Fig. 28   Reflections, potentials...Pusher Street 2005.

VI. Discussion: Tactical Formlessness, Critical Aesthetics, and the Dilemma of Planning

Even though the fate of the Free Town is far from settled, my discursive roaming has to come to a halt. Looking back, I see a diverse, urban exteriority, scattered with lived events, architectural structures, historical remnants, and individual movements. At a closer look, this exteriority has become even more multifaceted, broken up by agitated voices and experimentation, by questioned norms and faltering regulations – by attempts to stir up the whole, to redirect its development, or to simply understand.

With the point of departure in the Free Town of Christiania, the present study has tried to cover what has unfolded as an urban –*scape*; a propagating *formlessness,* which, in order to be comprehended, has to be *performed*, re-enacted, realized. Actualizing this –*scape* of mediating performances, through an ambiguous 'do-it-yourself' community, the study has also sought to problematize what has been referred to as a more general process of urban *aestheticization*. Historically understood as the modernist tendency to obscure political conflicts by appeals to ideal form, it has in a more 'post-modern' urban context been associated with commercial exchange – the obscuring of political conflict through commodification. A short-sighted furnishing or face-lift of reality,[1] it has first and foremost connoted the most superficial aesthetic values – pleasure, amusement, harmless beauty – all that which we associate with 'place marketing', 'city branding', or 'Disney-fication.' However, as an aberrant urban expression, Christiania has managed to put this 'thematization' of urban space to trial. Asking how the Free Town has been articulated has therefore provided a venue for interrogating also the aesthetic presumptions behind contemporary urban planning and design, as well as the more deep-seated consequences of aestheticization in relation to a general understanding of our situation in a changing world.

In my approach to the unruly Free Town, I have first and foremost focused on the way the community, through different kinds of actions, expressions, and mediating events has contributed to a general urban discourse. I have in this regard retold its story as a discontinuous undoing of aesthetic conventions of form. In the Christiania manifesto, this undoing was originally expressed as the activist claim for the individual's right to 'freely unfold.' In my study I have therefore related this claim firstly to the de-centering or displacement of the subject as unambiguous form, and secondly to its situating in relation to a likewise amorphous and 'displaced' space. Thirdly, more explicitly reflecting the emancipating ambitions of the Free Town, I have discussed the aesthetic implications of powers, forces, and desires, thereby also interrogating the

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1   See Wolfgang Welsch (1997:2).

aesthetic presuppositions for empowering resistance and spatial change.

As these 'unfoldings' have shown, aestheticization has to be understood as a double process, on the one hand connoting a re-centering and stabilizing formalization of reality around certain identities, themes or norms, around symbolic forms that despite their presumed 'pre-given' nature may still be exchanged and commercialized. On the other hand, there is what could be called the 'critical aestheticization' actualized by Christiania, which constitutes a more deep-seated and fundamental agitation of the subject as well as of space.

In relation to the de-compressing strategy of a *formal* aestheticization, critical aestheticization constitutes what I have chosen to designate as a *tactics of formlessness*. Inspired by Michel de Certeau, I have defined *tactics* as the composite of actions unfolding despite a lack of a 'place proper.' A tactics is an *informal* way of navigating or advancing within a given form or a given representative order. It is the kind of agency that in every instant has to take the surroundings into consideration – positions, relations, patterns. Answering to a given arrangement, it unfolds as a *move* – an illegal catching of a prey by trespassing onto the other's domain,[2] an illegitimate decoding of imposed patterns, an unsanctioned use of a neglected surplus. A tactics is in this sense formless by default; a dynamic set of actions developed in opposition to a static system in order to continually 're-make sense.'

In a similar way, Christiania has operated within the confines of a given order, a given urban form. As such, Christiania has exemplified what de Certeau would have described as an urban "art of the weak"[3] – an intermediary activity that, making use of that which formal edification has left aside – the surplus and the scrap – actualizes the expressive and mediating potentials that otherwise would remain unnoticed.

The Subject Undone: An Outreaching Aesthetics

In my study of this 'alternative' community, the positioning of the subject has constituted an initial point of departure. As a reaction to a formal aestheticizing of the subject – the attempts to fixate the individual in relation to a given representational regime such as privatized real estate orders, individualized psychological orders, or rational orders of knowledge production – Christiania has proposed different means of expansion and re-positioning of the subject, thus aestheticizing being in an alternative way.

2   Discussing reading as a tactical undertaking, Michel de Certeau suggests the metaphor of *poaching*, in French *du braconnage*; an anti-disciplinary practice opposing the pedagogic pretension to "*inform* a population, that is to 'give form' to social practice" ("la prétention [...] d'*informer* une population, c'est-à-dire de 'donner forme' aux pratique sociales"). Michel de Certeau (1980:239-240).

3   "un art du faible" Michel de Certeau (1980:61).

The tactics of subject re-positioning developed in Christiania have been of different kinds. First of all, with a point of departure in libertarian or anarchist ideas of conviviality, Christiania developed on the basis of a non-representational and embodied participation of 'one person–one voice.' The significant trait of this direct-democracy as it has developed in the Free Town, has been its situational character, its emphasis on direct encounter and embodied orality, which has resulted in what could be called an urban aesthetics of *voicings*. Rather than being submitted to regimes of signification, the subject transforms into a vociferous agent, continually expressing itself, leaving its concrete and material traces in space. This situational positioning of the subject in relation to a surrounding should in this respect not be understood as a return to an original state of natural communication, but as an activation of the material abundance, the yet formless surplus of drifting meanings and potentials, that formal representation has left aside. As such, the situational aesthetics of Christiania is also more confrontational – according to Walter J. Ong in every instant "agonistically toned", unveiling the fact that embodied spatial being situates knowing "within a context of struggle."[4]

The second tactics of subject repositioning that I have seen actualized in Christiania could be understood in terms of *re-staging*. Challenging the representational setting of urban space, its publicly accepted, often 'face-lifted' *masque*, Christiania has actualized the implicit *scenographia* at work. Deliberately using not only action theatre, political manifestations, and aesthetic happenings, but a general discursive expressivity, the Free Town has managed to question the passive role of the subject in a conventional urban setting. Employing an out-reaching, 'in-yer-face' tactics, Christiania has rejected the fundamental 'interiorization' of the subject inscribed in the Cartesian idea of the *cogito*. The result has been a fundamental re-configuration, not only on the level of new family constellations or social interaction, not only as a predilection for the carnivalesque, but as a re-staging on the personal level, realized as a widespread interest in spiritual experimentation of all kinds. Having presented an opportunity to open the secluded chambers of the rational psyche, Christiania has shown to be not only degenerative, but de-familiarizing in a quite emancipatory way.

Thirdly, Christiania has undone subjective aesthetics through what could be described as *bewilderment*; a critical re-orientation of the subject's situation in space. In Christiania, this has been a question of rejecting reductions, of defending the largest possible degree of differentiation. As an alternative *common*, a public space outside the regulated urban grid, its implicit ambition has been to embrace disorientational confusion as an abundance of creative potentials. Questioning spatial consistency, such as cognitive regularity, street numbers, or schematic street grids, Christiania has also rejected the more fundamental principle of a distant beholder controlling a spatial whole. Practicing a labyrinthine rather than projective logic, Christiania proposes

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4   Walter J. Ong (1982/2001:43 and 44).

through its bewildering structure a performative approach to the question of the subject's positioning in relation to a societal space.

The fourth tactical aspect I have designated as *interceptive*. In relation to a surrounding urban landscape, the tactics of Christiania has had an interfering, agitating and critical function, actualizing the shortcomings of a normative subjectivity also in an ethical sense. A transgression of the limits imposed on the subject does not necessarily entail an abnormal manifestation of hubris or egotism (as stated in the critique of Christiania). Instead, it is also an actualization of the Other as a potential – not only constantly present, but even acute. With the point of departure in an undone subjectivity, Christiania thus re-enacts what Wolfgang Welsch has called an *aesthet/hics*;[5] a spatial aesthetics of expressive interference with Others and Elsewheres.

Christiania has in this respect not simply constituted a refuge, sanctuary or absolute alternative in relation to a surrounding modernity. On the contrary, it is itself an integral part of this modernity; its own inherent borderline or *liminality*. As such, it constitutes the integral fringe at which a radical contestation and reconsideration of urban fundamental values may be spatially manifested and openly performed. The re-positioning of the subject thus becomes an active reflection of the fact that it is only on the level of human agency that the urban landscape, as a human propagation, may be represented and reproduced. As in Christiania, 'the aesthet/hic' turns out to be anything but a vision of ideal harmony or disinterested beauty – rather an out-reaching aesthetics of a non-finalized *inter-esse*, an in-between being, transforming the subject into a performing agent.

Place Undone: Landscape Activated

The polemical tension caused by Christiania over the years could be understood as a tension between spatial paradigms. Rejecting a 'space logic' that prioritized universality and predictability, it would be possible to see Christiania as a stealing of a 'place' for itself, thereby creating a sensuous foothold in an increasingly cerebral world. Having developed from unique and historically specific 'placial' circumstances, the Free Town could still be seen as a place with an easily recognized 'face' or a circumscribed form. In the west cut off from the city by an extended brick building, and in the south and south-east largely delimited by moats and sculpted ramparts, its defined contours have sustained its forceful fight to establish a humane and characteristic place, complete with a village co-op, a village green and lots of quite innocent and even bourgeois enterprises and activities.[6] In the midst of a hostile and geometric world, Christiania has

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5   See Wolfgang Welsch (1997).

6   This is what I formerly have referred to as a "normalization from within," and which has also been commented from an aesthetic point of view by among others Merete Ahnfeldt-Mollerup (2004) in the essay "Christiania's aesthetics – You Can't Kill Us/We Are Part of You". I

constituted a recognizable and genuine place with a clearly articulated form and a firmly rooted identity.

Even though employed as a tactical figure in the debate, such an interpretation of Christiania would be a simplification. It would fail to spot the important problematization of locality production that Christiania, as an intermediary spatial agent within an urban planning discourse, has evoked. In respect to the Free Town as "a somewhat organized anarchy",[7] I have instead wanted to emphasize the 'agonistic' aspect of Christiania. This inherent conflictiveness opens out between on the one hand an aesthetic framework based upon the idea of a grounded and intentional place, and on the other hand a spatial aesthetics that takes as its point of departure a performative and narrative –*scape*.

I have chosen to discuss this spatial tension in terms of *phenomenological interiors* and *polemological excursions*. Considering the general inclination to simplify the space-place discussion in strict oppositions, this might seem a bit hazardous. My intention however, has not been of the simplifying kind, nor has it been to bring forward Christiania as an ideal. Instead, I have seen the Free Town of Christiania as a telling example in a discussion about how spatial issues have been and may be articulated, in relation to a historically-situated urban discourse.

My point of departure has in this respect been the fact that the discourse on Christiania has complicated the image of an existentially grounded place as representative of commonality. Repeatedly contested and re-enacted, unfolding as a thought provoking 'Elsewhere' rather than an authentic 'Here', Christiania does not fit into the role of an intentional place with an identifiable form. Instead I argue that Christiania has developed according to a discontinuous tactics of aberrance and disobedience, dramatizing its own waywardness – a tactic that has certainly at times also worked against its own best interests.[8] However, constantly exploring its own narrative potentials, Christiania has brought into consciousness the fundamentals of locality re-production, which are not simply a matter of a geographically circumscribed 'place. Even though the idea of an existentially defined 'place' certainly has constituted one of the articulated 'intentions' behind the Free Town, its discursive entanglement has tattered the image. Rather than a plain recuperation of place as a natural

category of unified identity and wholeness, Christiania has twisted its nostalgic content and put it into play.

In my discussion of Christiania, I have therefore chosen to describe how the Free Town has emerged, not as a reaction against, but as a direct function of urbanization and spatial aestheticization. On the one hand, Christiania appears as a direct consequence of the early critique of urbanity as an intensified but interiorized *nervous life*. On the other hand, Christiania produces a rupture also with such a critique. Given its emphasis on the desire to "freely unfold", it constitutes a space that generates a more out-reaching intensification – a heightened awareness also of an explicitly social life of embodied action.

Following Christiania's discursive undoing of place, I have chosen to frame my spatial discussion in terms of four aspects of critical aestheticization. These aspects, all of which touch upon the totality of representation and reproduction that characterizes human spatial agency, are designated as *unsettled grounds*, *disseminating reproduction*, *narrative consumption* and *liminal -scaping*.

Firstly, the 'unsettling of grounds' refers in this sense to the critique of a phenomenologically defined concept of place and its repression of the role of the political. As placial *theft*, Christiania has contested the normative idea of a 'place proper', and the idea of a natural 'belonging' related to a cognitively given 'dwelling place.' My critique has in this respect first and foremost addressed the academic function of this idea, especially as expressed in the notion of *genius loci*, 'the spirit of place'. This idea of a place grounded in a transcendental *sensus communis* has here often resulted in a reactionary aestheticization and a manipulative psychologizing of illusion, veiling a political situation of conflicting interests.

The second unfolding takes place through a re-interpretation of the linguistically-oriented phenomenology of Heidegger. In this context, this re-reading functions as an intermediation between a transcendentally grounded 'place' and an idea of 'space' as an extension cleared for reproductive practices. Through the *disseminating* movement inscribed in the Heideggerian notion of 'thrownness', a different conception of space unfolds, one that places human action in its origin. This dissemination leads on to the designation presented by Henri Lefebvre of space as the everyday propagation of representational practice. Rather than space *a priori*, this is a space repeatedly *produced* through discursive practice. The Lefebvrian analysis of urban space thus answers to a critical 'undoing' of existential place that concerns its status as physically-defined geographical location as well as transcendentally-derived eidetic image.

The third spatial aspect is perhaps the one most explicitly exemplified by Christiania. A further development of the Lefebvrian theme, place here opens up onto a space of *narrative consumption*. Consumption should in this respect

be understood as 'use', as an alternative production making use of a spatial surplus, all that which is not defined by a 'meaningful' place. In Christiania, this has more concretely been articulated as the performative tactics lacking a 'place proper' – the informal uses developed 'despite all' - a narrative recycling of an urban surplus, a development of hybrid spaces, a consumption of architecture as event. These 'telling' uses also describe a shift from a phenomenology of place to a *spatial rhetoric*, to a logic based on continual *spatial articulation.* Designated by de Certeau in terms of *enonciations pietonnières*,[9] a 'wandering rhetoric', this articulation constitutes a composite of spatial figures or *tropes*, which reinforces a *phatic* character of space, its unfolding first and foremost as mediating extension for its own sake; a participatory and communicative *faire-avec*.[10]

The fourth tactical aspect is constituted by the composite –*scaping* of Christiania on a more imaginative level. As I have repetitively emphasized, Christiania is not only to be understood as a physically manifest, geographical place, but perhaps as much as a discursive propagation with more extended ramifications. Extending *phatic* consumption to a wider media-scape, Christiania also plays an important role in an imaginative locality production, which, in a global and transient economy, takes place 'against all odds.'[11]

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Unfolding as a *liminality* in the city, a borderline area or a polyvalent zone where unintentional transformation can take place, Christiania has contributed to a radical dissolution and displacement of identities, positions and properties. I argue that this displacement has had a reflective and activating effect not only in the local context, but on urbanity as such. Through the spatial agitation caused by Christiania, the royal city eventually transforms into an urban field, a mediating land-*scape*. This is a landscape that defies superficial 'landscapization', or what de Certeau has called the "political freezing of the place,"[12] instead unfolding as "the imaginary landscape of an inquiry"[13] – a discursive landscape, which restores what may be called 'popular culture', the propagation of everyday narrative practices, which continually transforms the historical matrix of places into "an infinity of mobile tactics."[14]

That urbanity should acknowledge within its confines a liminality such as Christiania is perhaps not all that controversial. However, what Christiania has made clear is that such acknowledgement not only concerns the circumscribed

9   Michel de Certeau (1980:148).

10   Michel de Certeau (1980:50).

11   Arjun **Appadurai (1996:181).**

12   "…il [in this case *le récit*] travaille au gel politique des lieux…" Michel de Certeau (1980:188).

13   "Le paysage imaginaire d'une recherche" Michel de Certeau (1980:67).

14   "une infinité mobile de tactiques" Michel de Certeau (1980:67).

legitimizing of an exceptional 'Free Town', but requires a rethinking of urbanity as a whole. Rather than a distinct association of physical and cultural *forms*, the urban landscape is constituted through situational agency. In this respect, Lefebvre's spaces of representation, de Certeau's *narrative consumption*, and Appadurai's imaginary locality production, all constitute attempts to articulate a spatial approach that embraces also the active, non-finalized and formless, rendering to this superfluous dimension of space an intermediary function.

Power Undone: Towards an Empowering Urban Jam

A spatial conflict of interest, Christiania most certainly constitutes an actualization of the urban landscape in terms of *power*. As an illegitimate re-appropriation, it already initially staged a critique of subject positioning in relation to representational regimes. It questions the validity of ideologically formulated notions of 'common grounds', and it develops subversive modes of uses 'against all odds.' Furthermore, as a social experiment deviating from the general norm, it has also, which is no less important, interrogated the decompressive and aestheticizing strategies of the modern Welfare State.

In my discussion of Christiania and its disturbance of urban geography, I have taken as a point of departure the relation between aesthetics and power. Here the aesthetic challenging of power as articulated by Surrealist Georges Bataille and Situationist Raoul Vanéigem constitutes an important point of departure. Actualizing a subversive *formlessness* of recombinant meaning, Bataille's thinking in this respect provides an undoing of power from an aesthetic point of view. In his polemical poetics, Bataille furthermore revealed the incarcerating effects of normative aesthetics, its functioning as a 'lexical prison' mutilating human expressivity. The alternative for Bataille was an aesthetic activism 'bringing down' or *horizontalizing* the edifices of power, further a basic *materializing* of representative form, and finally disturbing a governing intentionality through the staging of *transgressive play*.

During the urban uprisings of the sixties, the Situationists further emphasized this aesthetically formulated critique. In his polemical *Treatise for the Young Generations*, Vanéigem targeted not only an emergent market economy, but also the normative life-politics of an aestheticized welfare state, primarily as expressed through urban planning. With the point of departure in a threefold analysis of repressive power as *constraints*, *manipulation*, and *seduction*, the Situationists developed a triple strategy of *savoir-vivre* building upon the abilities of (impossible) *participation*, *communication*, and *realization*. Emanating out of a similarly expressive critique of normalizing power, Christiania has likewise aimed at differentiating stereotypes and imposed norms. With parallels both to the *base materialism* of Bataille and the *savoir-vivre* of Vanéigeim, Christiania has developed through concrete realization of exchanges, forces and desires, thus challenging the idea of a unified common place and a normative sets of values.

When Christiania takes shape in the early seventies, it consequently aims as much at a differentiation of the unifying and governing idea of commonality as it targets an all-embracing capitalist economy of seductive 'spectacle'. In Denmark, the idea of a common ground as a basis for a common economy furthermore historically originates in the idea of *fælleskab* or *folkelighed*[15]– a natural and popular, political community closely related to a national 'Danishness.'

A community seen in terms of exchanges, forces and desires, furthermore reacting upon a representative regime of popular commonality, quite logically becomes an object for analysis in Foucauldian terms of power. In this respect, Christiania has been as important for the understanding of Foucault's concept of power as has Foucault for the understanding of Christiania. Power, for Foucault, is exercised, yet in our contemporary society not necessarily through physical violence or explicit laws, but through discourse, through representational regimes. The 'normalization' process of Christiania in this sense represents an apt example. A leveling force working through the imposition of historically and aesthetically motivated matrixes, it unfolds as a *bio-political* praxis, a regulatory composite of actions with the implicit aim of governing social and cultural reproduction. In his analysis of power, Michel Foucault used the metaphor of the *panopticon* in order to discuss how the bio-political governs space. As the invisible and surveying eye, power is incorporated with our own lives through the representational system to which we are subjected. Spatially distributed and ubiquitous, power still operates on a material level of particular bodies, with the explicit objective to keep everyone in their proper place.

In my approach to spatial power, I have tried to show the influences in Foucault from aesthetic activism, and similarly how Foucault's further development of this aesthetics of power in turn inspires activist movements. The Situationist understanding of urban planning as repressive prevention is in this sense closely related to the panopticism of Foucault. Similarly, the construction of *savoir-vivre* as an activist program for resistance is a parallel to Foucault's development of "the care of the self " where the body appears not only as a locus for repression, but also for creative opposition and empowerment.

In this way, Foucault's thinking constitutes a link between the aesthetic activism formulated by among others Bataille and the Situationists, and the urban activism of Christiania. Never explicitly articulated or resolved in Foucault's own thinking, the undoing of power finds a 'solution' through the development of the aesthetic category of *play*. The ludic principle constitutes a socio-material counter-tactics, a social set of actions operating on a basic, material level in relation to the horizontal politics of bio-power. A deliberate navigation in relation to power, Christiania has similarly developed playful and manipulative tactics of responsivity/response-less-ness, spatial amassments or material disturbances.

15   See de Certeau's comment on N.F.S. Grundtvig in Michel de Certeau (1980:195). **See** also **Signe Sophie Bøggild (2005)** "**Christiania/***Christiania*".

The performative effect of the tactical play with the horizontal, the bio-political, and the material, is the *urban jam*; the improvised yet reproductive formlessness of power understood as empowerment. The provocative and transformative reciprocity of the *jam* should in this respect be related to other contemporary kinds of local yet formless and temporary disturbance tactics; practices that in a similar way have unfolded as reactions to changing formations of power. These are all tactics of *base materiality*, tactics of 'bringing down', clogging up or disturbing an all-pervasive economy of flow. Nonetheless, staging a sluggishness of a very moldable and dynamic kind, culture jammers, like the inhabitants of Christiania, are conscious and discursive agents, not only restricted to local squatting or seizing of circumscribed places, but using a broad range of externalizing, spatializing and intermediating practices in what could be seen as a mass-mediated –*scaping* that entails also global mobilization. Like an urban jam, the modifying mess and message of the Free Town has emerged wherever power has left a vacancy for potential re-appropriation.

The metaphor of the urban jam is in this context first and foremost polemically related to the governing and homogenizing structures of a conventional planning discourse. Playing upon gaps and crevices in the aesthetic formation of power, the urban jam of Christiania entails a bringing into consciousness of the spatial workings of power, turning them into empowering potentials. As in the musical jam, playing explores what planning has left out; the composite of improvised passages, of singular achievements, of particular happenings in a space of potentials. An intensified and informal interplay, the urban jam, as staged by and through Christiania, constitutes a creative composite of singular contributions, furthermore with the potential of displacing and entirely consuming the leading theme.

The urban jam staged in and through the Free Town of Christiania has consequently constituted a counter-movement, a creative sluggishness, but also a generative force in relation to the city as such. The jam is an urban tactic reinforcing the performative qualities of the urban landscape, thereby transforming the city from a subject-object constellation to a *situation*; a performative, spatial event, releasing both subjects and objects from their submission to a given form. The urban jam is thus a figure establishing an intermediary space, realizing a shift with repercussions also on urban aesthetics, from cognitive *form* to performed *embodiment*. In a more specific planning context, the strategic rationales of the *plan* are thereby countered by the ludic tactic of the *jam*; an engaging and consuming means to deal with a multiple reality – a means beyond measurement but somehow within the range of imaginative and physical reach. And even though this is on one level without doubt an aestheticizing posture, even (to a certain extent) an irrational and romanticized fantasy, it is on another level a fantasy that cannot, even with the most efficient methods or arguments, be excluded from the human multiplicity that constitutes contemporary urbanity.

With this study, my aim has been to introduce a 'critical aesthetic dimension' into the urban discourse, and this with the help of a contested 'Free Town'. What I in different ways have asked throughout this work is a composite question: What can an improvised squatting initiative tell us about the role of expressive, aesthetic action in relation to such an intentional practice as that of urban planning? My answer has been that it can tell us a lot, not least through its simple actualizing of the fact that there is always a 'more', an even greater 'lot', a horizontal, material and discursive abundance that we, as practitioners and participators in an intentional field of practice, should, and must, acknowledge.

The reader looking for unambiguous solutions and categorical formulas will however probably be disappointed. If there is a general elucidation in this work, it is the one that 'urban solutions', just like the everyday urban landscape, should have few general rules, but much specific potential. This also raises the principle dilemma of urban planning: as a practice oriented towards projective overview, it has difficulties handling the abundance and unpredictability of a performative reality. What Christiania has made clear is the fact that in the in-betweens, surplus spaces, passages and vacancies, there is a profusion of life that cannot be submitted to planning but that, nevertheless, constitute a necessary leeway for creative reconsideration. As such, these relational spaces become public spheres in the deeper, non-proprietary sense; spaces that have no properties and no forms and therefore, on a very direct level of action, are experienced as *free*.

A subsequent dilemma is thus that planning, in its conventional interpretation as a 'strong' program, ultimately constitutes a barrier to the development of a planning *practice*, a practice which, like the activism of Christiania, unfolds as open discourse, as dialogic undertaking. In order to become 'strong', planning ought to 'weaken' or 'un-do' itself, to become a soft *art-de-faire,* with its sources or codes of decision making open for scrutiny and modification. Such a 'planning' practice would not lean on epistemic truths, eidetic images or formal solutions. Instead, it would be confident in its function as a basic cultural play.

Another dilemma, one that is also relevant in relation to a symbolically influential Free Town, is that there is no unbiased, non-political planning and design. Even though planning is a public service, there is no objective planning, no normal planning, no neutral planning, aside from those who actually plan. As such, planning is by default an expressive performance, an aesthetic, discursive practice, operating through the representational forms it has itself created. Facing an increasingly complex, spatialized and aestheticized media-scape, an issue such as this needs more attention. The problem of planning and urban design is in this situation not that they are redundant practices that have lost their relevance, but that there is considerable confusion as to their roles

and functions in an aestheticized world.[16] In other words, the problem is not so much that planning produces and organizes positive forms, which certainly also constitutes an expressive potential, but that, as expressive practice, it remains so insensitive to its own aesthetic presuppositions. This is a thoughtlessness that, as we have seen, strikes the very ability to handle and understand its own secondary products – the abundant surplus, the 'negative' formlessness, that, paradoxically enough, constitutes both its own critical and creative reserve.

What Christiania, as the *as-if* space of urban narratives, has clarified, is the fact that urbanism and aesthetics are two aspects of the same human exteriority. Releasing aestheticization from its strictly representative duties in relation to the urban landscape, it transforms into an expressive potentiality, a context-generating excursion, an empowering play with Others and Elsewheres. 'The urban landscape' is not simply a question of how 'reality' should be interpreted, represented and adapted to societal standards, but, more importantly, a question of how – on a basic, everyday level – it is practiced, consumed, performed and transformed.

In this respect, I have seen Christiania as an experimental realization of an alternative *aesthetics of tactical formlessness*; in other words, of a relational and aesthetically informed ethics, an out-reaching and interfering practice that will not let itself be reduced to one or the other representative 'property', 'identity' or 'form.' It is my conviction that Christiania's 'undoing' of a normative aesthetics in this way has seriously actualized the dangers associated with a natural and 'intimate' normalization of common, urban space. The Free Town plays an important role as an active reminder of the simple fact that, in order for a vital urban landscape to unfold, there has to be room for a 'more' - more than residents, more than forms, more than monuments. What this ultimately calls for is an even wider recognition of superfluous spatial narratives, of drifting wanderers, of redundant players and deviating thieves – all of whom will contribute to the articulation of an unpredictable and heterogeneous future-present.

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16   See Tom Nielsen (2001:194).