

**Intimacies:  
A Feminist Exploration of Squatting Utopias  
Through Field Research and Art Practice**

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A Thesis in the  
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Figure 1. Tina Carlisi, *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

## ABSTRACT

### **Intimacies: A Feminist Exploration of Squatting Utopias Through Field Research and Art Practice**

**Tina Carlisi, PhD, Concordia University, 2022**

My doctoral research is a feminist, utopian exploration of three squats through field research and art practice. Squatting is unlawfully occupying vacant or unused buildings or land without the owner's permission, to create a collective living environment and/or operate a social centre where culture, political organizing, social events, and DIY skills are shared and accessible to a wider community. For three months in autumn 2017, I was a guest, volunteer, and artist-researcher at three squats: the former protest camp Grow Heathrow (est. 2010, evicted/demolished 2021) in London; Can Masdeu (est. 2002), a squat in a former hospital and surrounding gardens in Barcelona, abandoned since the sixties; and Freetown Christiania (est. 1971), founded by squatters on a former military base in central Copenhagen. Situated in three distinct cultural and social contexts, these autonomous communities, and the experiences of the individuals who live there, share many similarities.

My field research involved case studies, field notes, interviews with women squatters, and research-creation informed by feminist oral history and a personal utopian exploration of each site, to investigate intimacies at the intersection of communal living, learning, and creativity. By *intimacies*, I refer to: a) social intimacies: togetherness or closeness; and (b) material intimacies: closeness through skill-sharing and re-skilling. Developed in parallel and in dialogue with my fieldwork, I created a book of poems and drawings called *Intimacies*, intended to articulate the emotional knowledge of this research: what intimacy *feels* like in these community contexts, from my artist-researcher perspective. *Intimacies* is a seventy-two-page, two-colour, Risograph-printed artist's book of handwritten poems and drawings, which I first developed when visiting these communities. This research uses poetic writing as an active tool and a deep phenomenological probing to approach the complex, subtle experience (Kusserow, 2020) of autonomous collective living. Through a poetic window, I investigate how such experiences, as they impact an individual's personhood, may be creatively expressed. A broader goal of this research is to

consider how communal life in these squats can reimagine the world in crucial ways, especially pertaining to the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, when offline and intimate communality seems increasingly unattainable.

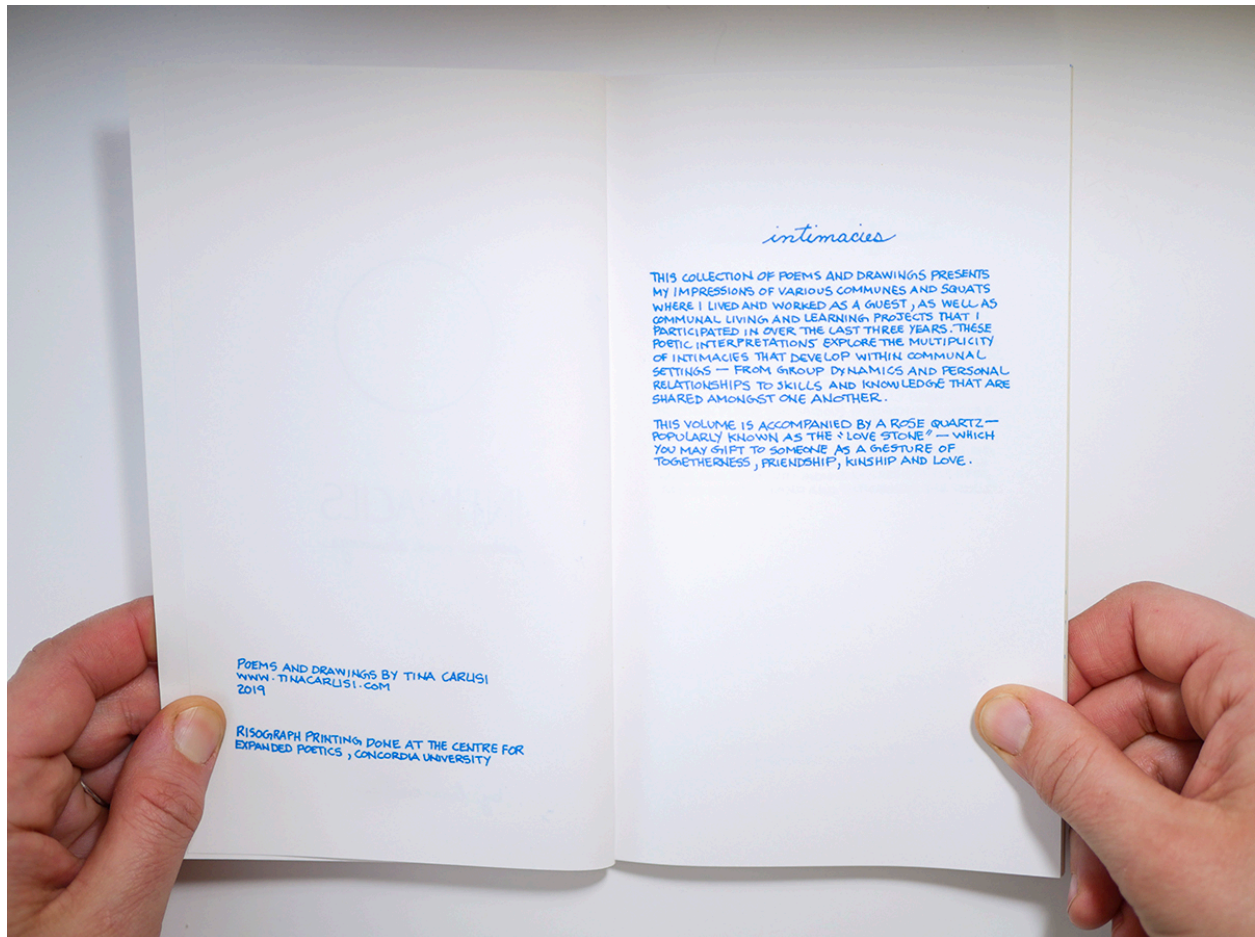


Figure 2. Tina Carlisi, introduction to *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

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Figure 3. Tina Carlisi, land acknowledgment in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

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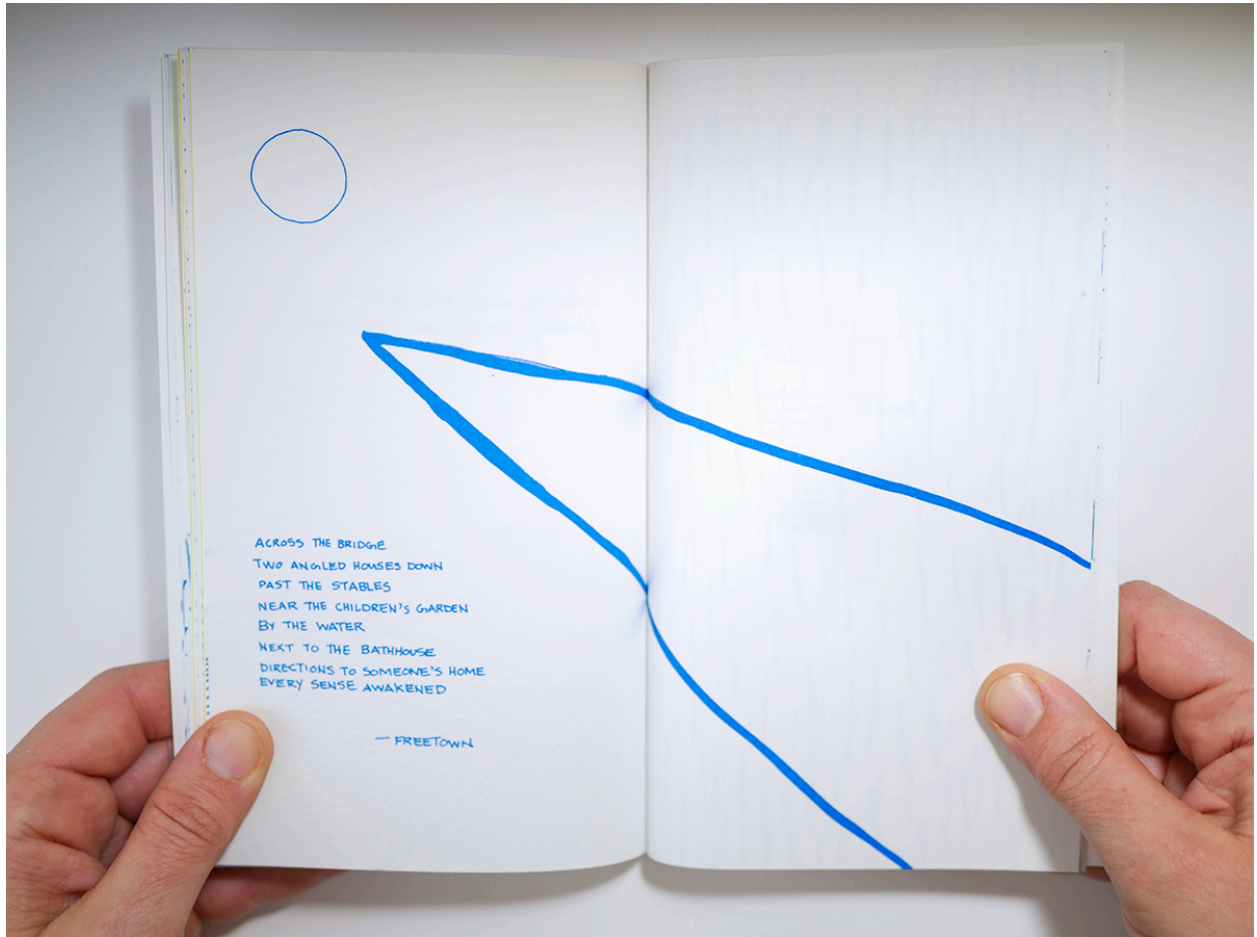


Figure 4. Tina Carlisi, "Freetown," in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Intimacies: Situating the artist-researcher and introducing the research**

Squatting utopias go beyond the limits of squatted buildings: it is a struggle on housing, self-managed spaces and self-produced culture, free knowledge and behaviours.

—Miguel A. Martínez (2007, p.12)

The first time I stepped foot in Christiania—a freetown<sup>1</sup> founded by squatters in 1971, on a former military base in the centre of Copenhagen, Denmark—the sensations of experiencing an autonomous community manifested themselves for me in so many ways: how, in the cool summer breeze, Christianites rode their front-loaded cargo bikes carrying giggling small children along the unpaved streets; being introduced to community-minded neighbours who organize and share resources with one another; the pleasure of witnessing spontaneous street theatre, costumes, and music bubbling up at any given moment; the level of intimacy that may be found in social spaces such as the public bathhouse; and numerous small pathways leading to unique, hand-constructed or -modified homes along the serene waterside. Only in the last two decades have all the streets of Christiania had legal names and addresses, as required by the city of Copenhagen for security purposes such as directing an ambulance or a fire truck to a specific location.<sup>2</sup> Regardless, whenever I visited someone during my second trip to Christiania, which I undertook as part of my fieldwork for this research, I received colourful directions to their homes and not a physical address, as I described in the poem “Freetown” and which I illustrated with a minimalist path, drawn in perspective (Figure 4).

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<sup>1</sup> The term *freetown* is specific to Christiania. In September 1971, shortly after the barricades to the military base were broken into by squatters, journalist Jacob Ludvigsen wrote about Christiania, referring to the squatted area as a freetown (Lauritsen, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> I received this information from a local.

It began as a squatted area under threat of eviction but, fifty-one years<sup>3</sup> later, Christiania continues to symbolize and inspire alternative models in autonomous intentional communities. The spark for this doctoral research-creation project, which involved case studies and interviews with residents of Christiania and two other squats (Grow Heathrow in London, United Kingdom, and Can Masdeu in Barcelona, Spain), came to me in 2016, during my first month-long stay in Christiania. On that occasion, I arrived at Christiania through my participation in Utopia School, a nomadic, temporary free school and social centre operated out of New York City.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 5. Research photo-documentation in Christiania, November 2017. Left: Banana house built by Christianites (residents of Christiania) with the help of journeymen.<sup>5</sup> Parked in front of the house is an iconic Christiania cargo bicycle. Right: Example of a street in Christiania. Photos: Tina Carlisi.

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<sup>3</sup> Christiania celebrated its fifty-year anniversary on September 26, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> “The Utopia School is a temporary free school and social space for sharing information about both failed and successful utopian projects while working towards new ones. We define Utopia as those projects and initiatives which re-imagine the world in some crucial way. The Utopia School takes the form of a people-powered ‘social center’—a space where people can gather for free and engage in thoughtful discussion and practical skill-shares” (Iglehart, n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> A journeyman is a skilled building trade or craft worker (such as a carpenter) who has completed an official apprenticeship. Journeymen (and journeymen) are trained solely to use traditional, as opposed to electrically powered, building tools and are required to leave their hometown for three years of travel, offering their skills in return for hospitality as part of their apprenticeship. This professional structure originated in Germany in the thirteenth century as a series of Catholic worker societies called the *Gesellenvereine* (journeymen’s unions) which later spread to other European countries, including Denmark (Spiegel Online International, 2006).

As squatters' movements persist today (Martínez, 2018, 2021; Moore, 2012, 2018; Moore & Smart, 2018; SqEK, 2012, 2014; van der Steen et al., 2014; Vasudevan, 2017; Vilaseca, 2013), my lived experiences within squats, autonomous collective projects, and social centres have inspired me to explore how communal living, learning, and creativity mesh intimately within these autonomous spaces and, more specifically, those I am writing about in this doctoral research. I am interested in how such experiences may impact an individual's personhood and how this impact can be creatively expressed. A broader goal of this research is to consider how communal life in these squats can reimagine the world in some crucial way, as well as pertinence of this mode of living in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, throughout which the intimacies of social life have been held at arm's length.

A simple definition of squatting is the unlawful practice of occupying vacant or unused buildings (and sometimes land) without the owner's permission. Squats may be living environments, wherein squatters share a common living situation and/or run a social centre,<sup>6</sup> where culture, political organizing, and social events can take place, and DIY (do it yourself) skills are shared and made accessible to a wider community. Sociologist Steven M. Buechler (2000), whose research focuses on social movements, has described creating autonomous spaces as a form of direct action, since it provides activists with a place in which to demonstrate how people can live outside of mainstream capitalism. Most squats are illegal and can, in fact, be dismantled through the execution of property laws; therefore, for the people who gather together and live in them, they are precarious situations.

While squatting is often a reaction to social hardships such as lack of employment or affordable housing, as pointed out by Miguel A. Martínez, a scholar of urban movements and activism and member of the activist research network Squatting Everywhere Kollektive (SqEK),<sup>7</sup> it is also a "well-established repertoire of political protest by youth and leftist-anarchist movements" (2018, p. 2). There are numerous reasons to squat vacant buildings or lands, the

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<sup>6</sup> Social centres make up the largest type of squatting practice in Europe (Martínez, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> The network was originally called the Squatting Europe Kollektive (SqEK), which, in 2017, the collective decided to change to the Squatting Everywhere Kollektive (also SqEK) to remove the limited geographical reference with political connotations, which the network preferred to avoid (Martínez, 2021). See the SqEK website for downloadable free books and research updates: [www.sqek.squat.net](http://www.sqek.squat.net).

most obvious being financial. In other words, the less time a person spends working to pay their rent, the more opportunities remain to devote time toward the things that matter more, personally and collectively (van der Steen et al., 2014), such as political organizing, gaining new skills, and skill-sharing for building projects, homesteading, art projects, and community building.

The militancy that often characterizes the relationship between urban squatting and autonomous politics in northern European countries has been dependent on mass populations of youth, who understood themselves as marginal to mainstream society. However, as geographer and urban studies scholar Alexander Vasudevan asserts in *The autonomous city: A history of urban squatting*,

Autonomy represented far more, however, than an expression of disaffection or obstinacy, freedom or rebellion. It offered an opportunity to *become a squatter*, to explore new identities and different intimacies, to experience and share feelings and to organize and live collectively. The squat may have been a place that challenged housing precarity, rampant property speculation, and the negative effects of urban redevelopment and regeneration. But it was also a place where one could (quite literally) *build* an alternative world. (2017, p.10)

It is precisely this potential that squats present—opportunities to explore and express new identities; to engage in different forms of intimacies; to organize, learn, and live collectively through autonomous re-skilling and skill-sharing as means of building an alternative world through radical autonomy—that is the focus of this doctoral research-creation project. Herein, I explore the intimate interactions that manifest themselves in the collective rhythms of living, learning, and creativity within three autonomous squat communities occupying lands in three major European cities.

For a period of three months in the autumn of 2017, I stayed as a guest, volunteer, and artist-researcher at the now-demolished protest camp Grow Heathrow, in London, United Kingdom (established in 2010 and evicted/demolished in 2021), which occupied a small piece of abandoned land that was once a market garden and later an illegal dumping ground; at Can



Masdeu, in Barcelona, Spain (established in 2002), a squat in a former leprosy hospital abandoned since the sixties; and at Freetown Christiania, in Copenhagen, Denmark (established in 1971). Founded and operating in three distinct cultural and social contexts, to each of which I devote a case study chapter, similarities exist between these autonomous communities and the experiences described to me by the people who live or lived there. In each case study chapter, I investigate how these squats exemplify both social intimacies, such as togetherness or closeness; and material intimacies, particularly knowledge and skills shared via DIY skill-sharing and re-skilling, all of it geared toward preserving autonomy. Learning autonomous skills can include “hard” skills, such as bike mechanics, sewing, electrical work, construction, and gardening; and “soft” skills, such as non-violent communication, learning consent practices, political organizing, and community building.

By *intimacies*, I also refer to the method of inquiry of *intimate sensing*, which geographer J. Douglas Porteous has described as involving “not only visual sense but also sound, smell, taste and touch, body and soul as well as mind” (1986, p. 250). In parallel and in dialogue with my field research (case studies, field notes, and interviews), I developed a book of poems and drawings, titled *Intimacies*, intended to capture the emotional knowledge of this research through the senses—what intimacy in these community contexts *feels* like. *Intimacies* is a two-colour (blue and yellow) Risograph<sup>8</sup> printed artist’s book comprising seventy-two pages of handwritten poems and drawings, and mainly laid out in two-page spreads. *Intimacies* will be described in detail in the chapters preceding the case studies chapters: in Chapter 3, as a research-creation method; and in Chapter 4, as notes on the process of writing the poetry. Images of page spreads from *Intimacies*, of the writings and the drawings, punctuate the dissertation. The purpose of this structure is that the research-creation component and the formal text function in collaboration with each other, to present more effectively the social and material intimacies in the social life of each community. The full version of *Intimacies* may be found in the companion PDF; I invite the reader give it a perusal first, before delving further into this more formal text.

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<sup>8</sup> The Risograph (or Riso printer or RISO printer duplicator) is a printer originally designed for high-volume printing using stencil or screen technologies. “As a printing method it sits somewhere on the spectrum between screen printing and offset lithography, but what sets Riso apart is the unique aesthetic and highly tactile finish of the prints” (Komurki, 2017, p. 9). Similar to screen printing, to achieve multiple colours on a single sheet of paper, different ink colours are layered separately.

As an artist-researcher, I consider the pages of *Intimacies*, in their experiential and aesthetic aspects, as vital to understanding the discussion contained in this dissertation with full context. How art generates and embodies knowledge will be further discussed in the research-creation chapter. I have inserted selected spreads from *Intimacies* as visual reminders of this research-creation work, wherever the textual discussion in the dissertation intersects with the concerns in the book. Throughout the dissertation, I will guide the reader as they encounter these insertions.

## **Research questions**

This dissertation engages with two guiding questions:

**Through intimate sensing, how can poetic writing and drawing serve as a form of emotional knowledge gathering, to closely capture the complex and subtle experiences of people living and working in autonomous squatters' communities?**

**What knowledge may be gleaned from oral history, such as the place-based knowledge of teaching, learning, and making found in squats, that has a resonance in this present moment—especially now, as Western cultures increasingly confront crises of social justice?**

As will be further discussed in Chapter 3, I address these questions using case study methods, including interviews with residents who identify as women;<sup>9</sup> and research-creation, in the form of an artist's book, that integrates poetry as an ethnographic method (Gullion, 2016; Kusserow, 2020; Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Weeber, 2020). Crucially, I explore these questions from a feminist and utopian standpoint, the theoretical underpinnings of which are further outlined in Chapter 1; and are informed by my literature review on squatters' movements and practices, outlined in Chapter 2.

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<sup>9</sup> The use of the term “women” in this dissertation is trans inclusive.

## **Situating myself as a feminist artist-researcher**

I am an artist-researcher whose artistic practice and research focus are socially and politically engaged. I do not currently live in a collective home nor have I squatted. My interactions with squats and social centres throughout my twenties and thirties, whether locally in Montreal or abroad during my travels, have been casual, such as staying as a guest or volunteer, and attending free parties, talks, political events, and skill-sharing workshops. Even so, I have extensive personal experiences with autonomous learning within radical spaces. In parallel to my formal education during my adult life, I have participated in radical spaces (anarchist, feminist, queer) such as social centres, collectives, libraries, archives, and squats, as well as free-school projects that are modelled on such spaces. Workshops, events, political organizing, and readings on various political and DIY subjects at zine libraries have deeply informed my personhood in ways that extend my formal schooling. New School media studies professor Elizabeth Ellsworth's book *Places of Learning* (2005) explores what it means to think of pedagogy outside of traditional learning spaces, as knowledge in the making or what she refers to as "the experience of the learning self." Such an approach to learning involves not only our cognitive interpretation but also our corporeal understanding, in terms of movement, sensation, and affect as experienced by the body/mind in time and space.

As a feminist, I am interested in the oral histories of women and, in the specific context of this research, I am fascinated by the women who create and maintain squatted spaces. In 2017, when I commenced my doctoral research and fieldwork, and began developing my interviews (see Appendices C and D), questions of race or other identity and equity factors did not form part of my early research objectives. While in retrospect, and for future researches, I will inquire about such crucial questions for a more intersectional understanding of my research subject, in this doctoral work, my research lens is gender. In my opening paragraph, I stated that my month-long stay in Christiania, for Utopia School, formed the seed for my doctoral work. Utopia School itself is modelled on squats in which participants live together; operate schools and social centres in the aim of providing social spaces, practical information and aid, skill-sharing workshops, and events; and run a people's kitchen that is open to everyone at no cost (Figure 6). At Freetown Christiania, fifteen people from around the world gathered to live together and run a school as a

free space for everyone. The school was open Wednesdays through Sundays, and offered workshops, tea and coffee, food sharing, and a people's kitchen where anyone was welcome to come for dinner and socialize. People were encouraged to drop in, learn, and even propose a class to teach themselves. In 2016, the school was located in Fabrikken<sup>10</sup>, upstairs from the Byens Lys cinema in Christiania.



Figure 6. Utopia School, Christiania, Copenhagen, 2016. Photos: Jaime Iglehart.

As an open free space, Utopia School was enjoyed by many kinds of people and in different capacities: some attended the entire month while others took one class, multiple classes, taught classes, or shared meals together at the weekly people's kitchen. At Utopia School, I met people who had squatted, or currently squatted, in different cities in Europe, including two

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<sup>10</sup> Fabrikken is a large two-floor building with a theatre, artist studios, an industrial kitchen and an open space to host events, artists and organizations working in Christiania.

individuals<sup>11</sup> who at the time were living at Grow Heathrow. Furthermore, as stated above, this edition of Utopia School was located in the centre of Freetown Christiania. During my stay there, I was inspired to investigate how the community has managed to survive the precarity that most squatted buildings or areas face. Additionally, I attended a talk on women in Christiania by Tanja Fox, a community resident since age three. This talk was my first encounter with women's histories within mixed squatters' movements.



Figure 7. Photographs of Sofiegården, ca. 1966–69. Top left: A communal meal in the courtyard. Photograph by Jens Bull (n.d.). Bottom left: Street theatre was often performed in the courtyard (Dorrit & Widding, 1969). Right: As an illegal squat, the only way to enter the building was by a rope ladder dropped down by a fellow squatter. Photo: Ritzau Scanpix.

During my time in Christiania for Utopia School, I interviewed artist Britta Lillesøe, who had been a member of the political street theatre troupe Solvognen and a culturally and politically active Christianite since the early 1970s. In our discussions, I discovered that she has

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout this dissertation, except for in my formal interviews for the case studies, I do not mention individuals's names to out of respect for their anonymity.



squatted in Copenhagen since the mid-sixties and was a founding member of Sofiegården<sup>12</sup> (Sophie’s Yard), one of the city’s first squats (Figure 7). Today, Sofiegården is often referred to as the “grandmother of Christiania” (Lauritsen, 2002). Hearing Britta’s stories of her early squatting days—stories told from a woman’s perspective—was inspiring and further ignited my interest in researching women’s histories and perspectives on squatting.



Figure 8. Tina Carlisi, “Radical Softness” course session, School of the Alternative, Black Mountain, North Carolina, 2019. Photo: Heidi Gruner.

This dissertation is also informed by my earlier and ongoing work in terms of aesthetics, responding to social circumstances and public pedagogy as part of my social art practice. In addition to Utopia School (Christiania, 2016; New York, 2017), I have participated in other free-

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<sup>12</sup> The city of Copenhagen decided to demolish Sofiegården in February 1969, which prompted many of the squatters to seek free housing in other neighbourhoods, and then, eventually, in the former military barracks (Lauritsen, 2002).

school residencies/projects that were based on communal living, learning, and creation, most notably School of the Alternative, in Black Mountain, North Carolina, from 2017 to 2019.

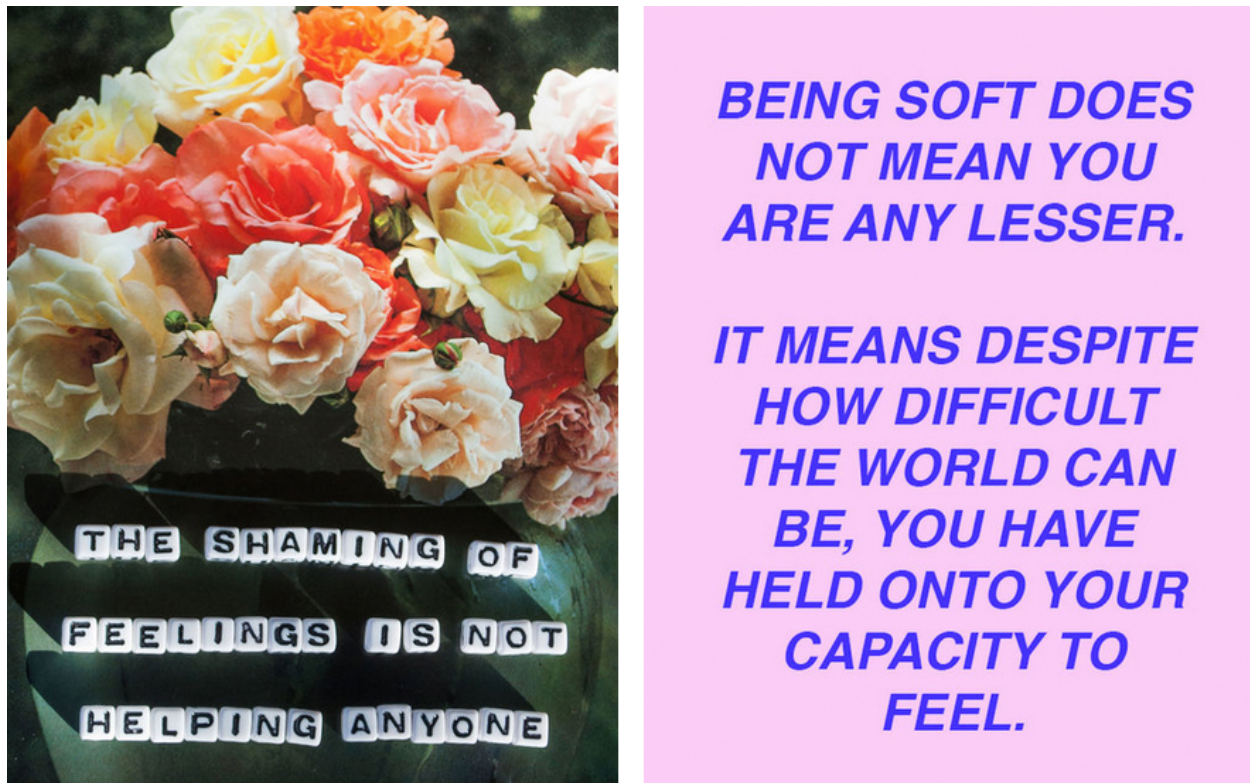


Figure 9. Lora Mathis, from the series *Radical softness*, 2015. Photos: Lora Mathis ([www.loramathis.com](http://www.loramathis.com)).

A project in which I take a critical theoretical approach to personal emotion and intimate collective experience similar to that of *Intimacies* was the course “Radical Softness,” which I taught at School of the Alternative in 2019 (Figure 8). Artist and poet Lora Mathis (Figure 9) used the phrase “radical softness as a weapon” in 2015, to describe how presenting your emotional self is a political act, one which works against our patriarchal society’s expectations (Mathis, 2016). They related the idea of “radical softness” to intersectional feminist author Audre Lorde’s famous quote: “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (1988, p. 332). While the class format of “Radical Softness” at School of the Alternative, which mainly involved group conversations and play, differs from the artist’s book format of *Intimacies*, both projects are embedded in research and creative output that embrace the idea that sharing personal emotions and experiences may be meaningful, in a collective sense, in imagining a different, more just world—one in which emotionality, as well as



different relationship structures and values, may allow us to acknowledge a spectrum of ways in which individuals can relate to one another.



Figure 10. Tina Carlisi, “Making Mountains Move: Poetic Action/Action Poetry” course session, School of the Alternative, Black Mountain, North Carolina, 2018. Photo: Alexis Schultz.

The year prior, I taught another course, “Making Mountains Move: Poetic Action/Action Poetry,” at School of the Alternative (Figure 10). For this course, I drew inspiration from two main references: action-inspired works, such as conceptual artist Yoko Ono’s *Grapefruit* (an artist’s book published in 1964, consisting of instructional scores which the reader may interpret through action); and Brazilian theatre practitioner, theorist, and activist Augusto Boal’s book *Games for actors and non-actors* (1992). Boal is widely known for developing a radical theatrical form, the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Influenced by Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire’s seminal book *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1972), TO includes participation by spectators as a means of promoting social and political change.



In “Making Mountains Move,” my purpose was to discover, collectively with other course participants, the potential power in poetic actions and words. Through group activities such as mime, this class explored intimacy and different forms of poetry (spoken, written, or performed) as part of a radical imagination. For Canadian scholar-activists Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish, co-authors of *The radical imagination: Social movements in the age of austerity* (2014), the radical imagination animates the struggle for a better world to create something else, and to create it together. As Haiven and Khasnabish explain:

The radical imagination emerges out of radical practices, ways of *living otherwise*, of cooperating differently, that reject, strain against, or seek to escape from the capitalist, racist, patriarchal, heteronormative, colonial, imperial, militaristic, and fundamentalist forms of oppression that undergird our lives. These radical practices are happening everywhere, all the time, in small ways and big ways, as our love, our hope, our solidarity, our critical thinking, our optimism, our skepticism, our anger and our communities fight against the powers that be. Reading and thinking can be such an act, so can teaching and protest marches and spiritual awakenings and family and squats and communes. (p. xxviii)

Haiven and Khasnabish have stated that no single definition can suffice to capture the range of meanings that the term *radical imagination* evokes; as such, their area of focus is practices with particular genealogies that “arise from within social movements in opposition to imaginaries that uphold the status quo” (Dyke et al., 2018, p. 160). Such genealogies include, for example, Ernst Bloch’s “forward dream” and the radical possibilities of “not-yet” (1954-59, 1995); Black rights movements; Indigenous resistance movements;<sup>13</sup> squatters’ movements; and intersectional feminist movements’ proposals for new ways of working, creating, and living—in short, those that “dream beyond abstract systemic change towards the transformation of everyday life” (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2012, p. xiii).

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to acknowledge the radical imagination in relation to Indigenous and Black histories. For further discussion on Indigenous and Black radical imagination, spatio-temporalities, and futurities, see, for example, Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, “What is radical imagination? Indigenous struggles in Canada” (2010) and Rickford J. Russel, *We are an African people: Independent education, black power, and the radical imagination* (2016).

Scholars Marcel Stoetzler and Nira Yuval-Davis (2002) ascribe a feminist aspect to the imagination—what they refer to as the “situated imagination”—that is shaped and conditioned (although not determined) by social positioning. For Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, “imaginings build on and are informed by cognitive processes as much as the latter depend on and are shaped by the imagination” (p. 326). They argue that the imagination is corporeal and not something that exists solely in the mind. Rather, the imagination is situated in senses, feelings, and—like intersectional feminist scholars have discussed before them—how bodies move in the world in relation to class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and age:

Experience, made by the senses and mediated through the faculties of the intellect and the imagination, produces knowledge as well as imaginings, and along with them meanings, values, visions, goals, and critical and creative, along with reactionary and destructive, potentials. Here lies rooted the possibility and indeterminacy of (or else the ‘freedom’ to) social change. (p. 326)

This corporeal and embodied approach to the radical imagination embedded in feminist intersectionality resonates deeply with me. In “Making Mountains Move,” collective exercises such as mime created a space in which the imaginary became a corporeal experience. This was also very much a real and sharable experience, as participants interpreted and engaged with each other in silence, vulnerably and with focus, not always fully knowing what somebody else’s mimed action might mean; yet, through each individual’s imagination and trust in others, a larger intimate, collective experience was imagined, shared, and often—so it appeared to me—enjoyed.

Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis conclude their article “Standpoint theory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination” (2002) with an emphasis on the role of the imagination in feminist pleasure, asserting that fighting social and political injustice should not preclude the experience of pleasure. In essence, Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis are advocating for what feminist author and activist adrienne maree brown, in *Pleasure activism: The politics of feeling good* (2019), her collection of writings and interviews with intersectional feminist thinkers, has termed “pleasure activism.” Presenting a case for making social justice work a pleasurable experience, brown argues for a

politics of healing and happiness within activism that can help us to reframe social justice struggles and strive toward fulfilled lives.



Figure 11. White bicycle plan, Provo, Amsterdam, 1966. After an unsuccessful formal request to the city of Amsterdam to provide free bicycles across the city for everyone to use and share, Provo decided to paint a hundred bikes and left them all around the city. Their motto—“A bicycle is something, but almost nothing!”—sought to express the environmental benefit of this traditional Dutch mode of transportation at a time when the city government was considering construction of a highway that would cut through the city core. Photo: Cor Jaring ([www.corjarring.nl](http://www.corjarring.nl)).

As an artist-researcher, my approach to activism, the history of social movement cultures, and creating political and social work is at once critical and poetic. In my practice, imagining social change embeds pleasure within a larger driving force, to articulate not only the power of what social change could look like, but also what it might *feel* like, through personal experience. For example, in May 2015, I spent a month in Amsterdam for a printmaking residency at Amsterdams Grafisch Atelier (now called AGA LAB). While there, I also conducted research on

Provo, a short-lived Dutch anarchist youth movement (active from 1965 to 67), at the International Institute of Social History archives, as well as at various events and exhibitions taking place around the city to celebrate the movement's fiftieth anniversary.



Figure 12. Tina Carlisi, *Taking back the sky: White kite plan, ban the drone, fly a kite*, Amsterdam, 2015. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

During this research, I wrote an essay on Provo (presented as an artist's book) titled "Provo! Imagining new urbanisms through tactical urbanism" (2015). In the essay, I discuss how some members of Provo were early squatters<sup>14</sup> and environmentalists, and how print was used as a tactical and poetic means to provoke action. Inspired by the various Provotarian actions—in particular the "white bicycle plan" (Figure 11)—I created the work *Taking back the sky: Ban the drone, fly a kite* (Figure 12) as part of the printmaking residency. Here the kite, a strong icon in Dutch

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, my research on Provo in 2015 is what led me to visit and research Christiania in 2016, as part of my first time there through my participation in Utopia School. The journalist Jacob Ludvigsen, whom I mention in footnote 1, was part of the Provo movement. For further connections between the 1970s countercultures in Copenhagen and Amsterdam, see my article "Free cultural spaces: Freedom of expression in autonomous geographies" (Carlisi, 2018).



culture, embodies poetry as a polysensory experience. I wanted to utilize the kite not only as a communication tool but as an experience which, in its simplicity, feels liberating and powerful.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 13. Tina Carlisi, *Taking back the land*, Montreal, 2016. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

A sister project to *Taking back the sky* is *Taking back the land* (Figure 13), which I conceived in Montreal in 2016. A multi-part print and action project involving wheat-pasted silkscreened posters and seed bombs, *Taking back the land* proposes reflections on citizen autonomy over land, decolonization of land, and greening the city (precursory meditations informing this doctoral research-creation project). Each seed bomb was stamped with a letter, indicating one of three wildflowers native to Montreal, and accompanied by a postcard explaining the project and providing information on each wildflower and its medicinal or edible uses. The seed bombs and printed matter were intimate objects, easy to distribute for free in large numbers, intended to open up the radical imagination for the purpose of re-conceiving cities. The wheat-pasted posters

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<sup>15</sup> For more information on Provo and how my research on this anarchist movement inspired *Taking back the sky*, see my article “Radical potential of poetic gestures” (Carlisi, 2016).

publicized this idea with the phrase “taking back the land,” printed against a solid green shape. The phrase allowed for multiple interpretations, yet the simple aesthetics that are familiar in social movement cultures also strongly suggested the decolonization of land, in this case city land.<sup>16</sup> In an earlier publication, I have described these two projects as *poetic gestures* and investigated how such gestures can inspire radical potential for social change (Carlisi, 2016). Poetry functions in my practice in various ways, in the aim of creating intimacy. Whether through printed poetic forms, pedagogy, or performances or happenings, such poetic intimacy is often rooted in experiences that involve reciprocal exchange.

I explore reciprocal exchange through friendship and gifting in Chapter 1 as part of my theoretical framework, connecting these intimate arrangements of relations to feminist and utopian practices. This framework, coupled with a literature review in Chapter 2 of current writing on squatting, autonomous movements, and practices in Europe, provides background context for my three case studies: Grow Heathrow (Chapter 5), Can Masdeu (Chapter 6), and Christiania (Chapter 7). Chapter 3, on methods, provides a map of my research-creation methods (ethnographic poetry, drawing) and fieldwork methodology (interviews, case studies, field notes) as the reader, in parallel, journeys through my artist’s book *Intimacies* and this dissertation text. In the conclusion, I will restate my research questions and draw from what I have gathered from my research-creation and field research, and point to considerations and objectives for future research-creation projects.

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<sup>16</sup> Note that I created this work prior to current versions of the Indigenous-led “land back” movement. My work is aligned with that movement’s principles, though with no intention to speak for it.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Theoretical framework: Intimacy, feminism, and utopianism**

#### **Intimacy: Friendship and gifting**

In his book *Intimacy* (2012), Ziyad Marar presents interconnecting theories on the subject from psychological, sociological, and philosophical scholars. Intimacy, he notes, forms part of the everyday and exists in the small spaces that happen in everyday life. Marar argues that although intimacy is an everyday phenomenon, that does not mean that we experience it daily; therefore, it is “maddeningly elusive for being so close at hand” (p. 9). In essence, the desire for intimacy is the desire to be known and to know another truthfully—as our true selves. Few relationships are intimate and the ones that are may not always be *consistently* intimate (p. 9). Marar points out that intimacy is different from love because it requires reciprocity. Put differently, a person can love another person who does not love them back, whereas intimacy cannot exist unless it is experienced by both people. Unlike other emotions, “intimacy exists *between* rather than *within* people” (p. 49).

*Intimacies*, the research-creation project accompanying this research, invites the reader to look at the particular versus the general, by describing social situations or sensations as intimate and as a form of intimacy. My research investigation is concerned with how living in a squatter community shapes individuals and can offer perspective-changing experiences through autonomy and intimacy. Marar has made the case that due to intimacy’s mutability and subtle texture, it is particularly difficult to express in words and is therefore more suited to discussion using artistic forms such as novels or poems rather than theory alone. Above all, intimacy needs to be experienced; therefore, to conduct research *on* intimacy, my methodological approach is intimacy *in* research—combining fieldwork, interviews, and research-creation as forms of “intimate sensing” (Helmreich, 2009; Howes, 2005)—which I elaborate further in the chapter on methods.

A crucial underpinning for my research in relation to intimacies in squatter communities is friendship theory. In her insightful essay “Notes on friendship” (2012), artist Céline Condorelli points out that the small body of philosophical discourse on friendship extending back to antiquity is problematic because, traditionally, writings focused on male-to-male friendships. In patriarchal societies, women were considered incapable of having friendships and, furthermore, unwelcome in the public sphere. Contemporary literature has expanded the discourse on friendship across gender expression, sexual orientation, and culture, more closely addressing platonic intimacies and the potential of friendship to nurture political, social, and cultural solidarity (Blatterer, 2014). For example, in her article “Lovers and friends: ‘Radical utopias’ of intimacy?” (2010), sociologist and philosopher Maria Márkus discusses how autonomy, or self-determination, is one of friendship’s main characteristics, and one which, she argues, can contribute to radicalization of democratic arrangements in social structures.

An anarchist zine titled *Friendship as a form of life*,<sup>17</sup> containing a collection of writings on friendship theory, first sparked my thinking, for purposes of this research, on the role of friendship in subcultures such as squatters’ movements as a radical practice toward social change. The zine’s title is a direct reference to “Friendship as a way of life,” a 1981 interview with philosopher Michel Foucault in the former French magazine *Gai pied*. In the interview, Foucault discusses how normative societal perspectives on homosexuality deny recognition of friendship amongst gay men. The aim of this denial, he adds, is to cancel “everything that can be troubling in affection, tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship” (Foucault, 1997, para. 10). A less unsettling societal view of homosexuality focuses on defining it as solely a sexual act. Foucault urged homosexual men specifically<sup>18</sup> to adopt friendship as a mode of life; in other words, to actively create a network of friendships as a necessary form of solidarity and camaraderie:

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<sup>17</sup> The zine can be downloaded for free here: <https://friendship-as-a-form-of-life.tumblr.com/download>.

<sup>18</sup> While Foucault himself focused on the potential of friendship as a mode of life and political engagement for homosexual men, he acknowledged that women, regardless of sexual orientation, already practice forms of intimacy.



A way of life can be shared among individuals of different age, status, and social activity. It can yield intense relations not resembling those that are institutionalized. It seems to me that a way of life can yield a culture and an ethics. (Foucault, 1997, para. 15)

Foucault's work is crucial in thinking about friendship as a form or structure that can redefine social practices. "Families of choice," states sociologist Harry Blatterer (2014), "are intimate friendships that validate and support whole 'ways of life' in the context of trust and respect—ways of life that gain their political identificatory purchase as 'families of choice' from the fact that they are both lived in and in opposition to a heteronormative gender order" (p. 60). A *family of choice*, more commonly called a *chosen family*, is a signature of the queer experience (Levin et al., 2020). Similar to chosen family structures, intentional communities also decentre the couple in favour of non-normative families (Depaulo, 2016) that are not based upon bio-legal bonds. Recent studies demonstrate, as argued by social scientist Bella Depaulo, that individuals who practice a single life and/or a life as part of a family of choice, are more likely to engage in collective projects. With intentional communities as a chosen social structure, in my research-creation project and in my interviews, I am interested in exploring the potential of friendship as a transformative form of relationship.

Blatterer's book *Everyday friendships: Intimacy as freedom in a complex world* (2014) is central to my thinking for this dissertation as it provides a scope on the scholarly literature on friendship and broadly maps perceptions of friendship in different historical contexts. Blatterer's research profile at Macquarie University, in Sydney, Australia, states that his work centres on the changing meanings of friendship, in terms of what he describes as an "intimate relationship that is 'generative'—potentially life changing, invaluable for integration into new environments and supportive of a sense of self as well as personal change" (Macquarie University, n.d.). In *Everyday friendships*, Blatterer argues that certain kinds of friendship may constitute a creative, generative process. He discusses the qualities of friendship in relation to freedom, autonomy, and equality, arguing that "friends may encourage us to realize our potentials, take a new direction in life's journey, and glimpse possibilities of which we may otherwise remain unaware" (p. 96).

What can “friendship as a way of life” mean in the context of squats, particularly at the intersection between communal living, learning, and creativity? When I asked the women I interviewed for this research at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania about the role of friendship in communal life, many responded that they did not necessarily consider the people they lived with in their community as friends per se but rather something closer to familial, or even comradely, relationships. (Of course, some do very much consider the people they live with as close friends). In each case study chapter, I discuss and quote from participants’ thoughts and experiences on friendship within their community. It is important to note that the varied experiences of friendship in community also depend upon the relationships that may or may not develop when an individual enters a community, a change that generally begins as co-living with strangers that share common values and interests.

In *Rethinking friendship* (2006), sociologists Liz Spencer and Raymond Edward Pahl discuss how “personal communities” continue to provide social adhesion within contemporary societies, which includes friendships and “friend-like” relationships across familial and non-familial milieus and spanning the larger social landscape. This lack of institutionalization of friendship, as opposed to other relationship structures such as marriage and family, provides individuals a space that is voluntary and free, and outside of cultural prescription, allowing for a variety of relations and connections to emerge, including creative and pedagogic ones. Spencer and Pahl argue that although the relational freedom of friendship is not total, friendships are created mostly between people who share interests and needs without a universally applicable framework—not unlike intentional communities. It is important to acknowledge that no relationship, including friendship, whether between individuals or among an entire community, is free of tension and disappointment (Smart et al., 2012).

In *Rebel friendships: “Outsider” networks and social movements* (2015), a compilation edited by Benjamin Shepard, various authors discuss the connections between social movements, autonomous movements, and friendship as a form of powerful camaraderie and allyship. During my fieldwork, I wrote *Intimacies* from a place of friendship, thinking of it as an offering or gift deeply embedded within the research-creation. Each copy of the book is accompanied by a piece of rose quartz—popularly known as the “love stone” (Hall, 2016)—which can be gifted to

someone as a gesture of togetherness, friendship, kinship, and love, thereby building another intimate connection (Figure 14). The quartz sits on the book cover, in the middle of an outline drawing of a circle, suggesting the circle of life and togetherness.



Figure. 14. Tina Carlisi, *Intimacies* with rose quartz, 2018. Photo: Mélody Alasset.

The idea of a gift exchange and reciprocity has been theorized in both anthropology and art (Hyde, 1983; Mauss, 1990; Sansi, 2014). For poet, essayist, and cultural critic Lewis Hyde, art is a gift and not a commodity. Hyde argues that art exists in two economies, a market economy and a gift economy, but states that only one is essential: “art can survive without the market, but where there is no gift, there is no art” (p. xi). In *Art, anthropology and the gift* (2014), Roger Sansi delves into contemporary artists’ and ethnographers’ affinities, noting that artists seem to embrace anthropology not solely for its methods but also because of interest in anthropological

theories regarding exchange, personhood, and identity. Sansi argues that the theme of the gift appears often at the centre of artistic practice:

It has become even more important in the last decades, with the exponential growth in relational and participative artistic practices. The situations and relations that these art forms generate inevitably go back to the gift and the general forms of the social: how do we relate to each other, how do we relate with things, how are communities built, how do we work in common? (p. 87)

Sansi's statement is pertinent to the scope of this dissertation project inasmuch as it is concerned with questions of the social: how autonomous forms of community are built, how these contexts may foster meaningful social relationships and connections to knowledge exchange and creativity, etc. For me, as an artist-researcher, it was a gift to be welcomed by each community, not only in terms of the hospitality that was extended to me but also for the exchanges that make up the very foundation of my research investigation: togetherness, learning from others, and communally engaging in creative and cultural life.

As discussed earlier, *Intimacies*, on the one hand, is an articulation of these ideas through art practice and, on the other, an intimate artistic project that is also a way to give back to each community—an ode, so to speak, to how these communities are transformative. The book's print format, which lends itself to multiples, will allow me to gift copies to each person in the community who participated in my research, following the formal defense of this doctoral work. *Intimacies* also has the potential to connect to other people not directly linked to this project such as friends, friends of friends, loved ones, and colleagues who share similar interests, art practices, or values. My ability to share this book work with others serves as an intimate connection, through poetic writing and drawing, even as it allows me to connect, as an artist-researcher, to various audiences outside of academia.

### **Feminism: Emotions and experiences as knowledge**

Having an artistic praxis imbued with a feminist subjectivity, I embed my research within

feminist epistemology. At its core, feminist epistemology values the perspectives, feelings, and lived experience of women as knowledge (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Working from my own specific positionality or situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), for the research-creation component of this doctoral work, feelings became vital as a source of knowledge. In her article “The place of emotions in academic research,” city and regional planning scholar Rebekah Widdowfield points out that “emotions have an important bearing on both how and what we know” (2000, p. 199). Widdowfield explains that emotions affect the research process in relation to what is or is not studied, by whom, and how; and may also influence a researcher’s interpretation of a situation. Furthermore, Widdowfield argues that, “not only are emotions an inevitable and unavoidable part of the research process, but writing emotions into research accounts can facilitate a better understanding of the work undertaken and forms an important part of the process of situating knowledge” (p. 205).

In addition to acknowledging feelings in my research process and working from my own specific positionality or situated knowledge, my research also highlights particular women’s histories and experiences in the context of squatting and, by extension (where relevant), commune cultures. I take a feminist approach to this research, with my main lens being gender. As I state above, for my initial research objectives during my fieldwork, I did not inquire into the intersectional aspects of women squatters’ experiences, which include various forms of social stratification, exclusions, and inclusions: e.g., race, class, mobility, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, and ability. For future research on women squatters’ experiences, I will aim to take a more intersectional approach since it is crucial for understanding social movement phenomena more fully and with critical nuance.

Black American feminist scholars Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw,<sup>19</sup> bell hooks, and Angela Davis are early contributors to intersectional feminism, which emerged in response to the biases of earlier (white) feminist thought. These and other scholars have shown that women’s experiences and identities are not all the same. In *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (1984), hooks

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<sup>19</sup> Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality* in her 1989 essay “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex,” but the argument that Black women are doubly oppressed by race and class, and doubly marginalized by the feminist and civil rights movements, has been debated by other Black feminists in earlier works such as bell hooks’s *Ain’t I a woman* and Angela Davis’s *Women, race and class*, both published in 1981.

proposes a new approach to feminism, one that moves beyond the fight for equality of gender within a single socioeconomic class. Rather, she envisions a feminist movement that fights to end sexist oppression and exploitation without abandoning other forms of oppression such as racism and classism, which are “interrelated and inseparably connected to each other through interlocking webs of oppression” (p. 31). Contemporary intersectional feminism continues to identify and deconstruct such interlocking webs, in relation to gender, gender expression, ability, and mobility.

While an intersectional lens did not form a part of my early objectives for this research, nevertheless, in reviewing my data and research-creation work, I believe it is important to provide some articulation of visible difference, to the best of my ability and based on my observations, in terms of racial diversity and physical ability in my descriptions of each of the three squat locations in the case study chapters. These articulations also provide starting points and junctions to build upon in future research work. I would also note here that my research-creation project, *Intimacies*, also does not address intersectionality in its conceptual framework, based as it is in my own feminist perspectives and experiences.

Why a feminist perspective on squatting? While squats and social centres strive to be liberated, anti-oppressive spaces, the anti-hierarchical structure of autonomous spaces can often result in “hidden hierarchies” (Gordon, 2007, p. 69); or, as feminist philosopher and theorist Elizabeth Grosz (2001) explains, there is no *outside* to patriarchy: it becomes entangled within spaces and behaviours, even when there is an active struggle to dismantle it. The demographic of squatters includes people with different socioeconomic class backgrounds, political tendencies (such as anarchists, anti-authoritarians, anti-imperialists, autonomous, anti-fascists, and environmentalists), people of colour, migrants, refugees, artists, and workers as well as autonomist women and dykes, gays, and radical queer and trans people (Azozomox, 2014).

Literature in English on the histories of women, dykes, and queers in squatting movements so far has only a small footprint, but more texts on these specific histories are being written and published. The collection *Lesbian activism in the (post-)Yugoslav space: Sisterhood and unity* (2019), edited by professors Bilić Bojan and Marija Radoman, presents evidence of the role of



feminist movements in squatting histories. The essay “Squatting and diversity: Gender and patriarchy in Berlin, Madrid and Barcelona” (2014), by Azozomox (a pseudonym), sums up these histories of feminist squatting practices and their vital necessity:

The wimmin,<sup>20</sup> lesbian and gay movement that began in 1968 and spread worldwide had a great impact on the emerging squatting movements. . . . It initiated important debates over gender, sexism, transphobia and homophobia, heteronormativity, intersexuality and anti-patriarchal struggles. (p. 134)

Spain, and more specifically Catalonia, has been one of the most active countries in regard to feminist squatters’ practices. One of the main reasons for the development of gender non-mixity<sup>21</sup>—or, as I prefer: *chosen mixity*<sup>22</sup>—is to communicate explicitly the inclusion of trans, non-binary, and genderqueer people and, in so doing, to “critique male-dominated behaviour and patterns in mixed living spaces, squats or political groups, where often men ignore and reject the need for independent women’s spaces” (Azozomox, 2014, p. 136). In addition to underrepresented histories of feminist and queer squats, there is likewise an underrepresentation of women and queer perspectives and experiences in squatting in general.

In *The subversion of politics* (1997), historian and social theorist George Katsiaficas surveys women’s autonomist movements of the sixties and seventies in Italy and Germany, and asserts their importance, even today, for autonomous movements, including squatting:

Many feminist groups operated according to self-managed consensus, making decisions independently of central leaders and implementing them according to their own self-discipline. This organizational model remains vitally important to the definition of autonomous movements. (p. 14)

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<sup>20</sup> A feminist spelling of *women* to avoid the word ending in *men*. Another feminist spelling is *womyn*.

<sup>21</sup> Feminist non-mixity is a radical organizing approach to allow women and queers to gather in spaces free from cis male domination.

<sup>22</sup> “Chosen mixity” and “with a certain chosen mixity” are phrases I have come across more often in French and Spanish anarchist circles.

Christine Wall, a professor of architecture at the University of Westminster, London, has written two articles on feminist squatting in 1970s London: “Sisterhood and squatting in the 1970s: Feminism, housing and urban change in Hackney” (2017) and “Squatting, feminism and built environment activism in 1970s London” (2018). Although both are specific to feminist squatting in London and focus mainly on women-only houses, Wall asserts that for women, dykes, and queers, squatting provided possibilities for living outside traditional and conventional mores. Furthermore, living collectively enables groups of feminist women and queers to meet, organize, and discuss politics as a part of daily life, as well as learn essential skills that have traditionally been trades practised by men (e.g. construction, electrical work, etc.). It also provides convenient meeting places for cultural activities. Not surprisingly, in both articles, Wall incorporates interviews with women squatters while acknowledging the scant history of feminist squatting in Europe available in English and referencing Matt Cook’s *Queer city* (2014), which devotes a small section to feminist squatters in Copenhagen.

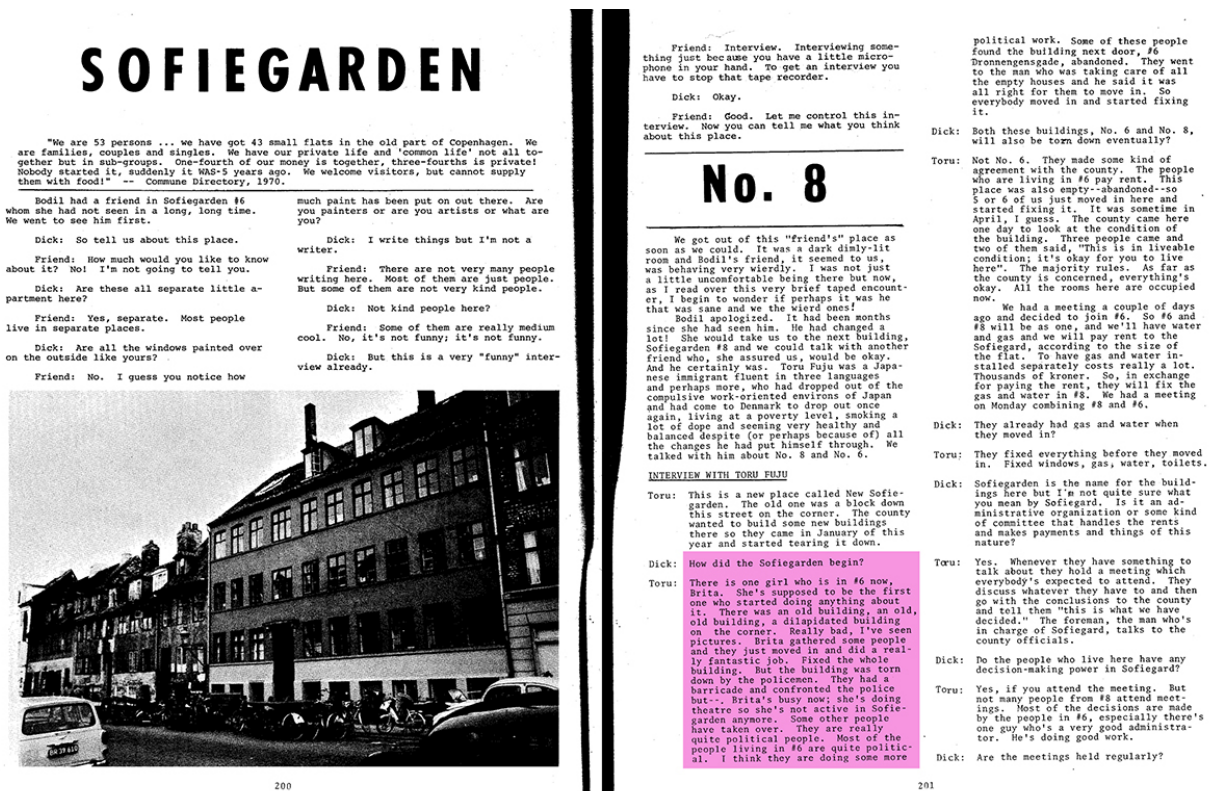


Figure 15. Excerpted pages on Sofiegården from Richard Fairfield’s *The modern utopian: Communes Europe* (1972). I have highlighted the section on Britta Lillesøe in pink. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Squatters' histories are oral histories. Even when they appear in print, interviewed squatters are often quoted anonymously. During my research, I came across an interview with an anonymous squatter in a catalogue of communes published in 1972 (Figure 15), who was quoted as saying that Britta Lillesøe (whom I first mentioned in the Introduction) was one of the founders of Sofiegården. I sent the article to Britta, who saw it for the first time in fifty years. This anecdote underlines how greatly squatters' histories rely on interviews. In line with the use of oral history methodology as a feminist approach, my interviews with women at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania contribute to the emerging research on women and queers within autonomous movements, who are challenging traditional and conventional mores by living collectively, engaging in organizing and politics as a part of daily life, and re-skilling, skill-sharing, and creating cultural activities in the course of maintaining these rare spaces.

### **Emergent utopias: Anarchism and social dreaming**

The term *utopia* was coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516, to describe an imaginary island society. It derives from two Greek words, οὐ (not) and τόπος (place), which together mean “no place”<sup>23</sup> (More, 2009). As Grosz (2003) points out, one thing that More, Plato, and other thinkers on utopia share is that the utopic is always conceived of as a space (i.e., an island, a walled city, etc.) and is self-regulating and autonomous in form, though it may function alongside and/or in exchange with other societies. Nonetheless, Grosz argues that the concept “is beyond a conception of space or place because the utopic, ironically, cannot be regarded as topological at all. It does not conform to a logic of spatiality” (p. 268). Rather, Grosz proposes that the utopic is the projection of a past or a present as though it were the future (p. 268) and concludes that “the task of architecture [space] and philosophy is not to settle on utopias, models, concrete ideals, but instead to embark on the process of endless questioning” (p. 272).

My inquiry into squats as utopic spaces—that is, as spaces created as direct actions, to

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<sup>23</sup> More's utopia is not an ideal place and the word is a cheeky play on this notion. Although there are many instances of applied idealism in his story—for instance, everyone on the island has clothing, food, and shelter—there are strong overtones of totalitarian power structures, exercised through a colonialist imagination that was a product of his time and social class position (More, 2009).

build a desired future in the present—began before my field research. Here I would note, however, that my own work on utopia took place before my interviews for this research. Inspired by my experiences, I was drawn to writing on the theme of utopia prior to my engagement with the three communities that informed my research-creation project. The theoretical lineage of utopian thought in which I position my work includes certain contemporary theorists, whose works stem from Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch’s writings on utopia in *The principle of hope* (1954–59/1995). Lyman Tower Sargent, Ruth Levitas, and utopian feminist Lucy Sargisson all use utopianism to refer to social dreaming—that is, a way of seeing and approaching the world that moves toward social justice and subsequently represents and embodies that vision (Sargent, 2006, 2010; Levitas 2010, 2013; Sargisson, 1996, 2000, 2012).

It has become a commonplace that to be a utopian is to be hopelessly impractical, or dangerously idealistic, or both (Davis & Kinna, 2009). Davis has argued that such views focus on aspects of utopian tradition associated with a quest for perfection or an impossible future, and “curiously omit those elements associated with encouraging greater imaginative awareness of neglected or suppressed possibilities for qualitatively better forms of living latent in the present” (2009, p. 73). By way of explanation, contemporary forms of utopianism are not about seeking perfection; rather, they are based on awareness and inventiveness. I contend that the communities in my case studies are themselves examples of awareness and inventiveness, as they work with already existing materials and structures and transform them into something else, as forms of emergent<sup>24</sup> utopias.

Utopia is always present around us: that is, through innovation, a community can create necessary political and social change for itself with the resources at hand and employing alternative forms of social production. Ruth Kinna, who specializes in anarchist studies, observes that although there are continual debates about the relationship between utopianism and anarchism, “the anarchistic aspect of modern utopianism is marked by an engagement with an imaginative and open-ended exploration of alternative ways of being” (2013, p. 221). An

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<sup>24</sup> I use the word *emergent* here as proposed by intersectional feminist activist and writer adrienne maree brown, in her book *Emergent Strategy* (2017, p. 69): “Intentional adaptation is the heart of emergent strategy. How we live and grow and stay purposeful in the face of constant change actually does determine both the quality of our lives, and the impact that we can have when we move into action together.”

anarchist understanding of utopia, Kinna argues, is connected to social revolution through prefiguration. In her article “Utopianism and prefiguration” (2017), Kinna points to the current discourse on how prefiguration is used to describe the “creative power of collective struggles, the project of a new world in the heart of the old . . . or to describe ways in which revolutionary desires are expressed” (p. 6). As an “intimate relationship between social transformation and action in the present” (p. 6), prefiguration is about testing alternatives in the hope of proliferating such autonomous models. Autonomy is indebted to individuals who re-skill and skill-share their knowledge.

For Stephen Duncombe, activist, professor, and founder of the Center for Artistic Activism in New York, small-scale utopian projects should aim to: inspire others by showing that another world is possible; critique current societal structures and dynamics; generate new models for organizing society; orient others toward a shared direction; and motivate individuals toward collective and collaborative action (2017, p. 2). Based on my research, squats create possibilities for an intimate, radical imagination with regard to “living otherwise” (Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014) or “living differently” (Chatterton & Hodkinson, 2006). With a nuanced perspective of utopia, expressed in a desire for something better rather than perfect (Levitas, 1990), I use a utopian lens as part of my research-creation practice, as Grosz suggests, “to embark on the process of endless questioning” in the desire to create something better—that is, something emergent. Building upon my theoretical framework—intimacy (friendship and gifting), feminism (emotion as knowledge), and utopia (anarchism and social dreaming)—the following chapter reviews the literature on autonomy, squatting, re-skilling, and skill-sharing, to provide theoretical support for the three case studies to better grasp these spaces as intimate, transformative communities.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Literature review: Autonomy, re-skilling and skill-sharing**

#### **Social intimacies: Autonomy and squatting**

Most literature on squatters' movements in Europe that is being produced in English is written, mainly, by an activist-research network of people who are insiders in the field—that is, those who have squatted or participated in squats (Martínez, 2018). Outside of well-established activist communities, these are movements that have, until recently, received little recognition with the notable exception of the efforts by the Squatting Everywhere Kollektive (SqEK), a group of activist-researchers working on the squatting movement, mostly in Europe (Vansudevan, 2017). My work contrasts with other research on squats. A significant body of research on squatting (Martínez, 2018, 2021; Moore, 2012, 2015; Moore & Smart, 2016; SqEK, 2012, 2014; van der Steen et al., 2014; Vasudevan, 2017; Vilaseca, 2013) and on commune cultures since the 1960s (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976; Eliezer, 2013; Fairfield, 1972, 2010; Kanter, 1972, 1973; Manzella, 2010; Melville, 1972; Miller, 1999; Zicklin, 1983) exists in the fields of sociology, anthropology, urban studies, and history; yet little literature exists on the creative cultures within these milieus, perhaps since they are so difficult to trace.<sup>25</sup> As well, squatting histories and practices generally are not widely written about because they are often illegal and/or underground, and therefore not intended to be visible to a larger public.<sup>26</sup> Both Grow Heathrow and Can Masdeu were and are illegal, though well-known. Christiania, on the other hand, is both well-known and legal, having functioned, technically speaking, as an illegal squat only for a six-month period in its fifty-one years of existence. These specificities concerning legality will be further elaborated in each case study, where I take up literature directly concerned with each site.

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<sup>25</sup> As it pertains to squatting and art, my research led me to a pair of works by art historian and activist Alan W. Moore, who has surveyed this work in two recent books: *Occupation culture: Art and squatting in the city from below* (2015) and the collection (co-edited with Alan Smart) *Making room: Cultural production in occupied spaces* (2016).

<sup>26</sup> I acknowledge that squatters' histories are not intended to be shared widely; therefore, there is an inherent conflict in exposing them in academic writing, particularly squats that are not well known, at risk of imminent eviction, and/or occupied by vulnerable populations.



Within these difficult-to-trace histories, even those of well-known squats, feminist and queer histories are known even less.<sup>27</sup>

Autonomous practices within squatters' movements are ideologically aligned with anarchism. There is no single type of anarchism,<sup>28</sup> as varying emphases have produced different schools of thought, from anarchist communism to individualist anarchism. The word *anarchism* derives from Greek and means without authority (Ward, 1973). A primary premise in all forms of anarchism is distrust of the state and an insistence upon self-government. On a philosophical premise, anarchism maintains that institutional power and enforcement—especially on the part of the state<sup>29</sup>—are not methods suited to create and maintain social cohesion. Rather, as a critique of authority and power, anarchism proposes collaboration, such as mutual aid and voluntary cooperation. Politically, anarchism promotes direct action—the taking of action without permission from the state—and supports models for self-organization.

An anarchist thinker who has been influential for my own thinking and practice is Colin Ward. An architect, educator, and one of the United Kingdom's most predominant writers on anarchism, Ward's action-oriented perspective spans a wide array of interconnected issues including architecture, education, squatting, environmentalism, urbanism, ruralism, and utopianism. His arguments for anarchism are illustrated not from theory but from actual examples of tendencies that already exist. He affirms that “an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence” (p. 23). In accord with Ward's assertion that anarchy is possibly the oldest form of polity and one that has characterized most of human

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<sup>27</sup> Feminist and queer squats with chosen mixity (without straight cisgender men) exist and continue to be under threat in Europe. Examples include La Pigeonne in Strasbourg, France; Liebig34 in Berlin (evicted in April 2021); and La Revo in Seville, Spain. See [squat.net](http://squat.net) for updated news.

<sup>28</sup> It is argued that modern forms of anarchism stem from the Diggers, a Protestant radical movement in seventeenth-century England. The Diggers fought for common land and the right to grow food in disused or neglected spaces (Awan et al., 2011). My proposed case studies all involve communities on squatted land, which are based, to varying degrees, on a premise similar to that of the Diggers. Furthermore, within squats, communes, or intentional community networks, some members refer to themselves as “diggers and dreamers,” which for me sums up both anarchist and utopian values.

<sup>29</sup> I would like to elaborate that philosophically anarchism can be applied to multiple aspects in life. For example, relationship anarchy challenges labels, dynamics, monogamy, heteronormative forms of intimacy, etc., in relation to romantic and platonic relationships.

history (p. 23), author, activist, and educator Randall Amster (2012) adds that it might not seem so today, since anarchism's antitheses, particularly capitalism, "occupy the greater portion of our lives, increasingly so in this era of pervasive technologies, expanding social control, and escalating global crises" (p. 1). Amster observes that the presence of anarchists in the contemporary era is associated with the anti-globalization movement:

This has led to a flowering of anarchist infrastructure, from a dramatic increase worldwide in social centers and infoshops, to an upsurge in collectively run projects meeting needs like legal support, food and art. We've developed informal though articulated global networks of exchange as well as solidarity, facilitated by everything from savvy uses of communication technologies and indie media to material aid. (p. xxii)

In this sense, we might say that in addition to the anarchist mantra of *do it yourself*, there also exists a related practice, which balances the equation by proposing that we *do it together*. Indeed, many anarchists practice forms of community organizing that demonstrate precisely this inherent sense of organic connectedness. And, when extended beyond purely human concerns, this sensibility offers a vision of anarchism that is radically ecological as well.

Autonomous spaces are those liberated from the forces of regulation and control typical of regimes based on private property; such spaces may include a building occupied in the course of a demonstration, a vacant lot reclaimed for a community garden, or an abandoned dwelling inhabited by squatters. Autonomous spaces can be seen as anticipatory or prefiguring spaces, which, as Ezequiel Adamovsky puts it, "embody in their own shape and forms the values of the society we are striving to build" (quoted in Chatterton & Hodkinson, 2006, p. 312). As briefly presented in the Introduction, squatting often happens in reaction to social hardship such as a lack of employment and affordable housing. Paying less or no rent creates the possibility to invest time and energy in other activities (i.e. political organizing, creating art, community care, gaining skills, etc.). To squat is to "live differently," by creating a daily life that strives for autonomy from mainstream society (Chatterton & Hodkinson, 2006, p. 312). Although "squatting practices have been mostly excluded by urban development discourses [and] defined as illegal situations of

social deviance, a problem to solve through a repressive or normalising ‘approach’ fostering pacification of radical urban conflicts” (Martínez, 2018, p. 247), the desire to “live differently” relates directly to French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s notion of the “right to difference” (1968).

Squatting practices provide a counterpoint to the increasing homogenization of cities—or, more specifically, gentrification—that defines capitalism. George Katsiaficas observes that the base of autonomous squatting movements in Europe reflects a break with established middle-class norms: “communes instead of traditional families; movement restaurants and bars where the ‘scene’ can have its own space as opposed to the commercialized world of mass culture” (1997, p. 14). Here I would note that the research focus of this dissertation is squatting as it relates to personhood (i.e., autonomy through skill-sharing and re-skilling, creativity, informal education, and friendship within intentional or chosen communities) rather than on squatters’ movements as a response to housing needs.

### **Material intimacies: Re-skilling and skill-sharing**

[The figure of the artisan] mediates the transfiguration of people into skills, of lives into working lives, into variable capital. The artisan is the vehicle that carried us all into the contemporary world. She is the patient midwife of our notion of an autonomous creative and reflective self. . . . The artisan makes us who we are.

—Raqs Media Collective (2005, p. 213)

The quotation from the Raqs Media Collective, comprised of three media artists and researchers from New Delhi, powerfully situates the figure of the artisan. The collective argues for the apprenticeship model as an intimate form of learning. Apprenticeship is socially intimate, requiring hands-on teaching and learning between a skilled worker and a beginner; and materially intimate, entailing a tactile encounter with materials of the skill/trade. “Materiality is one of the most contested concepts in contemporary art” (Lange-Berndt, 2015, p. 12) and includes “a critical genealogy of the formation of concepts of materiality, dematerialization,

immateriality, inter- and trans-materiality” (p. 18). My use of “material intimacy” here is concerned less with concepts of materiality in contemporary art practice and theory as with the relationship, individual and collective, to materials and immaterial practices in the broadest sense—a relationship that is acquired through the social production of autonomous re-skilling and skill-sharing. For instance, in *Food for free* (1972/2012), Richard Mabey’s classic book on foraging, the author states in the introduction how possessing knowledge and experience of foraging, even if one does not *need* these skills for survival, is satisfying on many levels.<sup>30</sup>

I refer to Mabey to stress the point that acquiring practical skills from others, such as gardening, sewing, or basic construction, allows for an intimate social relationship involving materials and processes that are linked to the larger questions, experiences, and concerns of daily life. With this research, I am interested in thinking about how one’s relationship to others, and to the environment, may shift when one is implicated in making or tinkering with the things that one relies upon daily. I argue that an involved awareness in making material goods for daily use fosters sustainability through value, rather than merely filling a void through consumption. Simply stated, making is the opposite of disposability, which is deeply implanted in capitalism.

Raq̄s Media Collective’s essay on the figure of the artisan provides a framework for thinking about the meaning of practical skills in relation to a more autonomous and creative life, one that is embedded in the social and material intimacies of communal milieus. The Collective describes the artisan as existing in a third space, with “neither the anonymity of the worker drone” (2005, p. 209) nor the “hyper-individuated solipsism of the artist genius” (p. 209), and as one who “functions best in the atelier, the workshop and the street, with apprentices and other artisans, making and trading things and knowledge” (p. 210). Although individuals who re-skill and skill-share in the living contexts of squats and communes may not necessarily self-identify as artisans *per se*, the personal and collective practices within these contexts have very much in common with the those of the artisan, as they relate to social and material relationships. As the Raq̄s Media Collective elaborates:

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<sup>30</sup> Mabey (1972) has described this as an intimacy with nature, that encourages a growing awareness of food linked to a larger living scheme of things and a more acute understanding for ancestral knowledge.

The objects and services that pass through her [artisan] hands into the world are neither ubiquitous nor rare, nor do they seek value in ubiquity or rarity. They trade on the basis of their usage, within densely networked communities that the artisan is party to, not on the impetus of rival global speculations based on the volumes and volatility of stocks, or the price of a signature. (p. 210)

The Collective emphasizes the importance of networked communities as they relate to the artisan, which I argue applies directly to the practices and politics of squatter culture. Like the traditions of artisans, craftspeople, and skilled workers, typically squats are spaces for “making, trading things and knowledge” (p. 210). Although squats are politically aligned with an anarchist ethos, they are also utopian (Martínez, 2007), not just in the sense of a rent-free living space for communities but also in their linkages to making and learning through knowledge that is shared on site. It is the intimacy of passing knowledge that I aspire to capture in some of the poems in *Intimacies*.

My poem “The baker” (Figure 16), for example, seeks to capture the intimacy of passing on knowledge—in this case, over three generations. The poem is about an elder from the small community in which Can Masdeu is situated. After his wife’s passing, Felipe moved in with his daughter, in another town, but still visits his old village weekly and stays at Can Masdeu. Felipe has become something of an elder, and even kin, to the people and their children who live there. Hailing from three generations of bakers, he helped the community at Can Masdeu set up their wood-burning oven and showed them how to bake artisanal bread. Drawn images of round loaves of bread, represented from a bird’s eye view next to the text of the poem, speak to the abundance of the knowledge passed down. In informal conversation, some of the founding members of Can Masdeu identified mutual aid with the local community as an important aspect to foster. Not only does mutual aid help to maintain a sustainable community presence, it also creates support among locals for defending Can Masdeu against being shut down by authorities. Nearly every Sunday, Can Masdeu holds an outdoor social centre, featuring music, events, and a vegan meal for a few euros, that is open to anyone. Can Masdeu also reserves a part of its garden for locals to tend and holds an open garden day every Thursday for anyone who wishes to

volunteer to learn more about permaculture and collective living, and to meet like-minded people.

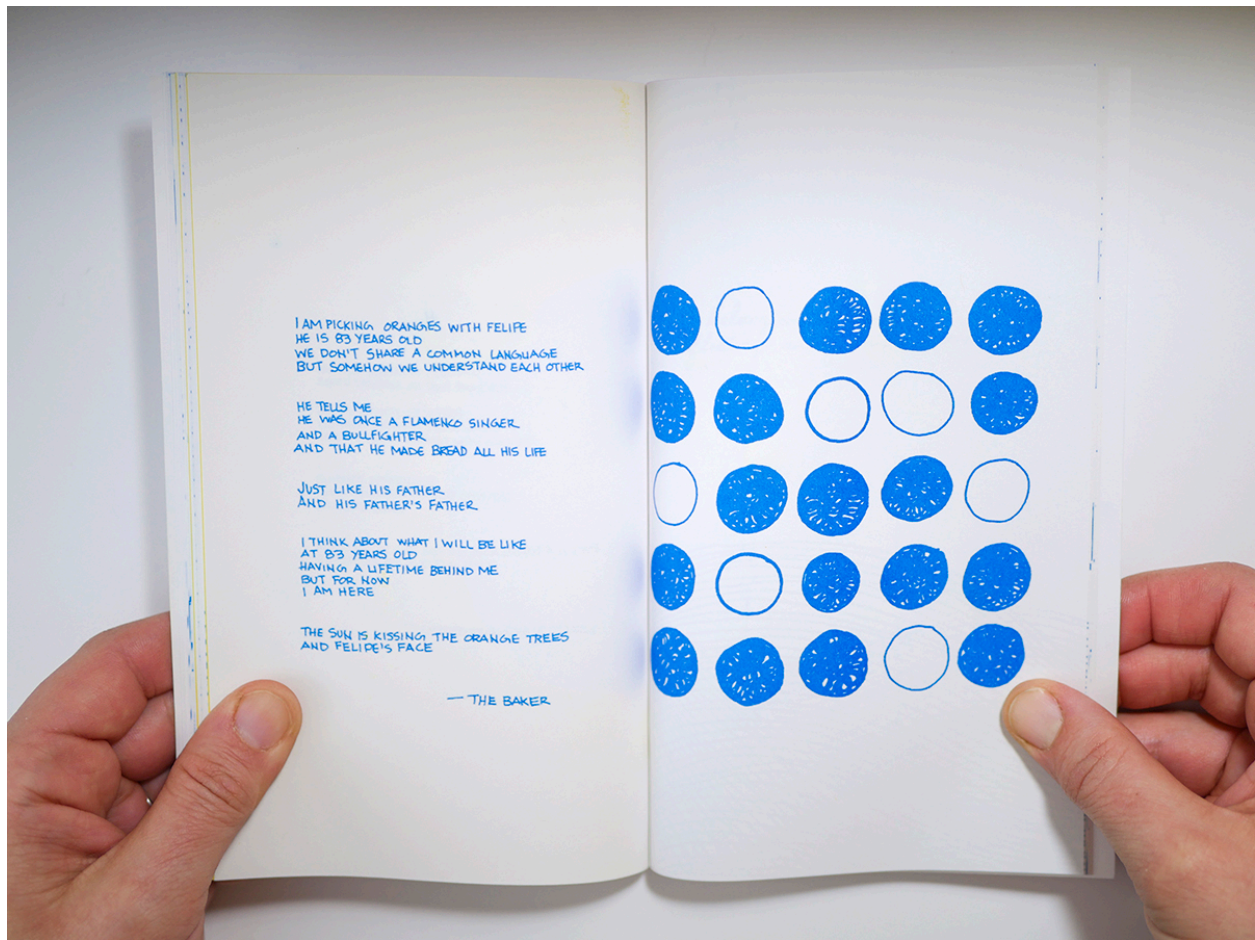


Figure 16. Tina Carlisi, “The baker,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Like the baker in the poem, having a specialized traditional skill or craft that has been passed down from one generation to the next has much in common with utopian approaches to pedagogy. In his essay “Crafting experience: William Morris, John Dewey, and utopia” (2011), John Freeman-Moir makes the case for utopian traditions of craft and education, by linking the works of William Morris (1834–1896), a prominent designer and activist of the British Arts and Crafts Movement, with the American philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952), whose ideas on reforming education have influenced alternative education models throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Freeman-Moir describes Morris and Dewey as each being “radical in his thinking about art, work, democracy, and education [and as having] explored ways of living that



each regarded as more desirable than that which capitalist civilization can provide for and that each thought might be realizable” (p. 205). Although the Morris–Dewey brand of socialism is historically inscribed, and although capitalism today presents new forms of complexity linked to globalization, the basis both for a craft approach and for transformative pedagogy continues to be relevant.

In their book *The new politics of the handmade: Craft, art and design* (2020), Canadian artist, writer, and cultural worker Anthea Black and Canadian critic and curator Nicole Burisch critically rethink the role of the handmade. For Black and Burisch, “craft, in all of its diverse forms, remains a mode of production that is intimately tied to adaptation of identity, culture and survival to meet personal and collective needs” (p. 9). Re-skilling and skill-sharing is the basis for autonomous community practices, specifically those that lie outside of institutional structures and rely mainly on intentional social connections and networks for teaching and learning. To clarify, re-skilling and skill-sharing do not always involve physical, material exchanges of knowledge. Within squats, many workshops are geared toward “soft” skills, to encourage awareness and build stronger communities, such as consensus decision making, conflict resolution, consent, nonviolent communication, safer spaces, and anti-oppressive processes.

## **Deschooling**

Taking for granted that the scope of this doctoral research does not deal directly with alternative or radical education, this question of learning from an artist’s perspective, through poetic self-expression, re-skilling, or social connections, is integral to my inquiry. Ivan Illich’s influential book *Deschooling society* (1971) is vital to my thinking about the de-institutionalization of education, particularly in regard to the author’s overarching proposal that individuals ought to learn in meaningful settings that equip learners with soft and hard skills that relate to their lives directly. Deschooling does not equate to de-skilling; on the contrary, deschooling is an approach to learning that opposes a one-size-fits-all education system and, rather, lets communities and individuals decide what they want and need to learn how to live comfortably and joyfully. Illich

proposes a balanced ratio between theoretical and practical knowledge, suggesting that neither one extreme nor the other is beneficial for the individual and, hence, the community.

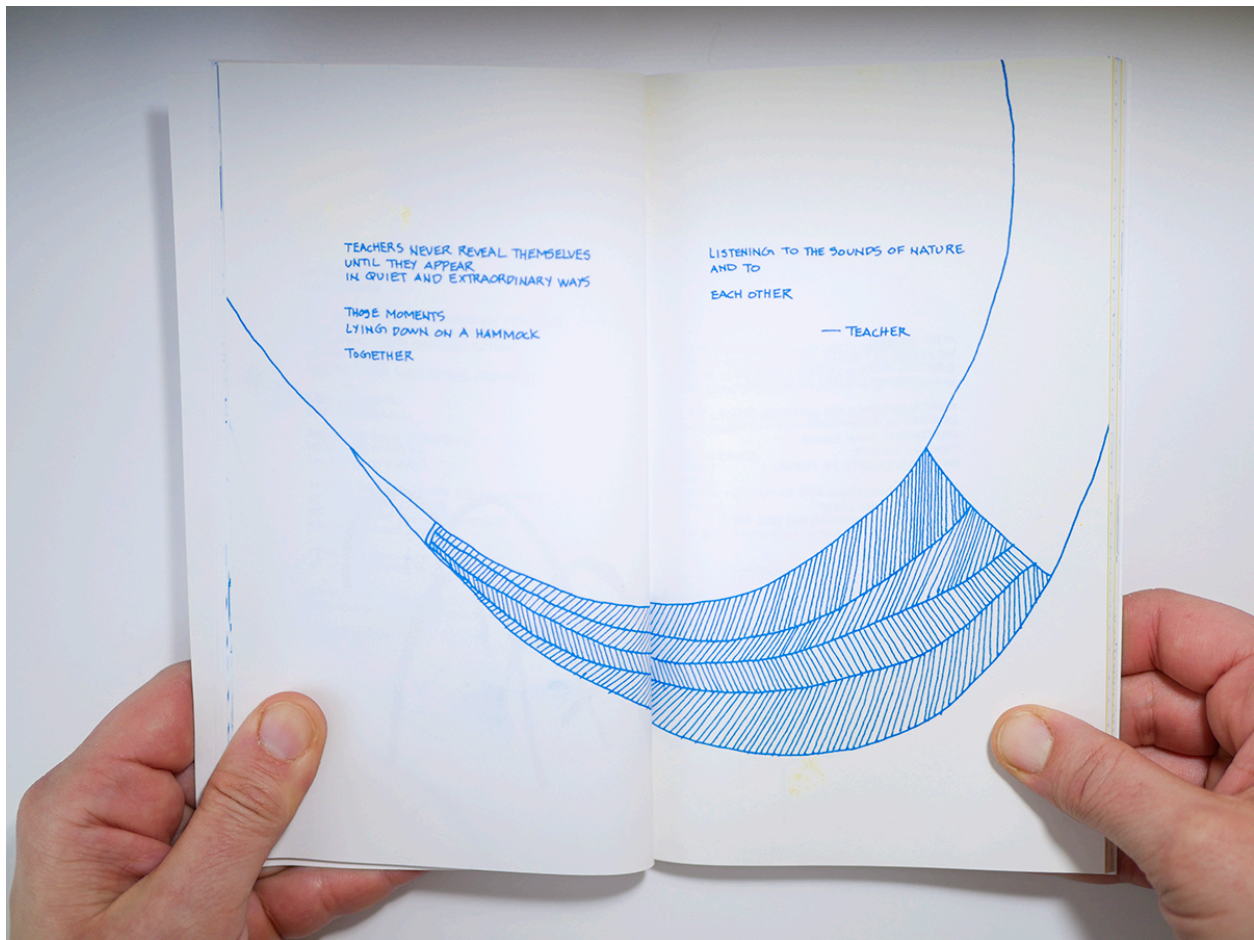


Figure 17. Tina Carlisi. *Teacher* from *Intimacies*. 2018. Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Taking on this idea of deschooling further into a social realm, with this case-based and artistic research, I am interested in thinking through how learning and creativity in general can gain a different meaning through structures of friendship or more broadly, togetherness through collectivity. In the poem *Teacher* (Figure 17), I describe such a moment of exchange during my field research while chatting with a resident of Can Masdeu on a hammock which I graphically represent holding the poem in the spread. *Teacher* opens questions like how can friendship aid in the development of autonomous practices, generate creativity and foster solidarity? Furthermore, what does it mean when these practices take place in more intimate, private or even domestic social spaces that are open to the public such as the case with the communities at Grow

Heathrow, Can Masdeu and Christiania? In the next chapter, I will discuss my methodology to understand the social intimacies and material intimacies involved in each case study and how these intimacies (social and material) within autonomous settings is a type of deschooling — where a living community is school.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Intimacy as method: Research-creation, ethnographic poetry and case study**

For women . . . poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.

—Audre Lorde (1984, 2007 p. 36)

*Intimacies* emerged as a research-creation project based on the practice of ethnographic poetry, a type of poetic writing that formed part of my fieldwork as an artist-researcher. In the words of contemporary art and theory professor Natalie Loveless, “research-creation is a geographically specific term that works in tandem with alternatives such as practice-based research, practice-led research, research-based practice, research-led practice, creative-praxis, arts-driven inquiry, arts-based research, and, increasingly, artistic research” (2019, p. 4). The term *research-creation* is defined by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada as “an approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation” (2021). With the creative process situated within the pursuit of research, research-creation cannot be limited to the interpretation or analysis of a creator’s project; rather, it must be critically informed work (SSHRC 2022). Loveless, who has written various articles, book chapters, and an entire book on research-creation, intimates that this research method gives artist-researchers

the opportunity to re-envision and re-craft—to re-story—our disciplinary practices. Rather than uncritically adding one disciplinary apparatus to another, research-creation marshals new methods that allow us to tell new stories, stories that demand new research literacies and outputs. . . . [T]o do research—of any kind—is not simply to ask questions, it is to tell stories-that-matter. (2019, p. 27)

Loveless's understanding of research-creation as a form of telling new stories that matter, and that demands new research literacies—such as the use of poetic writing and drawing as research—resonates with my use of intimacy as a methodological approach. In *Knowings and knots: Methodologies and ecologies in research-creation*, Loveless asserts that “research-creation is a way of doing theory/thinking that is bodily, experimental, and considers research (knowledge making) as a (speculative) event emerging from a practice, rather than preformed or predetermined” (2019, p. 226). In other words, the practice of art helps to approach a concept from the inside rather than the outside, as an intimate method of investigation.

### **Intimacy as method**

Artist, feminist, and architectural historian Cynthia Imogen Hammond (2012) considers research-creation in relation to a “site” of investigation. Hammond emphasizes that such a site does not have to be a physical site or a location but rather may be a theme or an anchor. I draw on her research-creation work for thinking about research-creation and place-based, site-responsive art. Hammond relates that in her site-specific doctoral research-creation project on the English city of Bath, described in her book *Architects, angels, activists and the city of Bath, 1765–1965* (2012), “the agent that has made research-creation in my work possible, even necessary, has been the specificity of the site.” In a similar fashion, creating *Intimacies* was made possible—necessary, even—through the specificity of my case study sites as well as the use of poetry and drawing as intimate responses those sites.

Sociologists Mariam Fraser and Nirmal Puwar (2008) maintain that intimacy *in* research involves becoming intimate and close with one's research participants and sites, and taking (with permission) what are often intense, private moments of exchange into the public realm for scholarly purposes. My field research relied on an intimate sensing approach that entailed living within different communities among (urban) nature in order to engage in multiple conversations (formal and informal) and to observe my own closeness to everything that I was learning while staying temporarily with each community. It is crucial to make explicit that although I do espouse many of the same values as my participants, I did not share their life choices. Having a visitor status—in other words, being an outsider—implicitly affected how I experienced and

understood the communities that I studied and the lived experiences of my participants. A visitor's perspective entails an inherent bias and limits understanding, particularly in regard to the difficulties and challenges of squatting practices and communal life in general. My status may also have allowed me to discern things that others more implicated might not notice.

Anthropologist Stefan Helmreich (2009) notes that sensations are experienced differently by each individual. David Howes (2005), also an anthropologist, notes that it is crucial to take into account the fact that the different senses yield differing impressions of the same space. A scholar specialized in sensory anthropology, Howes explains that “our ways of sensing affect not only how we experience and engage with our environment, but also how we experience and engage with each other” (2014, p. 5–6). As a creative process, intimate sensing allowed for different senses and sensations to inform my research. Helmreich has also used the term “intimate sensing” to describe close social and material engagement with contexts of study. The difference between remote sensing and intimate sensing goes beyond simple physical distance and relates, rather, to humanist geographer Pauli Tapani Karjalainen's description of the senses as “essentially tied up with a deep personal meeting with the world” (1999, p. 5).

Karjalainen considers how new knowledge can emerge from approaching the study of place through this type of intimate sensing. One example of how I apply an intimate sensing approach to my research is the poem “In the woods” (Figure 18). In this poem, I capture a moment around a fire at a squat located in a forest outside of Barcelona. The impression I had of this moment is expressed in the poem through intimate sensing of place, particularly how the forest sounded and the feeling of the forest air. The cocooning feeling of this moment surrounded by trees, of intimately sharing music around a fire, is graphically represented by abstract trees (forest) that encircle the poetic writing. “In the woods,” like many other poems and drawings in *Intimacy*, captures, for me, what these communities *feel* like—something that cannot solely be expressed in a formal dissertation text.

Rebekah Widdowfield asserts that, “not only are emotions an inherent and integral part of conducting research, but emotions can have a real and tangible impact on the research



process. In particular, emotions may affect the way, or indeed whether a particular piece of research is carried out” (2000, p. 201).

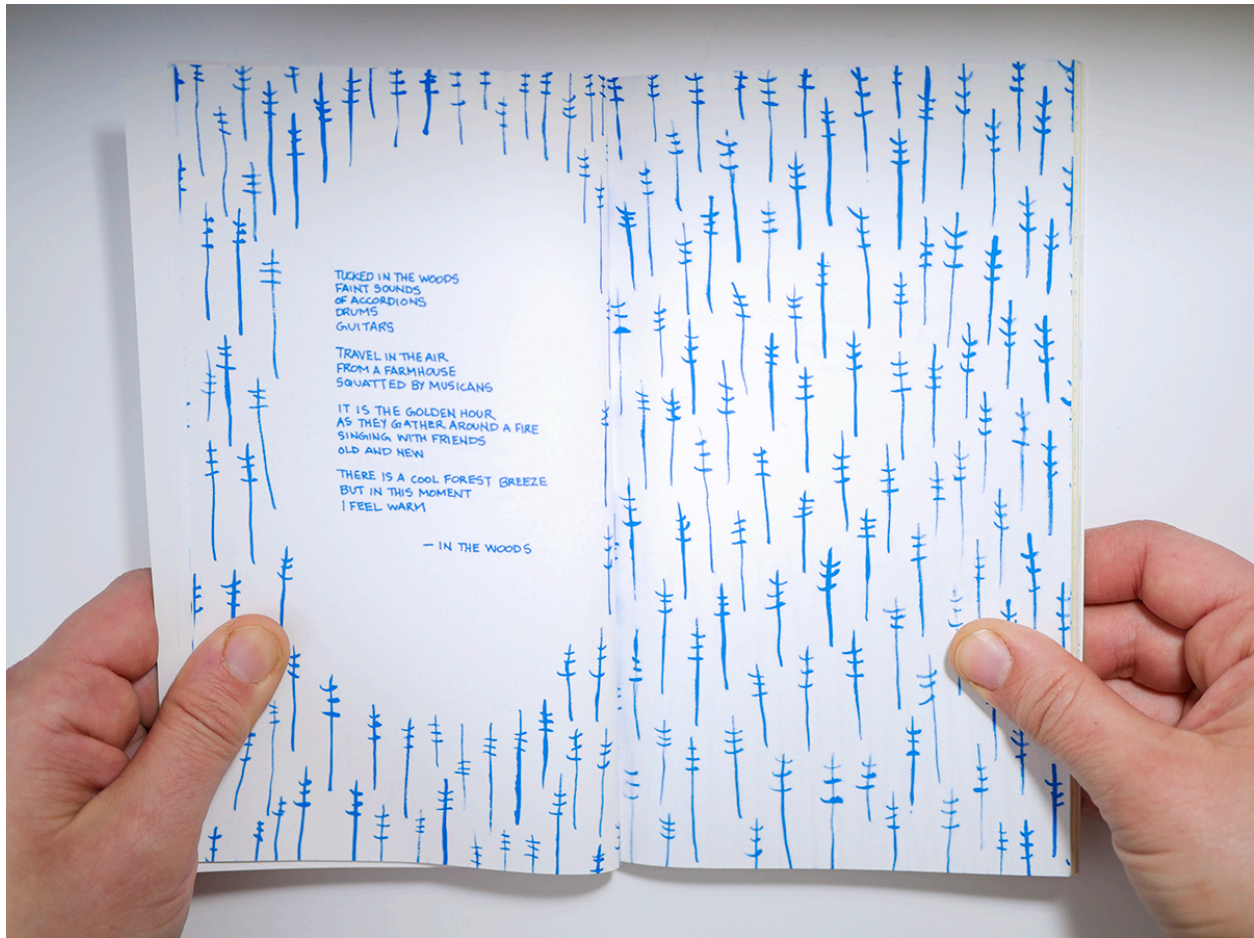


Figure 18. Tina Carlisi, “In the woods,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

## **Ethnographic poetry**

Part of my research-creation inquiry considers how intimacy, as a method, can also contribute to developing imaginative or creative ethnographic writing. Cultural anthropologist Denielle Elliott argues that “creative writing is often both subtler and more precise than ethnography, honest in a way that conventionally written ethnographic texts rarely are” (2017, p. 26). Elliott notes that complex relationships developed over long periods of time are the very element that makes for good ethnography; and also the thing that makes writing difficult. That is to say that researchers writing about the lives of people they work with, live with, and become

friends with is also challenging. One of Elliott's arguments for poetic writing as research is that creative forms that are not representative of "real life" give researchers space to write truthfully without tarnishing relationships (p. 26). Many of the spreads in *Intimacies*, including "In the woods," capture moments by describing places, people, and sensations without disclosing locations, names, or detailed descriptions of individuals, thereby minimizing the impact on privacy.

A dictionary definition of poetry is a type of "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in a language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound and rhythm" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Here I want to note that although I consider *Intimacies* to be part of the genealogy of artist's books more than that of traditional forms of poetry, my work uses poetic writing (and drawing) as a research method. In *Poetry as Method* (2009), communications and media studies scholar Sandra Faulkner describes poetry or poetic writing as a rich means for (re)presenting and creating understanding of human experience in ways that more traditional forms of research may not necessarily consider or centre. While privileging story-telling as a critical form of knowledge exchange and building, sociologist Jessica Smartt Gullion asserts in *Writing ethnography* (2016) that poetry as a method of inquiry becomes scholarly when we situate a real-life story within a larger social or political research issue or question. In other words, poetry as method is a way of knowing the world. As Gullion describes it: "the telling of these stories adds to the ongoing scholarly conversation and sometimes sparks new ones" (p. 13). Story-telling binds people and communities together, allowing individuals to learn about themselves and in relation to others.

In her article "The politics and poetics of 'fieldnotes': Decolonizing ethnographic knowing" (2021), feminist scholar-activist Urmitapa Dutta asserts that poetry allows her to be "an alive presence" in her research. In her essay "Opening up fieldwork with ethnographic poetry" (2020), cultural anthropologist Adrie Kusserow states that

ethnographic poetry is not something that simply reflects an initial ethnographic insight; it is an active ethnographic tool, a deep and refined phenomenological

probing, as opposed to a dreamy, distant musing. The tentacles of the ethnographic poem, through image, metaphor, language, form and rhythm, enable me to inch even closer to the complex, subtle experiences. (p. 431)

Kusserow's approach to ethnographic poetry resonates with me, in particular the fact that she wrote poems *during* her field research as opposed to *after*. I, too, produced the first drafts of my poems and sketches during my field research at each site of study, as part of a useful process of observation (p. 431) upon which I will elaborate in Chapter 4.



Figure 19. Tina Carlisi, "Laundry," in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

For example, in the poem "Laundry" (Figure 19), I describe an apparently unremarkable moment of hanging clothing outside to dry, yet the feelings evoked by the poem begin to open up a space to imagine what living autonomously in an off-grid community might be like, as moments

are cherished and nature's surroundings are amplified: the sound of the wind in the trees, the warmth of the sun, or—the only element illustrated here—the sound of birds chirping. Writing poetry as a research method at the sites of study assisted me in understanding my research participants during our interviews, such as when they spoke about the feelings and sensations entailed in living a simpler lifestyle—such as, for example, the simplicity of hanging handwashed clothing. Such instances of “refined phenomenological probing” (Kusserow, 2020, p. 431) through poetry are critical to understanding rhythms of life in intentional autonomous communities such as Can Masdeu, where “Laundry” was written.

In the article “Anthropology at the edge of words: Where poetry and ethnography meet” (2010) anthropologist Kent Maynard and scholar of language and literacy education Melissa Misha Cahnmann-Taylor have discussed how poetry can be a critical space to explore the tensions that emerge between the researcher and a community of study. For example, participating in social activities and developing friendships with community members lies outside formal methods of my research such as interviews for example, but also informs my research in vital ways. As an artist-researcher, poetic drawing and writing offered me a space for intersubjectivity—thinking, feeling, doing and being. Anthropologists Dara Culhane and Denielle Elliott—also editors of *A different kind of ethnography: Imaginative practices and creative methodologies* and co-founders and co-curators of the Centre for Imaginative Ethnography in Toronto—argue that to “write an ethnographic poem is to convey our knowledge, our observations, and our theoretical analyses in the poetic form” (2017, p. 28). The authors cite Kent Maynard’s ideas on how ethnographic poetry can be better suited than prose to understanding life connected to the rhythmic, poetic, or musical. For Maynard, poetry can attend to the “sentimented” nature of social life. Ethnographic poetry involves writing about “the unexpected, the idiosyncratic, the sensorial, the everyday — all the sorts of things we often ignore in our writing” (p. 33).





Figure 20. Tina Carlisi, “Silvia sings, in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

In the poem “Silvia sings” (Figure 20), I amplify the extraordinary in the seemingly mundane moment of a now former resident at Can Masdeu, Silvia, on her cooking shift for the collective. Silvia’s singing as she listens to the radio, the sounds of children playing outside, the clear view of the city, all act, both in the poem and graphic representation of grass (referring to growth), to express the preciousness of this seemingly mundane moment and how it impacted me in an emancipatory way.

One of my research-creation objectives for using poetry and drawing is elucidated aptly by Audre Lorde, who remarks that “poetry is the way we help give a name to the nameless so it can be thought.” (1984, 2007, p. 36). In a recent article, Léa Dorion, a researcher in feminist epistemologies, movements, and organization management, explores how she turned her feminist activist ethnographic fieldwork toward the writing of an ethnographic account in a specifically

feminist way. Dorion's work builds on that of Lorde, "to underline the role of emotions in a feminist writing process producing emancipatory knowledge" (Dorion, 2021, p. 1). Her article also provides a literature review of feminist ethnography and discusses various themes that informed her doctoral work, some of which also parallel my own work herein.

Dorion discusses how feminist researchers experience their fieldwork, specifically in reference to sociologist Kristin Blakely's (2007) work on feminist epistemological commitment not to "other" individuals who are being researched. The author notes that feminist researchers may develop deeper emotional bonds with their research participants and, in the process, end up researching themselves during the fieldwork—something I point to in the last lines of "Silvia sings": "in this moment, I am growing, but being her too." Dorion's main concern is how to turn experience into knowledge in a feminist way, one that values emotion as an underexplored source of information and frame of investigation (2021). Whether such emotions are conserved in jotted field notes or a personal journal, or included in the finished work, Kristin Blakely (2007) explores the questions that may confront the researcher:

You might be thinking about your feelings toward the research participants, the research subject, and how this is affecting you and your research. What stirred your emotions, and what were those feelings? What happened during the research process that affected you the most, and how did it make you feel? Do you still feel the same way? Did some of the emotions stay with you after the interviews or the study, and for how long? Which emotions, and why? (p. 60)

As this dissertation weaves together case studies, interviews, and poetic writing and drawing, the role of emotion forms part of my research method, the better to understand what intimacy means in a research context.

## **Case studies**

There are many types of intentional communities. For purposes of this research, I am interested in and used as my case studies communities that began, or that continue to exist, as



squats founded by groups of people on neglected or unused lands. The rationale for this focus is my interest in examining autonomous living and knowledge exchange within communities that did not purchase land; that welcome visitors and host activities or events for free; and that maximize available resources in creative ways. In other words, I am interested in free cultural spaces (Carlisi, 2018; Waalwijk, 2016) that encourage creative expression, hands-on learning, and various forms of activism within non-monetary exchange models. I also chose Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Freetown Christiania because they are—or, in the case of Grow Heathrow, *were*—autonomous with no support from the state or private funders.

These three sites relate to what architecture scholar Felicity D. Scott, in her book *Outlaw territories: Environments of insecurity/architecture of counterinsurgency* (2016), identifies as “outlaw territories.” Scott examines post-Second World War countercultural responses to urban unrest, such as the commune movement of the sixties and seventies. One point that Scott raises regarding territories or sites that exist outside of the law, such as autonomous communes and squats, is that living in these rare places has the potential to be a vital form of schooling as the lack of external rules imposed on the community results in unimaginable (possibilities).

Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Freetown Christiania comprise but a limited number of case studies, but they offer a rich wellspring of examples of autonomous communities at different stages of their development, precarity, and physical scale of land occupations. These three communities are also relevant as examples of communities that uphold ecological values (to varying degrees) and that are, or were, located within or skirting major cities. Grow Heathrow was a protest site against the expansion of Heathrow Airport and its particular site was itself a demonstration, as it lay squarely within the airport’s plans for a third runway. Can Masdeu, situated at the edge of Barcelona in the Collserola Park, constitutes a reimagining of a squat. Commonly, squats are associated with urban collective punk houses, essentially spaces for youth, whereas Can Masdeu is embedded in a tranquil, idyllic landscape and strives to be intergenerational. With the nearest metro located approximately fifteen minutes away by foot, a wider public is able to enjoy Can Masdeu’s social centre and community gardens. As a declared “freetown” in the centre of Copenhagen, Christiania is the epitome of accessibility, yet it remains

a wild, overgrown landscape enveloping a former military barracks complex. All these communities *feel* (and felt) like the countryside within the city.

In researching these case studies, I used non-obtrusive means to acquire information, observing participants chiefly by participating in the community's social life myself. Furthermore, I kept a research journal and interviewed individuals on site, which greatly informed my cross-case analysis. The two main fieldwork research methods that I used for this project were interviews and field notes, which allowed me to maintain "an alive presence" (Dutta, 2021) in my research, a presence which complemented and informed the first drafts of my poetic writings and drawings. I would often interview participants as they were performing a task such as gardening or cooking, or sitting comfortably in an intimate corner of their home. With a list of prepared questions (sent to participants in advance; see Appendices C and D) as my starting point for opening conversations on the social and material intimacies they experienced or identified in their communities, I recorded each interview digitally on my phone using a recording app. After the participant reviewed the consent forms (Appendices E and F) and before commencing the interview, I advised the consenting participant that there was no fixed or expected length of time for their interview. We spoke until whatever moment felt natural and comfortable, for the participant, to end the interview; interviews ranged from fifteen to ninety minutes, with an average of forty. For the entire span of my three months of field research, I maintained a personal research journal and diary. For me, this daily practice, of recalling my days and the emotions I was feeling during this time, was the most detailed and intimate method for drafting notes that might serve as emergent knowledge.

## **Fieldnotes**

Keeping field notes is a form of data collection familiar to anthropologists and other social scientists, and has been adopted by artist-researchers (Sansi, 2014). Anthropologist Raymond Madden (2017) notes that although many other methods exist which, on the surface, seem to be better and can more easily capture information to record ethnographic data (e.g., cameras, audio recorders), handwritten notes nonetheless remain a central method in ethnographic research. Madden argues that keeping fieldnotes is not merely about recording

observable facts but also reveals as much about the personhood or embodiment of a researcher as it does of the participant being (observed). This embodiment of the researcher in fieldnotes is likewise explored by anthropologist Jean E. Jackson, in her article “I am a fieldnote: Fieldnotes as a symbol of professional identity” (1990). There is no standard method for producing fieldnotes and so the nature of the practice is dependent upon the researcher’s approach and purpose (Sanjek, 1990). Broadly, however, research notes range from participatory jottings (participant observation), to consolidated fieldnotes (often written at end of day, as a form of reflection), to diaries, to logs. These forms may also overlap; for example: consolidated notes that incorporate diary entries (Madden, 2017).

During my fieldwork, I kept a daily journal at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania, which allowed me to take personal notes on daily interactions, impressions, reflections, and personal feelings in a manner that was non-obtrusive to the communities that I was a guest at, learned from, and was inspired by. These notes I used as reference materials, to develop “thick descriptions” that identified “microscopic” elements and were composed of facts, commentary, interpretation, and analysis (Geertz, 1973). They also formed my starting point for developing a poetic expansion of this research through art practice, where theoretical writing did not suffice. Anthropologist Roger Sansi has stated that “fieldwork techniques such as participant observation, field notes, interviews and life histories have become common methods through which artists produce their work” (2014, p. 36). As social anthropologist Andy Alaszewski explains, “research diaries provide a way of accessing data in a relatively natural form and can therefore be used to explore the taken-for-granted aspects of social interaction” (2006, p. 43). Furthermore, research diaries can contain some of the emotional aspects of everyday life that directly inform my broader theme of intimacies within squatters’ communities.

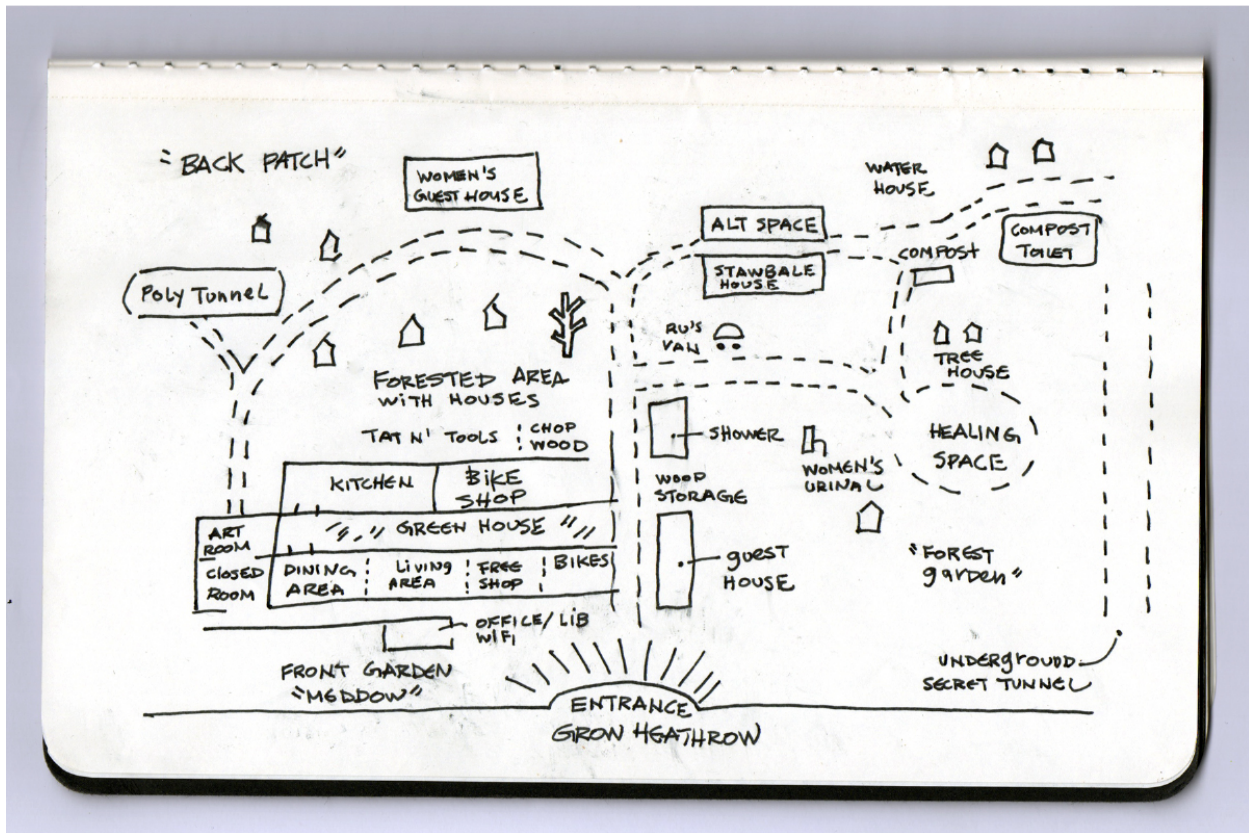


Figure 21. Tina Carlisi, map sketch of Grow Heathrow in research journal, 2017.

I also made sketches in my research journals, including hand-drawn maps of the communities of study, abstract representations of both the locations themselves and the embodied sensations that I experienced within them. For example, Figure 21 shows a map of Grow Heathrow that I drew during the first week I was there. Grow Heathrow was mostly a forested area with cleared pathways (illustrated on my map as dotted lines) leading to various locations around the site. The map helped me navigate the space, something which, during the first days of my stay, was not altogether a simple matter due to the thick, overgrown vegetation. Having a spatial understanding of the protest camp also helped me in proposing spaces for conducting the interviews with my participants.

Some of the visual information recorded in my sketchbook has translated into the drawing component of *Intimacies*. Such an example is the illustration for the poem “Autonomy” (Figure 22). This illustration derives from a quick sketch of Can Masdeu that I did

from afar. While “Autonomy” is one of but a few examples where a notebook sketch became the basis for a drawing in *Intimacies*, for the most part, the drawings in the book aim to convey a feeling, an emotion, or an embodied experience rather than a representation of the places and people I am writing about.



Figure 22. Tina Carlisi, “Autonomy,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Ethnographers and artists alike use drawing, and other artistic forms, in their field notes. In *I swear I saw this* (2011), anthropologist Michael Taussig reflects on ethnographic fieldwork, the keeping of notebooks, and the incommunicable within anthropological knowledge creation. Distinguishing field notebooks as a method for witnessing as opposed to observing, Taussig points out that notes can detail “small, intimate and hardly worth mentioning moments that keep you transfixed” (p. 5). He also suggests that drawing and other experimental formats such as poetry constitute important field note types, as they point away from the “real” and capture something

invisible. In other words, in moments where “theory gives insight but closes off things as well,” Taussig argues, “art can fill that gap” (p. 6).

## **Interviews**

In addition to keeping field notes, I elected to conduct interviews as a means of data collection, to obtain insight into the personal experiences of women who live in autonomous communities. The interviews supplemented my fieldnotes, which mainly focused on my experiences and observations of the locations themselves and the social interactions among community members that I either witnessed or partook in. The interviews thus provided an important form of witness to these rare spaces, the micro-societies within them, and the stories of the individual women who played, and continue to play, a formative role in these three case study squats.

Adopting a feminist oral history approach not only validates women’s lived experiences but also negotiates the dynamics of authority that often play out within the interview process (Srigley et al., 2018). As feminist and oral history scholar Katerina Srigley emphasizes:

Feminists who work with oral history methods want to tell stories that matter. They know, too, that the telling of those stories—the processes by which they are generated and recorded, and the contexts in which they are shared and interpreted—also matters—a lot. (p. 1)

For this research, I conducted nineteen interviews with individuals who identify as women, from all three communities that make up my case studies, as a way to gain new insights into histories and experiences that are insufficiently represented in or excluded from the existing literature on



squatters' movements (Azozomox, 2014; Wall, 2017, 2017a, 2018) and, by extension, commune movements.<sup>31</sup>

The breakdown for my audio interviews, ranging from fifteen minutes to an hour and a half, included the following participants: seven individuals aged approximately eighteen to thirty-six, at Grow Heathrow (Kirsty, Ru, Frieda, Pixie, Kristen, Petra, and Claire); five individuals aged approximately thirty to fifty, at Can Masdeu (Claire, Clare, Maia, Silvia, and Dasha); and five individuals aged approximately forty to seventy-five, from Christiania (Tanja, Olga, Elisabeth, Shanna, Solveig, and Britta). I also interviewed artist, musician, and writer Alicia Bay Laurel, from the United States. My interview with Alicia is the only one that I conducted via a video call; she is also the sole participant that does not live in one of the three case study communities.

My rationale for interviewing Alicia Bay Laurel is that her influential countercultural book *Living on the Earth: Celebrations, storm warnings, formulas, recipes, rumors, and country dances harvested*, first published in 1970 and entirely written and illustrated by hand while living on a commune, has been a central influence on my doctoral research-creation project. I elaborate upon this further in the research-creation section of this chapter. Furthermore, Alicia's experiences living in various communes as an artist and a woman bear interesting similarities to those of Britta Lillesøe, despite their different cultural contexts.

The choice to interview women provided me with a vital focus on communal experiences, particularly as it pertains to squatting cultures, which continue to be dominated by cis white male

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<sup>31</sup> There are a number of books on the countercultural commune movement in the United States written by women communards. Artist and long-time communard Alicia Bay Laurel generously shared some of these references with me during our exchanges for this research. Such references include the accounts of women, who share their experiences living on communes and practising midwifery and vegetarianism: *Home comfort: Stories and scenes of life on Total Loss Farm* (Porche et al., 1973), *Scrapbook of a Taos hippie* (Keltz, 2000), *Spiritual midwifery* (Gaskin, 1976), *The Farm: A cooperative method of natural birth control* (Nofziger, 1992), and *The Moosewood cookbook* (Katzen, 1974).

perspectives (Kadir, 2016).<sup>32</sup> Gathering squatters' and communards' experiences at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania from a feminist epistemological standpoint would be impossible without interviewing the women who chose to live, or had lived, there. With the exception of the video interview with Alicia Bay Laurel, all interviews took place in the communities of study, most of them at the participants' homes. In Grow Heathrow, this often meant a small, hand-built house; in Can Masdeu, a closed bedroom; and in Christiania, a well-constructed single-family house. Before embarking upon my field research, it was important to me that the interviews take place in the communities. Doing the interviews in the participants' private spaces lent them a greater intimacy, as they were able to speak about their home, within their home.

In the cases of Grow Heathrow and Can Masdeu, I typically conducted interviews only after I had become somewhat acquainted with each person and the community as a whole, whereupon I invited the participation of those who felt comfortable sharing their stories and were interested in contributing to women's narratives on squatting or communal living. In Christiania, with the exception of Britta and Tanja, both of whom I met in 2016 during my first stay in Christiania while participating in Utopia School, I approached potential participants on the recommendation of other community members; the community has approximately a thousand residents, so it is impossible to meet everyone within a single month.

I took an oral history approach, whereby I developed a more collaborative relationship with the people I interviewed through shared authority<sup>33</sup> (Frisch, 1990), which aligned with the egalitarian values of the squat communities as well as my own. I did this by asking community

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<sup>32</sup> While this research aims to broaden existing histories and perspectives on squatters' experiences through women's and queer voices—including my own—such narratives continue to be predominately white, Western perspectives. The purpose and scope of this dissertation cannot fully address underwritten histories as they relate to autonomous communities. Emerging scholarship on decolonial histories, perspectives, and practices is contributing to new understandings on squatter and commune cultures, and providing ample evidence that much remains, in terms of underrepresented histories, to be researched, written, and broadly shared. For examples, on themes of collectivization, mutual-aid, feminism and communalism in the Black Liberation movement, the Black Panther Party, and MOVE, see Jeffries (2006, 2007, 2010, 2018); Farmer (2017); Spencer (2016); and Araiza (2014).

<sup>33</sup> Michael Frisch coined the term “shared authority” to describe “the dual authority of the oral history interview, comprising the lived experiences of the storyteller and the questioning of the interviewer-researcher” (High, 2009, p. 13).

members who agreed to be interviewed for this research where and when they would prefer this to happen. I also noted that interviews could also take place while they worked on other tasks and for however much time they felt like talking. This approach allowed for a more conversational exchange to emerge. Except for the interviews with Britta and Alicia—both publicly known as artists—all participants were given the option of using their real first name or providing another of their choice. I transcribed all nineteen interviews and sent them to the participants for approval, revisions, or omissions, etc., before any quoted material in my dissertation.

Once a participant agreed to be interviewed, I either sent them the questions via email and/or delivered the hardcopy in person. The questions were in English but, for Can Masdeu participants, I also provided a translation in Catalan and, for Christiania, one in Danish (see Appendices C and D). My rationale for the translation was to ensure clarity, as my participants in Barcelona and Copenhagen had a command of English that ranged from good to perfectly bilingual. The interviews themselves were all conducted in English. Beginning with semi-structured questions, the subject matter ranged widely: experiences in communal living, women's experiences within squats, how learning and creativity manifested within the community, the role of friendship in community life, questions on autonomy and autonomous practices, impacts upon one's personhood, limitations or downsides to communal living, and moments of joy or happiness directly linked to being part of an intentional community. It is crucial to acknowledge that the interviews included in this dissertation represent a specific moment in time and that some participants' opinions may have shifted since then. Furthermore, reading the interview transcripts, some individuals who had less experience in squatting or communal living at the time of the interview later felt that their perspectives had gained in nuance, even a few months later. Nevertheless, all participants expressed to me that, in general, they felt that what they shared still represented their points of view and their experiences as to communal living, learning, and creativity. In each case study chapter, I interweave interviews from women in that particular community. I also include cross-case analysis on recurring themes across all three communities.

## **Analysis and procedures**

Through case studies, field notes, and interviews, I was able to identify recurring themes, ideas, and propositions as they emerged from my research. As a means to analyze the research and field notes, narrative analysis (Geertz, 1988) enabled me to identify my own situatedness in the research process and thereby inform my research-creation component. By weaving my participant observation notes (and here, observation also entailed participating in the social life of the community) together with my transcribed interviews, I was able to design my case studies on each community. In counterpoint to my case study design, which was developed predominately after my fieldwork was complete, I wrote my first poems, as I mentioned above, during my stays at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania. This approach was crucial to communicating a sense of situatedness authentically rather than attempting to re-experience each moment after my stay.

## **Research-creation as intimate**

The space of a book is intimate and public at the same time; it mediates between private reflection and broad communication in a way that matches many women's lived experience. Women create authority in the world by structuring a relation between enclosure and exposure. The women who make books out of the materials of their lives and imaginations establish a balance that gives voice to their own issues on their own terms.

—Johanna Drucker (2007, p. 14)

The format of *Intimacies*, as a collection of poetic writings and drawings, is conceived in the tradition of the artist's book and DIY printmaking techniques. In combining my own poetry and drawing, my book takes a similar approach to that of Canadian poet Rupi Kaur.<sup>34</sup> It also

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<sup>34</sup> Rupi Kaur's work touches on love, loss, trauma, healing, femininity, and migration (Kaur, 2022). Kaur wrote her first book and self-published it at twenty-one years of age. Since then, she has become one of the most popular contemporary poets.

bears similarity to the work of American poet Nayyirah Waheed;<sup>35</sup> like hers, my poems are generally “short and minimalistic” (Luc, 2017, para. 3) and give the title, following an em dash, at poem’s end.

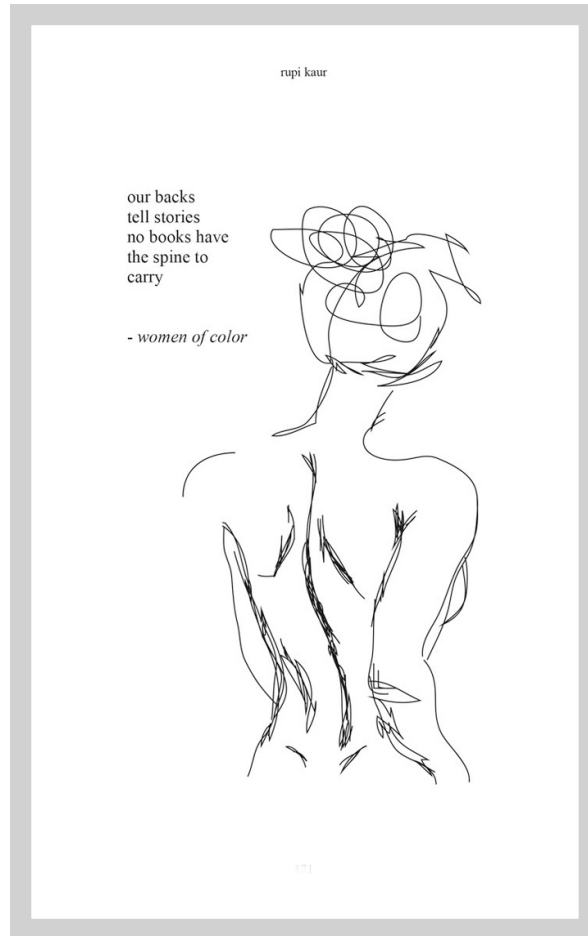


Figure 23. Rupi Kaur, “Women of color,” in *Milk and honey* (2015), p. 171. Photo: Rupi Kaur.

As a collection of poetic writings and drawings, the narrative for *Intimacies* is non-linear, which is intended to capture the feelings and sensations that I experienced during my research investigation rather than attempt to present them sequentially, as a story. Poems written at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania flow in and out of each other, emphasizing these three communities’ shared social and material qualities while also making manifest their uniqueness through the format of individual poems with accompanying drawings. The book is divided into

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<sup>35</sup> Nayyirah Waheed’s work covers topics such as love, identity, race, and feminism (Luc, 2017, para. 2). Although little is known about Waheed, her poems circulate widely on Instagram.

three parts, with the insertion of a large yellow circle at the beginning (sun), a large blue circle toward the centre (moon), and the outline of a circle toward the end (sun and moon). Each of these spreads is followed by a short poem accompanied by a smaller version of one of the circles (sun, moon, or sun and moon), hinting at the cycles of a single day, sunrise to sunset (see, for example, Figure 24).



Figure 24. Tina Carlisi, “Untitled (moon),” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

While artists’ books commonly take on sculptural or unconventional book forms, the stylistic choice for *Intimacies* is minimalist: perfect-bound (pages bound with adhesive, for a clean look) with two-colour risograph<sup>36</sup> printing (blue and yellow) on smooth white paper. My choice to print *Intimacies* using a risograph printer echoes DIY practices that are traditionally linked to

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote 8.

squats, communes, collectives, social centres, anarchist bookstores, and other anti-capitalist and anti-oppressive milieus.

Risograph printing began in Japan in 1946, when its originator, Noboru Hayama, used a mimeograph printing device as a response to postwar shortages, namely the limited availability of emulsion ink, an expensive import (Komurki, 2017). Hayama believed that “people [in Japan] should not lose their ideals because then there would be no future”; hence he decided to call his company Riso-Sha (“ideal”) (Riso, n.d.). Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, mimeograph printing was “adopted for more explicitly political ends, notably among the gay and lesbian community and other activist groups, but it is the world of alternative or countercultural literature that is most often associated with mimeograph type-technology” (Komurki, 2017, p. 31).

In recent years, risograph printing has become increasingly popular with artists and designers because of its economical and environmentally friendly aspects. The use of biodegradable, soy-based inks and the hands-on qualities of the riso printing process encourage experimentation (Komurki, 2017, p. 31). Its high-volume output also lends itself well to producing DIY zines, posters, and other ephemera intended for circulation (Haylock, 2011). One such example is *Queering friendships* (2020), a self-published, risograph-printed zine by Mixed Rice.<sup>37</sup> A collection of writings and drawings by QTBIPOC<sup>38</sup> authors and artists on the subject of friendship, *Queering friendships* has been reprinted multiple times over the course of its short life. The zine’s popularity is likely owed to its accessible format, its focus on an underrepresented theme, and its inclusion of QTBIPOC personal experiences that are otherwise not widely shared. Moreover, the risograph method’s particular print quality gives the work an intimate, handmade feel that complements the personal tone of the content.

Literally meaning *ideal*, risograph printing is linked conceptually to utopian practices and aspirations: from small publishers and art/design collectives to anarchist social centres and

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<sup>37</sup> An individual’s pseudonym.

<sup>38</sup> QTBIPOC is an acronym for queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and people of colour.



libraries. Working in collaboration with the Centre for Expanded Poetics at Concordia University, an experimental research laboratory for the interdisciplinary study of structure, form, and fabrication, I printed 150 copies of *Intimacies* in blue and yellow inks. Each book was then professionally perfect-bound by a small, local publishing company specialized in artist's books. I choose perfect binding for its clean aesthetic, durability, and as an affordable binding after saddle-stitch binding, a binding technique that uses only staples.

My stylistic choices for *Intimacies* are all intended to create a sense of intimacy for the reader. The book is small in format, measuring 4.5 by 7.5 inches, and is entirely hand-drawn and handwritten to give it a diary-like feeling. To me, it seemed crucial not to overly stylize the book, as though it were a sculptural object, but rather lay emphasis on its handwritten, hand-drawn content. A sculptural book object would suggest a precious one-off and would likely have interfered with the creation of this book: a small, intimate object that can be held close to a person's chest as they read, creating yet another layer of intimacy, between reader and text. Furthermore, my three case study sites of investigation, and the ideas that emerged from these places and the people connected to them, are fully embedded in the ways of voluntary simple living; it therefore made sense that similar values be reflected in the design of the book.<sup>39</sup>

*Intimacies* is meant to be an intimate, poetic entryway into the communities of Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania. For this dissertation, as mentioned in the Introduction, a digital version of *Intimacies* is available on Spectrum, Concordia University's open access research repository. While the digital version of *Intimacies* represents a different experience from the physicality of the original book version, the digital version offers accessibility. A direct scan of the book itself, the digital representation offers the reader an entry point into the book's intimacy-oriented aesthetic choices and the intimate, communal nature of the content.

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<sup>39</sup> Simple living, or voluntary simplicity, is a way of life that rejects the high-consumption, materialistic lifestyles promoted by consumer culture. Simple living (as opposed to poverty) is voluntary, and may be practised for spiritual or secular reasons. It is based on reducing consumption, work time, and possessions to simplify one's life—including the reduction of technology—and reduce one's environmental footprint. Philosophically, it is centred on the idea that happiness cannot come from and is not based upon consumption and material goods. Simple living also involves acquiring knowledge in the aims of self-sufficiency and autonomy from capitalist structures. It is sometimes also referred to as *possum living*—to live simply, with little or no paid work (Rebouças & Soares, 2020).

## **An inspiration for *Intimacies: Living on the Earth***

As I have remarked above, Alicia Bay Laurel’s book *Living on the Earth* (1971) has been a strong influence on my poetic writing and illustration for this dissertation and is linked directly to ways of life aimed at more communal and voluntary simple living. In agreeing to be interviewed for this dissertation, Alicia has contributed important perspectives on the value of these rare communal spaces. I first corresponded with Alicia via email, while I was on a month-long artist residency at School of the Alternative, located on the original Black Mountain College<sup>40</sup> campus, at Black Mountain, North Carolina. Of course, SotA is strongly influenced by that legendary experiment in education and community. In my email, I mentioned that I was currently in residence at Black Mountain. She wrote back immediately and told me that one of her mentors, Jean Verda, a friend of Anaïs Nin, had taught at Black Mountain College. I felt a second kindred connection with Alicia in that moment—the first being through *Living on the Earth*. (In the years since I first discovered this book, I have scanned its pages numerous times, fully engulfed by how it whimsically conveys practical information on simple living.) I wrote back to tell Alicia that the residency was not only located on the original Black Mountain College campus but was directly modelled on it as well. I attached a photograph of the first page of my sketchbook, upon which was a quotation by Anaïs Nin<sup>41</sup> that I had written there to set down my intentions for the residency.

Alicia is an artist, writer, singer-songwriter, and guitarist. At the time of our video-call interview, she was touring her music in Japan and preparing for a retrospective exhibition of her work and archives. Her book *Living on the Earth* is known around the world. On her website, Alicia describes the book as

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<sup>40</sup> Black Mountain College was an experimental college founded in 1933 by John Andrew Rice, Theodore Dreier, and several others. It closed in 1957. Students and teachers lived communally and learned a variety of subjects through visual art and dance. Several subsequently influential teachers and artists attended Black Mountain College (Duberman, 1972).

<sup>41</sup> The quotation from Anaïs Nin in my notebook was: “Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born” (1966).

a DIY guide to sustainable living, bohemian style, that I created at Wheeler Ranch commune in northern California in the late 1960s. Besides its utility as a craft, gardening, construction, herbal remedy and recipe book, *Living on the Earth* documents utopian commune life in the late '60s. . . . For some people, *Living on the Earth* is a source of spiritual inspiration, since it demonstrates living joyously without a lot of money and consumer goods, living close to, and protecting, nature, and living in harmony with others. (Laurel, n.d.)



Figure 25. Alicia Bay Laurel, "Some things to consider about communal living," in *Living on the Earth* (1970). Photo: Tina Carlisi.

In our interview, I was interested in the context in which Alicia had created her influential book, as well as in her relationship to communal living, learning, and creativity during and after

her time at Wheeler Ranch, where she lived from 1969 to 1971. I wanted to gain insight into how her different communal experiences had shaped her as a person and as an artist, what communal living means in terms of learning, and what friendship as a potentially generative process meant to her. Furthermore, her story occupies a vital place amid women’s histories in the counterculture of the United States—histories that we must continue to unearth and expand on with greater intersectionality.<sup>42</sup>

Alicia embodies the imaginary of the sixties “flower child.” She left home at a young age and headed to San Francisco in 1966, where she lived in a number of communal pads and began to study at San Francisco State College. It was during this time that Alicia acquired her first Koh-i-Noor Rapidograph pen,<sup>43</sup> inspired by one of the other artists in her communal family, and developed the style that she used in *Living on the Earth*:

One night I took that pen, a whole stack of drawing pads, and some LSD, and I just drew all night. That synthesized my childhood drawing style, my mother’s academic drawing style, and a realization that I could just visualize what I wanted to draw on the page and just trace it. All of those elements came together to inform the drawing style that became recognizable as my own. (personal communication, September 29, 2017)

After falling ill with infectious hepatitis, which obliged her to spend half a year in bed recovering at her friends’ communal San Francisco hippie crash pad, Alicia left college and set off with a backpack to hitchhike for fun. She met and joined a group of people who were hitchhiking to Wheeler Ranch, the commune that inspired *Living on the Earth*. Bill Wheeler’s ranch sits on a forested ridge of approximately 350 acres and is still home to an intentional community of about twenty-five people. When Alicia stayed there, from 1969 to 1971, close to a hundred people were

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<sup>42</sup> It is crucial to point out that in North America and Europe, where young people benefitted from free public education and the welfare state, the hippie counterculture was predominantly white and middle class. This has particular pertinence for contemporary intentional communities that strive for more inclusive participation. In recent years, for example, the Foundation for Intentional Community—the main network for intentional communities globally—has addressed the relative lack of racial and class diversity in most intentional communities, in their magazine *Communities* (Foundation for Intentional Community, 2022).

<sup>43</sup> In writing and drawing *Intimacies*, I mostly used the same model of pen, in deference to Laurel.

living there in small, homebuilt cabins and other structures made from recycled materials. Alicia told me about how most people built houses hidden away in the trees, but everyone would come together communally through gardening and for Sunday gatherings, which featured a pot luck feast, a music jam and, in the rainy season, a sweat lodge. The only house that was built in the open was Bill Wheeler's home and painting studio, which he had constructed from hand-milled timbers with a ceiling two stories high and a hand-built stone fireplace. Alicia explained how *Living the Earth* came to fruition at Wheeler Ranch:

Joyously, I discovered life at the ranch was even more astonishing and delightful than I had imagined. My first idea, when I arrived to Wheeler Ranch and fell in love with communal living in the forest, was to make a book as a service to community. Like most of the others there, I had grown up in a city, and knew little about off-grid living skills. I realized, everyone on the land knew something that we all needed to know about living outdoors, but no one knew everything. I knew how to make dress patterns, and I had learned from my sculptor mother how to build a clay kiln. I asked all one hundred people what they knew that everyone else should know about living at the Ranch. I spent about a year writing down advice and making drawings. (personal communication, September 29, 2017)

Alicia's original plan for her two-hundred-page manuscript was to photocopy a hundred copies and give one to each person who contributed. She realized that the cost was too expensive—roughly the equivalent of \$2,000 today. A friend, Ramón Sender, suggested she take it to his friend Stewart Brand, founder and editor of the *Whole Earth Catalog* (personal communication, September 29, 2017). Brand loved the book but did not have the finances to publish it himself—but he did review it in the *Whole Earth Catalog*. He also suggested that Alicia propose her book to the Book People, who had just started an imprint, The Bookworks. Ten thousand copies were produced and sold out in less than three weeks. Soon after, Random House offered \$10,000 as an advance against royalties for a second edition. In the five decades since, *Living on the Earth* has been reprinted by various publishers and translated into numerous languages.

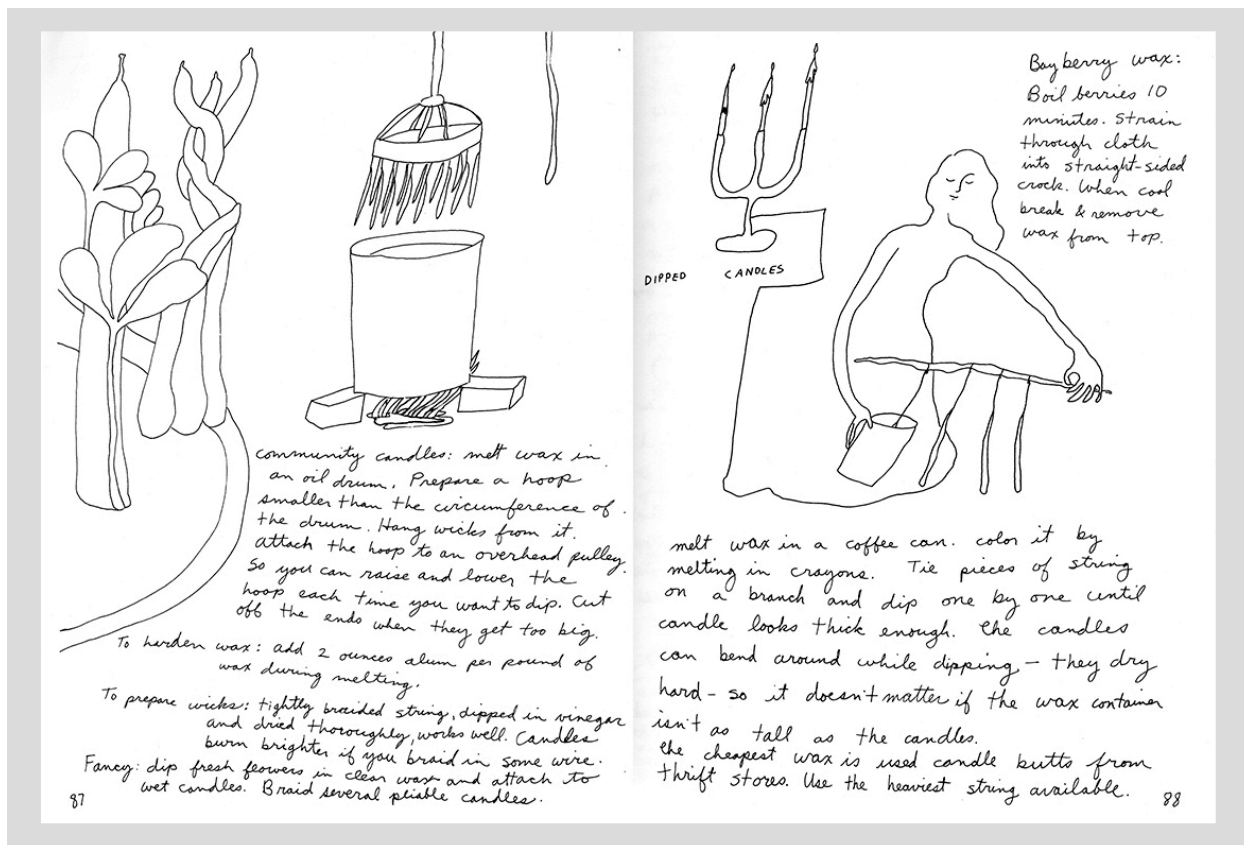


Figure 26. Alicia Bay Laurel, "Community candles," in *Living on the Earth* (1970). Photo: Tina Carlisi.

To celebrate, Alicia threw a party at Wheeler Ranch. She invited fellow communards from communes across northern California. The party lasted three days, with eight hundred attendees. *Living on the Earth* was directly inspired by life at the ranch and is a testament to the embodied knowledge that each person carries and its power when it is shared collectively. Alicia added:

Besides inspiring me to create my book, the Wheeler Ranch offered a space for a variety of other creative projects. I volunteered to help educate the children by doing art projects with them, including helping them to create their own books. I wrote a lot of songs, and I sang and played guitar with a variety of other musicians living on the land. I made clothes for others and for myself using fabric foraged from used clothing that had been donated to the community free store. (personal communication, September 29, 2017)

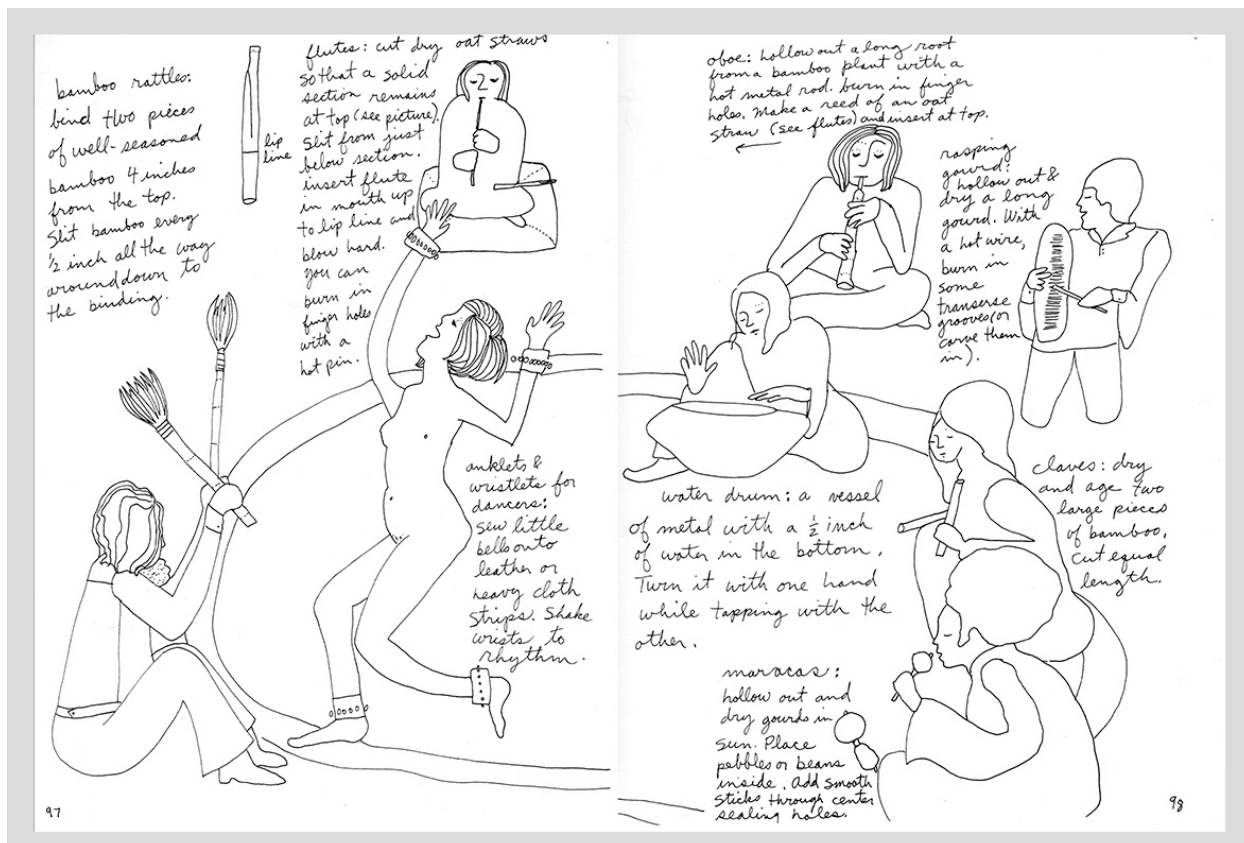


Figure 27. Alicia Bay Laurel, "Making instruments," in *Living on the Earth* (1970). Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Wheeler Ranch, in its early days, was unique as an intentional community, because there were a lot of artists who lived there, including the founder Bill Wheeler. Alicia described this milieu as a place where "art is lived" (personal communication, September 29, 2017). In other words, artistic production is not held separate from one's daily life; rather it is an integrated component of it. *Living on the Earth* is a testament to such an approach. More than a DIY manual to simple living, Alicia's whimsical illustrations and text open up a poetic window onto an integrated approach to simple living, learning, and creativity.

As part of the second-wave feminist generation, Alicia feels that commune women were at the forefront in challenging traditional gender roles.<sup>44</sup> She noted that quite a few women at Wheeler Ranch learned to use power tools, cut their own firewood, and build their own houses.

<sup>44</sup> Most communes and the sixties counterculture adhered to stereotypical gender roles, whereby women are represented as caregivers, homemakers, or conspicuously spiritual diva goddesses. Nevertheless, women living in communes challenged mainstream middle-class notions of womanhood (Lemke-Santangelo, 2009).



Commune women didn't shave their body hair if they did not want to and, if they found a man attractive, they were assertive. Regardless, as Alicia explained, gender stereotyping continued to be internalized, particularly for a generation of women who had grown up raised by mothers during the postwar years; thus, communal life was an active process of undoing. (personal communication, September 29, 2017)

It is interesting to observe how friendship has been a central component in Alicia's communal experiences, quite like the women of the same generation that I interviewed in Christiania. Their perspectives differ in some ways from those of the younger women I interviewed at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that the communes that formed in the sixties and seventies were largely treated as social experiments rather than longstanding projects—as spaces created to explore different social structures and dynamics, often undertaken among friends. For Alicia, living communally meant doing projects together: gardening, building houses, taking care of the commune children, working on various craft projects, hosting weekly gatherings with food, and playing music together. As she described it, “we always had important topics to discuss. It was exhilarating” (personal communication, September 29, 2017).

Although every day at Wheeler Ranch held the potential to be extraordinary, for Alicia the winter sweat lodges were particularly special. Fellow communards would build a bonfire to heat large rocks and then stack them in a central pit under a dome of curved branches, blankets, old tents, and plastic sheets—one of the many DIY building instructions found in *Living on the Earth*. In retrospect, for Alicia, “sitting naked in the sweat lodge surrounded by quiet friends, is another example of the intimacy with nature and with one another that we all took for granted at the Ranch” (personal communication, September 29, 2017). It is this kind of shared group intimacy that can shape one's personhood and reinforce the fact that we are all connected to each other, to our environment, and to the creative potential involved within this process of communalism.

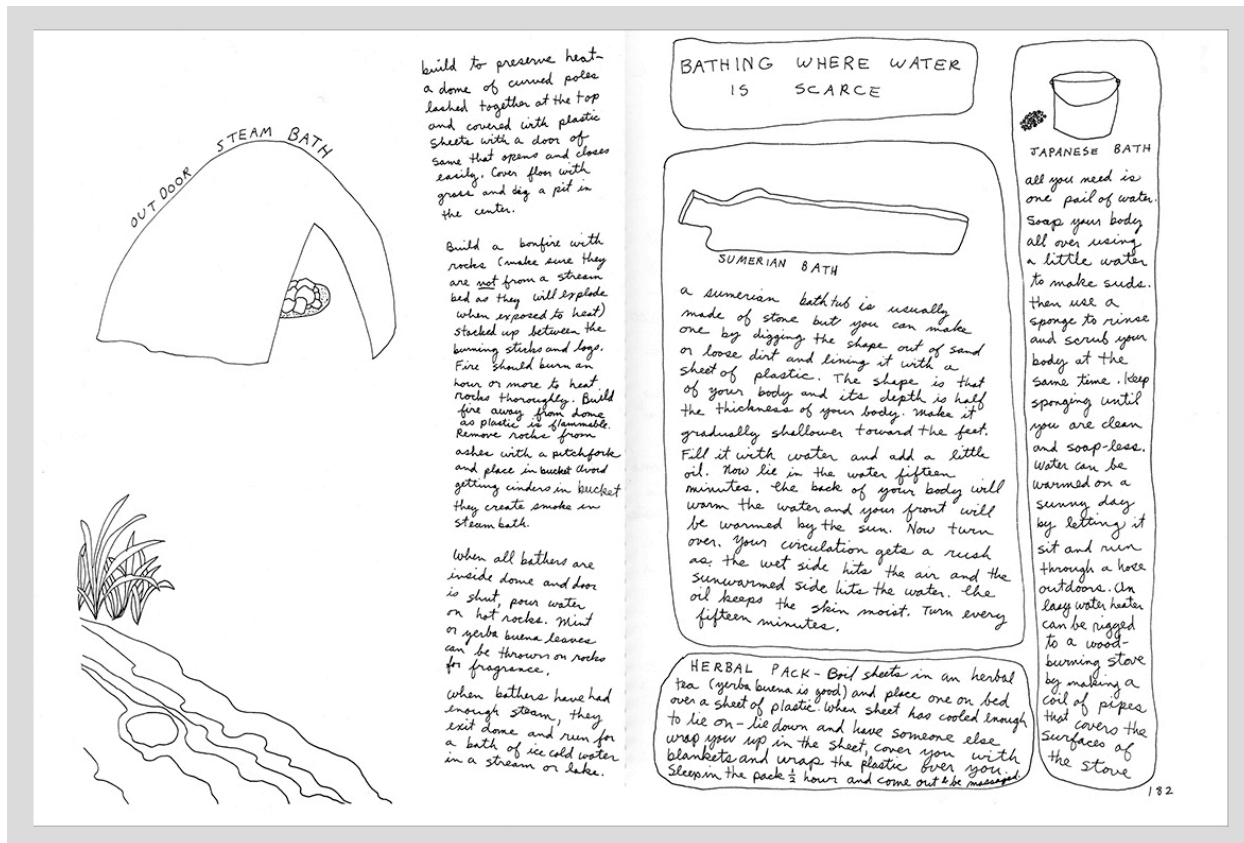


Figure 28. Alicia Bay Laurel, “Outdoor steam bath,” in *Living on the Earth* (1970). Photo: Tina Carlisi.

For me, *Living on the Earth* encapsulates Alicia’s perspective on shared group intimacy, how it can shape one’s personhood, and how it represents and reinforces a sense of connection between one another and with our environment and the creative potential within communal living experiences. In making *Intimacies*, I drew inspiration from how Alicia’s work links such experiences, visually and conceptually, within autonomous communal spaces. Journeying through her book’s simple, raw line drawings and handwritten text opens up a portal into the day-to-day social life of a community and its rare intersection of autonomously generated spaces, skills, and creativity. Alicia Bay Laurel’s practice has deeply affected my understanding of my own artistic research practice, especially in terms of how to capture an autonomous community’s daily social life through a poetic distillation of text and image. The diaristic quality of Alicia’s book feels truly intimate and inspired me, in making *Intimacies*, to use a similar handmade, daily-life approach to try to articulate the kind of “group intimacy that can shape one’s personhood and reinforce how we are all connected to each other, to our environment and the creative potential involved within

this process” (personal communication, September 29, 2017). The next chapter is a short one, in which I delve in more depth into my poetry and drawing processes in the field and provide some general notes on my writing style in the case studies chapters.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Notes toward a reading of the case studies and on the writing of the *Intimacies* poems**

This short section serves as notes toward a reading of my three case studies, prior to delving into each in its separate chapter. It also discusses my process in writing the poems in my *Intimacies* book in relation to my three case studies, field notes, and interviews, all of which have informed my creative writing work.

I wrote my case studies following completion of my field research travel and subsequent return to Montreal. Each case study is written as a sequential narrative, and the three studies are presented in the sequence in which I visited the study locations. I visited Grow Heathrow during in September 2017, Can Masdeu in October, and Christiania in November. Coincidentally, the case studies also appear in order of age, youngest to oldest: Grow Heathrow (established in 2010, demolished in 2021), Can Masdeu (established 2001), and Christiania (established 1971). I constructed the main skeleton for each case study based on my field notes (for an example, see Figure 29), wherein I detailed my daily observations, experiences, and interactions at the end of each evening during my field research period.

My field diary notes are filled both with data that is directly relevant to my research questions as well as experiences that did not necessarily become formal aspects of this dissertation project but nonetheless served me as research aids, helping me to recall my experiences, reflections, and emotions. Throughout the case study chapters, I have weaved in my participant interviews wherever an interviewee expressed an idea that parallel my field notes. Likewise, once I transcribed all my interviews, I cross-referenced them with my field notes to include further data that supported the interview material. Both direct quotations from my interviews and material from my field notes have been cited throughout. The case studies are written in the past tense as the fieldwork was completed in 2017 and one of the sites of study, Grow Heathrow, no longer exists.

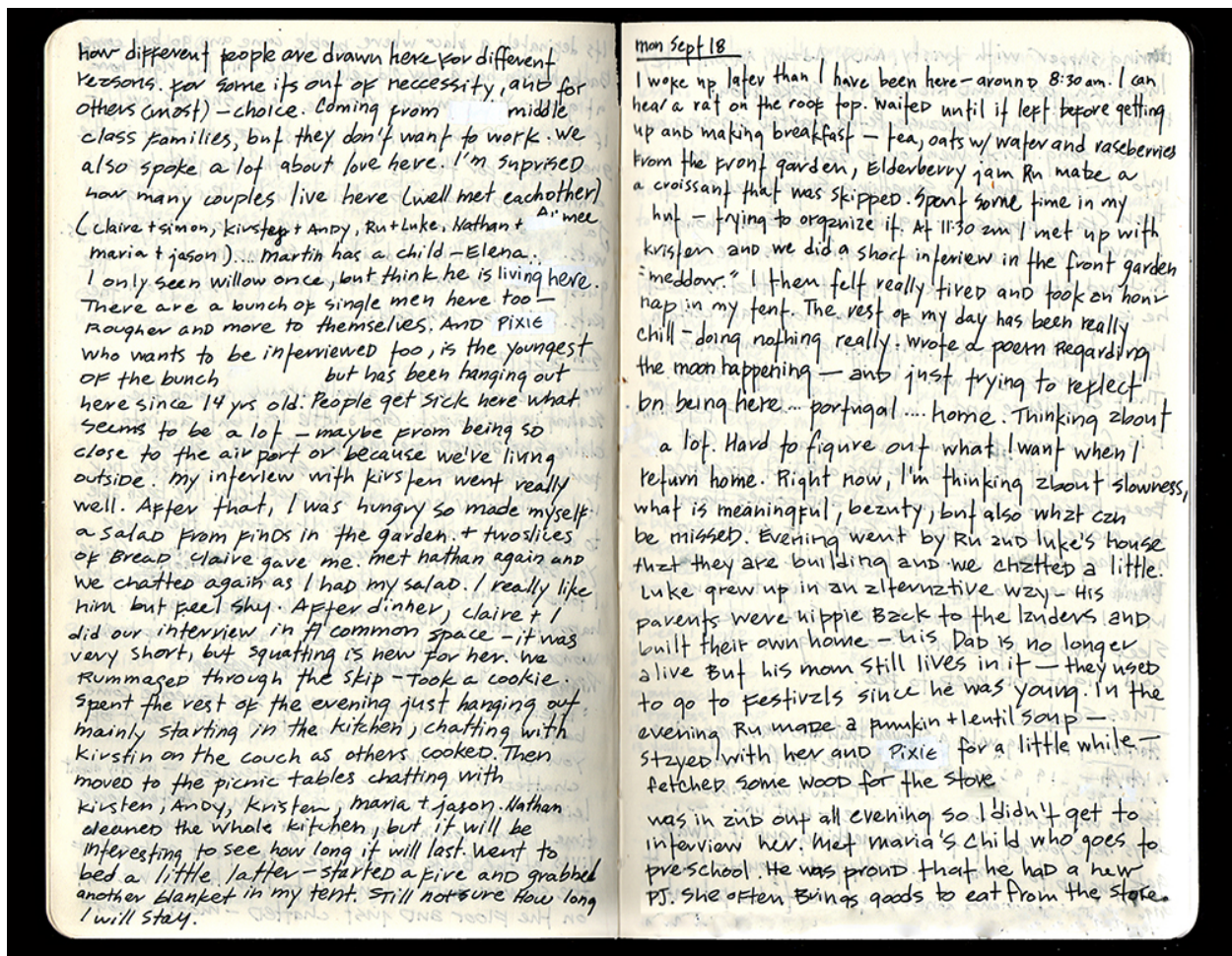


Figure 29. Pages from my field notes, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

As a representation of data, the poems in *Intimacies* are not aimed at addressing or engaging with literary traditions; rather, my poetic writing is part of the research process itself, intertwined and in dialogue with data gathered in my field notes and interviews.

As discussed briefly in the research-creation chapter, I wrote the first drafts of the poems on site, based on my observations, interviews, and field notes. For example, the poem “Christiania, she is strong” (Figure 54) is a composite of stories shared with me in interviews by multiple women in Christiania, who often described scenes and feelings of family within community very similar to the one I depict in the poem. The title comes from the statement that “women in Christiania are strong,” which I was told numerous times, both in formal interviews and informal conversations with Christianites.

Writing the poems during my stays at these three communities, I often referred back to my field notes for creative inspiration. One example of a poem that is essentially a representation of data gathered directly from my field notes is “Silvia sings” (Figure 20). I wrote this poem based on a section in my notes wherein I describe the food items upon which the community sustains itself, as well as an entry about witnessing Silvia cooking while seeing, from the window, various other activities taking place outside. In this poem, I make reference to the practical elements of communal living such as an inventory of bulk food, the foods that are grown on site, the cooking shift, and so on. The emotional response which these things sparked in me also included elements beyond such practical information, such as Silvia singing and hugging people who entered the kitchen as she prepared dinner.

The poetic writing serves as a form of emotional knowledge gathering of intimate and subtle moments within my communities of study, not only in terms of content but also through methodological choices relating to the poems and drawings. Each poem forms a two-page spread, with the exception of three short poems intended to function as breaks between sections: “Untitled” (sun), “Untitled” (moon), and “Untitled” (sun and moon). In presenting the other poems as spreads, I aimed to create a slower pace for the reader, that subtly echoes the slow rhythms of these autonomous communities. I added breaks between the book’s sections, also to create a slower rhythm for the reader and to emphasize different ideas and moments in the emotional scenario I aimed to create. The cursive hand is reserved mainly for a few very short pieces that operate more as a thread between the poems than as complete poems themselves. The majority of the spreads use block letters, in keeping with how I wrote my field notes. This stylistic choice aims at a feeling of intimacy, as though the reader were reading my personal diary and notes on my communal experiences.

While drafts of the poems were written on site, and sometimes accompanied by small sketches or illustrations, I continued to refine my writing over the course of my research travel as I gathered more data. This allowed me to draw further connections between themes as I developed an aesthetic methodology linked to the first of my two research questions: “Through intimate sensing, how can poetic writing and drawing serve as a form of emotional knowledge gathering, to closely capture the complex and subtle experiences of people living and working in



autonomous squatters' communities?" I finalized this work upon my return to Montreal, in January 2018, including development of the sequencing and layout of the poems and drawings in *Intimacies*. One example (Figure 30), from a left-hand page in my sketch book, depicts the first draft of what became the poem "Rain." The poem was originally longer, beginning with a reflection of what rain may feel like for city folks—an antagonism against sunny weather, an inconvenience—before I describe the experience of what rain means to an autonomous community, in this case Can Masdeu, where people rely directly on this precious natural resource to water their gardens and have water flowing from their taps.

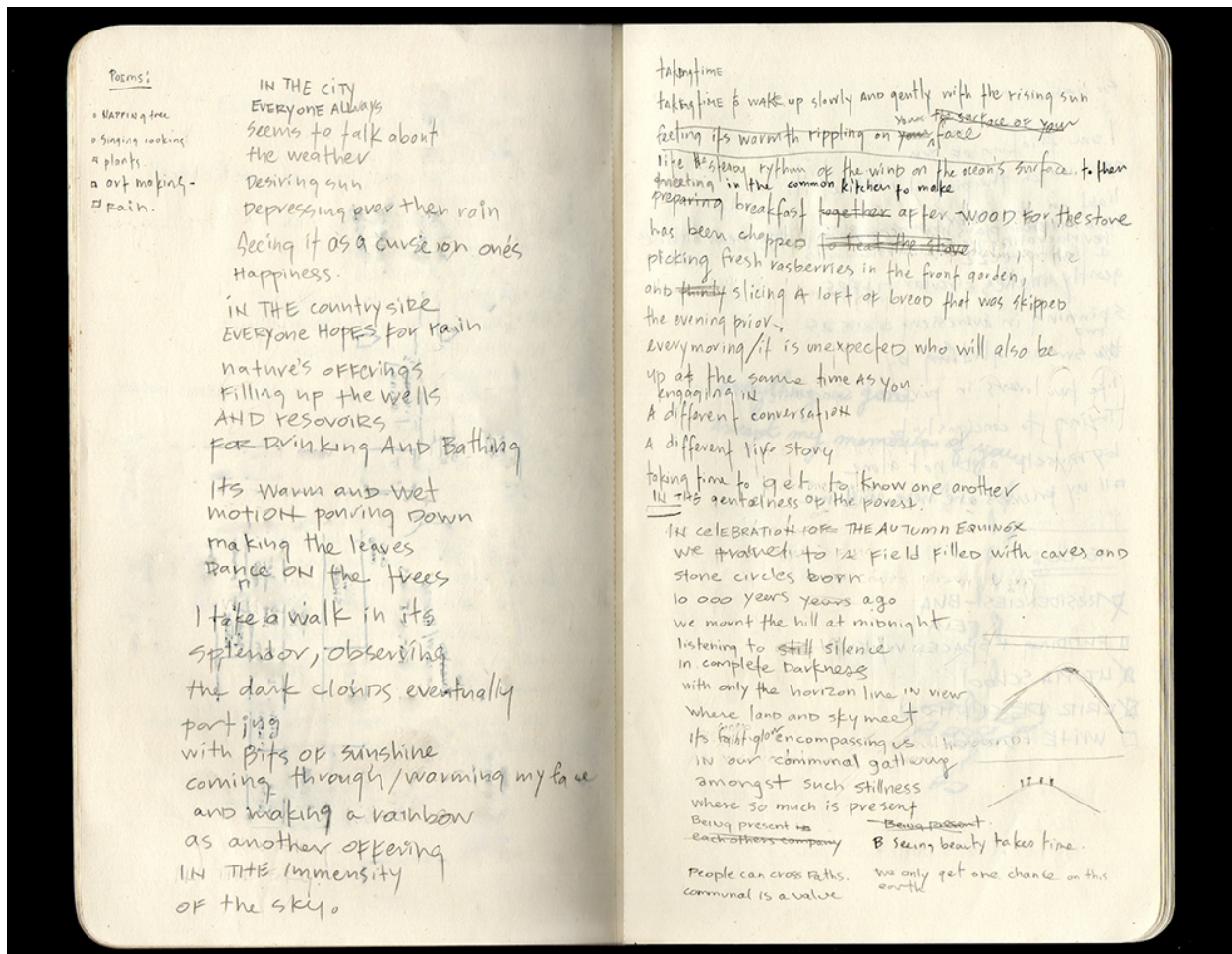


Figure 30. Pages from one of my field research sketchbooks, 2017. On the left-hand page is the first draft of my poem *Rain* while on the right are the first drafts of "Taking time" and "Presence." Photo: Tina Carlisi.



In the second draft of “Rain” (Figure 31), I rewrote the poem and began to think about the visual aspects, including different possible layouts. A few drafts later (Figure 32), I had shortened the poem to focus solely on what rain means to the community rather than make a comparison to city living. I also added a different visual exploration, before arriving at the final spread for “Rain” (Figure 46).



Figure 31. Page from one of my field research sketchbooks, with second draft of “Rain,” 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

In the final version, I opted to encircle the poem with graphic elements, a gesture also echoed in the poems “In the woods,” “Together,” “Sharing,” “Christiania, she is strong,” and “Light.” This graphic approach presents the encircling aspect of community.

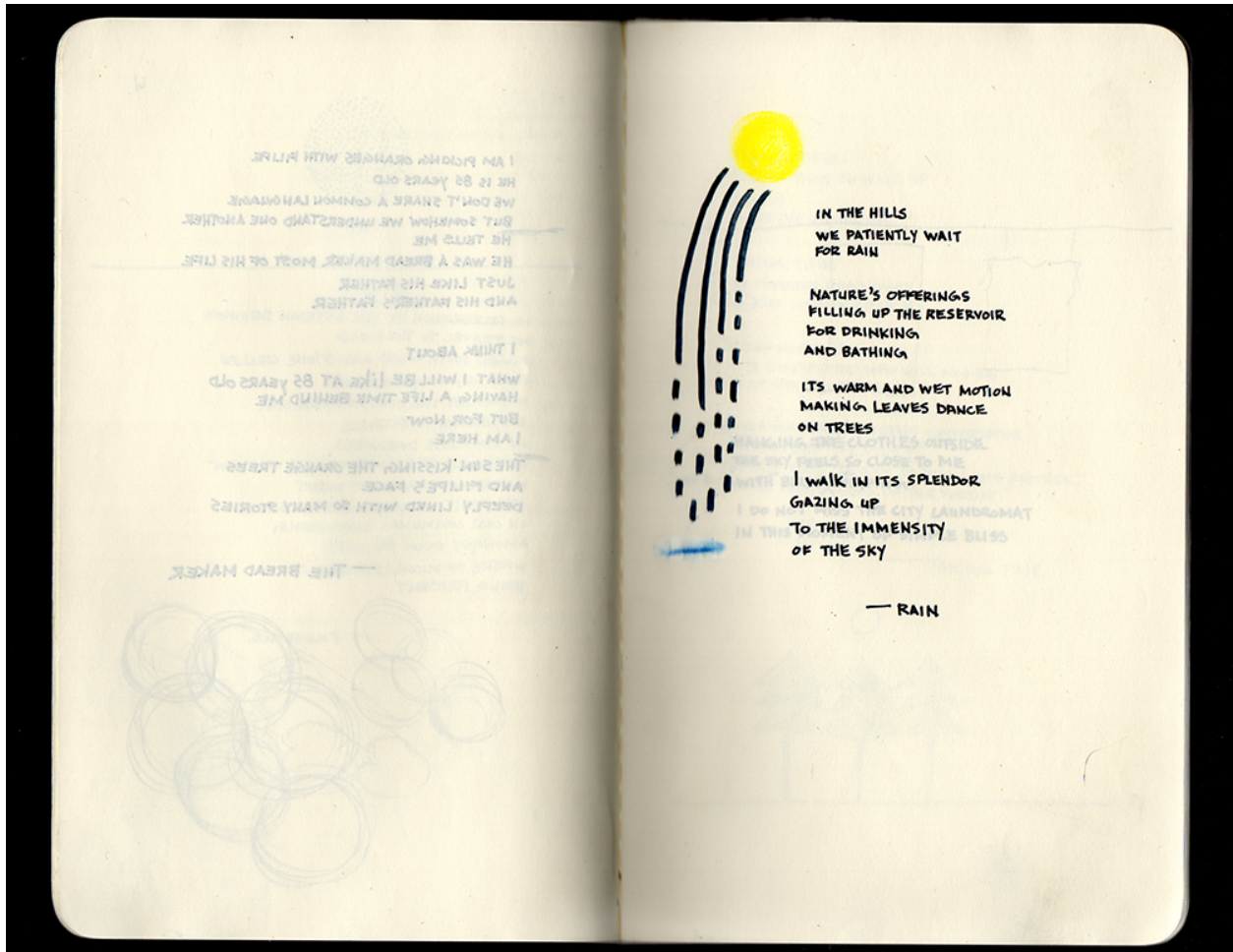


Figure 32. Page from one of my field research sketchbooks, with a draft (one of many) of “Rain,” 2017.  
 Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Similar to “Silvia sings” and many other poems in *Intimacies*, my field notes informed the essence of what I wished to express in “Rain.” An excerpt from my field journal (Figure 33) serves as an example of how I detailed my daily experiences and observations at each community, and emphasizes the fundamental important of rain for the squat to sustain itself. During my stay in Barcelona, the arrival of rain following a month-and-a-half-long drought also impacted people’s weekly chores, such as gardening and patching up the reservoir, as described in my field notes.



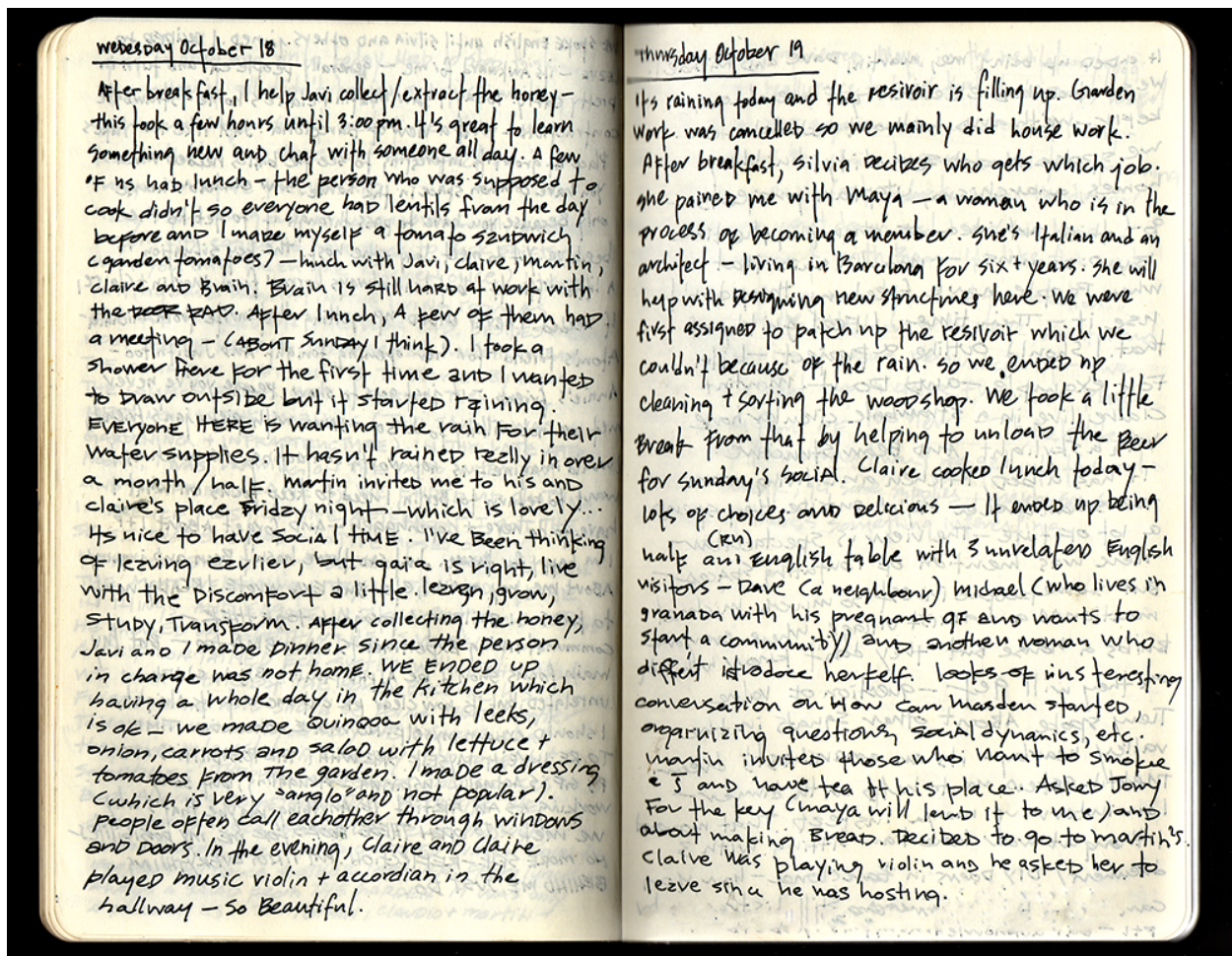


Figure 33. Pages from my field notes, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Although the case study chapters, as well as my interviews, are written in the past tense, the poems are set in the present as you, the reader, step intimately into the emotional knowledge of this research for the first time.





Figure 34. Barricaded entrance, Grow Heathrow, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Grow Heathrow: An eco-squat-topia**

I live right at the edge of all this industrial stuff, but the way of life and with the people I live with here, I would say is as pre-industrial you can get. We spend our time very slowly, tinkering around, making things, cooking over a fire, washing over a fire, being with each other.

—Kirsty, Grow Heathrow (personal communication, September 17, 2017)

Once wedged between crossing highways near Heathrow Airport, in the quiet village of Sipson in West London, was a squatted, semi-off-grid, alternative living community project established in opposition to a planned expansion of the airport. Started in March 2010 and evicted/demolished in March 2021, for more than a decade, Grow Heathrow stood against the construction of a third runway, both through organized political actions at the airport as well as by the very existence of the occupied site itself. The new runway would demolish nine hundred homes, wiping out a part of Sipson and other nearby villages as well as adding to the already detrimental effects of airport pollution and noise (Imbert, 2017).

Grow Heathrow represented community resilience admirably. Occupying a half-acre of land within the planned demolition zone for the new runway, the site had once been a market garden, prior to the 1950s, in an area where land was privately held by residents with small vegetable farms. By the 1970s, the land became an illegal dumping ground until a group of activists and local residents worked together to return the land to its original purpose. Walking through the quiet suburban neighbourhood of Sipson, one is not able to tell that this area was once a large green belt, prior to the building of Heathrow Airport in the 1920s (Bolton et al., 1971).



Squatters at Grow Heathrow were engaged in a long-term battle with property owner Lewdown Holdings Limited (registered in the British Virgin Islands), which owns most of the land upon which Grow Heathrow was situated. In 2015, Lewdown Holdings submitted a planning application for the Sipson Garden Centre site, followed by a series of possession orders and attempted evictions against Grow Heathrow. In March 2021, residents were forcibly removed from their community project, which they had established and lived in for eleven years, with the full support of the Sipson village residents.



Figure 35. Partial views of living room area, Grow Heathrow, 2017. Photos: Tina Carlisi.

Before eviction and demolition, the site was structured around three decaying greenhouses, which had been converted into communal spaces: functioning greenhouses, a kitchen, living/social spaces, a bike shop, a free shop, an art space, and a resource library. As a guest at Grow Heathrow, I was immediately amazed to see how the site was largely overtaken by nature and powered chiefly by solar panels and wind turbines. At any given moment during my month-long stay, somebody would be cutting firewood for the kitchen stove, to heat water for the sole on-site shower or to warm up their personal homes: tiny huts built from reclaimed materials, often quite crude in construction. Dubbed in the media as a “squat-topia” (Rose, 2012), Grow

Heathrow was a protest camp example of the transition<sup>45</sup> movement in the United Kingdom, and had a population ranging between ten and fifty people. When I visited in September 2017, approximately twenty-five people were living there. Grow Heathrow can be understood as part of a tradition of land movements in the United Kingdom, from the Diggers movement<sup>46</sup> of the 1600s to more contemporary protest camps such as the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (1981–2000), in Berkshire, England and Faslane Peace Camp (1982–present) in Helensburgh, Scotland.<sup>47</sup>

Kirsty, twenty-four years old at the time of my visit, expressed how this sense of history was part of the reason she moved to Grow Heathrow:

I wanted to learn more about land rights in the United Kingdom, and about the direct things that happened in the 1700s. I became a squatter to be more connected to the land. It's a profound thing to do . . . England is such a small country, but in the past, a lot more of the land was common land. There was the Diggers movement and then, in the 1700s, an enclosure act was instated which created various massive modes of control through legislation. This meant that people needed to get a job and therefore had less time to work the land, which increasingly became less free. Although the clothes were different and it was a different time, I see myself as a descendant of the Diggers movement. (personal communication, September 17, 2017)

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<sup>45</sup> Transition towns, initiatives, or models are grassroots community projects that aim to increase self-sufficiency in a bid to reduce reliance on oil and participation in environmental damage. The transition movement is an ongoing social experiment, a movement of communities coming together through a process of creating healthy human culture in balance with self, others, and nature. Transition communities are reclaiming the economy by supporting local products and services, growing permaculture, and reskilling, as well as creating a network of transition communities for connection and support (Transition Network, 2022).

<sup>46</sup> The Diggers—also known as the Levellers, and a more radical faction as the True Levellers—were a loose political group that formed in England in 1647. They advocated for an end to all property rights, as was the case in England before the Norman invasion of 1066, when land was owned not by state or monarch but by peasants holding small plots. The Diggers also advocated for the collective cultivation of land, spearheading the emergence of various collective communities across England. The Diggers also represent one of the roots of the squatting movement in the United Kingdom (Awan et al., 2011).

<sup>47</sup> The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was a nineteen-year anti-nuclear protest encampment at the U.S. military base at Greenham Common, Berkshire County, England. The Faslane Peace Camp, located in the Argyll and Bute council area, in Scotland, is the longest-running active protest site dedicated to campaigning and carrying out direct actions against nuclear weapon emplacements situated alongside Faslane Naval base (Eschle, 2017).



Kirsty's sentiment is an example of what architecture scholar Felicity D. Scott has referred to as *vernacular nostalgia*. In *Outlaw territories: Environments of insecurity/Architectures of counterinsurgency* (2016), Scott has referred to the 1960s hippie back-to-the-land movement as experiencing vernacular nostalgia, as communes returned to pre-industrial technologies and construction to create an utopia in rejection of capitalism and mainstream society. Autonomous projects such as land-based squats and protest camps continue to create environments that serve as alternatives to capitalism and mainstream society and which are part of wider utopic commune movements and traditions.

As a squat, Grow Heathrow was also tied to the history of squatting in the United Kingdom. Although squatting has been illegal in London since 2010, the city holds a rich squatting history.<sup>48</sup> The United Kingdom is also home to numerous communes, with organizing networks like Diggers and Dreamers, which offers endless listings of commune opportunities to anyone searching for a community to join, volunteer in, or visit. Grow Heathrow was networked with other environmental rights groups and communities throughout the country, such as HS2 Rebellion, an alliance of organizations opposed to the HS2 rail project, proposed to be built through numerous communities and forested areas. Still active at the time of this writing, in 2022, are four protest camps, autonomously and independently run in London, Buckinghamshire, and Staffordshire, in opposition to the HS2 expansion.<sup>49</sup> In terms of its overall purpose and development into a commune on squatted land, Grow Heathrow bore resemblance to one of the best-known squatted land occupations in Europe—La Zad, established in France in 2012. La Zad represents a significantly larger occupation, organized as an anarchist commune in opposition to an airport construction project in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, north of Nantes.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> An excellent and accessible resource on London's squatting history is the website "Made Possible by Squatting": [www.madepossiblebysquatting.co.uk](http://www.madepossiblebysquatting.co.uk).

<sup>49</sup> For more information on the HS2 rebellion, see: [www.hs2rebellion.com](http://www.hs2rebellion.com).

<sup>50</sup> At the time of this writing, in 2022, La Zad (short for *zone à défendre*, or "zone to defend") is the largest land squatting site in Europe. At the beginning of 2018, the French government announced the cancellation of its plans for an airport in Notre-Dame-des-Landes, but has since used the police force to dismantle parts of La Zad. For more information on La Zad, see: [www.zad.nadir.org](http://www.zad.nadir.org).

My time at Grow Heathrow for this research, in September 2017, felt surreal. There I was in West London, yet I couldn't have been further from the bustle of the city, staying in a community where I relied on sun, wind, and firewood for all my daily needs. The quotation by Kirsty that opens this chapter captures Grow Heathrow's essence, by comparing this way of life to pre-industrial times. I first arrived to Grow Heathrow on a Friday morning. The colourful entrance gates contrasted with the subdued surrounding neighbourhood (Figure 34). Through the gates, I could see two people chatting on a bench in the front garden. I rang the doorbell—a suspended steel oil barrel tied to a metal stick. The volunteer visitor host for that day, Nathan, greeted and introduced me to the people on site. I set down my backpack in one of the living rooms in the greenhouse, and he gave me a tour of the camp.

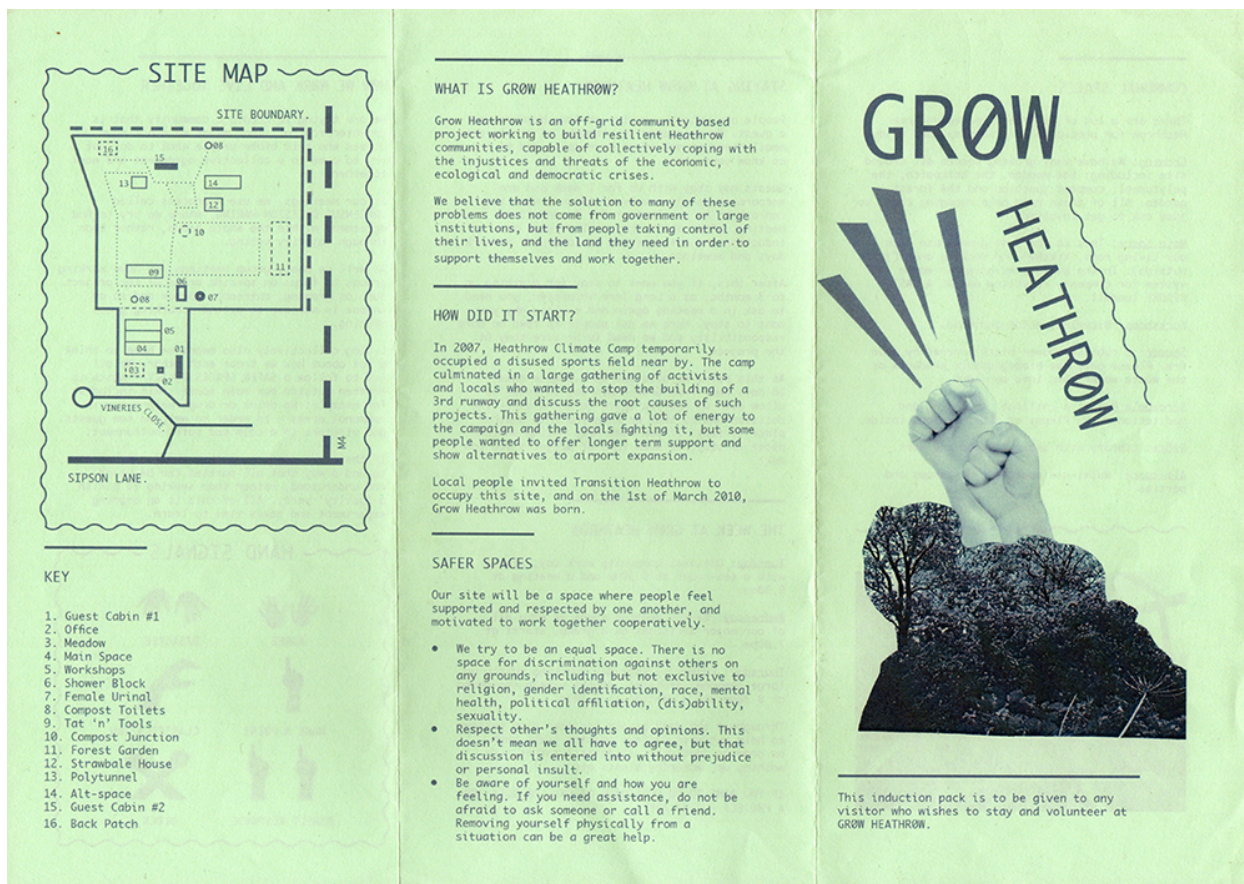


Figure 36. Recto side of volunteer/visitor pamphlet, with site map, Grow Heathrow, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Beginning in a garden near the front gates filled with raised beds, we talked about the area's history as a green belt and discussed the state of Grow Heathrow's court case. We walked



through the site, which had been completely taken over by nature, along pathways that community members maintained and which connected the different areas. Although the site was only a half-acre large, during the first few days of my stay, I kept losing my orientation for how to get from one area to another. As I mentioned in my methodology chapter, I drew myself a map in greater detail (Figure 21) than Grow Heathrow's site map (Figure 36) to aid my orientation.



Figure 37. Photo documentation at Grow Heathrow, 2017. Top, left to right: Signage indicating directions to various locations; forested area. Bottom, left to right: Tea cabin and seating area, with open fire; one of the first surveillance tree shelters at Grow Heathrow, built for self-protection and to resist eviction. Photos: Tina Carlisi.



The kitchen, housed in one of the greenhouse structures, was comprised of a glass ceiling, an old woodstove, wood surfaces and cabinets, and, next to the stove, a sofa. There I met Ru, a twenty-seven-year-old woman who described herself as a maker and a long-time member. She had been living at Grow Heathrow for over three years. Ru helped me get settled in the women’s guest room and showed me the women’s outhouse—two initiatives she had been involved in realizing, for purposes of building infrastructure for women, something typically lacking in squats.



Figure 38. Welcome sign announcing six-month chosen mixity trial period: women, trans, and non-binary individuals, Grow Heathrow. 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

In fact, at the time I visited Grow Heathrow, the community had decided to experiment with a policy temporarily to accept only new visitors and potential long-term volunteers who identified as women, trans, or non-binary (Figure 38). The purpose of this policy, adopted only for a few months, was to make the space less male-dominated, consciously break down externalized and internalized patriarchal attitudes, and create a more welcoming environment for individuals who identified as women, trans, or non-binary to visit and potentially join the community. Ru explained that “there have been multiple occasions at Grow Heathrow where men have not only outnumbered women, but where I have been the sole female on site” (personal communication, September 28, 2017). She added that, at the time when the temporary policy was first proposed as a means of creating better infrastructure for women, ideas proposed by women at meetings would often simply be overlooked. Kirsten, a thirty-two-year-old woman who worked in permaculture at the time when she moved to Grow Heathrow, also commented on the new policy, observing that closing the community temporarily to new self-identified cis male volunteers has had a positive impact. Although the policy was not fully supported by everyone on site—men and women alike—Kirsten, as well as other women I interviewed, believed that the temporary policy had been beneficial as it had brought about greater gender balance in the community, a less competitive atmosphere, and a more collaborative spirit.

After dinner, I settled into the guest room, a poorly insulated space with neither electricity nor windows. The first night I was alone, but other guests arrived in the following nights. During the daytime, Grow Heathrow exhibited a simple, idyllic way of life amid a forested landscape filled with creative yet practical structures built from reclaimed materials. After sunset, however, harsh realities such as the cold, and the scurrying of rats, exposed other facets of places like Grow Heathrow—what is sacrificed and what is gained by living this way, driven by a commitment to environmental activism and seeking happiness through simple living in a community. Claire, a thirty-six-year-old woman from France, who had lived in the United Kingdom for eight years and only recently moved to Grow Heathrow in 2017, stressed in her interview that for her, simple communal living equates to greater personal happiness:

When you wake up in the morning, you can't just have a cup of tea right away. You have to chop the wood to make a fire. It sometimes takes up to an hour to get your cup of tea. But at the same time, it's very pleasant because you are doing it for others too. (personal communication, September 17, 2017)

Squats and communes tend to be seen as spaces where individuals are free, at liberty to do as they like, so long as their actions do not infringe upon or oppress others. As an anarchist space, this freedom to choose what to do with your days is supported by shared responsibilities agreed upon through consensus decision making. While such topics as oppression were discussed in both informal conversations and the formal interviews, intersectional understandings of privilege and oppression—wherein race, class, ability, mobility, gender expression, sexual orientation, and other foci of oppression are seen as intersecting (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981)—were seldom mentioned within my three case study communities. As I delineated in the Introduction, I did not ask my questions with an intersectional lens; rather, my particular lens is gender. Since I did not ask my participants to self-identify in terms of race, I cannot add this to my discussion of their positionalities. However, it is important to include some articulation of visible difference, in terms of racial diversity and physical ability for each site, to the best of my observations.

In the case of Grow Heathrow, at the time of my research stay, the site had more cis men than women and queer residents. In terms of the overall make-up of the community, most squatters came from white working-class and middle-class backgrounds in the UK, with a minority from white working-class and middle-class backgrounds from Eastern European countries. Most squatters at Grow Heathrow had physical ability, essential for life in the protest camp. The issue of physical ability arose in each case study, due to the reality that these sites required a certain level of physical strength to perform daily tasks and spend long periods of time in consensus-based meetings. During my stay, this became evident quite quickly: to live at Grow Heathrow, a high degree of physical and mental strength was required. Although the land was flat, many areas were densely forested, with thousands of rats scurrying across the entire site by night. Many of the huts were crudely constructed, often leaving squatters cold. Physical strength was required for the daily chopping of wood, gardening, participation in work days, and so on.

On my second day at Grow Heathrow, I participated in the weekly Saturday work day. After breakfast, we had a one-hour meeting to decide what needed to be done on site, from practical infrastructure and maintenance to re-organizing the free shop and planning for public events. As a working camp, everyone at Grow Heathrow chose a task to work on. I decided to help Kirsty prepare lunch, from ingredients that were mainly skipped<sup>51</sup> at local supermarkets as well as supplemental ingredients that included produce grown in the garden, fresh produce obtained at a local market for a reduced price, and a few staples such as oil, rice, and beans, purchased in bulk. Being an outdoor and semi-off-grid site, Grow Heathrow had neither the capacity to refrigerate food nor the need for it. Given today's sky-high cost of living, particularly in a city such as London, witnessing this different way of living, in which Grow Heathrow residents spent £50 per month, on average, for all their living expenses, was eye-opening.

For lunch that day, I helped Kirsty make vegan hamburger patties with leftover dahl. Nothing was wasted. The innovation that went into the Grow Heathrow project was a constant process of unlearning what its residents described as normalized middle-class habits and values. Nathan gathered up a gorgeous array of edible flowers and a mix of greens from the garden, and I made a dressing for it with oil and fresh herbs, also from the garden. Once the meal was ready, the people on site were notified and welcomed to serve themselves. Sitting around two long picnic tables in the dining area, I chatted with others about what had brought them to Grow Heathrow. Many types of people and age groups lived there at the time, including two young children. Although people came from different backgrounds and life experiences, most had been drawn to Grow Heathrow for the lifestyle: the possibility of more free time, being in nature, and community—a sense of belonging and working toward something everyone deemed to be important and meaningful.

On Saturday, a constant flow of people visited the community, mostly former long-term volunteers. When former volunteers returned, they were greeted with much joy from the community, akin to receiving a long-distance family member for a visit. I made a comment to

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<sup>51</sup> A British term for dumpster diving. A dumpster, in British English, is a *skip*.



Kirsty to that effect, who responded that “everyone is always happy to see someone return for a visit or for another long-term stay. It is like reconnecting with a part of you again” (personal communication, September 16, 2017). Her comment resonated deeply with me as I tried actively to understand the profoundness of being part of a community and its potential for learning and creativity, particularly one that had been built autonomously as a protest camp and a community project. I wrote the poem “Light” in response to this sentiment, representing the light of the stars graphically in a dense tapestry of dots (Figure 39). The question of friendship in autonomous communities formed part of my early research investigation, the better to understand the social intimacies within squats; indeed, throughout my interviews, the responses revealed a complex web of friends, comrades, colleagues, and family relations.



Figure 39. Tina Carlisi, “Light,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

After lunch, Nathan showed me how to chop wood and explained the different types of firewood and how to properly feed the fireplace before taking a shower. The whole process took about an hour. With nature being all-encompassing at Grow Heathrow, inevitably I had to adopt a slower rhythm. I spent my days reading or writing poetry in the forest, or helping out on site, and sometimes I took spontaneous mini road trips with people from Grow Heathrow. That evening, Ru cooked dinner, bursting into songs like Dolly Parton's *Jolene*, while Pixie and I talked about friendship and love, sitting on the couch next to the kitchen stove to stay warm. The days at Grow Heathrow were made up of simple things. After a few days, I was starting to get to know the community and the site they called home, as I absorbed every sensation, every smell, taste, and sound of Grow Heathrow. This slower rhythm of life in a community out of doors is a feeling I tried to capture in the poem "Taking time" (Figure 40). The wildness of nature, taking over the Grow Heathrow site, is illustrated by tall grass—something that marked me upon first seeking to navigate the site's more unruly regions.

Squatting is an intensely political act tied to housing rights and anti-gentrification movements, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Petra, twenty-six years old at the time, had lived at Grow Heathrow for over six months and was one of the community's most seasoned squatters. Originally from Budapest, Hungary, she described herself as "an activist and squatter, common dissenter and maker" (personal communication, September 20, 2017). By this point, Petra had been squatting for more than five years, beginning with a number of squats in Hungary. Then she met someone from the Occupy London movement, and decided to move and become part of the London squatting scene. She has been part of a number of squatting collectives in London before Grow Heathrow, including the infamous collective ANAL (Autonomous Nation of Anarchist Libertarians), whose members specifically squatted abandoned mansions. For Petra, squatting offered a way out of the difficult realities of living in Budapest:

I started squatting quite young because mainstream culture was not for me. I saw my mother working so hard for minimum wage which is about two hundred pounds a month. We were living in a low class flat. I had this fear that I was going to work in Budapest for minimum wage all my life. In the winter, I would get really cold and suffered from it, and I was often really hungry and thought to

myself, ‘this is a shit life.’ You work twelve hours a day and you can’t even feed yourself. Even if you decide to go to university, what life does it give you? You will end up in an office with a lot of stress and your body will get all cramped up. (personal communication, September 20, 2017)

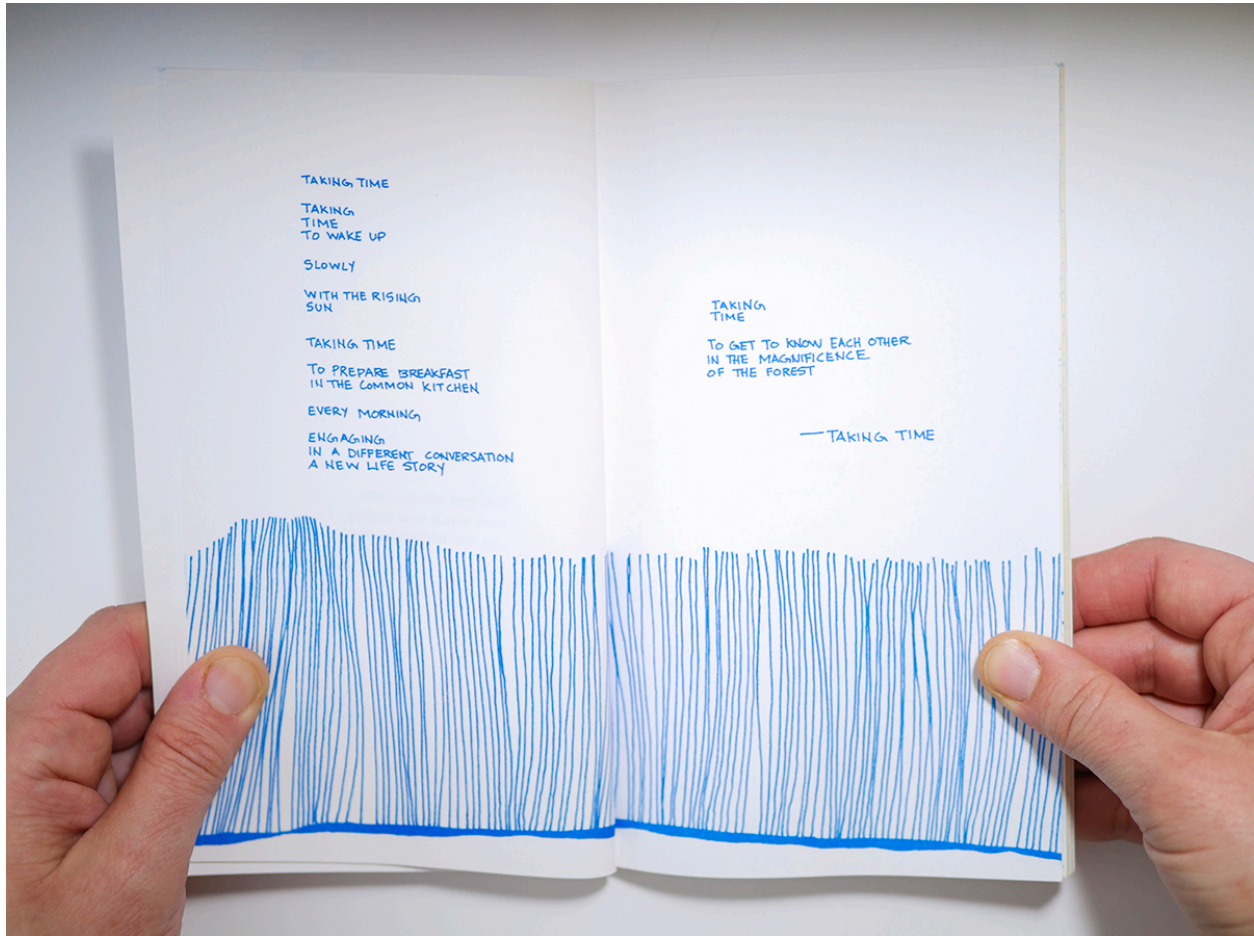


Figure 40. Tina Carlisi, “Taking time,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset

My interview with Petra took place at the strawbale house, a space that was used for various activities, including mediation and relaxation. As the name suggests, the house was built using strawbale<sup>52</sup> construction and was one of the most beautiful spaces on the site. A tranquil place, it contained musical instruments, simple seating (pillows), and material for holding events (a bar and music gear). The space resonated with Petra, as she discussed how squatting has mostly been a very positive experience, one which she described as “a big beautiful community

<sup>52</sup> Strawbale is a construction method that uses bales of straw and mud or plaster.

full of love.” Together with her squat family, Petra would “do things together like projects, workshops, art, and throw parties” (personal communication, September 20, 2017). She never felt threatened as a woman in these contexts, nor has she felt threatened or in danger as a result of this choice of lifestyle; but she admitted that it might not be the same for every person, depending on their life experiences. She described how some people, men and women alike, visited Grow Heathrow and were shocked that there were no flush toilets or electricity. She explained:

I don't think it matters if you are a woman or man. If you want to squat in whatever conditions it may be, you will do it. It is also about why you are squatting. Is it because you need a place to live or is it because you want to change something in your town or city? Whatever your reason, you have to give up your comfort to gain something else. (personal communication, September 20, 2017)

Living in squats can be difficult when dealing with situations that require forms of care and support that are outside most people's experience and expertise. A point that I discussed with Petra, as well as other women I interviewed at the camp, was care and support for individuals with drug additions and/or mental health issues. As Petra saw it, “communities cannot say they are totally open to everyone. You can take people in from off the streets, and it's beautiful but certain rules and limitations need to be established. What communities need are social workers” (personal communication, September 20, 2017). As autonomous spaces in which individuals seek to gain various “soft” or “hard” skills, there are limitations, especially concerning care and support for both individuals and the community as a whole.

Among the seven women I interviewed, many of their responses to questions about what makes living at Grow Heathrow extraordinary, or how learning and creativity manifest in their daily lives, were quite similar. Moments that were often cited as joyful times included special occasions such as Grow Heathrow's anniversary parties or other public events; but there were also the simpler, day-to-day moments that cannot be described as extraordinary per se but are special nonetheless, in quiet ways, such as intimate conversations, meeting new people each day, or living outdoors in nature. For Kirsten, life at Grow Heathrow encompassed so many special

moments that it was hard to describe it adequately: “every day, people surprise you here . . . magic happens every day that I can’t even name it” (personal communication, September 18, 2017).

On the subject of how learning happens in day-to-day life, many of the women spoke about learning skills ranging from the practical (cutting wood, making fires, building structures) to the more conceptual (dealing with group dynamics, self-growth). Kirsty explained that skill-sharing and re-skilling mean that what is learned is passed on: “It’s really lovely to know that knowledge is being passed on from one person to another, and then you know you can do it and it becomes something that becomes part of your daily life” (personal communication, September 17, 2017).

The youngest member, Pixie, who at the time had been living in the community for more than a year, attended high school and played music. Pixie offered personal insights on formal education versus the informal education they received while living at Grow Heathrow. Pixie had multiple reasons for coming to Grow Heathrow were due to their life experiences, but they decided to live there rather than in a squatted building closer to central London because of their interests in land rights. From their experience as a young person at Grow Heathrow, Pixie felt that “people who come and live in these types of places are generally liberated from the ‘outside world’ but they still have a lot of learnt behaviours internalized” (personal communication, September 22, 2017). Like others I interviewed, Pixie observed stereotypical gender roles being performed at Grow Heathrow, as men cut the wood and were more involved in building while women tended to cook and provide personal care, but added that this gendered division of labour was not deliberate. Many of the women told me that sexism and stereotypical behaviour at Grow Heathrow were not as pronounced as in the mainstream culture, but patriarchy was nonetheless internalized in both men and women, and therefore always needed to be actively unlearned. Some women also felt a patriarchal approach to labour privileges the building of infrastructure over the labour of maintenance and personal care traditionally associated with women’s work.

I interviewed Pixie in the morning, on the bench in the front garden amid the flowers and herbs. Afterward, they headed off to class. Prior to their 2017–18 school year, they had been homeschooled at Grow Heathrow; but Pixie admitted to not following their school syllabus because what they were learning at Grow Heathrow was more meaningful. For Pixie, “school education today is this intense push of information on people, when really we are organic and learn from conversation and doing practical things in a low-stress environment.” Being part of Grow Heathrow had taught them to be conscious of their behaviour toward themselves and others. Pixie spoke about how formal school lacks humanity, whereas a communal setting teaches individuals about the emotional stuff of life, learning through dreams, and taking care of body and spirit through practices such as meditation. They added:

I also learned that these types of environments are really great for learning music because people are so free that they will sometimes just start jamming together. I’ve learned a lot about music, but most importantly, I’ve discovered my passion for music. Music is what I really want to do and I didn’t realize how much so until I started living at Grow Heathrow. (personal communication, September 22, 2017)

Pixie’s experience of education and creativity at Grow Heathrow was directly embedded in their daily life—as discussed earlier on, a form of unschooled schooling.

Grow Heathrow exuded creativity visually, as Claire pointed out, with brightly painted signs and creatively built houses, which dotted the whole site. Regarding the question of how creativity manifests in daily life, she exclaimed, “I think it’s quite visible all around you. It’s everywhere . . . we are surrounded by bright colours. It’s everywhere” (personal communication, September 17, 2017). The physical architecture, dotted with bright paint and hand-drawn lettering indicating the different areas and providing information,<sup>53</sup> was clear evidence of re-skilling and skill-sharing. Although such evidence of creativity was present everywhere, members did not always experience it as a creative space. This depended heavily on who was living there at

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<sup>53</sup> On the matter of signage, I would like to make reference here to scholar and media artist Matt Soar’s article “Signs and the city” (2010). Just as city signs are “intricately linked to the dominant preoccupations of the city” (p. 133), signs in squatted areas, too, support a larger social narrative based on a community’s dominant preoccupations while also adding colourful visual elements to the various communal spaces.



the time—sometimes there were more artists, musicians, and other creative types than at other times—as well as what one understands as *creativity*. For Ru, the Grow Heathrow community’s greatest creative output was in its problem solving. The potential for lived opportunities for creativity and learning abounds in spaces like Grow Heathrow.



Figure 41. Tina Carlisi, “Reskilling,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

As Pixie related,

I’ve learned so much about gardening, and especially foraging and herbalism. I don’t think I would have learned this if I was just living in a house and then going to school because growing food is not on the national curriculum unfortunately, but it is very important knowledge. (personal communication, September 22, 2017)



As a young person, Pixie believed that living in this community had transformed them in positive ways, by giving them confidence and a greater awareness of how to care for their well-being—which would also allow them to take care of others as well. The months following the new policy had also brought an influx of women, trans, and non-binary visitors to Grow Heathrow. Pixie described being around women that were “free and like themselves and . . . not horribly anxious all the time,” in contrast the female role models they had grown up with, as a positive experience.

Because social dynamics and togetherness comprise a key reason for why individuals seek out communal living situations, I was interested in the role that friendship played in these contexts. As an artist who actively seeks to create situations that brings people together in meaningful ways, I have immersed myself in thinking about the radical potential of friendship as a process and a form, including in terms of solidarity. For most of the individuals I interviewed at Grow Heathrow, as well as Can Masdeu and Christiania, the people in their communities were not necessarily friends but rather more akin to familial relations. Kirsty, as well as other Grow Heathrow women such as Pixie, Kirsten, and Frieda, a twenty-three-year-old woman and artist who studied anthropology, emphasized that where community members *were* friends, they were sometimes bonded in special ways as they had met in very specific situations. Interestingly, Kirsty added that regardless of the degree of closeness to one another, the distinction between *living in* a community and *being* the community was an important one to bear in mind:<sup>54</sup>

When everything is great, you experience it and it multiplies, but when things start to go wrong, the air is heavy and how people interact with each other is really difficult. People just go retreat into their houses and when we see each other, there is this real feeling of tension. I feel a specific type of suffering when difficulties amongst people in the community are playing out. You need to be able to separate yourself from that in order to enjoy your own life and also to be helpful to others. (personal communication, September 22, 2017)

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<sup>54</sup> This distinction, between *living in* community versus *being* the community, was also a recurring theme in my interviews with long-term community members at Can Masdeu and Christiania.

A sense of autonomy was evident at Grow Heathrow, not only on a personal level but on a community level as well. The community strived for autonomy from capitalist systems as a whole, by gaining knowledge and skills to be able to learn and build what they needed on their own. I observed that learning and creativity were often intertwined at Grow Heathrow; in this regard, Ru commented that Grow Heathrow had an “amazing power as a learning space because it’s low risk. When you’re working with shared tools and reclaimed materials, you have nothing to lose but your time” (personal communication, September 28, 2017). Pixie also described it as a liberating environment in which to experiment:

When you are given all the tools and a playground—which this place is like, really—you have so much freedom to create amazing projects because we are not caught up with things like planning or building permission. We don’t build things to certain official standards, so these places are so free. Also, there are so many people with different energies, so it is really autonomous that way. We have so much free time as well, because we are not working within a nine-to-five routine. (personal communication, September 22, 2017)

At Grow Heathrow, one could feel far removed from mainstream society while still living in the city, but the community was not fully autonomous from capitalist structures. In many ways, they relied on the waste products of capitalism. Frieda commented:

Grow is not completely autonomous. We have consensus democracy and, in a sense, we have autonomy that way from the rest of society. But we’re not autonomous in the sense that we grow all our own food. We grow some of our food, but a lot of it is skipped and that heavily relies on the supermarkets around us. It’s interesting, we can try to be autonomous from society, but we are still so massively dependent on it. (personal communication, September 20, 2017)

Frieda pointed out that even if a person living at Grow Heathrow chose not to spend money for days or weeks on end, they could still survive because all their basic needs are met by the

community. For Kirsty, there was an immense strength in being autonomous, but to describe Grow Heathrow as fully autonomous would be inaccurate. She elaborated:

We are autonomous in terms of power source because we use the wind and the sun. Something along the lines that when you live this way, you have to understand the processes of things, be it electronics, carpentry, building, soil, and so on, more deeply than if you were living outside of a community like this. Knowledge is power. With your increased knowledge comes increased autonomy. But I would never say that this community is autonomous from the state, because a lot of the stuff we use and build from is reclaimed, and a lot of our food is skipped. We are living off the waste of capitalism in every sense. We grow only a tiny percentage of the food we eat. It's not a criticism—I think it is great—but I think we are less independent than what we claim we are, and that is something to be mindful of. (personal communication, September 17, 2017)

Grow Heathrow, like any community, had its downsides and limitations. Among the factors that might motivate the women I interviewed to leave such a semi-off-grid communal lifestyle were physical and mental health issues or difficult-to-resolve internal conflicts. Also, needless to say, community life, particularly squatting, is not for everyone. All the women I interviewed felt that they would continue to live in communal settings of some kind all their lives. Having experienced communal life, many believed that living alone, or with one partner, would feel isolating. Further, every person I interviewed anticipated that the future would bring an increase in communal living, due to greater environmental awareness and limited access to resources. Nevertheless, Grow Heathrow embodied the potential of creating something from what is already available, with a lot of work, commitment, and creativity.

When I refer back to my diaries from my stay at Grow Heathrow, I noted that they are filled with quiet moments—particularly one-on-one conversations and group conversations with people on site. What made these quiet moments distinctive to Grow Heathrow was the restraint with regard to circulation of money and reliance on services exterior to the community. By stepping outside of the bustle of city life, habits based in consumption appeared excessive, joyless,

and uncreative. But life at Grow Heathrow was not only about feeling a sense of freedom from city life; there were many lessons to be learned about how, structurally, to build a community like Grow Heathrow, including how to practise conflict resolution and hold productive group decisions on site maintenance. Each Wednesday, for example, a consensus meeting was held to discuss any existing conflicts, decisions that needed to be made, and to check in with the various working groups: art, bicycle maintenance, finance, gardening, legal issues, event coordination, outreach, well-being, and building materials.

In our interviews, both Pixie and Frieda recommended that people take the opportunity to visit a communal space because, even if you choose not to live in one, there is much to be gained from the experience and awareness of alternative ways of living and working. Pixie advised:

If you have the opportunity to visit a communal space, particularly ecovillages, go visit, just to get that perspective. There are such beautiful places. Even if it's not your thing, it is good to know that they exist, to come back to them later or tell others about them. You don't even have to live there, just visit or participate somehow. (personal communication, September 22, 2017)

Frieda suggested that individuals visit communal living projects to gain insight, before denigrating alternative lifestyles as a form of escapism or an easy way out. There is a misconception, she told me, that these types of communities are made up of freeloader when, in actual fact, a great deal of work is involved in maintaining a space like Grow Heathrow, not to mention a great deal of intentionality. Frieda also noted that much networking was carried on between Grow Heathrow and other, similar sites, which can become an extended community of friends as well as new places to visit and learn from.

In each community I visited, a common response from my interviewees was that a key feature of living in spaces like these is that it teaches individuals how to be more empathetic and open to others. Pixie, Frieda, and Kirsty all felt that people engaged in communal living were generally kinder than we are socialized to be in cities. Additionally, as an eco-squat, Grow

Heathrow was also a lesson in how to make less of an environmental impact. Kirsten admitted that she would not be able to go back to the kind of lifestyle that is considered normal in the United Kingdom because of her awareness of its impact on nature. She aptly summed up the material intimacy that life in an eco-squat entailed, stating, “we do it for ourselves. We are more in touch with nature, the ground, with our resources and what our needs are” (personal communication, September 17, 2017).

I opened this chapter with a quote from Kirsty and so I will also conclude, with deference to her eloquent ability to describe what living at Grow Heathrow was like—a feeling that I also experienced, even in my short, one-month stay:

This place has been totally reclaimed by nature. It is really special to climb the water tower at night and watch the planes coming in to land. We’ve also seen some really amazing sunsets from the water tower, despite the really terrible air pollution. There is this trippy beauty here, where you are kind of surrounded by industrial society but you feel you’re on the outside looking in. We are a tiny little crack by being here, surrounded by ecological devastation. Living here is a very visual manifestation of that, a lot of the times. (personal communication, September 12, 2017)

Since my visit, Grow Heathrow has been dismantled and no longer exists; yet, as I reflect on Kirsty’s comment about Grow Heathrow, as a communal eco-living project, being a “tiny little crack,” I come to think about how such openings might proliferate. With regard to proliferation, I think of Elizabeth Grosz’s *Chaos, territory, art: Deleuze and the framing of the Earth* (2008). Although Grosz’s discussion is about art, squats too can be considered not as a

self-contained activity in the sense that it is disconnected from the ways in which the natural and social worlds function. . . . Rather, it is where intensities proliferate, where forces are expressed for their own sake, where sensation lives and experiments, where the future is affectively and perceptually anticipated.” (pp. 78–79)

In a sense, proliferation is partly what makes collectives viable. Their concern is not to create collectivity on a mass scale, as with state socialism or communism, for example; rather, projects like Grow Heathrow are small-scale collectivities which acknowledge that no single system can fulfill the mass society's needs. To the contrary, collectivization brings together people who have similar goals and values, which will make the fulfillment of each individual's goals more likely (Red Sunshine Gang, 1970). Collective projects organized on a small scale benefit from networking with other collectives, by sharing knowledge on how to organize, what works and what doesn't, and so on, until many tiny cracks break open across the larger surface, creating possibilities for new, more widespread models. The subject of the following chapter, Can Masdeu, now more than twenty years old, has helped to spread its seeds to other collective projects, an achievement for which their community members take great pride.



Figure 42. View of Can Masdeu from road leading toward the main entrance, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.



## CHAPTER 6

### **Can Masdeu: A living utopia in the hills**

Utopia is a process and not a destination. For me, utopia is a place where humans live and humans are not perfect. So, utopia is a process where humans have to work through their issues. That is the big lesson. There is a lot of work involved in it, but I definitely feel we are utopians.

—Claire, Can Masdeu (personal communication, October 28, 2017)

Tucked in the Serra de Collserola Natural Park, in the hills above Barcelona, is Can Masdeu, a communal living project situated on two-and-a-half acres of land, where about thirty people experiment with various approaches to living sustainably together (Can Masdeu, n.d.). The community began with a group of people squatting an abandoned hospital in a former leper colony owned by Sant Pau hospital, where they have remained since 2001. Having existed for more than twenty years, Can Masdeu is one of the longest-surviving squats in Spain. Similar to Grow Heathrow, the community is committed to self-sufficiency as well as to environmental education and social change. It is an accessible community and interacts with the wider Barcelona population, via its social centre and gardens. Due to its physical accessibility with regard to Barcelona's metro system, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Can Masdeu received more than a hundred visitors every weekend.<sup>55</sup> Can Masdeu serves as a model for the *rurbano* (rurban) movement in Spain (Cordingley, 2004) and part of its mandate is to share knowledge on autonomous community practices, in hopes of sowing seeds so that other communal living projects may sprout and proliferate.

Can Masdeu defies every stereotype about squats: it is organized, high-functioning, beautiful, tranquil, and intergenerational.<sup>56</sup> Most of the people who live in the community have

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<sup>55</sup> Claire explained that the main purpose of the social centre at Can Masdeu is to bring people together and inspire others with an alternative way of living, by providing an open space where one can experience a vibrant community outside of capitalist structures.

<sup>56</sup> The age range at Can Masdeu during my field research was roughly thirty-five to fifty-five, with four children under twelve. Can Masdeu is intergenerational, mainly due to its extended community via the social centre, gardens, and visiting guests.

been there for over a decade and two have been there since its first day, when the former hospital was squatted. Very different from Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu enjoys stable infrastructures and amenities, and is situated in a warmer climate; therefore, member turnover is minimal. When the former hospital was squatted by a small group, in 2001, they used innovative tactics such as suspending people from wooden beams protruding from windows to prevent eviction. This tactic worked because, should a police officer seek to bring down one of the suspended people, the other would fall to their death (Figure 43).



Figure 43. Squatters hang from wooden beams during a three-day attempted eviction by a hundred police officers, Can Masdeu, April 2002. Source: Libsoc Wiki Fandom.

This caused a sensation in the media and eventually the squatters were left alone by the authorities (Cordingley, 2004). Can Masdeu lost a court case to remain on the abandoned land and, technically, can be evicted at any moment, but this is unlikely, as residents explained to me, because after twenty-one years of existence, the squat enjoys strong community support from the neighbourhood and the wider Barcelona community.

When I first arrived at Can Masdeu for my field research in October 2017, I could see from afar its magnificent building with gardens below (Figure 45). I accidentally entered from the social centre entrance rather than the main entrance, and there I met Javi, a resident who, at that time, had lived there for more than ten years. He was washing some pots and pans in one of the exterior sinks as I introduced myself. Javi gave me an orientation of the site and showed me to the guest room in the house. Everyone in the community lives in the house, except for two people who have built eco-homes on the property. Most of the infrastructure is original to the hospital, with colourful, patterned floor tiles, marble counters, and sinks in the kitchen area, and wooden doors and frames that have been slowly repaired over time. Other than closed bedrooms, all other spaces and amenities are collective. During my stay, residents reminded me that Can Masdeu did not always look and function like this. Its current configuration has taken fifteen years to achieve. I settled myself in the guest room, which had two bunk beds and futons that can accommodate up to six people. At the moment of my arrival, I was the only guest.

On my first day, a bell rang from the kitchen in the early evening, indicating dinner was ready. I made my way there. The kitchen is an open space, with large windows (Figure 44) overlooking the city on one side and the ocean on the other. I sat at a large wooden table that accommodated over twenty people. At Can Masdeu, lunch and dinner are prepared by the residents; each volunteers to cook two communal meals per month. As a sustainable community, most of Can Masdeu's food comes either from the garden or from purchases of bulk organic staples, to which each resident contributes financially. Bread is made on site, in a large, hand-built woodstove, and honey is collected from rooftop beehives by the house beekeeper.

Right next to the kitchen is a large living room and dining area. As I sat among all the new faces, I quietly observed the community's dynamics as they mostly spoke Spanish to each other. A few people also spoke Catalanian and English, but Spanish was the official language in the house. At the time, the community was comprised mainly of people from Spain but included a few individuals from Italy, Britain, France, and Russia. From what I gathered through informal conversation, most people came from working-class and middle-class backgrounds while a few grew up in more rural areas in Spain. Some people greeted me and asked basic questions, while others were fully invested in separate conversations with their housemates. At the dinner table I

met Martin, one of Can Masdeu's founding squatters, who was originally from the United Kingdom. He shared with me the insight that even though Can Masdeu is open to visitors and some residents really thrive on meeting new people, others find these fleeting relationships emotionally exhausting, so they have to try to retreat a little, to conserve their own energy. Therefore, Martin advised, I should not take anything personally.



Figure 44. View of Barcelona from kitchen window, Can Masdeu, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Each person in the community is in charge of some task or responsibility for the year, whether it be breadmaking, beekeeping, organizing events at the social centre, educational programs for visiting groups, or maintaining infrastructure, to name a few examples. Each Thursday is a work day, where everyone devotes four hours, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., to their assigned task. The community meets frequently for consensus-based meetings, as well as smaller meetings for residents working together on a common project or task, to determine what needs to be done, resolve conflicts, or propose new sustainable projects. The Thursday work day is also the day when the gardens are open for members of the public who wish to volunteer, to gain experience in gardening, learn about Can Masdeu as a communal living project, and meet other volunteers interested in starting their own collective projects.

As a location, Can Masdeu is beautiful and tranquil, with stunning views of the city but far from its noise, with birds and other wildlife all around. On my second day, I helped Javi extract honey from the combs all afternoon, as he explained beekeeping to me and the fragile relationship it entails between the beekeeper and the bees. After hours of extracting as much honey as possible, using just a fine strainer and a wooden spoon, I volunteered to help make dinner. That evening, there was a light rain outside, which everyone was happy about because it meant that the reservoir would fill up with water for drinking and bathing. As I watched the pouring rain from the large windows as we cooked dinner, I found myself thinking about how in the city, rain is generally regarded as an inconvenience; but here it was celebrated, because the community relied on it for the water to flow through their taps. Just like at Grow Heathrow, the closer people are to their resources, and to an understanding of the processes involved, the more they incline toward ecological choices. In Figure 46, the poem “Rain” is framed by the falling rain.





Figure 45. Garden at Can Masdeu, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

After dinner, once everyone had washed their dishes, the house grew quiet. Clare, a musician originally from the United Kingdom who had been living at Can Masdeu for fifteen years at the time of my visit, and Claire, also from the United Kingdom and a resident for three years, took out their accordion and violin to practice some classic English folk songs. The music travelled up the stairwell and throughout the whole house. Despite the hard work—from physical to emotional—that goes into sustaining a community, it was these spontaneous and simple



creative moments that brought me joy. In our interview, Claire shared her perspective that there is a really strong possibility for creativity when living in a communal situation because of the DIY aspect—in other words, the problem solving: learning how to do something and having to come up with creative solutions. She added that it is also possible, though not always the case, that people may enjoy greater time and freedom to pursue personal creative projects. Claire explained that

for me, I really enjoy playing violin and sewing, and I have more time and freedom to do those things here. [In communities like this one] you do find a lot of creative people—artists, writers, intellectuals—because it is a space where you have flexibility and connection with the practical. (personal communication, October 28, 2017)

Clare, however, is as a professional musician and performer, and her perspective on creativity in communal living is somewhat different. I interviewed Clare in the garden for an hour, as she was pulling up unwanted weeds. Interviewing her in the midst of one of her daily activities meant that we were able to find a moment in her busy schedule, not just for the meeting but also to create a more relaxed environment for the interview to flow conversationally. In Clare's view, the community was creative in terms of coming up with ideas for how to do things, but not on an artistic level. At the time of my stay at Can Masdeu, there were not many artists or artistic people living in the community, as Clare confided; as such, she sometimes found it hard to get inspired because she lacked other artists against whom she might bounce creative ideas. She added, however, that this lack of artistic energy in the community was not always the case and was closely linked to activating communal spaces:

A couple of years ago, I set up a choir here, and that was brilliant for all of us to share a space to sing together. When we started to have Internet and people made their rooms more comfortable and nice, this meant people started moving out of the communal spaces and into their private spaces. So, at night, we are all in our little boxes with little screens plugged in. We lost that thing that we all used to

share together, that used to be creative or joyful, like playing music, games, or giving each other massages. We lost that and so, for me, the choir brought that back, which is so important. If you don't share a fun space, if you are not looking after that side of it, that side can easily be converted to just living quarters and it can become less of a spirit of community. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)



Figure: 46. Tina Carlisi, "Rain," in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Dasha, originally from Moscow, was finishing an internship with the Global Ecovillage Network in Barcelona when she began volunteering during the open work days at Can Masdeu, and she shared a perspective that was similar to Clare's. A long-term guest, Dasha developed educational projects and tours for children and young adults, introducing them to Can Masdeu by teaching them about the community's core values such as sustainability and food sovereignty.

She explained that every solution devised by the community to address emergent problems or necessities is creative, as it involves invention, trying out ideas, and troubleshooting. Regarding creativity in a more artistic sense, for Dasha, this depended on what was going on in the community at any given time, as well as on the time, space, and energy available:

I would like to be more creative, but I find I am not getting enough time and free mental energy to move through with my ideas all the way. For example, I am working with the social centre and I sometimes have some ideas that I would like to experiment with, but I don't have the time and space to implement them. Generally, there used to be more involvement with creative projects, but usually it doesn't get as much general support, so they either end up being more individual initiatives, which is more demanding to realize as well. Collaboration puts less pressure on an individual, so it liberates you in a way. But I think, in general, it is a creative place because you are making up a form of existing, which there is no ready model for that. You are constructing it and it is constantly in the making. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

Maya, who is originally from Italy and had lived in Barcelona for ten years by 2017, is an architect specialized in eco-construction. At the time I interviewed Maya, she had just moved to Can Masdeu and saw creativity in terms of people's relationships to one another. For her, creativity lay in the possibility for knowledge exchange between people in the community, sharing a diversity of skills: yoga, organic farming, conflict resolution, construction, and group facilitation. The value of learning as part of the daily processes of communal living was something all the women I interviewed at Can Masdeu agreed on, if with some variation. My own short stay at Can Masdeu permitted me a glimpse at this kind of practical learning: from running a social centre, permaculture principles, and making beer to more abstract concepts such as social dynamics.

Silvia, who had lived at Can Masdeu for five years at the time of our interview, offered insightful, experience-based perspectives on how community living formed part of her political life and how it was linked to anti-capitalist activism and care. For our interview, we sat in her cozy

room, neatly filled with books and art. Silvia discussed her living philosophy and its roots in her upbringing. She grew up in Galicia, an autonomous region in northwest Spain, on a farm surrounded by forest. She described her upbringing as quite communal, akin to a tribe rather than an individualistic model. Silvia maintained that for her, communal living offered time for skill-sharing, teaching, and taking care of one another. Living in a community, she said, entails learning something new every day—and this included how to self-manage one’s differing feelings toward others. As she put it, “I am learning practical things all the time and I have learned to have more empathy by listening to others and by listening to myself—to listen to my own prejudices” (personal communication, October 31, 2017). This perspective—that living communally can offer “many mirrors,” as Clare described it—can challenge one’s own behaviour and perspective on particular situations. It can also teach a person how to set personal boundaries and limitations. This theme was one that other women I interviewed also discussed, at all three communities.

For Silvia, there is a philosophical richness in “doing nothing”—to stay at home and have the freedom to read, write, or simply do nothing, when not working within or outside of the community. She explained that

there is this confusion that when I am home doing nothing, I am available to do the things in the community that people who work full-time outside of Can Masdeu don’t have time for. This is difficult for me. It is difficult to explore and find your own limits and the limits of others. . . . When I was very young, I decided philosophically that I wanted to be a different person each day and that I want to learn something every day. Some days, it is impossible because you give a lot of your mind and heart when you live in a community. (personal communication, October 31, 2017)

Learning within community, as an organic process, was a position emphasized by everyone I interviewed, at all three communities. When learning organically, one links up with one’s own interests but also to a circle of life. Claire observed that a central quality of community living, particularly in an ecological squatters’ community, is that individuals tend to have a DIY

attitude, learning how to do things by using novel, as well as traditional, techniques to meet the community's needs. As Clare expressed it:

I reckon you can't enter a community without learning an awful lot. The learning that happens in a community is much more personal and related to who you are. It might be how you behave in groups and how to be with other people. It might be more practical, like group dynamics or facilitation. Learning, learning, learning. (personal communication, October 28, 2017)

As mentioned earlier in regard to creativity, learning is not simply a de facto attribute of communal living; rather, it depends on self-motivation and meeting basic needs. Clare spoke about how, for example, when Can Masdeu first started up, no one in the community knew how to garden. They learned as they went along, by "living and observing the garden" (personal communication, October 29, 2017). She explained that they also learned from older residents in the area, who used part of the gardens:

It was lovely with the older people, for example, because when we first arrived, they taught us. As we became more clued up on permaculture techniques, for example, like preserving water or mulching, we were able to teach them. We started having this nice relationship to experiment and share this land together. We could have kept all this land for ourselves, but it is much more satisfying and enriching to share it with others. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

Living in community also provides opportunities to learn, experience, and bear witness to natural life processes that in modern society have widely become institutionalized and removed from domestic spaces. Maya explained that she was present when one of the women in the community gave birth in the house, and described how Esther, who has lived at Can Masdeu with her family for more than ten years, and is a midwife, delivered the baby (everyone else helped by being organized for the occasion). For Maya, this was a beautiful, intimate moment to witness.

At Can Masdeu, the question of learning and performing stereotypical gender roles prompted responses similar to those of the women at Grow Heathrow. Much of the labour still gets divided according to traditional gender roles, the result of a combination of factors that are not always intentional. For the most part, as Claire often stressed, if a woman or man wants to learn new skills that they do not have, they have to carve out personal time for it. Many practical tasks, however, need to be performed while using time efficiently, which unfortunately means that performing a task often falls to the person who already possesses the skill, instead of it being a learning opportunity for someone else. On the one hand, showing someone else how to do something may take twice as long, if not longer. On the other, in the long run, it would mean that two people have the skill, which would help the community at large. Claire shared her own experience on this:

I found it very empowering to learn how to use tools, materials, and construction. I know as much about building and maintaining a space, electrical works, and welding as a man who had these skills when they joined the community. They are quite generalized skills that can be used often and in different ways, which I think a lot of women don't know or get to know, or had missed opportunities for learning those things. I think living in community offers the opportunity to learn these types of skills, but living in community doesn't mean you *will* learn these skills. It doesn't necessarily go hand in hand . . . and I don't think it's necessarily gender-empowered by learning to use those tools . . . but those opportunities are there. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

Silvia and Clare added that many learned behaviours begin in childhood; therefore, it is the broader societal issue that needs to be addressed. Clare taught herself how to use and repair a chainsaw because no one in the community, men included, had taken it on. She thus felt confident to take that space for herself to learn. Silvia explained that at Can Masdeu, there is a shared belief that women and men are equal, but the physical work and force, especially in squats, that is needed to start a community, often falls to the men. She shared her own experience with this problem and discussed some of the attitudes that need to change in this regard:



When I was a young, I started cooking meals for my parents, at twelve years old. In my memories, the boys never helped out with the cooking or cleaning; therefore, they had time to acquire other skills that they wanted to learn, like fixing machines. It is a complex issue since it is so embedded in our society . . . At this moment at Can Masdeu, there are many people who work full-time elsewhere; therefore, we are not all taking the time to learn the skills we all need to know. This means we keep falling back into classical gender roles, where the women clean and cook and men take care of infrastructure. Most of the time, when I need to repair something and I want to learn, the reaction is we don't have time, so what often happens is a man with that skill set will fix it instead of taking the time to teach me how to do it. (personal communication, October 31, 2017)

Another necessary change in attitude regards determining which kinds of labour are more or less valuable. In particular, the labour of care, which has been traditionally associated with women, becomes invisible and undervalued, even within a communal living context. Silvia shared some candid thoughts:

At Can Masdeu, we have a work system where we count the hours for specific types of work that needs to be done, but there is a lot of labour that is not recognized in this way, which I think should be because it is important and necessary for the community. For example, we have an elderly man, Filipe, who comes to visit and stay with us each month for a few days to a week. Everyone loves it when he visits, and he brings a lot to our community in terms of intergenerational relationships and knowledge. But he needs care and attention, and it is often women who take the time to be with him. Invisible labour, like care, is not recognized in the community and this is my fight right now. (personal communication, October 31, 2017)

Interpersonal relationships and dynamics, in many regards, are the most difficult aspects of community life to define, learn about, and manage. As I did at Grow Heathrow, I was interested in asking the individuals I interviewed at Can Masdeu about the role of friendship

within communal living projects. And similarly to Grow Heathrow, many women responded that their relationships among one another were more akin to familial ones. Each person might have a friend, or a few friends, or even a partner within the community but, for the most part, fellow residents were not necessarily friends—but, as Claire, Clare, and Silvia indicated, they were people you could rely on. As Clare described it,

there are people here who I would not necessarily call my friends but who I can rely on, who would be there for me—more like a family. They are people who I love very much but I don't hang out with. Yet, they are very dear to me, and I am here for them too if they need me. I would say this is how we all pretty much feel. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

Although communal life is thus akin to family, there is often a desire among community members to create friendships. One of the challenges to consider in creating friendships, or intimate dynamics, is that communities often evolve and can change drastically over time. Claire, who lived in various communal situations before arriving at Can Masdeu, offered insight on this which echoed Kirsty's observations at Grow Heathrow. It was rare, Claire told me, that all community members are friends with one another—and it can even happen that someone is not friends with anyone in the community. Clare saw this happen in several communities in which she has been involved and, for her, it is an unfortunate situation. Clare observed that

community is about living with people that you don't necessarily have commonality [with]. You can start with a group of people who have a special groove and intentions on how to live together, and what everyone wants to get out of the space—if you have a political project or economic project based on sustainability principles, for example. Whatever it may be, it is more than friendship on why you want to be together. Friendship can be a solid basis for a community, but once someone leaves and someone new comes in, and someone else leaves, someone new, and so on, then, all of a sudden, it is a completely different group and the friendship bounds are not necessarily there. Sometimes this beautiful moment happens in a group where everyone realizes they are friends

and there is group bonding. For me, friendship is one of the main reasons to why I am here. I am not the type of person who goes in a community and [will] not be friends with anyone, or at least friendly and on good terms with everyone, and then there are some people that you develop closer bonds with. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

This chapter's opening quote, from Claire, attests to the reality that no place is perfect and that utopia is a process always in the making. Within this process, communal living, like any model, has its limitations and downsides. At Grow Heathrow, an outdoor, semi-off-grid working site with few comforts, many people spoke about how being physically and mentally fit was a necessity. As a more established site such as Can Masdeu, this issue was less prominent; however, with an older population than at Grow Heathrow's, the Can Masdeu community was beginning to think about physical accessibility. Its site is multi-level. In March 2018, Can Masdeu launched a fundraising campaign to make their social centre and surrounding amenities wheelchair accessible (Can Masdeu, n.d.). At the time of my visit, I found that I went up and down the main house stairs multiple times a day. Accessing the gardens also required stairs and navigating different levels. The exterior public composting toilets could be reached via stairs from the social centre, and were thus not accessible to all visitors. The ease or difficulty of moving about a site will certainly impact who chooses to live there or visit.

Beyond the more obvious limitations or downsides of communal living, such as interpersonal conflicts, the amount of work one must devote to community life, and the challenge of reserving private time and space for oneself, many of my interviewees described it as an intense way of life in which, for the sake of self-preservation, you had to avoid taking on other people's energies. Claire explained:

Living in a community can be intense in terms of taking on other people's energies. The mental and emotional demand is quite high. You have thirty people living with you and then there are the guests, who you want to make feel welcome and be friendly; and for some people, this is mentally and emotionally difficult. Then you have the social centre and the gardens. You have a lot of relationships

and most of them are fleeting, which can be emotionally hard. But I love it. I think Martin gets a lot, emotionally, from those fleeting relationships too. I think he really thrives by having people come to his house, share a cup of tea, they tell him things and share a moment together. It doesn't matter to him that he may never see them again. For others in the house, that is really difficult and it can diminish their rhythm. (personal communication, October 28, 2017)

Another important challenge with any horizontal structure is achieving democratic consensus, not only in theory but in practice. This is an aspect that becomes more burdensome when the groups to be managed are larger, as in the case of Christiania. Some people are stronger-willed or may complain louder than others, often getting their way, which may not benefit the entire community. On this issue, one raised by other interviewees as well, Dasha offered a clear articulation of the problem:

Everyone has to manifest what their necessities are and the community will address and respond to them as best as we can. On a certain level, compared to other communities, this place is very well organized, especially as a squat. There is a lot of frustrating discussion which is necessary for horizontal processes. I think we can have more structure to our horizontal processes—to have better discipline from everyone and more mindfulness and awareness of the necessity of this process. Discussions can often get de-centred because someone might become emotional about a particular point or aspect. I think sometimes people can be self-indulgent in the openness of the consensus process. I sometimes feel that conversations get pushed in an unproductive direction. The meetings are not always well facilitated because there are no professional facilitators in the community. There needs to be a better structure for facilitation. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

Despite such downsides or limitations to communal life, almost all the women I interviewed believed that they would continue to live communally, whether in a co-housing arrangement or a small village with shared resources. A common response was that the option of

living alone or as a couple, with or without children, seemed lonely in comparison. From an artist-researcher's perspective, I am interested in how communal living offers models for autonomous practices and can produce transformative and even joyous spaces. One of the most remarkable aspects of Can Masdeu is their low reliance on external systems of production and consumption. Dasha pointed out that the Spanish word for autonomy is similar to the one for being off-grid—not only in terms of resources but also in the sense of not relying on official structures in order to function and take care of your own needs. For Dasha, the philosophy of the Okupa Movement, a squatters' movement in Spain, embodies this autonomy. The Okupa Movement can be divided into four types of squats: 1) squats occupied by non-political youths, 2) squats occupied by the poor out of necessity for housing, 3) squats to attract tourism, and 4) activist squats such as Can Masdeu (Vilaseca, 2013). While activist squats in Barcelona are varied, they are all rooted in anarchism. In *Barcelonan okupas: Squatter power!* (2013), Stephan Luis Vilaseca asserts that the goal of okupas is not to defeat capitalism but to seek a better life despite it. Okupas attempt to change society through social creativity; in other words, they identify the social as a key to quality of life (p.4).

Clare pointed out that Can Masdeu's autonomy lies in the decisions taken regarding how to live and in not having to obtain permissions, including building permissions for the various projects that the community initiates. They are not fully autonomous in the sense of food production but are in many other ways, including financially, as they rely on income from the social centre, from sales of food and drinks. Granted, being fully and absolutely autonomous may be impossible, but from what I saw during my stay while volunteering in the social centre, the gardens, and the house, a community like Can Masdeu offers many lessons in building a practice toward autonomy. There are numerous lessons to be had from communal living, learning, and creating, lessons which—and in this matter I agree with the women I interviewed at Grow Heathrow—are lessons for the broader society too.



Figure 47. Sunday social centre, Can Masdeu, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Clare, Maya, and Dasha all maintained that one of the greatest lessons of communal living is that it teaches individuals to consider other points of view and other ways of doing things, and to learn how to compromise. Maya wished these lessons might extend to society more widely. In the community, she explained, you learned how to share within a collective in ways that are familial, a way of thinking which for her is extremely valuable and something we need more of in society in general. Maya stated that “we need more values of sharing in society. For me, it is part of my activism—to change myself in order to change the world” (personal communication, October 19, 2017). Such lessons are directly linked to how communal milieus can transform people. Clare response, in this regard, was similar to those of the women at Grow Heathrow: living communally, she commented, had helped her become a better person as it taught her to be tolerant, to see how qualities unattractive in somebody else might simply be a reflection of oneself and, hence, to seek ways to make positive changes in one’s relationships with



others. Claire's response echoed something that Kirsty at Grow Heathrow had said, namely that depending on one's personality, an individual either *lives in* a community or *becomes* the community. As Claire expressed it:

I live here in an intense way. I don't work in the city. I work in the house, my partner is in the house, and my friendships are in the house. If anyone asks me what I am doing with my life, I say Can Masdeu. I am definitely a person who throws their personhood into the project. And it is definitely a project that I identify my life with in a particular time. I used to define myself more as a climate activist than someone who lived in cooperatives. It was an aspect, but not quite so central. But now that has shifted for me. I don't do activism outside of the community anymore; but what I am doing here, is a different form of activism, by putting energy into the social centre and developing economic projects. (personal communication, October 28, 2017)

As I search for lessons that may be taken away from autonomous communal living projects, as they relate to learning and creativity from an artist and art educator's perspective, I am always eager to hear people who live in autonomous communes and squats describe examples of joyous moments particular to communal milieus. In other words, as an artist motivated by meaningful forms of togetherness and autonomous practices such as skill-sharing and knowledge exchange, I regard the sharing of joy as powerful. Silvia spoke about connecting with the elders who work in the garden at Can Masdeu or the children who live there. Maya, who is new in the community, told me that for her, a joyous moment is when everyone is truly together and able to share a space where vulnerability can be shared. Claire shared with me an anecdote about a special moment which exemplified the kind of intimacy a community can share, an intimacy that might not be fully understandable from an outsider's perspective:

My sister, her husband, and my nieces visited me last year, on a day when someone was leaving the house, so we had a big dinner for him. Some of us learned a song that this person liked. We were projecting photographs and singing this song and dancing around, and it just created this moment where everyone was

really going wild to this tune. My niece didn't understand what was going on. We were all wearing fancy clothes. It was beautiful and there was this crazy moment that we all got, that my family did not get, but I think they really appreciated that they were witnessing this very intimate moment among us. (personal communication, October 28, 2017)

A moment that is often cited as capturing the pure joy of living communally—one that was common to Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania—is the celebrations and festivities surrounding the community's anniversary. At Can Masdeu, Silvia, Claire, and Clare all made reference to these particular events. Clare described succinctly

that moment [that] happens most years when we celebrate the community by having a big party in May—on the day that the authorities tried to evict us. For me, it is always a very special time because I organize all the special acts, which involves between forty to fifty performing artists and DJs. The beautiful moment, for me, happens around 3 or 4 a.m. the next morning, when everyone has left and it is just us who live here. We have our moment for us to party. This is a beautiful thing, for us to reflect: “wow, another year, we've done it, and here we are dancing!” And every year, during the high point of the party, I go up to the roof and look at it all and watch thousands of people having a brilliant time. That is a massive moment for me, to know that I am part of it in the making. (personal communication, October 29, 2017)

The sense of pride and joy of a community completing another year is especially potent for squats, as each one starts out knowing that their community could be quite short-lived if they are evicted. It is a remarkable beating of the odds for a place like Grow Heathrow, which survived eleven years, or for Can Masdeu's twenty-two years, at the time of this writing, or Freetown Christiania's fifty-one—more than a half century of lessons about the resilience required to live in and survive the utopian process of perpetual becoming (Grosz, 2002).



Figure 48. A street in one of Christiania's fourteen neighbourhoods, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

## CHAPTER 7

### **Freetown Christiania: A lesson in utopian resilience**

We started as a social experiment but now we want to be considered an experimental zone rather than a social experiment because we have existed for more than 45 years. If our autonomy to self-govern is taken away, this place will no longer be Christiania. People can learn many things from Christiania. It is like an open living school.

—Britta Lillesøe, Christiania (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

It is not an exaggeration to say that Freetown Christiania is mythical in the history of squatters' movements. Occupying eighty-four acres of land in the centre of Copenhagen, in what used to be the military barracks, its more than half a century of existence is a testament to resilience. By the late 1960s, Copenhagen's military barracks were mainly used to store ammunition. Following a government decision to close them, the army personnel resident there abandoned the area by 1971. People living nearby would trespass the area, mostly to have access to urban nature and open spaces for their children to play in (Lauritsen, 2002). At the time, there was a housing crisis in Copenhagen, resulting in low vacancy and high rents, which prompted some young people to begin squatting (Henriksen, 2011). By the summer of 1971, approximately 150 people had moved into the barracks, setting up homes, building facilities, and organizing community. In the autumn of 1971, squatters living in Christiania circulated flyers around Copenhagen announcing "squatter-liberated area, unemployed builders wanted to help" and "those who come to Christiania can just go into the area and pick a house for themselves" (Lauritsen, 2002). An alternative weekly newspaper published an article on Christiania, inviting people seeking housing to go to Freetown. Within days, several hundred people took the leap and moved into Christiania. This made it difficult for authorities to evict the residents—more than seven hundred people, mostly hippies, artists, and activists—which prompted the new liberal Danish government to allow the intensively squatted zone to exist as a "social experiment."





Figure 49. Map of Christiania on a wall in the “downtown” area of Freetown, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

Over the years since 1972, there have been numerous threats by various governments to shut down Christiania, as well as many agreements—so-called “treaties”—to protect it. In recent years, Christiania has been under threat of integration, gentrification, and of eventually losing its autonomy through normalization plans proposed by the government. After eight months of seeking legal advice and holding meetings to arrive to a consensus for a counter-plan, residents proposed to purchase the land legally by selling shares. Anyone, tourists included, may buy shares to help Christianites buy their freedom, but this does not constitute owning an actual piece of Christiania. No one is allowed to own property in Freetown and the residents want to keep it that way, to prevent gentrification, co-option, and termination of the free haven. Today, eight hundred adults and two hundred children live in Christiania. They pay city taxes to Copenhagen as well as rent to Christiania, to cover the mortgage, support five Christiania institutions, and pay for management and maintenance. Freetown is autonomous, meaning there is neither



interference nor support from the Danish government. Adopting a direct democracy model since its founding, all matters in Christiania are voted on. Residents attend an average of one to two “common meetings” per week to establish consensus.



Figure 50. Entrance to Morgensteden, a vegetarian and vegan restaurant with an ecological kitchen, in Christiania. The entrance is festooned with Christiania’s red-and-yellow flag. The three dots on the flag represent the dots above each of the three “i”s in *Christiania*. 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.





Figure 51. One of the main entrances to Christiania, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

This self-governing community has nine simple rules, which are proclaimed upon posters throughout Christiania: no weapons, no hard drugs, no violence, no cars, no biker colours, no bulletproof clothing, no sale of fireworks, no use of thunder flashes (smoke grenades), and no stolen goods. Conceived as a place where people are free from imposed laws and social constraints, cannabis and hashish have always been accepted. In the early days, this attracted a few small-time pushers, who hung out on what later became Pusher Street but had a relatively



low impact on the community (Edwards, 1979). Today, Pusher Street is a much more complex site run by biker gangs, who have turned the area into a multi-million-kroner (the Danish currency) cannabis and hashish market, which has become an ongoing problem for both the Danish government and Christianites.



Figure 52. Entrance to Christiania, near the waterfront, 2017. Photo: Tina Carlisi.

The main entrances to car-free Freetown Christiania run along Prinsessegade Street. Physically bordered by the former military base's concrete wall, completely covered in graffiti,

visitors are greeted by archways bearing Christiania's name and flag, a sign that reads "you are now leaving the EU," and colourful, psychedelic murals that immediately lend a sense of walking into another world. Just a few steps in, visitors find themselves in a "no-camera zone," along Pusher Street, with its numerous kiosks with people openly selling cannabis and hashish to tourists. Many residents have told me they avoid Pusher Street and its surrounding tourist-filled establishments, preferring to go for walks on the quieter paths along the water in the early morning, before the tourists begin to flood in. For many Christianites, walking in nature and being greeted by fellow residents is closer to what Christiania once was, before it became one of Denmark's most popular tourist destinations.

My experience upon first entering Christiania, to participate in Utopia School in 2016, was different from that of most visitors. I approached from the quieter side, along the water, where a hand-painted sign that with two swans announces "Christiania" and indicates, haphazardly, that you are now in Freetown (Figure 52). This handmade, DIY aesthetic, found throughout Christiania, is a reminder that although Freetown has become a legal entity, its radical squatting roots are omnipresent. Somewhat resembling something like a hobbit village, Christiania is filled with imaginative, self-built houses in addition to the converted military buildings, and has a rich cultural life with many associations, clubs, music venues, theatres, galleries, meeting places, cafes, restaurants, daycares, a cinema, several sound studios, a radio station and a TV station, many different art workshops, blacksmiths, carpenters, music and dance groups, indoor and outdoor skater ramps and much more.

As I stated in the Introduction, my first visit to Christiania was a transformative experience, which with a single stroke provided me with clarity regarding the kind of research I wanted to pursue for my doctoral dissertation. On my second, month-long visit, in November 2017, as part of my case-study fieldwork, I formally interviewed six women in Christiania, three of whom had moved there in the seventies, eighties, and nineties, respectively, and two more who had been raised in the community, making them second-generation Christianites. From what I observed in the community, through informal conversations with my small pool of participants, was that community members came from the working, middle, and upper classes. There appeared to be a strong racial inequity between the residents of Christiania and the community's

small homeless population—which includes individuals who can be seen in the public squares daily, collecting discarded empty beer bottles, and which is made up of immigrants from various other countries and Indigenous people from Greenland.<sup>57</sup>

Gathering perspectives from different generations of women has been invaluable to my research. Furthermore, thanks to a local program, Christiania Researcher in Residence (CRIR) house, I was able for a second time<sup>58</sup> to immerse myself fully in the day-to-day life of Christiania, which is essential, from a researcher’s point of view, for observing the social and material intimacies involved in a community of this scale. In a one-month stay in Christiania, one can only begin to scratch the surface of the history, activities, organization, politics, and innovation that have gone into making this community what it is. The community is endlessly fascinating and offers many learning opportunities for anyone who wishes to start an intentional community, eco-village, or free cultural space.

Taking a walk or a bike ride through Christiania, you can see people working outdoors in their flower gardens or chatting with neighbours, parents riding with their children on Christiania bikes,<sup>59</sup> and streams of tourists smoking cannabis by the water and sightseeing in the “downtown” area of Freetown, where there are shops, cafes, music venues, and art galleries. Sometimes you can spot children riding horses through the woods or catch a spontaneous street performance. It is a vibrant place, and those who consider it to be just another neighbourhood in Copenhagen underestimate the amount of work that each individual contributes to the community life and infrastructure that sustain Christiania. Technically, Christiania was an illegal squat for just six months of its fifty-plus years of existence because, soon after that, the Danish government allowed the community to exist as a social experiment. (Through the years, this

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<sup>57</sup> The Indigenous peoples of Greenland (which is part of Denmark) are Inuit and make up the majority (88 percent) of the Greenlandic population (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, n.d.).

<sup>58</sup> My first stay in the Christiania Researcher in Residence (CRIR) house was in 2016. I was conducting research on the Danish theatre group Solvognen, which included informally interviewing Britta Lillesøe.

<sup>59</sup> The classic Christiania bicycle is a tricycle with a large cargo box in front. The cargo bike was invented by Christiania’s blacksmith, Lars Engstrøm, in 1984 as a surprise birthday present for his partner Annie. On the day that Annie unveiled her present and rode it around Christiania, two neighbours asked Lars if they could order a bike for themselves, birthing the production of the Christiania bike. It is currently exported to more than twenty countries worldwide. Source: [www.christianiabikes.com](http://www.christianiabikes.com).

designation has been reassessed and fought for many times over by the residents, who probably never thought the community would last for more than five, ten, or perhaps even fifteen years.

Christiania was founded at a time when young people in the counterculture were strongly challenging their middle-class and upper-class upbringings and seeking the freedom to create a society that was less capitalistic and enjoyed more liberal values. It was also the time of the second wave of feminism and many of the women I interviewed spoke about how the first women of Christiania directly represented the values and outcomes of the feminist movement. In these interviews, I was repeatedly told that “the women of Christiania are strong” and highly respected in the community. During an interview with Tanja, in her warm, timber-frame home in the Mælkebøtten (Dandelion) area, we spoke extensively about her experience of growing up in Christiania, with strong feminist and activist parents amid a tight-knit community. I first met Tanja in 2016, on the occasion of her talk, for Utopia School, on women’s experiences in Christiania. Tanja, who at the time of our interview was fifty years old, describes herself as a mother and grandmother. At the age of three, Tanja moved with her mother to Christiania, in October 1971, just a week after it was first officially occupied, on September 26. She has lived there for most of her life and strongly identifies as a Christianite. Tanja’s and other women’s stories of living and growing up in Christiania inspired my poem “Christiania, she is strong” (Figure 53), the text of which is encircled in a field of bright yellow, which takes up most of the space in the spread.

In our interview, Tanja explained that her “mother’s generation, who was the first generation to occupy the community, is also the feminist generation that burned their bras and went on demonstrations and fought for women’s rights” (personal communication, November 29, 2017). (She readily acknowledged that the efforts made by her grandmother’s and great-grandmother’s generations were even greater, in particular the struggle for the right of women in Denmark to vote, a franchise that was won in 1915.) Tanja was very conscious of the benefits she enjoyed as a woman growing up within a feminist environment. She explained that in the seventies, Denmark was still very traditional; therefore, the lifestyle and values found within Christiania were, from a feminist perspective, very progressive:



The women here in Christiania took their rights and did whatever they wanted to do, like become a welder or blacksmith,<sup>60</sup> a carpenter, a photographer, etc. They were the first generation of women to do that. Today, we take this for granted. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)



Figure 53. Tina Carlisi, “Christiania, she is strong,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Not only did women in Christiania break down gender stereotypes in terms of labour, but they also reclaimed their own bodies. For Tanja, this has had positive impacts on her personal self-esteem and relationship to body acceptance:

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<sup>60</sup> In the centre of Christiania is Kvindesmedien, the women’s blacksmith workshop and store. Founded in 1997 by Dorte Eilenberger, Charlotte Steen, and Gitte Christensen, they make furniture, sculptures and interior decorations. See: kvindesmedien.nd.

In the early years, there was only a small handful of tourists—mostly friends of people living in Christiania. In the summertime, everybody would be naked, so I grew up with this idea that a nude body is completely normal and it wasn't sexualized. Women would go out and buy food naked, just to show that they are free and that they are taking their right to do so. Today, I can see that young women are having breast implants or Botox to conform to an ideal of beauty. I do not want to judge this, since it is a private matter, but I can see they are not content with what they have, and this saddens me. I grew up with this idea that all bodies are beautiful, and be proud of what you have and show it. It is sad to say that young women today in Christiania don't think this way. A lot of the original values in Christiania are unfortunately not being carried [forward]. As an older woman, it saddens me that younger women are not relaxed in their own skin. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

As Tanja observed, such issues are not specific to young women in Christiania but affect young women in Danish society in general. Christianites have never intended to isolate themselves from the rest of society, and thus the mass media's influence upon beauty ideals impacts everyone.

Christiania is often described as a hippie haven. Solveig, who was born and raised in Christiania and whom I interviewed in her clothing boutique, Essence, in downtown Christiania, responded, "I don't necessarily see a hippie as someone with flowers in their hair. It's more of a lifestyle that is not so capitalistic by getting rid of unnecessary material things" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). At her boutique, Solveig sells customized clothes that she designs and mostly sews herself. Like individuals whom I interviewed in their private homes, interviewing Solveig as she ran her store gave me a more intimate view of her day-to-day life. A second-generation Christianite, Solveig is raising her child in the community. Solveig's mother, an artist, and her father, who was a carpenter, moved to Christiania in 1973. Solveig told me that she has always been creative because of the environment that she grew up in, both in and around her home.

In addition to the freedom that women have created for themselves in Christiania, it is common knowledge, and commonly acknowledged, in the community that it is the women who would join together whenever serious issues arise. All the women mentioned this to me, when I asked about the experience of being a woman in their community. One sunny afternoon, I biked across the water to the quieter side of Christiania to meet Olga, who has lived there for over forty years. Olga moved into the community at age twenty, after travelling for half a year through Europe and Morocco. Prior to moving to Christiania, in her teenage years, she used to visit the community and, by age nineteen, these visits had become daily. What first attracted her to Christiania was the nature and the culture—particularly the folk music—which made it a vibrant place in which to meet friends. At twenty, she moved in with a partner who was already living in Christiania, and then lived in a few different homes over a span of three years, before moving into the house where she has lived for the last thirty-seven years and raised her children. Professionally, Olga worked as a schoolteacher for a decade, and has also dabbled in the arts, mainly dancing, painting, and playing music. She explained to me how women in the community banded together to address important issues:

I think the women in Christiania are very strong and many times when we needed to deal with a serious issue, we would call the women together and having a woman's meeting. We knew which men we had support from and in the common meetings we could make proposals and decisions. Common meetings are the only way to make changes in Christiania. For example, in 1989, the decision to temporarily close the main entrance to Christiania was first proposed in the women's meeting.<sup>61</sup> Often, if there is something that is too difficult to discuss or find solutions to in general meetings, we called a women's meeting. I think women generally have a different energy. Men can fight a lot, where women try to find a solution collaboratively. (personal communication, November 22, 2017)

This is not to say that the men's voices are stronger than the women's in the general meetings. As Solveig commented, "actually there are a lot of women who speak at the meetings.

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<sup>61</sup> In 1989, in a conflict with biker gangs, Christiania's women decided in a meeting to block the main entrance, to prevent drug pushers from entering the free haven (Lauritsen, 2002).

There are a lot of strong women in Christiania, who built their own houses and took care of the children on their own, so I wouldn't say that the men are more aggressive than the women here, so it is democratic in that way" (personal communication, November 15, 2017). I interviewed Elisabeth, a dancer and an instructor of African dance, who has lived in Christiania for thirty-two years, in her home. She offered her perspective on power dynamics in meetings:

I think the way of talking to each other is different between men and women. Men can sometimes have a hard way of talking, a harsh tone. Not every man, but often this is the case in political discussion. Some women have adopted this harsh tone also, but I think it is influenced by the men's way of being together. There is also an attitude of "we are the best" that many men in Christiania have, which can make you too proud and that has influenced others. This attitude can manipulate decision making that is not necessarily always the best solutions for the community. (personal communication, November 9, 2017)

Concerns about the difficulties of consensus democracy were a theme of community life that was common to all three case study sites. Although consensus meetings are ideal in theory, in practice there will always be some voices that are stronger, more persuasive than others, regardless of gender. For a community of Christiania's scale and longevity, there are added complications. Tanja offered insight on this, explaining that in the 1970s, it was possible not to pay taxes, not to work a lot, or even not to work at all, with the aid of welfare. This meant that community members could devote a lot of time to meetings, which sometimes lasted for days. Today, it is no longer possible to live off social security; and, given the higher cost of living, people are working more and have less free time. Tanja explained:

In that way, the consensus model is being disrupted by [the]modern predicament, disrupted by too many kings and by people who don't speak up. It only works if everyone speaks. It works great in principle and, in general, because we are still here, but there are some periods that it just doesn't work. I think we are going through one of those periods now. . . . I want to add a parenthesis that Christiania always has its ups and downs in waves. If you look at world history and different

countries, this is how it works. Christiania is a microcosm. We are just a mirror of what is going on in a larger scale. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

As a small microcosm, each individual's involvement in the community is a more intimate experience than their general involvement in the mainstream society and its institutions. Shanna, who was fifty years old at the time of our interview, has worked for the Danish Refugee Council<sup>62</sup> for more than twenty years and has lived in Christiania since 1993. A neighbour of Tanja, she also lives in the Mælkebøtten area, where there are eighty households. Within each area in Christiania, the community decides which amenities—such as washing machines and dryers, for example—will be shared, rather than possessed individually, in private homes. Shanna observed that in Christiania, there are two categories of neighbours: those that live in your area and those in the broader Christiania community. Each area holds weekly meetings in addition to the larger meetings that concern all of Christiania. Shanna explained that you cannot just live in Christiania because it is not simply a neighbourhood—it is a community. Therefore, it is expected that everyone will be an active member.

There are some people in the community who do not interact with others as much as they once did, but they tend to be the older generation, mostly living in Christiania's remoter parts, who might have lost the drive or physical ability for such active engagement in community life. Olga also pointed out that it becomes problematic when people who live in a community begin to treat it simply as a place to live and withdraw from community life, including even speaking to their neighbours. For Olga, this happens not because a community has become too large in terms of population but due to people getting older and hence more laid back, choosing to retreat rather than interact with others. As she phrased it, “there is a lot of work and energy to create social cohesion and it's easier when you're young” (personal communication, November 22, 2017). As with most organic processes in life, there is no formal schooling on how to live communally; therefore, it is something that one learns along the way, through experience and by sharing experiences with other communities. At the moment Christiania was squatted, nobody

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<sup>62</sup> A global humanitarian organization active in approximately forty countries. See: <https://drc.ngo/>.



could imagine that the community would thrive for fifty years, let alone foresee the need for intergenerational transition as the community aged. Tanja offered insight in this regard:

If someone lives for forty-five years here and pours all their energy and money into a place, and don't want to live here anymore and have a small pension or can no longer be active in the community, where should they go? It is a disadvantage. It's something we need to figure out in our community. If you lose a spark for a community, how can we let you go in a good way, as part of a generational transition? Since Christiania was squatted and people didn't think they would be here more than a year, and then five years, etc., it was never in the long-term plans to think of this or even consider such an issue. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

Intergenerational transition not only concerns the issue of Christianites who no longer have the spark for community life, but also that of passing the torch. For example, Britta Lillesøe, who, at the time of my field research in 2017, was seventy-three years old, continues to be very active in community life, especially in regard to culture and politics. She is also invested in finding ways to “encourage younger people in the community to take part and take over” (personal communication, November 24, 2017). Britta is an artist in multiple disciplines—actress, writer, playwright, cultural coordinator, and event organizer. She has acted on stage, radio, and television, and on the streets, participating in both professional and alternative theatre. An active community member of Christiania since its beginnings, Britta cofounded the Christiania Cultural Association<sup>63</sup> in 1996, among her many other community involvements. She was also a member of Solvoggen, a celebrated, radical Danish street theatre collective active from the late sixties to the early eighties. Closely associated with Christiania, the troupe's large-scale street actions were politically charged with anti-capitalist, anti-war, and anti-racist sentiments.

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<sup>63</sup> The Christiania Cultural Association was formed in 1996. Intended as a cultural bridge between Christiania, the surrounding community, and its supporters abroad, the association debates difficult issues via artistic and unconventional means, to create dialogue between individuals across different ethnicities, classes, and generations (Christiania, 2013).

The first time I met artist Britta and her husband, Nils Vest, a documentary filmmaker who was also part of Solvognen, was in August 2016, at their home in Christiania, where they have lived since the early eighties. As I discuss in the Introduction, it was this first meeting with Britta, who shared stories with me of her early squatting days in the mid-sixties, when it dawned on me that this was my first time meeting an early squatter who was a woman. It was at that point that I decided to include the personal perspectives of women in my dissertation, to bring this underwritten history into public view.

On my first visit in 2016, Britta explained that the housing crisis of the late sixties and early seventies had a greater impact on women, because of a Danish law that prohibited women from buying property and discouraged unmarried women from renting. The only alternative for single women was either to seek out the few apartments that did rent to women, usually a small bedroom in a house in which other single women lived, or to squat. Opting for the latter, Britta's first squat was with a few friends in a shipping container by the water, in an area that would eventually become part of Christiania. Copenhagen is the site of some of the earliest examples in Europe of communal squatted experiments, including Sofiegården (also mentioned earlier, in the Introduction), which Britta founded with some artist friends (Kampmann & Widding, 1969). For Britta, Sofiegården offered not only free housing but an opportunity to live and create with like-minded people:

The first squatted community I founded, together with some friends, is Sofiegården, in 1965, which was torn down five years later. It was a lot of work to maintain the building, but it was a beautiful place. There was a lot of culture and togetherness with our working-class neighbours. Some of us were from middle- and upper-class families, but we all came together and made work together—intellectuals, bricklayers, architects, carpenters, artists, and students alike. We created street theatre, in the tradition of worker's street theatre of the 1920s, in the courtyard at Sofiegården and we would invite our neighbours. (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

For Britta, her neighbours in Christiania are something of a family. Even though people live in separate houses, everyone helps each other. Britta commented that “it is very much social work living in a community” (personal communication, November 24, 2017). Regardless, if Christiania did not exist, she would have taken part in creating some other autonomous community, just as she took part in starting Sofiegården because, as she phrased it, “it is who I am” (personal communication, November 24, 2017).

There is much to learn from, engage in, and be creatively inspired by in Christiania, from learning how to build homes to organizing artistic events. Like other women I interviewed, Shanna emphasized creative skills and autonomy:

There is a dynamic in [Christiania’s] way of living that stimulates more creativity. People are also trying to do and make things on their own. Christiania attracts artists and artistic types which inspires others. As a community, we have many more artists than you would find in a neighbourhood of a similar size. It is a more relaxed way of living. Maintaining homes here also requires a special skill set. (personal communication, November 5, 2017)

Creativity is not only seen in the building and maintenance of homes in Christiania, but also in how the homes themselves keep on transforming. As individual families grow and change, so do their houses. This is a beautiful, poetic, and sustainable process of sharing space. Olga, for example, moved into her current home back in 1979, but for the first eight years she had no running water or electricity. Initially, her house was one big room with high, open ceilings; eventually she turned into a two-storey home. Olga’s house recently went through another transformation, as she built a wall to create a second apartment for her daughter and son-in-law, and their two small children. Modifying a home to create a second apartment for a family member is not uncommon, especially for people who grew up in Christiania and wish to continue living there. As there is high demand to live in Christiania, it is the neighbours who decide on new community members; and just because somebody grew up there does not automatically mean they will be selected. Solveig told me that at age nineteen, she moved out of Christiania to live on her own. After many years living in different neighbourhoods in

Copenhagen, she decided she wanted to move back to Christiania. This was made possible by her mother sharing part of her home with her, just as Olga has done for her daughter. As Olga explained,

I was lucky to get a part of my mother's home. I have twin siblings who moved out and then she had too much space, so she gave some to me. This is how I came into Christiania, because it is very difficult to get a place here. Even if you grew up here and know everybody, there are many people on a waiting list to move in. There are so many great people who want to live here and neighbours decide who gets to live here. When I was living outside of Christiania, it felt very impersonal. You don't talk to your neighbours. I felt that if I was walking down the street, neighbours would take faster steps to get into their flats to avoid saying "hi." This is not how I grew up. I missed Christiania when I was living in the city. (personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Tanja, who has also lived most of her life in Christiania, recounted how growing up in Christiania meant being part of an intimate community life that was very different from the rest of Copenhagen. It also meant that children had a lot of freedom, back when there were still only a few tourists. They were free to just roam around, precisely because everyone knew one another:

When we were young, there was no phones and of course no cars, as it still is today. We would leave our houses and come back home when we were hungry, and if there was no food at home, we would just go to the next house. We were allowed to discover so many things. The whole area of Christiania was like a playground to me. I grew up with horses, rabbits, guinea pigs. It was very stimulating as a child. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

The question of friendship elicited many different responses from the women I interviewed in Christiania. Solveig told me that the people she grew up with bonded closely, and are still her best friends. Britta sees her neighbours and the community more like a family who help each other, similar to the women I interviewed at Grow Heathrow and Can Masdeu, both

significantly smaller and younger communities. Olga described it as somewhere between friends and family. Although she may not necessarily go visit neighbours in their homes, she will encounter them spontaneously—by the lake or the bathhouse, for example. Elisabeth is still very close to the friend who first helped her moved into the community, more than thirty years ago. She is also still close friends with other women from her early squatting days and the women’s movement organization she was involved with prior to life in Christiania. And Shanna feels she has many friends in Christiania, some of them close friends, others friendly acquaintances, and others still who fall somewhere in between. As she described it,

I have some very close friends here. It is special to just knock on each other’s door. It’s also nice to know that once you retire and get along in years, there are people around you if you need something. There is also something in between friends and acquaintances living in Christiania, something that I have in this area that you can rely on them. (personal communication, November 5, 2017)

Tanja spoke to me about rethinking friendship within the community, in a broader sense than merely interpersonal relationships. Although Christiania is a strong community in many respects, Tanja would like to see more discussion about the issue of friendship in the community, which, to her mind, would be a valuable and fruitful process:

In a community like this, no one is going to tell you how to behave and think, and each person has a different standard and way of being and view friendship in different ways, which is natural. If you want a real friendship, you have to re-evaluate it every so often. Friendship plays out in time and where you are in your life. There are different types of friendships. I think we need to do a friendship talk in a vision meeting. I would love to have one or two days to explore this. I think quite a few people in Christiania in the last five years, at least how I understand it, are disappointed with old friends. It is a breakup time with a different political climate, since Christiania is buying itself. It has been a big change and the adjustments that come with that has divided people. It is hard to keep the glue sometimes, but it might be temporal right now. Maybe it is not bad



that people are getting angry at each other, or sad, because that can explode into something new. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

Today Christiania is a longstanding community, which has passed through many phases and challenges—from the normalization process of collectively buying themselves out to maintain their autonomy, to the internal politics of seeking more power to deal with the unwelcome criminalized environment of Pusher Street. Through such experiences, living in Christiania has had a positive impact on the women I interviewed. It is an experience which they believe may also offer lessons for society at large. Solveig believes that it is the people of Christiania who make her the person she is today. To her, living communally means not feeling like another “brick in the wall,” as she did when living in the city. Her day-to-day life is filled with personal interactions with people she knows. Solveig also contended that living in Christiania, among such a diverse group of people, has made her more open-minded. Olga and Elisabeth suggested, similarly, that living in a community like Christiania teaches one to be tolerant and about the importance of caring for one another. Communal living also teaches one to set limits, something that can take years to come to terms with. In Tanja’s experience growing up in Christiania, the community was at the centre of every decision. If something wasn’t good for the group, then it wasn’t good at all. She candidly shared that it has taken her fifty years to begin taking care of herself, because she always looked after the group first:

This is the way I was raised, which is not always good. It is important to take care of each other, but I have learned that I have to also look out for myself too. Taking care of the group is great, but it came at a high price where I didn’t know how to set limits. But on the other hand, this attitude has given me so many wonderful life experiences. This is the result and I’m still here. I haven’t left and I believe that the world would be a better place if we took care of our neighbours. Christiania is not perfect. Not everyone thinks or feels this way. There are some people here that I wonder why they want to live here if they are not interested in the group and only do their own thing. Community life is the core value here. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

Perhaps the greatest lesson Christiania can offer is a point of reference for creating autonomous communities and spaces, or simply for how to live out community-based values. Christiania is also an inspiring example of how a small group of people can build something, make a positive impact, and continue to do so by adapting to changing times. When I asked Tanja what is Christiania's greatest lesson for society at large, she offered the following:

I think along the same lines as revolution: society is not static and it is always possible to make a change—that one individual can make a difference, because there weren't many that started this place. They were told they couldn't do it, that it was against the law, but they did it. And then they fought to keep it. And if things don't go well after a long time, you just change it again. I think Christiania shows that. When I was working at the Christiania Share,<sup>64</sup> people would come to me and said that after visiting this place, they believed it can be done, that change can happen. If you live in a small town, you can do a Christiania in your building. Do the grocery shopping for your old neighbour or help her paint her apartment. Just do it, because the change is real. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

There are many special aspects to community life. In conducting interviews in three very different intentional communities, all rooted in squatting but embedded in different cultural contexts, founded in different epochs, and varying greatly in size, one of the most humbling things that all these women have shared with me is the recounting of a magical moment that they experienced through being part of a true community. Again and again, the community's anniversary celebration was cited as a special moment in living communally. These occasions were times of both reflection and celebration, a moment when, as Elisabeth put it, "you feel like you are part of a living society" (personal communication, November 9, 2017) by being together, being part of something that is continually growing: learning together, being creative, sharing

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<sup>64</sup> Christiania Shares donations can be purchased in Christiania. The monies received are used to buy the Freetown through the Fund for Christiania, and in effect, the donations are used to secure Christiania's autonomy from the Danish Government. Source: [www.christiania.org](http://www.christiania.org).

intimacies, getting through hardships, and experiencing joyful moments—in short, living. Elisabeth shared a few such joyful moments with me:

When it is springtime and everything is growing, we all make our gardens, including a common garden, and sharing meals—those moments when you feel like you are part of a living society. There is also Christiania’s birthday. It is a nice occasion, especially when we meet and have breakfast together, and say “congratulations” to each other. When we are proud of being part of Christiania, it brings a moment of joy. When we were celebrating Christiania’s fortieth-year birthday, we organized a long coffee table along one of the streets. We collected cups, cans, and had many cakes. We all dressed up in white. It was very beautiful. Also, when Christiania was closed for a month and we were only the community—that was also nice to be together. I am also part of a women’s choir and we meet once a month. Right now, we are not singing, but we still meet and have dinner together. We are ten women and mostly my age. It is also very nice to raise my daughter here and who played with the other children here. We took care of each other’s children. (personal communication, November 9, 2017)

For Olga, raising her children in Christiania and witnessing the intimate bonds that can develop in communal living, has been idyllic:

For me, it has been a really nice and wonderful place to raise my children. I could always let them play outside or go bicycling, because there are no cars here. In a way, it was more free and peaceful. It can also be peaceful in the countryside, but here we get both nature with water and trees, like a countryside, and the city. It is the best of both worlds. And to see my daughters, who are at the ages of thirty-one and thirty-three, still close with other Christianites they became friends with at one year old, and they still keep together—that is special. (personal communication, November 22, 2017)

Solveig cited Christiania's birthday celebrations as special, meaningful moments; although she added that they have become less so, over the last decade, with more tourists and less time for community members to be together by themselves. Private celebrations can also be very special, as Shanna and Britta related, as they reveal how the cycle of life created by social and material intimacies is so closely experienced. Solveig shared some intimate community and family moments:

I remember when I was growing up, for Christiania's birthday, I would meet my friends and we would go eat breakfast together at the communal spaces. Kindergarten children would sing Christiania songs and wore Captain Christiania outfits with wings. Then we would all eat dinner together on a long table. These traditions, where we all met, where we really feel like we are part of something. Private parties are also special. My father just had his seventieth birthday. There were young and old people, everyone knows each other and have a connection to each other. That is how it should be in a little community. We should take care of each other. (personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Shanna's story captures emotions that cannot easily be described. She told me about an extraordinary community experience, between cycles of life and death:

Something that was special, that wasn't just joy and happiness but also sadness, is when I turned fifty. We organized a big party and invited a hundred people, with food and music. The night before, one of my neighbours died, at sixty-two years old, from a heart attack. It was so tragic. We tried to help by calling an ambulance, but he died. The next day, his son said to us that his father did not go to parties but he organized them. Therefore, we should go ahead and have our party. That evening was very special because there were so many people who came to the party, but even more people came to mourn his death, so it was a celebration of his life too. We could embrace it all and it all happened out here, between these two houses. It wasn't joy, because I was extremely sad, but it was extraordinary and intimate. (personal communication, November 5, 2017)

Britta was also moved by intimate moments in community life. She cited the example of community members' funerals, where more than eight hundred people may attend, young and old. After mass, everyone marches through the streets of Christiania and down to the water, to lay flowers, talk, and share a drink. Britta explained that these are special moments, "where everyone comes together to honour someone's life." She added: "to have a spiritual way of life is important to me" (personal communication, November 24, 2017).

Material intimacies are deeply tied to social intimacies in community life. For Tanya, moments of pride and joy in Christiania are associated with taking action to change something for the good of a community, and literally build it together:

I have many of these: "this is a Christiania moment." The raisin house, which looks a little bit like a church, was built by the community. It was built in collaboration with the journeymen, who also built the banana house<sup>65</sup> in collaboration with the community. I think this house is a symbol of an empowered period in Christiania. We were a lot of people who had the same vision of the future for Christiania. We were building daycare centers, making plans, etc. It was beautiful and visionary. The day that the beams were up we had a celebration, and that day was like a day of vision and empowerment. It was around 1995–96, which was before the normalization period with the city. There was a group of people who wanted an urban space filled with trees and resources for their children. Knowing your neighbourhood and shaking things up together—there are many moments like this. (personal communication, November 29, 2017)

The vulnerability and passion with which these women spoke about their community, together with the women before them, who helped create Christiania, inspired the poem "They understood" (Figure 54), accompanied by a solid, stable form suggestive of a rock. Based on my interviews with Christianites, as well as with women at Grow Heathrow and Can Masdeu, being

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<sup>65</sup> See footnote 5.



part of a living society that is larger than just a single individual and is made possible through the effort, creativity, and dedication of everyone involved, can be a deeply meaningful experience. As an artist-researcher, I am interested in exploring further the meaning of this *feeling* of being part of a living society, as well as its possible embodiments in art.

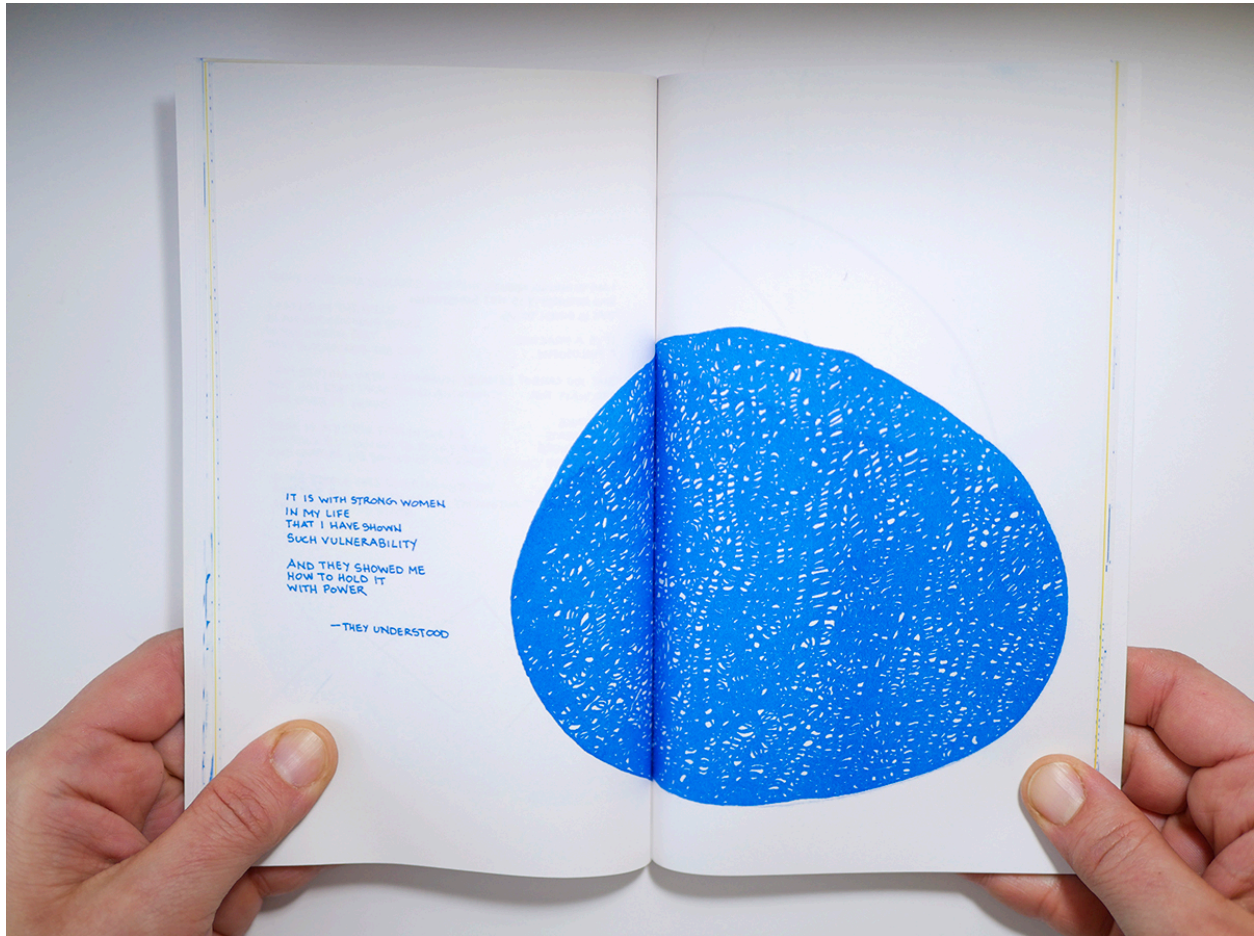


Figure 54. Tina Carlisi, “They understood,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Britta has lived her life and, by extension, her art, while deeply rooted in autonomous practices. When it comes to learning and creativity, she is of the conviction that young people need spaces in which they are free to express themselves outside of the view of authorities, institutions, etc. She has been guided by this belief throughout her career, whether in her involvement in street theatre or through networking internationally, with other squatted communities, to promote free cultural spaces.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For more information on this initiative, see: [freeculturalspaces.net](http://freeculturalspaces.net).

In the sixties, I was doing street theatre and actions before being part of Solvognen. When we occupied Christiania, we had more resources and space to create larger-scale projects. For example, because there are blacksmiths in Christiania, we were able to make large-scale props, like the goose that we pushed down the street as part of the *Santa Claus Army* [more on this below]. Solvognen was remarkably freeing. We all had part-time jobs, but we also had time to work together on creative projects. (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

Solvognen, which means “Chariot of the Sun,” a reference to Norse mythology, originated as a light show group in 1969, before becoming an action theatre troupe in 1972, the summer after Christiania was first occupied. Action theatre, often seen as having developed out of the “happenings” of the 1960s, “involves an intervention in an already established situation, i.e., the audience and the authorities are forced into co-acting and thereby into revealing what is normally disguised by the accepted ideology” (Jorgensen, 1982, p. 17). In adopting a co-operative work model and performing in the streets and other everyday places, the troupe presented an alternative to institutionalized theatre in Denmark at the time (Jorgensen, 1982; Garton, 1983). Solvognen’s best-known large-scale interventions include *NATO Army* (1973), *Santa Claus Army* (1974), and *Rebild Happening* (1976). Highly political and controversial at the time, *Santa Claus Army* has since been named, by the Danish Ministry of Culture, as part of a canon of ten important works of theatre and performance (Zarelli, 2015).

Having free spaces for self-expression and collaboration with others is, for Britta, extremely important. It is also intimately linked to her affinity for squatting, communal living, and creating. She comments that,

I need to be able to be free to express myself. I had some wonderful roles in professional theatre but I also wanted to create my own projects. I need both—professional and alternative venues. When I was young, I also had a job in the art academy, as a nude model for live drawing and painting, and often spoke with other artists to take part in Solvognen. I believe it is important that artists are together. This is still what I do—to bring people together through Christiania’s

Cultural Association. People may have other jobs, but they can still come here to express themselves together—and do it beautifully, with humour and joy, instead of feeling suppressed. Of course, this is not always easy, but we try to help others express themselves who may not know how or have the means to do so. This is how we started Solvognen, before we became well-known. Now I collaborate to support free cultural spaces. It is a network of squatters' communities, who try to support each other against the forces of gentrification in our cities. Our aim is to show the importance of free cultural spaces, especially for young people to express themselves. If young people do not have a free creative outlet, they may turn to violence. (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

In a public speech she gave in the self-proclaimed Republic of Užupis,<sup>67</sup> in Vilnius, Lithuania, (Lillesøe 2016), Britta spoke about Christiania as an artists' town where people “live life artistically” (personal communication, November 24, 2017). This applies not only to artists in the commonly understood sense of the word but to everyone who expresses themselves artistically in everyday life. In our final interview, Britta elaborated on this idea by giving an example:

People should not be afraid to express themselves. For example, my neighbour, who grew up in the poorest barracks in Copenhagen and who doesn't identify as an artist, recently lost his beloved dog. He made a beautiful, small graveyard in the backyard, with candles, music, and a bonfire that people can sit around together. It is so beautiful and touching. People here are always trying to express themselves. Even if the outcome is not always fantastic, I think it is still really important. (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

As a large, intentional community in the centre of a major city, Christiania is unique in many ways and, for the artists who live there, having a number of suitable venues to showcase

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<sup>67</sup> A self-declared republic in Vilnius, Lithuania since 1997, residents established its own government, constitution and currency. The Republic of Užupis covers less than 1 sq. km area and has approximately 7000 inhabitants, with approximately 1 out of 7 residents identified as artists. Source: [www.uzupiorespublika.com](http://www.uzupiorespublika.com).

their work to the wider public is especially remarkable. In existence as an autonomous community for nearly fifty years, Christiania is like an open-air school for living. I asked Britta to identify one important lesson that an individual, and perhaps also society at large, might learn from Christiania, and she offered the following response:

Create one, two, or more Christianias! It is really important to have a frame to work with. I call myself a frame maker and believe good frames make good people. For example, if you put a lot of care into throwing a beautiful party, then people will feel good. The point of a free cultural place where anyone can participate is to foster togetherness. Society should not just be law and order—it needs some elasticity as a way of thinking, including some space for civil disobedience. Now that I am getting older, I am trying to encourage the younger generation in Christiania to take part and take over. (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

At the time of our interview, Britta was seventy-three years old and showed no signs of slowing down or losing her passion for community and culture. And she continues to have many ideas about how to create “frames” to support togetherness, learning, and creativity:

You can learn a lot of things in Christiania—both from its positive and negative aspects. Also, I want to start an academy for handiwork. We have many neighbours who have been carpenters all their lives. I have a lot of ideas on what we can do. Christiania is like an open living school. (personal communication, November 24, 2017)

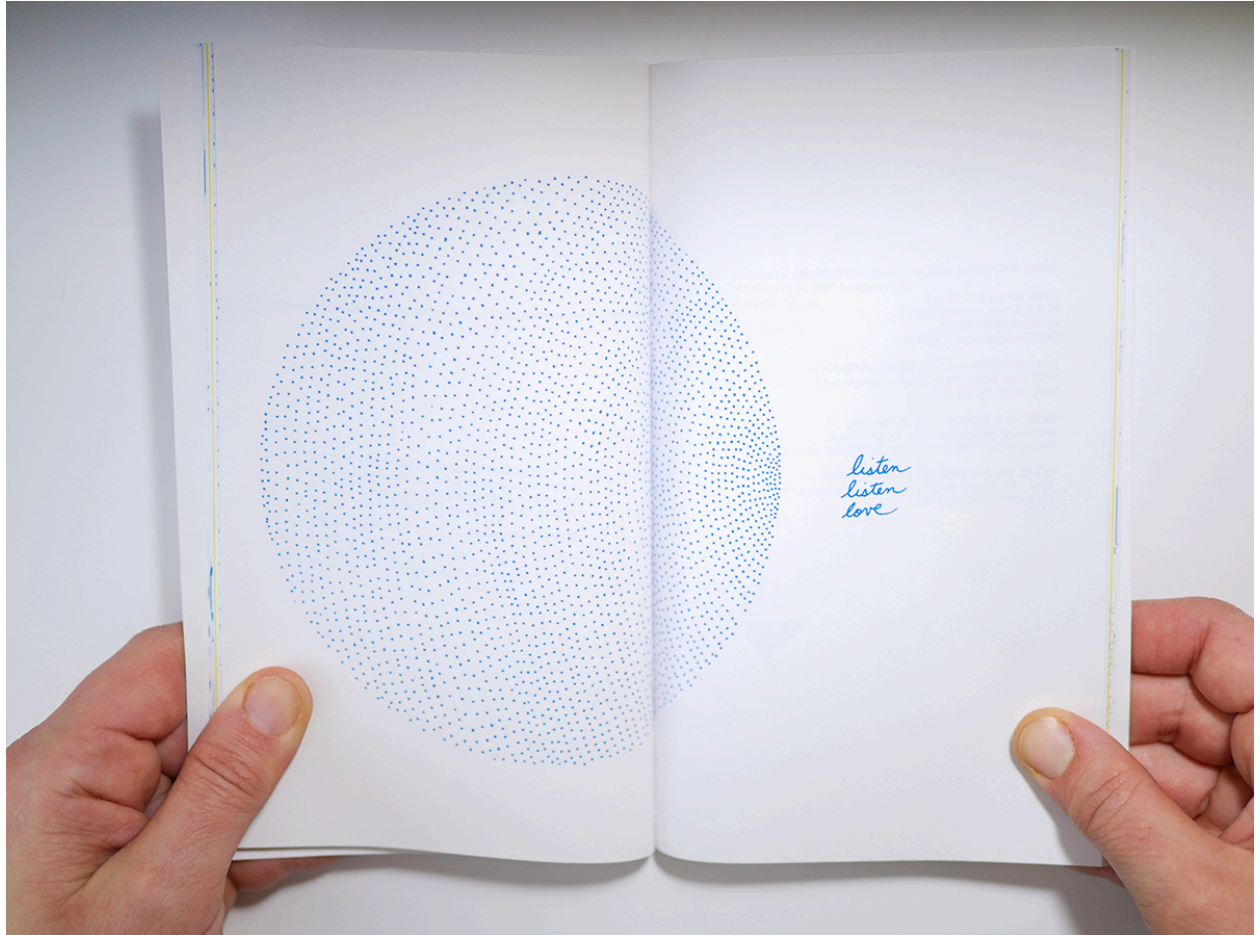


Figure 55. Tina Carlisi, “Listen, listen, love,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

## CONCLUSION

### **An open living school: Fostering intimate micro-utopias**

The desire to present an individual transformation of the material world that also posits a collective vision of reality, while standing in juxtaposition to the dominant collective will, is an undisputedly naïve, utopian practice. But it is one that we must refuse to abandon if the species is to survive.

— Carol Becker (2016, p. 12)

To live, learn, and create communally—what do these things mean for one’s artistic practice? Can they inspire sensibilities that are specific to the intimacy of communal living? As an artist, my practice has been impacted considerably by participating in a number of experimental communal living and learning residencies, as discussed in the Introduction, and through my lived experiences at the communities of study for this research. That is to say, these experiences have broadened my thinking about what constitutes a socially and politically engaged art practice. It has nurtured in me a critical examination on how private or domestic spheres, and the practices linked to these types of spaces, can allow for autonomy as an act of resistance to the kinds of control typically encountered in public spaces. These experiences have resulted in questions on the creative, generative potential in communality and, in particular, how an artist is shaped by living intimately with others, in terms of their personhood and daily practices; and, furthermore, how one’s conceptions of art, learning, and activism may be expanded in these types of milieus.

Through case studies, interviews, and research-creation in the form of an artist’s book of poems and drawings, as a feminist artist-researcher I aimed to embody an intimate sensing approach to better understand social and material intimacies in autonomous squatters’ communities. Throughout my field research and data analyses, I have enacted intimacy *in* research and intimacy *on* research, weaving together my methods while privileging the emotional knowledge gathered and expressed through research-creation to arrive at new insights that can be gleaned from squatters’ movements outside of housing, social justice, and urbanism studies. In



*Squatters in the capitalist city* (2021), Miguel A. Martínez proposes to abstain from viewing squatting as a marginal and isolated practice and instead as being at the forefront of a struggle on the part of social groups that are experiencing injustice in regard to housing. While Martínez's book deals with squatting in relation to housing, justice, and urban politics, the urgency of viewing squatting practices as critically informing wider social themes in our contemporary moment is insightful. Particularly during this challenging time, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and uncertainty have become constants over the past two years. In this concluding chapter, I restate my two research questions and summarize the means by which I have addressed them. Beginning from this analysis, I elaborate my discussion in light of COVID-19, as it relates to the question of whether intimacy requires physical proximity. I will also circle back to *Intimacies*, to discuss how research-creation encompasses and embodies my concluding thoughts, as well as address shortcomings to be considered in future research endeavours and how this work paves the way for my next creative research project.

My first research question:

**Through intimate sensing, how can poetic writing and drawing serve as a form of emotional knowledge gathering, to closely capture the complex and subtle experiences of people living and working in autonomous squatters' communities?**

Through my literature review, and an intimate sensing approach to my case studies, interviews, and research-creation work, I have found that although each squatters' community sprouts from a different socioeconomic and cultural context, there are nevertheless many similarities. In my case studies at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Freetown Christiania, the women I interviewed helped me to understand the intimate and sentimental nature of social life in autonomous communities, and how it is linked to the sharing of knowledge, values, and intimate moments. From my own lived experience as an artist-researcher and guest-volunteer, and from the interviews with the women who helped to create and maintain these rare spaces, I have found that within autonomous communities, every day is a learning opportunity.



Figure 56. Tina Carlisi, “Sharing,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Mélody Alasset.

Intimate sensing through poetry and drawing has allowed me to incorporate not only visual impressions but also to consider sound, smell, taste, touch, body, and mind (Porteous, 1986) in my research process. Further, incorporating research-creation in my doctoral work has helped me to approach my investigation from the inside (Loveless, 2021), privileging feelings as a vital source of knowledge. Research-creation has also allowed me to be an alive presence (Dutta, 2021) in my research, by way of creative forms (poetry and drawing) that do not rely upon direct or realistic modes of representation that might compromise the privacy of my individual research participants (Elliott, 2017). *Intimacies* encompasses and embodies many of the concluding thoughts that I have arrived at through my research, thereby amplifying my responses to these sites of investigation. Through my interviews with women at Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania, I have learned that for them, intimacy often exists in the smaller spaces or moments

of everyday life (Marar 2012). Scanning my book's risograph-printed pages, I observe how *Intimacies* embodies ways to consider the complexities of intimacy through correlations between text and image. Throughout *Intimacies*, recurring themes are expressed: growth, slowness, simplicity, joy, warmth, and presence. Compositionally, repetition and the sense of being encircled are visually recurrent. Through poetry and drawing, I construct a version of the three case study sites, former protest camp Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Freetown Christiania, "whose stories I wish to tell" (Vaughan, 2017, p. 110).

My poem "Sharing" (Figure 56) is an example both of the theme of presence and of being encircled by intimacy, with repetitive lines spreading out like the sun's rays, to articulate a sense of joy. My reflection on this question of presence in this moment has been complicated by major shifts in society since COVID-19. I will elaborate further on this after addressing my second research question, as the subjects are intertwined and build toward the contours of my future research.

My second research question:

**What knowledge may be gleaned from oral history, such as the place-based knowledge of teaching, learning, and making found in squats, that has a resonance in this present moment—especially now, as Western cultures increasingly confront crises of social justice?**

If the women at Grow Heathrow generally spoke more about learning manual, practical skills such as chopping wood, lighting a fire, or building a small living space, those at Can Masdeu and Christiania tended to speak about learning how to live in community, communication, conflict resolution, and keeping an open mind to others who may think completely differently. In relation to social skills, however, interviewees from all three sites did reflect on the need for more socially based knowledge and skills. In the case of Christiania, now past its fiftieth year and well into its third generation of residents, the question of aging in community has become a unique concern. With Can Masdeu, also an aging community, the question of physical mobility is being considered, as the community seeks ways of adapting the site. In terms of artistic creativity, squats are fertile ground for experimentation without the fear of failure, since the stakes are felt to be low and restrictions from outside influences such as municipalities, governments, etc., are

absent. This situation was described a number of times, by various participants, as a playground or an experimental zone; or, as Britta referred to Christiania, “an open living school.” Interviewees also spoke about how there was a continuous collaborative spirit and memory, even when people decide to leave the community. For example, although a project may have been started by one person or group, it nonetheless continues to expand even after the originating person or group no longer resides in the community.

This leads to another, related point regarding living, learning, and creation in regard to the types of relationships that develop within squats. All the women I interviewed described living in community—especially precarious squats—as an intense experience. I was interested in understanding what kinds of intimate relationships may develop from living, learning, and creating in this type of intense living situation. One question I asked of all my research participants concerned the role of friendship among community members. Kirsty, at Grow Heathrow, replied succinctly, and I include her response again here, as it echoed those of many others across all three sites of study:

We live together, so we’re the community. We have something holding us together because we choose to live here. Within that, there will be people who are closer, or in a relationship, and have different degrees of friendship or animosity towards each other. (personal communication, September 17, 2017)

For most of the interviewees, the people they lived in community with were more akin to family, colleagues, and comrades—a support system based on trust and interdependence, with profound connections rooted in the intense experiences that they live through together.

This intimacy of experiences lived through together, deeply rooted in autonomous practices, comprises precisely the crux of the poems and drawings that make up *Intimacies*. Throughout this dissertation, I have taken up the research question on how poetic writing and drawing can serve as a form of emotional knowledge gathering. While my fieldwork (case studies, interviews, and field notes) and research-creation work come together to address both of my research questions, *Intimacies* in particular contributes to an emotional understanding of living,

learning, and creating in squatters' communities. In her book *Emergent Strategies* (2017), feminist writer and activist adrienne maree brown asserts that the "imagination is shaped by our entire life experience, our socialization, the concepts we are exposed to, where we fall in the global hierarchies of society" (2017, p. 4). If, in the future, I take on similar research subjects, I will integrate intersectional themes and categories into the questions for my interviewees: ethnicity, class, ability, mobility, etc. Such information, which was absent from my data collection and analysis, is vital to understanding squats as alternative and utopian models, as well as the socioeconomic and cultural gaps that exist within these places, the memberships of which, at the time of my research, consisted predominantly of white individuals from working and middle-class backgrounds. Nevertheless, given my small sample of case studies, I found it invaluable to gather women squatters' experiences across different generations, which revealed to me that even in emergent utopian communities that practice an ongoing deconstruction of negative learned behaviours, creativity and the willingness to learn from different kinds of individuals and contexts are seen not as separate but integrated, in many aspects of life. My interviews with Britta and Alicia granted me a historical perspective on women artists squatting and living communally in the sixties and seventies counterculture, and how their values continue to resonate in a different and changing global context.

Closely akin to participatory and socially engaged art are "micro-utopias," manifested in small-scale, "do-it-ourselves" projects (Becker, 2016). Art educator Carol Becker has observed how, in the last decade, socially engaged artists have created art projects in the form of gardens, green roofs, bicycle-repair shops, and various other neighbourhood-based initiatives, interactive public installations, and mass actions—what she refers to as micro-utopias. While Becker does not reference squatting movements as part of this lineage of socially engaged art, the examples she identifies are all represented in squatters' culture.

Artists are part of squats for many reasons, from explicitly political to economical and social reasons. The squat provides a free space to work in and, through its community, offers access to materials and knowledge. As Alan W. Moore observes in *Making room: Cultural production in occupied spaces* (2015), "it is not unusual, then, that squats and occupied social centres—rather than many houses just for residential purposes—have played a central and definitive role in a

broad spectrum of radical cultural production” (p. 10). Moore points out that in squats and social centres are represented all major fields of artistic vocation, including music, theatre, circus, visual art, literature, poetry, research and study, archiving and book-making, photography, cinema, architecture, fashion, mechanics, and artisanship—such work usually being take up by collective working groups. Yet, as Moore has argued, there is little acknowledgment of squatted as zones of artistic experimentation.

Moore contends that the relation between art schools in academic institutions and art as practised in squats is basically nonexistent. He observes that squats and social centres have tended to attract artists who cannot readily pursue careers in culture that require an academic degree by reason of their class position. What is unique to autonomous communities that are part of squatters’ movements is that activities such as workshops, free schools, and social centres take place in a private or semi-private sphere, in which the wider public can more easily participate. The private becomes a fertile sphere for fostering anti-patriarchal, anti-oppressive structures and dynamics, creating a greater sense of intimate relationships and, potentially, making space for different non-institutional and non-hierarchical forms of learning and creativity. Feminist theorist and philosopher Elizabeth Grosz argues that “to be outside (something) is to afford oneself the possibility of a perspective, to look upon this inside, which is made difficult, if not impossible, from the inside” (2001, p. xiv). Squats strive to function outside of capitalism, or at least outside of the normative structures and behaviours of the larger societies they are embedded in.

As attested by many of the women that I interviewed for this research, living, learning, and creativity should not be compartmentalized within discrete spheres in one’s life—e.g., the home (living), education and training institutions (learning), and professions, hobbies, etc. (creating)—but ought to co-exist within a collective setting. One of the most striking discoveries in my interviews happened when I asked participants to describe one of their most joyous moments in the community, whereupon a large percentage of the women referred to their community’s anniversary celebrations. The profound emotion of celebrating a community project, one into which so many individuals have directed their energies, points to the strength of social structures based on intimacy: friendship, familial relations, or the communal. It is this spirit that *Intimacies* aims to capture, decipher, and share with a larger public.



In my visits to Grow Heathrow, Can Masdeu, and Christiania to research the social and material intimacies in squats, I found that the daily intertwining of intimate forms of living, learning, and creating were profoundly meaningful for the individuals who lived these communities, as a commitment to an emergent project—even when that individual no longer lived there. My positionality granted me access to the experiences of others, which informed my account of the social and material intimacies I encountered in my fieldwork.

Intimacy, in these contexts, is embedded in proximity, within the containing structure of the intentional community. Although I incorporated intimate sensing within my research-creation project, I remain an outsider to these communities. Furthermore, there were instances where I could not be in close proximity such as in my video-call interview with Alicia Bay Laurel, in which, notwithstanding the great physical distance, an intimate and connected conversation still took place. The modalities of our current pandemic time demand hybrid forms for intimacies, both proximate and remote. As a result of this research, I reimagine art and school as a living thing, where learning takes place in a form more akin to apprenticeship and across multiple sites: physical, virtual, or hybrid; and which is linked to everyday life in such a way that creativity happens in multiple spheres and through interconnected actions, in support of the individual's autonomy and in relation to a chosen community.

As I conclude this dissertation, I hold a copy of *Intimacies* in my hands, reading my poems and drawings inked in blue and yellow, filled with stories that I have told and which remain as vivid as the days that each one describes. While my three research communities do not describe themselves as utopian, the senses that I have attempted to articulate herein are deeply tied up in a personal encounter with each site. In expressing what such moments *feel* like, I seek to see, approach, and envision them as utopian—in other words, as intimacies intended to create a more socially just society. Further, *Intimacies* points in the general direction of my next creative project and utopian future, toward which I will turn my energies. Starting with the knowledge gleaned through this dissertation project, my hopeful aim is to develop a temporary feminist and queer art community, here in my home province of Quebec, that is informed by intimate structures of the sort that I encountered in my fieldwork and research-creation. In particular, the “rurban” (between rural and urban) character of each of my three research sites represents an

inspiring space from which to begin exploring the potential for “open living schools,” wherein the intimacy of living, learning, and creating becomes an experimental zone and inspires other communities to proliferate and become interconnected, as we build more just futures together.



Figure 57. Tina Carlisi, “Thank you,” in *Intimacies* (2018). Photo: Méloody Alasset.

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## APPENDIX A

### EMAIL LETTER OF PARTICIPATION TO ALICIA LAUREL BAY AND BRITTA LILLESØE ENGLISH AND DANISH

#### **Subject: Request for an interview**

Dear Ms. Alicia Laurel Bay,

Hello, let me introduce myself. I am an artist and doctoral candidate in Fine Arts at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. I am getting in touch to inquire whether you would agree to be interviewed about your experience living at Wheeler Ranch commune in Sonoma County, California in the early seventies from an artist's and woman's perspective for my doctoral research project, *Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice*.

My doctoral research explores the interaction of communal living, learning and art-making. As an artistic and case-study based dissertation, this research is an exploration of the lessons that can be learned from communes and squats founded on acres of land (established during the counterculture as well as more contemporary ones). Part of my focus is to gain more insight from different perspectives and experiences that may have been underwritten in or excluded from existing literature on communes and squats, such as those of women. This research is interested in gaining critical and creative insight on possible linkages between autonomous and integrated ways of living, learning and art-making and enhanced connections with ourselves, others and our environment.

Your hand-illustrated bookwork *Living the Earth*, has been influential to my thinking, not only as a researcher on alternative communal models, but also as an artist and individual committed to creating positive change in the world.

It would be a great pleasure to have you participate by offering your experience in communal living and art-making within these contexts as a professional artist and woman.

I have attached proposed research questions and the consent form for your reference and will be pleased to discuss these with you. Should you accept, the interview can take place in a location of your choice depending on your availability, by Skype or in person. Specifics, such as disclosed identity and sound recording can be discussed in further communications.

I hope you will take my proposal to interview you under consideration. Should you have any questions, or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tina Carlisi  
artist and doctoral candidate  
Individualized Program in Fine Arts  
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada  
+1 438 878 3302  
tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
www.tinacarlisi.com

**Subject: Request for an interview**

Dear Ms. Britta Lillesøe,

I am returning to Christiania this fall (November 2018) to continue my research and I am getting in touch to inquire whether you would agree to participate in an interview on your experience living in commune and squats from an artist's and woman's perspective for my doctoral research project *Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice*.

My doctoral research explores the interaction of communal living, learning and art-making. As an artistic and case-study based dissertation, this research is an exploration of the lessons that can be learned from communes and squats founded on acres of land (established during the counterculture as well as more contemporary ones). Part of my focus is to gain more insight from different perspectives and experiences that may have been underwritten in or excluded from existing literature on communes and squats, such as those of women. This research is interested in gaining critical and creative insight on possible linkages between autonomous and integrated ways of living, learning and art-making and enhanced connections with ourselves, others and our environment.

Your involvement with Copenhagen's early squatters' movement in the sixties, the founding of Christiania and Solvognen theatre group in the seventies and currently your work on free cultural spaces, has been influential to my thinking not only as a researcher on alternative communal models, but also as an artist and individual committed to creating positive change in the world.

It would be a great pleasure to have you participate by offering your experience in communal living and art-making within these contexts as a professional artist and woman.

I have attached a sample of the research questions and a sample of the consent form for your reference. Should you accept, the interview can take place in your community or in another location of your choice depending on your availability. Specifics, such as disclosed identity and sound recording can be discussed in further communications.

I hope you will take my proposal to interview you under consideration. Should you have any questions, or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Tina Carlisi  
artist and doctoral candidate  
Individualized Program in Fine Arts  
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada  
+1 438 878 3302  
tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
www.tinacarlisi.com

## **Emne: Anmodning om et interview**

Kære Ms. Britta Lillesøe,

Jeg vender tilbage til Christiania dette efterår (November 2018) for at fortsætte min forskning. Jeg tager derfor kontakt til dig for at høre om du vil deltage i et interview omkring dine oplevelser i kollektive fællesskaber. Særligt fra et perspektiv som kunstner og kvinde. Dette er for min Ph.d-afhandling: *Social og Materiel Nærhed: Undersøgelse af utopier gennem kunstpraksis Forskningsansvarlig (Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice)*.

Min Ph.d-afhandling undersøger interaktioner i kollektive fællesskaber og former for boforhold, learning and kunstnerisk arbejde. Som en kunstnerisk og case-study baseret afhandling, dette projekt er en undersøgelse af de erfaringer vi kan lære fra kollektiver og squats bygget på besat jord (dels fællesskaber bygget under 70'ernes undergrundskultur samt nyere fællesskaber). Del af mit fokus er at fokus på forskellige perspektiver og oplevelser der eventuelt er blevet ekskluderet fra eksisterende litteratur om fællesskaber og squats, for eksempel kvinders perspektiv. Dette projekt har interesse i at få kritisk og kreative indsigt i sammenhæng mellem uafhængige og integrerede måder at bo, lære og arbejde kunstnerisk, samt hvilket forbindelser der kan blive etableret med os selv, andre, samt vores miljøet.

Din medvirken i den tidlige besættelsesbevægelse i 60'erne, Christiania, og Teatergruppen Solvognen, samt dit nutidige arbejde med kulturelle miljøer har være betydningsfuld i min tænkning, ikke kun som en forsker indenfor alternative kollektive modeller, men også som en kunstner og aktiv medborger.

Det ville være mig en glæde hvis du vil deltage ved at fortælle om dine oplevelser med at leve i kollektive fællesskaber, og kunstnerisk arbejde. Jeg har vedhæftet et eksemplar af forskningsspørgsmål og samtykkeerklæring for din information, og er åben for at diskutere dette med dig. Interviewet kan finde sted på en lokation efter dit valg, på et tidspunkt der fungerer for dig. Det er dit valg om du ønsker at din identitet bliver offentliggjort i forskningsprojektet. Andre detaljer, for eksempel vedrørende lydoptagelse, kan også blive diskuteret på et senere tidspunkt.

Jeg håber at du vil overveje min invitation til at deltage. Hvis du har nogen spørgsmål, eller ønsker mere information, er du velkomment til at kontakte mig.

På forhånd tak. Jeg ser frem til at høre fra dig.

Med Venlig hilsen,

Tina Carlisi  
kunstner og Ph.d.-kandidat  
Individualiseret Program, Billedkunst  
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada  
+1 438 878 3302  
tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
www.tinacarlisi.com

## APPENDIX B

### EMAIL LETTER OF PARTICIPATION TO WOMEN IN GROW HEATHROW, CHRISTIANIA AND CAN MASDEU ENGLISH, DANISH AND CATALAN

#### **Subject: Request for an interview**

Dear participant,

Hello, let me introduce myself. I am an artist and doctoral candidate in Fine Arts at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. I am getting in touch to inquire whether I can conduct a short interview with you on your experience living in an intentional community founded on squatted land for my doctoral research project, *Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice*.

My doctoral research explores the interaction of communal living, learning and art-making. As an artistic and case-study based dissertation, this research is an exploration of the lessons that can be learned from communes and squats founded on acres of land (established during the counterculture as well as more contemporary ones). Part of my focus is to gain more insight from different perspectives and experiences that may have been underwritten in or excluded from existing literature on communes and squats, such as those of women. This research is interested in gaining critical and creative insight on possible linkages between autonomous and integrated ways of living, learning and art-making and enhanced connections with ourselves, others and our environment.

It would be a great pleasure to have you participate by offering your experience in communal living within these contexts.

I have attached sample research questions and the consent form for your reference and will be happy to discuss these with you. Should you agree to participate, the interview can take place in the location of your choice at a time that works for you. It is your choice whether you would like your identity to be disclosed. Other specifics, such as sound recording can be discussed in further communications.

I hope you will take my proposal to interview you under consideration. Should you have any questions, or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you in advance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tina Carlisi  
artist and doctoral candidate  
Individualized Program in Fine Arts  
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada  
+1 438 878 3302  
tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
www.tinacarlisi.com

## **Emne: Anmodning om et interview**

Kære deltager,

Lad mig Introducerer mig selv. Jeg er en kunstner og Ph.d.-kandidat som studerer billedkunst på Concordia Universitet i Montreal, Canada. Jeg kontakter dig for at høre om jeg kan foretage et kort interview om dine erfaringer med at bo i et kollektivt fællesskab, bygget på besat grund, for min Ph.d-afhandling: *Social og Materiel Nærhed: Undersøgelse af utopier gennem kunstpraksis Forskningsansvarlig (Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice)*.

Min Ph.d-afhandling undersøger interaktioner i kollektive fællesskaber og former for boforhold, learning and kunstnerisk arbejde. Som en kunstnerisk og case-study baseret afhandling, dette projekt er en undersøgelse af de erfaringer vi kan lære fra kollektiver og squats bygget på besat jord (dels fællesskaber bygget under 70'ernes undergrundskultur samt nyere fællesskaber). Del af mit fokus er at fokus på forskellige perspektiver og oplevelser der eventuelt er blevet ekskluderet fra eksisterende litteratur om fællesskaber og squats, for eksempel kvinders perspektiv.

Dette projekt har interesse i at få kritisk og kreative indsigt i sammenhæng mellem uafhængige og integrerede måder at bo, lære og arbejde kunstnerisk, samt hvilke forbindelser der kan blive etableret med us selv, andre, samt vores miljøet.

Det ville være en glæde hvis du vil være interesseret i at deltage ved at tilbyde dine oplevelser i kollektive miljøer. Jeg har vedhæftet et eksemplar af forskningsspørgsmål og samtykkeerklæring for din information, og er åben for at diskuterer dette med dig.

Interviewet kan finde sted på en lokation efter dit valg, på et tidspunkt der fungerer for dig. Det er dit valg om du ønsker at din identitet bliver offentliggjort i forskningsprojektet. Andre detaljer, for eksempel vedrørende lydoptagelse, kan også blive diskuteret på et senere tidspunkt.

Jeg håber at du vil overveje min invitation til at deltage. Hvis du har nogen spørgsmål, eller ønsker mere information, er du velkomment til at kontakte mig.

På forhånd tak. Jeg ser frem til at høre fra dig.

Med Venlig hilsen,



Tina Carlisi  
kunstner og Ph.d.-kandidat  
Individualiseret Program, Billedkunst  
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada  
+1 438 878 3302  
tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
www.tinacarlisi.com

## **Tema: Sol·licitud per a una entrevista**

Benvolgut participant,

En primer lloc, permeteu-me que em presenti. Sóc una artista i doctorant del programa de Belles Arts de la Universitat de la Concordia a Montréal, Canadà. Vull contactar-vos, per tal de saber si podria fer-vos una breu entrevista per al meu doctorat, seria sobre la vostra experiència vivint en una comunitat internacional fonamentada en l'ocupació, en el marc del meu projecte de recerca de doctorat, *Convivència social i material: Exploració d'utopies mitjançant l'art (Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice)*.

La meua recerca consisteix a investigar sobre la interacció de la vida en comú, l'aprenentatge i la creació d'art. En tant que artístic i cas d'estudi per a la meua disertació, aquesta recerca consisteix a aprofundir en el descobriment de l'aprenentatge de les comunes i ocupacions d'espais de terra (establertes durant el període de contracultura així com en el moment contemporani). Part del meu enfocament va encaminat a incrementar la meua visió de les diferents perspectives i experiències les quals han pogut estar no escrites o excloses de la literatura existent referent a les comunes o ocupacions, tals com les de les dones. Aquesta recerca va enfocada en ampliar la visió dels possibles vincles entre els tipus de vida autònoma i vies d'integració, l'aprenentatge i la creació d'art, així com a millorar les connexions en si mateixes, amb els altres i el seu mediambient.

Serà tot un plaer poder comptar amb la vostra participació explicant la vostra experiència de vida en comú en aquests contextos.

Us annexo una mostra amb les preguntes de la recerca, juntament, amb el formulari de consentiment per a la vostra informació i, serà un plaer poder-ne parlar conjuntament. En cas d'estar d'acord en participar, l'entrevista serà realitzada en el lloc que desitgeu i a l'hora que us sigui més convenient. Vosaltres decidireu si voleu que el vostre nom o identificació sigui pública o no. D'altres consideracions tals com és l'enregistrament de l'entrevista en podem parlar més endavant.

Desitjo que considereu la meua proposta positivament. En cas de dubtes o més informació no dubteu en contactar-me.

Moltes gràcies a la bestreta, tot esperant notícies.

Ben cordialment,

Tina Carlisi  
Artista i doctorant en el Programa Individual de Belles Arts  
de la Universitat de la Concordia, Montréal, Canadà  
+1 438 878 3302  
tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
www.tinacarlisi.com

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE QUESTION GUIDE FOR ALICIA LAUREL BAY AND BRITTA LILLESØE ENGLISH AND DANISH

1. Please briefly introduce yourself.
2. What is your experience living in communes and/or squats?
3. What is your experience as an artist within these communal contexts?
4. What is your experience as a woman within these communal contexts?
5. How does learning for you manifest in daily life within communes and squats?
6. How does creativity for you manifest in daily life within communes and squats?
7. How does friendship play a role within these milieus?
8. What does autonomy mean in relation to living in a commune and/or squat?
9. How does creative collaboration play out in a commune and/or squat?
10. How has the experience of being part of an intentional community shaped your personhood?
11. What is the most important lesson a commune and/or squat can offer to an individual? And to society at large?
12. How has life and art-making in communes changed over the past forty years?
13. What are the factors that are affecting those changes?
14. What do you think is the future of communal life?
15. Can you think of an instance that you've experienced that epitomizes the great potential of life in communes?
16. What are the limitations or downsides of living in a commune?
17. What would you say to those who claim that communes are no longer relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
18. Would you wish to return to communal living? Why or why not?

## **Prøve spørgsmål:**

1. Kan du introducere dig selv
2. Hvad er din oplevelse ved at bo i et fællesskab og/eller squat
3. Hvad er din oplevelse som en kunstner inden for disse kollektive miljøer?
4. Hvad er din oplevelse som kvinde indenfor disse kollektive miljøer?
5. Hvordan manifesterer læring sig for dig i dit daglige liv inden for fællesskaber og squats?
6. Hvordan manifesterer kreativitet sig i dit daglige liv inden for fællesskaber og squats?
7. Hvordan spiller venskaber en rolle i disse miljøer?
8. Hvad betyder uafhængighed for din relation til at bo i et kollektivt fællesskab?
9. Hvordan spiller kreative samarbejde en rolle i kollektive fællesskaber?
10. Hvordan har oplevelse at være en del af kollektive fællesskaber ændret din personlighed.
11. Hvad var den vigtigste erfaringer vi kan drage fra at bo i kollektive fællesskaber, til individer og til samfundet mere generelt?
12. Hvordan har livet inden for kunstnerisk arbejde ændret sig over de sidste 40 år.
13. Hvad er de faktorer der har påvirket de ændringer?
14. Hvad tror du fremtiden er for kollektive fællesskaber?
15. Kan du tænke på et rigtig godt eksempel på et potentialer for livet i fællesskaber?
16. Hvad er fordele og ulemper ved at bo i kollektive fællesskaber?
17. Hvad siger du til de som siger at kollektive fællesskaber ikke har nogen relevans i det 21. Århundrede.
18. Kunne du tænke dig at vende tilbage til at bo i kollektive fællesskaber? Hvorfor og hvorfor ikke?

## APPENDIX D

### SAMPLE QUESTION GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS ENGLISH, DANISH AND CATALAN

1. Please briefly introduce yourself.
2. What is your experience living in communes and/or squats?
3. What is your experience as a woman within these communal contexts?
4. How does learning manifest for you in the daily within communes and squats?
5. How does creativity manifest for you in the daily within communes and squats?
6. How does friendship play a role within these milieus?
7. What does autonomy mean in relation to living, learning and creating in a commune and/or squat?
8. How does creative collaboration play out in a commune and/or squat?
9. How has the experience of being part of an intentional community shaped your personhood?
10. What is the most important lesson a commune and/or squat can offer to an individual? And to society at large?
11. How long do you plan to continue to live in the commune?
12. Can you imagine any conditions or internal event that would cause you to change your plans and leave communal living?
13. What do you think is the future of communal life?
14. Can you think of an instance that you've experienced that epitomizes the great potential of life in communes?
15. What are the limitations or downsides of living in a commune?
16. What would you say to those who claim that communes are no longer relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?



### **Prøve spørgsmål:**

1. Kan du introducere dig selv
2. Hvad er din oplevelse ved at bo i et fællesskab og/eller squat
3. Hvad er din oplevelse som kvinde indenfor disse kollektive miljøer?
4. Hvordan manifesterer læring sig for dig i dit daglige liv inden for fællesskaber og squats?
5. Hvordan manifesterer kreativitet sig i dit daglige liv inden for fællesskaber og squats?
6. Hvordan spiller venskaber en rolle i disse miljøer?
7. Hvad betyder uafhængighed for din relation til at bo i et kollektivt fællesskab?
8. Hvordan spiller kreative samarbejde en rolle i kollektive fællesskaber?
9. Hvordan har oplevelse at være en del af kollektive fællesskaber ændret din personlighed.
10. Hvad var den vigtigste erfaringer vi kan drage fra at bo i kollektive fællesskaber, til individer og til samfundet mere generelt?
11. Hvor længe planlægger du fortsat a bo i et kollektiv fællesskab som dette?
12. Kan du forestille dig en situation som kunne få dig til at ændre dine planer of forlade et kollektivt fællesskab.
13. Hvad tror du fremtiden er for kollektive fællesskaber?
14. Kan du tænke på et rigtig godt eksempel på et potentialer for livet i fællesskaber?
15. Hvad er fordele og ulemper ved at bo i kollektive fællesskaber?
16. Hvad siger du til de som siger at kollektive fællesskaber ikke har nogen relevans i det 21. Århundrede.

## **Preguntes:**

1. Voldria que et presentis breument.
2. Quina és la teva experiència vivint en comunes i/o en ocupacions?
3. Quina és la teva experiència com a dona en aquest context de la comuna?
4. Com es manifesta per a tu l'aprenentatge en el dia a dins de les comunes i ocupacions?
5. Com es manifesta la teva creativitat en la vida diària dins de les comunes i ocupacions?
6. Quin paper juga l'amistat dins d'aquests entorns?
7. Què significa l'autonomia pel que fa a la vida en les communes i/o ocupacions?
8. Què representa la col·laboració creativa en una commune i/o ocupació?
9. Com ha afectat a la teva personalitat l'experiència de formar part intencionadament d'una comunitat?
10. Quina seria l'aportació més important com individu que et pot oferir el fet de viure en una comuna o ocupació? I a la societat en general?
11. Fins quan tens previst continuar vivint en una comuna?
12. Pots imaginar-te alguna condició o esdeveniment intern que pugui canviar els teus plans o deixar de viure en comunes?
13. Quin creus que és el futur de la vida en comunes?
14. Podries posar un exemple d'una experiència que representi el gran potencial de la vida en comunes?
15. Quines són les limitacions o els aspectes negatius de viure en una comuna?
16. Què els hi diries als que afirmen que les comunes ja no són rellevants en el segle 21?

## APPENDIX E

### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR ALICIA LAUREL BAY AND BRITTA LILLESØE ENGLISH AND DANISH

#### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:**

Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice

**Researcher:**

Tina Carlisi

PhD candidate, Individualized Program in Fine Arts

**Researcher's Contact Information:**

tinacarlisi@hotmail.com

+1 438 878 3302

**Faculty Supervisor:**

Dr. Kathleen Vaughan

Associate Professor, Art Education, Faculty of Fine Arts

**Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information:**

Kathleen.Vaughan@concordia.ca

+1 514 848 2424 ext. 4677

**Source of funding for the study:**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship

Individualized Program (INDI) Doctoral Research Travel Grant

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You are invited to participate in the research study conducted by Tina Carlisi for her doctoral dissertation in the Individualized Program in Fine Arts, under the supervision of Dr. Kathleen Vaughan, Associate Professor in Art Education at Concordia University. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

## **A. PURPOSE**

*Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice* is a doctoral artistic research project that explores the interactions of communal living, learning and art-making. The purpose of the research is to investigate what lessons can be learned from communes and/or squats from artists' and women's perspectives. In particular, this research explores whether communal milieus offer integrated forms of living, learning and creating as they relate to notions of artistic freedom and the importance of friendship within communal dynamics.

## **B. PROCEDURES**

I understand the research involves an interview. I understand the interview will take 60-to-90-minute and will be sound recorded. I understand the recorded interview is confidential.

I understand that my identity will be disclosed and I recognize that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time until December 31, 2018, without negative consequence.

I understand the data will be kept digitally on the researcher's password protected computer hard drive and on an external backup drive for a period of five years (until April 1, 2023). I understand that if I choose to withdraw from the research by December 31, 2018, all my recorded data and transcribed words will be deleted from data storage and eliminated from the research project.

I understand that the researcher will email me transcribed parts of my interview she would like to include in the research project. I understand I will be able to edit my statements or omit parts of my statements I wish not to be included in the research project.

I understand that the researcher will send a follow up email in regards to my approval on statements she would like to include in the research.

I understand that if the researcher does not hear back from me on this follow up email by the time of the withdrawal deadline, the researcher will assume that I am content to remain part of the research, with my comments included and attributed as they have previously given consent.

## **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I understand that there are no foreseen risks in the participation in the study. I understand that I may benefit from the research conclusions of the study.

I understand that I can decide not to answer a particular question(s).

I understand that there is no physical activity is being asked of me, therefore no physical risk is

anticipated.

While this research is not intended to benefit participants personally, you may get pleasure from taking part in the interview and from contributing to enhanced awareness and understanding of communal living, learning and creating within communes and/or squats. As an artist and women participant in particular, you may get pleasure from contributing to an underwritten history of women within communal milieus. You may also enjoy being credited for your contributions.

**D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

I understand the researcher will not allow anyone to access the information. The researcher can only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

**E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand I can also ask that the information I provided not be used, and my choice will be respected. If I decide that I do not want the researcher to use my information, I must tell the researcher before December 31, 2018.

I understand that my participation in this study is my choice and that my identity will be disclosed.

I understand that the data from this study will be published in the researcher’s open access dissertation as well as in academic and popular papers and on websites such as but not limited to her own. Data from this study will also contribute to the creation of her artworks based on interviews and field notes, and this artwork may be exhibited internationally.

**F. PARTICIPANT’S DECLARATION**

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about the scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. You may also contact their faculty supervisor. Their contact information is on page 1.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).

## OPLYSNING OG SAMTYKKE ERKLÆRING

### **Projekt Titel:**

Social og Materiel Nærhed: Undersøgelse af utopier gennem kunstpraksis  
(Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice)

### **Forskningsansvarlig:**

Tina Carlisi  
PhD kandidat, Individualiseret Program, Billedkunst

### **Forskningsansvarligs Kontakt Information:**

tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
+1 438 878 3302

### **Fakultetsvejleder**

Dr. Kathleen Vaughan  
Lektor, Kunstuddannelse, Facultet for Billedkunst

### **Fakultetsvejleder's Kontaktinformation:**

Kathleen.Vaughan@concordia.ca  
+1 514 848 2424 ext. 4677

### **Forskningsstøtte:**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship  
Individualized Program (INDI) Doctoral Research Travel Grant

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Du er inviteret til at deltage i et forskningsprojekt foretaget af Tina Carlisi for hendes Ph.d.-afhandling under det Individualised Ph.d.-program i Billedkunst på Concordia Universitet i Montreal, Canada. Projektet er under vejledning af Dr. Kathleen Vaughan, Lektor I Kunstuddannelse. Denne formular giver oplysninger om hvad det vil betyde for dig at deltage. Læs den omhyggeligt før du eventuelt giver samtykke. Hvis der er noget du ikke forstår, eller hvis der er noget du ønsker mere information om, er du velkommen til at spørge forskningsansvarlig, Tina Carlisi.

## **A. FORMÅL**

Projektet "Socialt og Materielt Samvær: Udforskning af Utopier Gennem Kunstpraksis" (*Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice*) er den kunstneriske del af en Ph.d.-afhandling der udforsker de social dynamikker i kollektive former for boforhold, læring og kunstnerisk arbejde. Formålet med dette forskningsprojekt er at undersøge hvad vi kan lære fra sådanne kollektive fællesskaber og/eller squads fra kvinders perspektiv. Forskningsprojektet centrerer sig særligt om hvorvidt kollektive miljøer kan tilbyde former hvor boforhold, læring og



kreativt arbejde er integrerede og i hvilket omfang det relaterer sig til kunstnerisk frihed, og venskaber.

## **B. PROCEDURER**

Jeg forstår at projektet involverer et interview. Jeg forstår at interviewet vil tage 60-90 minutter og vil blive optaget på lyd. Jeg forstår at det optagede interview er fortroligt.

Jeg forstår at min identitet vil blive offentliggjort og at jeg har retten til at trække mig fra projektet når som helst, indtil 31. december 2018 (31-12-2018), uden negative konsekvenser.

Jeg forstår at interviewdata vil blive opbevaret digital på forskningsansvarligs digitale hard drive, beskyttet af et kodeord, samt på en ekstern back-up drive, for en periode på fem år (indtil 1. april, 2018). Jeg forstår at hvis jeg vælger at trække mig fra projektet inden 31. december 2018 (31-12-2018), alt optaget data fra dette interview samt transskriberede udtalelser vil blive slettet fra dataopbevaring og fjernet fra forskningsprojektet.

Jeg forstår at forsker vil e-maile transskriberede dele af interviewet til mig hvis hun ønsker at inkludere citater i forskningsprojektet. Jeg forstår at jeg vil få mulighed for at ændre mine udtalelser eller udelade dele som jeg ikke ønsker brugt i forskningsprojektet.

Jeg forstår at forsker vil sende en opfølgende e-mail med hensyn til at få min godkendelse for udtalelser som hun ønsker inkluderet i projektet.

Jeg forstår at hvis forskningsansvarlig ikke hører tilbage fra mig før den nævnte tilbagetrækningsdeadline, kan hun antage at jeg accepterer at være en del af projektet, med mine udtalelser inkluderet og refereret som der er hermed givet tilladelse til.

## **C. RISICI OG FORDELE**

Jeg forstår at der ikke er nogen forventede risici ved at deltage i dette projekt. Jeg forstår at jeg til gengæld kan drage fordel af forskningens resultater og konklusioner.

Jeg forstår at jeg kan vælge ikke at svare på specifikke spørgsmål.

Jeg forstår at jeg ikke bliver bedt om at deltage i nogen fysisk aktivitet og der er derfor ikke nogen forventede fysiske risici.

Selvom dette projekt ikke har til formål at gavne interviewdeltagerne personligt, kan du have glæde af at deltage i interviewet samt ved at bidrage til øget opmærksomhed og forståelse for kollektive boforhold, læring og kunstnerisk arbejde i små samfund og/eller squads. Som kunstner, og kvindelig deltager i særdeleshed, kan du få glæde af at bidrage til en hidtil uskreven historie af kvinder i kollektive bo- og arbejdsmiljøer. Du kan eventuelt også få glæde af at blive citeret for dine bidrag.

## **D. FORTROLIGHED**

Jeg forstår at forskningsansvarlig ikke vil lade nogle andre få adgang til data. Forskningsansvarlig kan kun bruge informationerne for formålet beskrevet i dette dokument.

## **E. BETINGELSER FOR DELTAGELSE**

Jeg forstår at jeg kan trække mit samtykke tilbage og afbryde min deltagelse når som helst uden ubehagelige følger.

Jeg forstår at jeg kan ønske at den information jeg giver ikke bliver brugt, og at mit valg vil blive respekteret.

Hvis jeg beslutter mig for at mine informationer ikke bliver brugt, må jeg fortælle forskningsansvarlig før 31. december 2018 (31-12-2018).

Jeg forstår at min deltagelse i dette projekt er mite eget valg og at min identitet vil blive offentliggjort med mindre jeg vælger at deltage under et pseudonym.

Jeg forstår at data fra dette forskningsprojekt vil blive offentliggjort i forskningsansvarligs Ph.d-afhandling (offentlig tilgængelig), samt i akademiske og populære artikler, på hjemmesider, inklusiv hjemmesider der ikke er forskningsansvarligs egne. Data fra dette projekt vil også bidrage til udarbejdelse af forskers kunstprojekter. Disse kunstværker vil eventuelt blive vist internationalt.

## **F. DELTAGERS ERKLÆRING**

Jeg har læst og forstået denne formular. Jeg har haft en chance for at stille spørgsmål og alle spørgsmål er blevet besvaret. Jeg accepterer at deltage i dette forskningsprojekt under de førnævnte betingelser.

NAVN (brug blokbogstaver) \_\_\_\_\_

UNDERSKRIFT \_\_\_\_\_

DATO \_\_\_\_\_

Hvis du har spørgsmål vedrørende de faglige aspekter af projektet, er du velkommen til at kontakte forskningsansvarlig. Du kan også kontakte hendes vejleder. Vejlederens kontaklinformationer finder du på side 1.

Hvis du har spørgsmål omkring etiske aspekter af projektet, kan du kontakte the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 eller [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).

## APPENDIX F

### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS ENGLISH, DANISH AND CATALAN

#### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:**

Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice

**Researcher:**

Tina Carlisi

PhD candidate, Individualized Program in Fine Arts

**Researcher's Contact Information:**

tinacarlisi@hotmail.com

+1 438 878 3302

**Faculty Supervisor:**

Dr. Kathleen Vaughan

Associate Professor, Art Education, Faculty of Fine Arts

**Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information:**

Kathleen.Vaughan@concordia.ca

+1 514 848 2424 ext. 4677

**Source of funding for the study:**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship  
Individualized Program (INDI) Doctoral Research Travel Grant

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You are invited to participate in the research study conducted by Tina Carlisi for her doctoral dissertation in the Individualized Program in Fine Arts, under the supervision of Dr. Kathleen Vaughan, Associate Professor in Art Education at Concordia University. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

**A. PURPOSE**

*Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice* is a doctoral artistic research project that explores the interaction of communal living, learning and art-making. The purpose

of the research is to investigate what lessons can be learned from existing intentional communities founded on squatted land in relation to questions of autonomy, skill-sharing/re-skilling, environment activism, friendship, free cultural spaces and creative expression.

## **B. PROCEDURES**

I understand the research involves an interview. I understand the interview will take 30 minutes or less and will be sound recorded. I understand the recorded interview is confidential.

I understand that the disclosure of my identity is my choice. I recognize that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time until December 31, 2018 without negative consequence.

I understand the data will be kept digitally on the researcher's password protected computer hard drive and on an external backup drive for a period of five years (until April 1, 2023). I understand that if I choose to withdraw from the research by December 31, 2018, all my recorded data and transcribed words will be deleted from data storage and eliminated from the research project.

I understand that the researcher will email me transcribed parts of my interview she would like to include in the research project. I understand I will be able to edit my statements or omit parts of my statements I wish not to be included in the research project.

I understand that the researcher will send a follow up email in regards to my approval on statements she would like to include in the research.

I understand that if the researcher does not hear back from me on this follow up email by the time of the withdrawal deadline, the researcher will assume that I am content to remain part of the research, with my comments included and attributed as they have previously given consent.

## **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I understand that there are no foreseen risks in the participation in the study. I understand that I may benefit from the research conclusions of the study.

I understand that this research takes up general social and artistic issues that are not contentious. I understand that if I am concerned that making public my ideas about my experiences living, learning and creating in communes and/or squats, I may choose to be identified by a pseudonym rather than by my real name and decide not to answer a particular question(s).

I understand there is no physical activity that is being asked of me, therefore no physical risk is anticipated.

While this research is not intended to benefit participants personally, I understand I may get

pleasure from taking part in the interview and from contributing to enhanced awareness and understanding of communal living, learning and creating within communes and/or squats. Women participants in particular may get pleasure from contributing to an underwritten history of women within communal milieus. As a participant, you may also enjoy being credited for your contributions, if you choose to be known by your real name.

**D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

I understand the researcher will not allow anyone to access the information. The researcher can only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

**E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand I can also ask that the information I provided not be used, and my choice will be respected. If I decide that I do not want the researcher to use my information, I must tell the researcher before December 31, 2018.

I understand that my participation in this study is my choice whether my identity is disclosed.

I understand that the data from this study will be published in the researcher’s open access dissertation as well as in academic and popular papers and on websites such as but not limited to her own. Data from this study will also contribute to the creation of her artworks based on interviews and field notes, and this artwork may be exhibited internationally.

**F. PARTICIPANT’S DECLARATION**

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about the scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. You may also contact their faculty supervisor. Their contact information is on page 1. If you have

concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).

## OPLYSNING OG SAMTYKKE ERKLÆRING

### **Projekt Titel:**

Social og Materiel Nærhed: Undersøgelse af utopier gennem kunstpraksis  
(Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice)

### **Forskningsansvarlig:**

Tina Carlisi  
PhD kandidat, Individualiseret Program, Billedkunst

### **Forskningsansvarligs Kontakt Information:**

tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
+1 438 878 3302

### **Fakultetsvejleder**

Dr. Kathleen Vaughan  
Lektor, Kunstuddannelse, Facultet for Billedkunst

### **Fakultetsvejleder's Kontaktinformation:**

Kathleen.Vaughan@concordia.ca  
+1 514 848 2424 ext. 4677

### **Forskningsstøtte:**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship  
Individualized Program (INDI) Doctoral Research Travel Grant

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Du er inviteret til at deltage i et forskningsprojekt foretaget af Tina Carlisi for hendes Ph.d.-afhandling under det Individualised Ph.d.-program i Billedkunst på Concordia Universitet i Montreal, Canada. Projektet er under vejledning af Dr. Kathleen Vaughan, Lektor I Kunstuddannelse. Denne formular giver oplysninger om hvad det vil betyde for dig at deltage. Læs den omhyggeligt før du eventuelt giver samtykke. Hvis der er noget du ikke forstår, eller hvis der er noget du ønsker mere information om, er du velkommen til at spørge forskningsansvarlig, Tina Carlisi.

### **A. FORMÅL**

Projektet "Socialt og Materielt Samvær: Udforskning af Utopier Gennem Kunstpraksis" (Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice) er den kunstneriske del af en Ph.d.-afhandling der udforsker de social dynamikker i kollektive former for boforhold, læring og kunstnerisk arbejde. Formålet med dette forskningsprojekt er at undersøge hvad vi kan lære fra eksisterende fællesskaber bygget på besat grund I forhold til spørgsmål om uafhængighed, videndeling/genetablering af viden og færdigheder, miljøaktivisme, venskab, åbne kulturelle miljøer og kreativ udfoldelse.



## **B. PROCEDURER**

Jeg forstår at projektet involverer et interview. Jeg forstår at interviewet vil tage 30 minutter eller mindre og vil blive optaget på lyd. Jeg forstår at det optagede interview er fortroligt.

Jeg forstår at offentliggørelsen af min identitet er mit valg. Jeg forstår at jeg har retten til at trække mig ud af projektet når som helst, indtil 31. december 2018 (31-12-2018)), uden negative konsekvenser.

Jeg forstår at interviewdata vil blive opbevaret digital på forskningsansvarligs digitale hard drive, beskyttet af et kodeord, samt på en ekstern back-up drive, for en periode på fem år (indtil 1. april, 2018). Jeg forstår at hvis jeg vælger at trække mig fra projektet inden 31. december 2018 (31-12-2018), alt optaget data fra dette interview samt transskriberede udtalelser vil blive slettet fra dataopbevaring og fjernet fra forskningsprojektet.

Jeg forstår at forsker vil e-maile transskriberede dele af interviewet til mig hvis hun ønsker at inkludere citater i forskningsprojektet. Jeg forstår at jeg vil få mulighed for at ændre mine udtalelser eller udelade dele som jeg ikke ønsker brugt i forskningsprojektet.

Jeg forstår at forsker vil sende en opfølgende e-mail med hensyn til at få min godkendelse for udtalelser som hun ønsker inkluderet i projektet.

Jeg forstår at hvis forskningsansvarlig ikke hører tilbage fra mig før den nævnte tilbagetrækningsdeadline, kan hun antage at jeg accepterer at være en del af projektet, med mine udtalelser inkluderet og refereret som der er hermed givet tilladelse til.

## **C. RISICI OG FORDELE**

Jeg forstår at der ikke er nogen forventede risici ved at deltage i dette projekt. Jeg forstår at jeg til gengæld kan drage fordel af forskningens resultater og konklusioner.

Jeg forstår at dette projekt adresserer generelle sociale og kunstneriske problematikker som ikke er kontroversielle. Jeg forstår at hvis jeg har betænkeligheder ved at offentliggøre mine udtalelser omkring mine ideer og erfaringer med at bo, lære og arbejde i et fællesskab og/eller squad, kan jeg vælge at blive identificeret ved et pseudonym, samt at undlade at svare på spørgsmål.

Jeg forstår at jeg ikke bliver bedt om at deltage i nogen fysisk aktivitet og der er derfor ikke nogen forventede fysiske risici.

Selvom dette projekt ikke har til formål at gavne interviewdeltagerne personligt, kan du have glæde af at deltage i interviewet samt ved at bidrage til øget opmærksomhed og forståelse for kollektive boforhold, læring og kunstnerisk arbejde i små samfund og/eller squads. Kvindelige deltagere i særdeleshed kan få glæde af at bidrage til en hidtil uskreven historie af kvinder i små samfund og kollektive miljøer. Hvis du vælger at blive kendt under dit rigtige navn, kan du også få glæde af at blive nævnt og citeret for dine bidrag.

## **D. FORTROLIGHED**

Jeg forstår at forskningsansvarlig ikke vil lade nogle andre få adgang til data. Forskningsansvarlig kan kun bruge informationerne for formålet beskrevet i dette dokument.

## **E. BETINGELSER FOR DELTAGELSE**

Jeg forstår at jeg kan trække mit samtykke tilbage og afbryde min deltagelse når som helst uden ubehagelige følger.

Jeg forstår at jeg kan ønske at den information jeg giver ikke bliver brugt, og at mit valg vil blive respekteret.

Hvis jeg beslutter mig for at mine informationer ikke bliver brugt, må jeg fortælle forskningsansvarlig før 31. december 2018 (31-12-2018).

Jeg forstår at min deltagelse i dette projekt er mite eget valg og at min identitet vil blive offentliggjort med mindre jeg vælger at deltage under et pseudonym.

Jeg forstår at data fra dette forskningsprojekt vil blive offentliggjort i forskningsansvarligs Ph.d.-afhandling (offentlig tilgængelig), samt i akademiske og populære artikler, på hjemmesider, inklusiv hjemmesider der ikke er forskningsansvarligs egne. Data fra dette projekt vil også bidrage til udarbejdelse af forskers kunstprojekter. Disse kunstværker vil eventuelt blive vist internationalt.

## **F. DELTAGERS ERKLÆRING**

Jeg har læst og forstået denne formular. Jeg har haft en chance for at stille spørgsmål og alle spørgsmål er blevet besvaret. Jeg accepterer at deltage i dette forskningsprojekt under de førnævnte betingelser.

NAVN (brug blokbogstaver) \_\_\_\_\_

UNDERSKRIFT \_\_\_\_\_

DATO \_\_\_\_\_

Hvis du har spørgsmål vedrørende de faglige aspekter af projektet, er du velkommen til at kontakte forskningsansvarlig. Du kan også kontakte hendes vejleder. Vejlederens kontaklinformationer finder du på side 1.

Hvis du har spørgsmål omkring etiske aspekter af projektet, kan du kontakte the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 eller [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).

## FORMULARI INFORMATIU I DE CONSENTIMENT

### **Títol del estudi:**

Convivència social i material: Exploració d'utopies mitjançant l'art  
(Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice)

### **Investigadora:**

Tina Carlisi  
Doctorant, Programa individual de Belles Arts

### **Contacte i informació de l'investigadora:**

tinacarlisi@hotmail.com  
+1 438 8783302

### **Directora de recerca:**

Dra. Kathleen Vaughan  
Professora titular, Art i Educació, Facultat de Belles Arts

### **Informació i contacte de la directora de recerca:**

Kathleen, Vaughan@concordia.ca  
+1 5148482424 ext.4677

### **Font de recerca per l'estudi:**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship  
Individualized Program (INDI) Doctoral Research Travel Grant

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Us convido a participar en l'estudi de recerca dut a terme per Tina Carlisi per a la seva disertació en el Programa Individual de Belles Arts, sota la supervisió de la Dra. Kathleen Vaughan, Professora titular d'Art i Educació a la Facultat de Belles Arts de la Universitat de la Concordia. Aquest formulari ofereix informació relativa a la participació en l'estudi. Si us plau, llegiu detenidament abans de decidir si voleu participar-hi o no. En cas de dubte, si hi ha alguna cosa que no s'entén o bé us cal més informació, si us plau, adreceu-vos a l'investigadora.

## **A. PROPOSIT**

*Convivència social i material: Exploració d'utopies mitjançant l'Art* (Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias Through Art Practice) és un projecte de recerca de doctorat d'art el qual explora la interacció de la convivència en comú, aprenent i fent art. El propòsit de la recerca és investigar que es pot saber i aprendre de l'existència intencionada de comunitats fundades en assentaments o ocupacions de llocs pel que fa a l'autonomia, compartir habilitats/adquisició de noves destresses, activisme mediambiental, relacions d'amistat, espais culturals lliures i expressió creativa.

## **B. PROCEDIMENT**

Entenc que la recerca implica una entrevista. Aquesta durarà 30 minuts o menys i serà enregistrada. L'enregistrament de l'entrevista és confidencial.

Entenc que revelar la meua identitat serà decisió meua. Reconec que tinc el dret de retirar-me de l'estudi sempre que ho desitgi fins a data 31 de desembre de 2018, sense cap conseqüència negativa.

Entenc que les dades seran desades de manera informatitzada per la investigadora en el seu disc dur amb la corresponent contrasenya i en una còpia de seguretat durant el període de cinc anys (fins l'abril del 2023). Entenc que si he escollit retirar-me de la recerca llavors serà fins 31 de desembre de 2018. Totes les dades enregistrades i transcripcions seran esborrades de l'emagatzament del projecte de recerca.

Entenc que la investigadora m'enviarà per correu electrònic parts de la transcripció de la meua entrevista que serà inclosa en el projecte de recerca. Entenc que estic capacit per editar les meves afirmacions o bé ometre les parts que consideri no ser incloses en el projecte de recerca.

Entenc que la investigadora m'enviarà per correu electrònic tot el que faci referència a les meves afirmacions per tal de donar-ne la conformitat per ser incloses en la recerca.

Entenc que si la investigadora no ha rebut cap missatge de part meua durant el temps establert per a la seva eliminació, la investigadora assumeix que estic d'acord per a que formin part per al projecte de recerca els meus comentaris els quals se m'atribueixen i n'he donat el meu consentiment prèviament.

## **C. RISCOS I BENEFICIS**

Entenc que no hi ha cap risc pronosticat per a la participació en l'estudi. Entenc que ser un benefici per a les conclusions de l'estudi.

Entenc que aquesta recerca s'enmarca en un tema social i artístic i que no genera cap polèmica. Entenc que si pel que fa a fer públiques les meves idees sobre la meua experiència de viure, aprendre i crear en una comuna i/o ocupació. Escolliré ser identificat amb un pseudònim en lloc del meu nom i no respondré a pregunta(es) personals.

Entenc que no hi ha cap pregunta referida a una activitat física, per tant, no hi ha cap risc anticipat.

Encara que aquesta recerca no va adreçada a cap benefici personal dels participants, entenc que és un plaer prendre part en l'entrevista, contribuir i millorar la consciència per a l'enteniment de la vida en comú, l'aprenentatge i la creativitat en les comunes i/o ocupacions. Per a les dones participants, especialment, serà un plaer la seva aportació d'una història amb garantia d'èxit dins dels entorns de les comunes. Com a participant, serà reconeguda la meua contribució amb el meu nom real.

## **D. CONFIENCIALITAT**

Entenc que la investigadora no permetrà a ningú l'accés d'aquesta informació. L'investigadora només pot utilitzar aquesta informació per a finalitats de la recerca descrita en aquest formulari.

## **E. CONDICIONS PER A LA PARTICIPACIÓ**

Entenc que sóc lliure de retirar el meu consentiment i interrompre la meva participació en qualsevol moment sense cap mena de conseqüències negatives.

Entenc que també puc demanar que la informació obtinguda no sigui utilitzada i la meva decisió serà respectada. Si decideixo que la investigadora no utilitzi la meva informació, hauré de comunicar-ho obligatòriament abans del 31 de desembre de 2018.

Entenc que decidiré la meva participació en aquest estudi si la meva identitat es donada a conèixer.

Entenc que les dades d'aquest estudi seran publicades en la disertació oberta així com en documents acadèmics i pàgines web públiques. Les dades d'aquest estudi també contribuiran en la creació del meu treball d'art basat en enquestes notes de camp, i aquest treball serà exposat internacionalment.

## **F. DECLARACIÓ DELS PARTICIPANTS**

He llegit i entenc aquest formulari. He tingut l'oportunitat de demanar i respondre qualsevol pregunta la qual ha estat resposta. Estic d'acord en participar en aquesta recerca amb les condicions descrites.

NOM (si us plau, en majúscules) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURA \_\_\_\_\_

DATA \_\_\_\_\_

Si teniu preguntes referents a qüestions acadèmiques d'aquesta recerca, si us plau, contacteu a l'investigadora. També podeu, igualment, contactar a la directora de la recerca. La informació del contacte la trobareu a la pàgina 1. Si teniu interès en els aspectes ètics d'aquest projecte de recerca, si us plau, contacteu al Director d'ètica en recerca de la Universitat de la Concordia, 514 848 2424 ex. 7481 o bé a [ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:ethics@concordia.ca).

## APPENDIX G

### PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN LONDON, COPENHAGEN AND BARCELONA

List of local physical and mental health resources to whom participants can be referred if necessary.

#### **Grow Heathrow (London, United Kingdom)**

West London Mental Health NHS Trust  
1 Armstrong Way  
Southall UB2 4SD  
24/7 helpline: 0300 1234 244  
phone: 020 8354 8354  
website: <http://www.wlmht.nhs.uk/>

The Haven Sexual Assault Referral Centre  
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust  
The Haven Paddington Praed Street  
London W2 1NY  
urgent advice / appointments: 020 3299 6900  
phone: 020 3312 1101  
email: [haven@imperial.nhs.uk](mailto:haven@imperial.nhs.uk)  
website: <https://www.thehavens.org.uk>

#### **Christiania (Copenhagen, Denmark)**

Psykiatrike Hospital  
Psykiske sundhedsydelser  
(Mental Health Services)  
Kristineberg 3  
2100 Copenhagen Ø  
phone: 45 3864 0000  
website: <https://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/Sider/default.aspx>

Rigshospitalet  
Centret for ofre for seksuelt overgreb  
(The Centre for Victims of Sexual Assault)  
Stairwell 5, 3. floor- Dep. 5032  
Blegdamsvej 9  
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø

phone: 45 3545 4085  
email: [cfv@rh.regionh.dk](mailto:cfv@rh.regionh.dk)  
website: <https://www.rigshospitalet.dk>

**Can Masdeu (Barcelona, Spain)**

Psicologica Horta  
(Psychology Clinic)  
Calle Lluís Sagnier 61  
08032 Barcelona  
phone: 686 65 41 39  
email: [clara@psicologiahorta.com](mailto:clara@psicologiahorta.com)  
<http://www.psicologiahorta.com/>

Hospital Clínic de Barcelona  
(24/7 care for victims of sexual assault)  
c/ Villarroel, 170  
08036 Barcelona  
phone: 932 275 400  
<http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnantimasclista/en/care-services>



APPENDIX H

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
2017-2019



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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Name of Applicant: Tina Carlisi  
Department: Faculty of Fine Arts\Individualized Program  
Agency: N/A  
Title of Project: Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias  
Through Art Practice

Certification Number: 30008202

Valid From: July 14, 2017 to: July 13, 2018

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Pfaus".

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Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee



CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY  
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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Name of Applicant: Tina Carlisi

Department: Faculty of Fine Arts \ Individualized Program

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Social and Material Intimacies: Exploring Utopias  
Through Art Practice

Certification Number: 30008202

Valid From: September 24, 2018 To: September 23, 2019

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Pfaus".

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Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee