Vanolo, 2013, p. 1796), and is considered a heterotopia.

Much like Metelkova, Freetown Christiania was established by squatters on an abandoned military base in Copenhagen (Coppola & Vanolo, 2015, p. 1157). Residents established the space "*with an emphasis on a social ordering that combined solidarity and difference, challenging not only the commodification of the city as an effect of the new emphasis on consumption in capitalism but also the way in which the expanding bureaucratic-administrative apparatus of the welfare state-regulated individual and collective life*" (Thörn, 2012). In 2011, Christiania was able to negotiate an agreement with the Danish Ministry of Energy and Buildings that allowed residents to collectively own part of the land and rent the remaining parts by paying a substantial sum of money. Whilst many celebrated this agreement, it did result in the introduction of a number of government regulations that were previously self-regulated by the community which impacted local politics and urban development (Vanolo, 2013, p. 1796). Under this agreement, the foundation has the right to build new infrastructures within the town (Coppola & Vanolo, 2015, p. 1153).

Businesses can be run either individually or collectively, and funding for activities and services are collected by way of fees from local residents and businesses (Coppola & Vanolo, 2015, p. 1157). As there is no private property in Freetown Christiania, economic investment is discouraged (Coppola & Vanolo, 2015, p. 1165), but residents instead invest in improving their lives and houses, often resulting in architectural designs that are unconventional and creative (Vanolo, 2013, p. 1791). Moreover, consumption is demonetised, and residents are instead encouraged to share second-hand clothes and meals (Vanolo, 2013, p. 1795). In our research, we try to understand how local people negotiate in these interactions, and how they feel these values are enforced.

Theoretical Framework

We will explore how local people perceive leadership in local governance by analysing what qualities allow Freetown Christiania and Metelkova to be considered autonomous heterotopias. Foucault and Miskowiec define heterotopias as "real places that contest and invert other sites within a culture" (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986, p. 24). Heterotopias therefore both mirror and challenge societal structures, and serve as spaces of resistance,

imagination, and transformation. Although he originally used this term to refer to individual sites like prisons or museums, contemporary Siegrist and Thörn expand this to coin the phrase 'autonomous heterotopia' to refer to "*an intentionally produced, counter-hegemonic mode of ordering urban space*" (2020, p. 1841). In these spaces, individuals are able to challenge the prevailing norms and discover new ways of organising society.

Communes and intentional communities can be considered autonomous heterotopias as they are intentional spaces created by groups of individuals who seek to live according to alternative principles or ideologies. These communities often have their own rules, values, and governance systems, providing an alternative social and spatial order within society.

3. Methodology

3.1 Interviews

Qualitative methods were employed for this research as they were considered as a most suitable approach to explore the lived experiences of perceptions of leadership. Purposive sampling allowed the researchers to deliberately select specific individuals based on pre-defined criteria, this meant the researchers could efficiently collect information from the small populations of Metelkova/Freetown Christiania and achieve targeted insights (Palinkas et al., 2013). Snowball sampling involved asking initial participants to refer other eligible individuals; this again was used due to the limited sample pool available (Palinkas et al., 2013).

In depth interviews were the primary method of data collection. We created an interview guide following a pilot interview over zoom with a local resident to ensure the in-depth interviews tackled the research question as effectively as possible (Jamshed, 2014). The sections below detail the various steps the researchers took in order to conduct the in depth interviews.

A draft interview guide was curated following a literature review and a pilot study with residents of Metelkova. This included a rough guide of questions to ask participants concerning leadership in governance in Metelkova and Freetown Christiania. This included questions such as: 'Can you describe how self-governance and autonomy are practised in Metelkova/Freetown Christiania?', And, 'can you provide an example of a challenging decision or issue that the community faced and how it was resolved through self-governance?'.

The literature review gave the researchers an insight into cultural contexts and informed them about what kind of questions to ask. For example, reviewing literature on self governance within Metelkova and Freetown Christiania indicated to the researchers that they should ask about this topic. The draft interview guide was then discussed between both researchers to identify possible room for improvement. A pilot interview was done with a resident of both places in order to further identify any problems with the interview guide, and pilot interviewees were asked to give honest and candid feedback on the questions asked (Jamshed, 2014). Points of feedback from the Metelkova pilot interview included saying Metelkova is 'located within' Ljubljana as opposed to saying 'part of' Ljubljana. Specific care was taken to incorporate their feedback into the finalised interview guide.

Depending on the preferences of the interviewee, interviews were conducted either in person in the place being studied or over zoom. If the interview occurred in person, verbal consent was taken from the interviewee to voice record the interview. In the case of zoom interviews, the record function was an efficient way of recording the interview for

transcription purposes (Archibald et al., 2019) In both cases, interviews lasted no longer than 30 minutes. The interviews were kept short out of consideration for the participant so that not too much of their day was taken up. This also meant that participants were more likely to agree to do the interviews as the time is more convenient for them. Ultimately, 1 in depth interview was conducted in Metelkova.

Because of the residents' busy schedules with their businesses/daily lives and potentially unwelcoming attitudes towards tourists, informal interviews were also considered necessary in Freetown Christiania as they require less time and are perceived as less formal by interviewees (Swain & King, 2022). Five informal interviews were conducted in Freetown Christiania, each lasting between five and ten minutes where we were able to ask local people about local leadership and how it informed governance in the area. By opting for information interviews or conversations, the researchers respected the boundaries of Freetown Christiania, and respected the unique socio-cultural context of Freetown Christiania (Swain & King, 2022).

Additionally, by engaging in these informal interviews/conversations, the researchers were able to build trust and establish rapport with key informants and community members (Swain & King, 2022). Although this approach was limited in terms of representativeness and generalizability, the researchers used this method in conjunction with ethnographic observation research methods which allowed for the triangulation of sources of information to draw conclusions (Campbell et al., 2018).

3.2 Ethnographic Observation

Ethnographic non-participant observation, was also conducted to see if this granted any further insights into how Metelkova and Freetown Christiania function (Campbell et al., 2018). Ethnographic observations focused on how local people behaved: if they followed the autonomously created rules, and how they dealt with those who broke the rules.

The researchers visited Metelkova and Freetown Christiania, immersing themselves in these contexts and spending a significant amount of time on-site. During their visits, they engaged in ethnographic observation. Photographs were taken where possible to support the observational data (Laroche, 2020). Ethnographic observation was used to complement the findings from the in-depth interviews (Campbell et al., 2018).

Our diverse methodological tools allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the perceptions of leadership and provided rich insights into the governance dynamics of Metelkova and Freetown Christiania, which enhanced the researchers understanding of autonomous heterotopias.

3.3 Data Analysis Approach

Interview transcripts were generated using voice-to-speech software, and then edited manually to ensure accuracy (McMullin, 2021). Having transcripts benefitted the researchers as they were able to go back and identify themes more easily for analysis (Rubin and Rubin, 2005)

Thematic analysis of the results from the in depth interviews was conducted in order to generate theory from the data, i.e. grounded theory. An inductive (bottom up) approach was taken. These transcripts were analysed to identify evidence-based reoccurring themes (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) which were coded for. Thematic analysis was used due to its flexibility in providing rich insights from the identification of emergent themes and coding was used to form concepts that could later be linked with political theory (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.4 Positionality

The researchers acknowledged their English-speaking background and the fact they were not local to Metelkova and Freetown Christiania and were therefore aware of the inherent limitations in their ability to fully access and comprehend local nuances, cultural dynamics, and linguistic subtleties within the context of their research on autonomous heterotopia (Lee & Anderson, 2009). Due to language constraints, the researchers could only approach English-speaking interviewees, which introduced potential bias into the sample (Brassey, 2018). It was recognized that these limitations could impact the depth of analysis and required caution when drawing generalised conclusions.

To mitigate potential bias and enhance the validity of the research, the researchers adopted a reflexive approach, openly acknowledging their positionality in the research project (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Transparent dialogue was fostered with participants, respecting their perspectives and knowledge while actively working to minimise preconceived notions or stereotypes that may have arisen due to the researchers' outsider status.

3.5 Ethics and Risks

As specified in the Approved Ethics Guide this research project was conducted in accordance with LSE Ethics Review policies. Participation was fully voluntary and no incentives were offered. Participants were provided with an information and consent sheet detailing the project's aims, which they signed and returned, and were given the opportunity to withdraw at any time. Verbal consent was reiterated prior to the interview, and participants were informed of how their data would be collected and used. In detail ethical considerations are found in the Approved Ethics review form.

All identifiable features/ quotes were removed from the report to ensure anonymity. Participants being assured of their anonymity increased the likelihood of them giving open and honest answers, increasing the richness of results. Moreover, as explained further below effective data management further solidifies anonymity of participants.

The research sites for this project were Metelkova (located within Ljubljana, Slovenia), and Freetown Christiania (located within Copenhagen, Denmark). These locations have a low travel risk and all risks associated with travelling were considered extensively by the researchers, and precautions were taken to mitigate potential harms eg. Travel insurance for all researchers was taken out.

3.6 Data Management and Data Storage

Data collected and participant information was kept and backed up in a secure, dedicated group Laidlaw Folder on the LSE Onedrive. Only researchers and supervisors had access to the data. Participants were made aware of all of this information in the Participant Consent Form.

Results and Discussion

Metelkova

The researchers were keen to enquire about the self-governance system of Metelkova therefore this was a focus point of all interviews.

The findings from the in-depth interview revealed that Metelkova operates on a self-governance system characterised by flexibility rather than rigid rules. Participants emphasised that individuals are encouraged to put forward their ideas and initiatives based on their passions, "It's not a rigid system with strict rules. Individuals put forward ideas and initiatives for the things they are passionate about." This approach allows everyone to have

the opportunity to contribute and make a difference in shaping the community, “Everyone has the opportunity to contribute and make a difference.”

Ethnographic observations supported these findings, as fliers, pamphlets, and posters promoting various activities and events were prevalent, indicating a community-driven atmosphere.

When asked further about how Metelkova’s leadership was perceived by others, participants expressed their frustration with being exoticized or perceived as strange simply because they were part of the alternative communities. They emphasised that the purpose of their involvement was to explore art, freely express themselves, and develop their lives authentically, rather than intentionally being perceived as weird. “Some people try to make us seem weird just because we’re part of these communities. But really, we’re just a group of individuals who want to explore art, express ourselves freely, and develop our own lives authentically. It’s not about being strange or weird.”

Ethnographic observations further supported this finding, as the researcher noted an instance where people seemed judgmental when taking photos of Metelkova, indicating a dislike for being treated as “other.” When asked why many tourists ‘other’ them, many participants said that the wide range of graffiti and art visible in Metelkova led to perceptions that they were ‘weird’. This led to an exploration of the significance of art and expression in Metelkova.

The significance of freedom of expression and art emerged as a central theme. Participants highlighted their involvement in organising cultural events, music festivals, art exhibitions, and workshops that aimed to bring people together. The historical context of Metelkova being a former military barracks taken over by artists and activists underscored the community’s commitment to providing a “haven for artists.” The participant explained how “I work closely with community members, artists, and visitors” and “We organise all sorts of cultural events, music festivals, art exhibitions, and workshops that bring people together.”

Ethnographic observations revealed a rich presence of art-related posters, graffiti, and messages predominantly addressing political left-leaning, anti-capitalist, feminist, and pro-LGBT+ themes.

Metelkova, as an alternative cultural community, embodies some characteristics of heterotopias. It functions as a self-governing space with its own principles and guidelines, detached from mainstream societal norms. The emphasis on autonomy and self-expression in Metelkova creates a unique environment that challenges conventional modes of governance (Foucault, 1986).

Foucault argues that heterotopias have a transformative power and the potential to disrupt existing power structures (Foucault, 1986). They serve as spaces for experimentation, resistance, and the creation of new social relations. In Metelkova, self-governance empowers individuals to shape their living environment, and challenge established norms. It allows for the exploration of alternative modes of living, artistic expression, and community organisation.

Their self-governance and autonomy can be seen as a manifestation of Foucault’s idea of heterotopias. It offers a different way of living, where individuals have the freedom to pursue their passions and collectively create a space that aligns with their values (Foucault, 1986). This pursuit of utopia within Metelkova contributes to the creation of a vibrant and diverse community.

The role of leadership and self-governance is essential in Metelkova to sustain their identities as autonomous heterotopias. Rather than relying on designated leaders or hierarchical positions, they both embrace an organic and emergent form of leadership (Kester, 2004). In Metelkova, leadership within the community naturally arises from individuals who take on roles based on their passions, expertise, or personal commitment to specific projects (Feldman, 2000). This fluidity ensures that leadership aligns with the diverse interests and aspirations of the community members, contributing to their autonomy and heterotopic character (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Leadership approaches are characterised by a participatory and collaborative process (Barrett, 2013). Decision-making involves open assemblies where all community members have the opportunity to contribute, express their opinions, and actively shape the direction of the community (McCabe, 2009). This inclusive decision-making fosters a sense of ownership, empowerment, and collective responsibility, reinforcing the autonomy and heterotopic nature of the space (De Certeau, 1984).

By avoiding centralised leadership and embracing distributed leadership, Metelkova ensures that power is not concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or hierarchies (Hardt & Negri, 2000). This approach helps maintain the communities' autonomy and prevents the emergence of dominant power structures that could undermine the heterotopic identity (Foucault, 1984).

Freetown Christiania

Leadership in Christiania is characterised by community decision-making, rather than democratic or authoritarian processes. Chloe, a business owner who proudly said that she was born and raised in Christiania, described the process of how the community made decisions: Christiania was divided into 14 different districts, each of which held weekly meetings to discuss important matters affecting the community. Anyone could participate in these meetings, but equally, there was no requirement for individuals to do so. In this way, individuals could engage with community politics to the extent they felt comfortable with. These weekly district meetings served as a space to hold preliminary discussions and gather views of the residents of each district. The same topics were then discussed at a larger meeting between representatives of all 14 districts. Final decisions about the running of the community would be made in these meetings.

Long-term resident Rose added that decision-making in these meetings was not a democratic process: instead every resident had to agree to the final outcome. She explained that the benefit of this method of governance was that it guaranteed that every person's view would be heard and listened to. Likening to a jury in court, she explained how this was very effective because one person's views and ideas could hold the power to sway other's opinions, and ultimately lead to a different outcome. In this way, there was no single leader, instead the community was able to lead itself in whatever direction it desired.

Whilst the residents of Freetown Christiania took pride in their community based system of governance, recognising it having superior qualities to democratic political leadership systems such as that in London, where I, the researcher, would have "no voice", they also openly expressed their struggles and their concerns with this type of governance. Firstly, things often remained relatively conservative as most residents did not want the existing infrastructures and systems to change. Rose seemed disappointed by this, as she personally felt that the sale of cannabis encouraged its use, which she believed was "unhealthy" for the "minds" of individuals.

Moreover, both Rose and Chloe said that despite the community's best efforts to make sure that decision-making was a process where everyone's views would be listened to and

considered, both remarked that some voices were “louder than others”. This appeared to threaten a system designed to make sure that every individual in the community had an equal voice in decision-making. One participant even added that a particular district would make sure that they were overrepresented at meetings to make their views more imposing to others. This issue seemed to challenge the whole concept of a form of governance where everybody had “a voice”, and the local residents were aware of this. When these two women were asked how they thought this could be overcome, they did not have any ideas to share.

Leadership in Christiania does not just involve decision-making in their own community, they also must navigate their relationship with wider Copenhagen. As suggested by its title as a ‘heterotopia’, Freetown Christiania was wildly different to the city (Copenhagen) that surrounded it. Just a couple of minutes’ walk away from the entrance to Freetown Christiania was the 17th century Church of Our Saviour which set the city and Freetown in Christiania in direct contrast with one another.

The Church of Our Saviour:



The entrance to Freetown Christiania:



The marked difference in architecture reflected the different values it held from the city that surrounded it. Whereas the church represented traditional hierarchical leadership which was reflected in its imposing and thought-out design, Freetown Christiania’s architecture and design reflected its community values by the array of styles of graffiti that covered the mismatched buildings.



Despite its autonomous status, Freetown Christiania still imposed rules on its residents, and many businesses displayed a poster detailing these rules that reminded residents and tourists of how they were expected to behave.

Both residents and the many tourists within Freetown Christiania respected these rules, and throughout my time in the town, I both saw no disputes, and nobody mentioned that breaking of this 'common law' was an issue. When people did break the rules, for example, one morning I was sitting on a wall that bordered Pusher Street, and I saw a middle-aged tourist about to take a picture of his young child. Despite the happy atmosphere - there was a live band playing, tourists were crowding round the market stalls in front of me, and the hot July sun was lighting up the art that surrounded us, a local man tapped the man on the shoulder and reminded him that taking pictures was prohibited on Pusher

Street. The tourist complied immediately, and both parties moved on with their day. Potential rule-breaking appeared to be dealt with immediately, but non-confrontationally.

More issues seemed to arise in Freetown Christiania surrounding what was considered 'legal'. From an outsider's perspective, I mentally divided Freetown Christiania into three different area types: the backroads where local residents would run small businesses, the central tourists areas near the market - here you would typically find two different types of individual: tourists, and locals who would be sitting in small side areas smoking cannabis, and finally, Pusher Street. Pusher Street was a small stretch of road located in the busiest part of Freetown Christiania, infamous for its many market stalls where young men would sell cannabis to tourists (which was illegal in Denmark). This area was fraught with tensions: Rose described to me that police would raid these stalls every day and the sellers would have to hurriedly hide their cannabis to avoid being arrested by the police. In this way, Freetown Christiania clearly challenged the legal norms of the surrounding city.

However, Rose also revealed that sometimes representatives from the city would communicate with her, and others from Freetown Christiania, when trying to rethink the appearance of Copenhagen. She described a time where the city had reached out to her asking for advice on how they could make concrete blocks appear more aesthetically pleasing. She responded by suggesting that they cover them in children's art, and whilst she never got formal recognition for this suggestion, a few weeks later she found that her idea had been adopted by the city.

Foucault and Miskowiec's concept of heterotopia can be applied to Christiania because of its unique leadership and relationship with the surrounding city. The decision-making

process in Christiania deviates from democratic or authoritarian systems, instead emphasising community involvement and consensus. The town enforces its own rules, which residents and tourists respect, and potential rule-breaking is addressed non-confrontationally. However, tensions arise regarding the legality of activities, such as the sale and use of cannabis in Pusher Street, challenging the surrounding city's legal norms. Nonetheless, there are instances of communication and collaboration between representatives from the city and Christiania, indicating a dynamic relationship that influences the appearance of Copenhagen. Christiania's distinctive governance structure, architectural divergence, and interactions with the wider city contribute to its characterization as a heterotopia according to Foucault and Miskowiec's framework.

Leadership in Christiania is characterised by a community-based decision-making process, setting it apart from traditional democratic or authoritarian systems. The community is divided into districts that hold regular meetings to discuss important matters, ensuring inclusivity and the opportunity for all voices to be heard. Final decisions are reached through consensus rather than a democratic vote, with each resident needing to agree to the outcome. This unique form of governance allows the community to lead itself in the desired direction, without concentrating power into the hands of a few individuals (Ntounis & Kanellopoulou, 2017). Like Metelkova, this political structure prevents dominant groups from emerging that would undermine Christiania's heterotopic identity.

Conclusion

The findings from the research highlight the role of leadership and self-governance in the sustainability of Metelkova and Freetown Christiania as autonomous heterotopias. The findings align with Foucault's concept of heterotopias as spaces that challenge established norms and power structures. Metelkova and Freetown Christiania embody characteristics of heterotopias by providing alternative modes of living, artistic expression, and community organisation. The emphasis on autonomy, self-governance, and community-led decision-making aligns with the transformative and disruptive nature of heterotopias proposed by Foucault.

In Metelkova, the self-governance system operates on flexibility rather than rigid rules, allowing individuals to contribute based on their passions and shape the community collectively. The emphasis on autonomy and self-expression creates an environment that challenges conventional modes of governance. Similarly, in Freetown Christiania, community leadership is characterised by decision-making through community meetings, where every resident has the opportunity to express their views and reach a unanimous agreement. This decentralised approach ensures that everyone's voice is heard and contributes to the collective direction of the community.

However, challenges exist within both communities. In Metelkova, participants expressed frustration with being exoticized or perceived as "weird" due to their alternative involvement, emphasising the desire to explore art and live authentically rather than intentionally being seen as weird. In Freetown Christiania, while community leadership allows for inclusive decision-making, there were concerns about certain voices being "louder than others," potentially undermining the equal representation of views.

The role of leadership in sustaining the autonomous heterotopia identities of these places is crucial. In Metelkova, the organic and emergent form of leadership allows for diverse interests and aspirations to shape the community. It fosters a sense of ownership, empowerment, and collective responsibility. Similarly, in Freetown Christiania, the community-led decision-making process ensures that power is not concentrated in the hands of a few, preserving the autonomy and heterotopic nature of the space. However, challenges

with maintaining equal representation and avoiding dominance within decision-making processes must be addressed.

The research contributes to our understanding of how leadership and self-governance play a vital role in sustaining the identities of Metelkova and Freetown Christiania as autonomous heterotopias. The findings highlight the complexity of leadership dynamics and provide insights into the challenges and strengths of these alternative communities. Further research and ongoing discussions are necessary to continue exploring the relationship between leadership, governance, and the sustainability of autonomous heterotopias.

The findings of our research provide social value by presenting an alternative system of governance to the dominant neoliberal framework that has become pervasive in our society. Metelkova and Freetown Christiania offer examples of self-governance, autonomy, and community-led decision-making, challenging the conventional norms of governance. This opens our minds to different possibilities, stimulates critical thinking about alternative modes of organisation, and encourages a reevaluation of our assumptions about how communities can be governed. By showcasing these alternative models, our research contributes to broader discussions on the diversity of governance systems and leadership and their potential for creating more inclusive and participatory societies.

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