

Architects of the Revolution? Building Fællesskab on the Asphalt

A Study of Youth Politics in Nørrebro, Copenhagen



Photos courtesy of Lauren Leighton Keene (2010)

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I. Introduction

Building fællesskab

Bridging across several strands of critical youth studies and critical urban ecology, this project explores the generative nature of youth politics in Nørrebro, a district in the northwest of Copenhagen. Nørrebro came under the microscope of international media in 2007 when ‘in the early morning hours of March 1st, the police laid siege to the *Ungdomshuset* (Youth House), setting off a firestorm that would result in some of the largest riots in Denmark in a decade’ (Henry et. al, 2008). In particular then, this research draws on Bennett’s (2009) vibrant, material ontology to explore the generative spaces, practices and relationships associated with a *youthfull* politics in Nørrebro. Central to this exploration is the Danish concept of *fællesskab* (community). This term is used to describe many kinds of egalitarian togetherness in everyday life: in clubs and associations; among friends, neighbors, and colleagues; in families; and in one’s relation to broader society as a whole (Bruun, 2011). Here, I use the term specifically to refer to a *youth-full* political community; the idea of *building*, to the processes of socialization and identity-formation that generate that community. As such, this research project centrally explores the idea of young people *building fællesskab on the asphalt*. In particular, I examine the role of memory and emotion in moments of *building*.

Tentatively, I suggest that the collective experience of 2007 and the demolition of the *Ungdomshuset* still residually motivates a *youthfull* autonomous politics in Nørrebro today. Heuristically, I use the ontology of a collapsed woodland giant - roots folding and meshing around a trunk core - to capture the multiplicitous, messy and rhizomatic nature of this politics as it slides, elides and collides around the empty lot of *Jatvvej 69*. The old *Ungdomshuset* in this respect emerges as a ‘vital conjuncture’ (Johnson-Hanks, 2002) and ‘building site’ for the political socialization and mobilization of young people in Nørrebro today. Diagramming this centrality of the old *Ungdomshuset* to youth politics is not however an attempt to fixate space, containerise relations and close off the possibility of ‘open-ended becomings’ (de Landa, 2006), rhizomatic linkings and the journeying political biography (individual and collective) within and *beyond Nørrebro*. Indeed as Massey (2001) posits, politics is not possible if space is closed. Thus the vibrant metaphor of roots is put to ‘work’ (Stengers, 1997). A *youthfull* politics framed then as an organic meshwork of elisions and collisions becomes sensitive to the inter-actings of the *architect* and *architecture* (Latour, 2006) and to how *fællesskab* is built ‘through practices of routine, disruption, violence, demolition, breakdown, accretion, improvisation, coping and uncertainty in the assembling and disassembling of the everyday’ (McFarlane, 2011). These Deleuzian notions equally then feed into a broader geographical literature exploring

‘how young people come together in what kinds of spaces and places; what forces and desires inform these collective spaces, and how they are sustained; how spaces and subjects are processually entangled; and the ways spaces are differentiated, that is to say, how boundaries are performed’ (Pickerill et. al, 2013).

A History of ‘Building’ ?

Placing this stress on the performed present does not however render the past biographies of *architects* and *architectures* obsolete in the building of *fællesskab*. Indeed as Mikkelsen & Karpantschhof (2001) posit, the BZ- squatters movement, prominent during the 1970s and



Figure 1. Rituals and Rhizomes (Morten Goll, 2013)

1980s in Copenhagen, still affects the political socialization of youth today. The new *Ungdomshuset* when we visited was offering a free film documenting the autonomous history and legacy of the House, the BZ- movement and ‘free cultural spaces’ in Nørrebro. As such these links between past and present moments of *building fællesskab* open the project up to two broader lines of inquiry, again folding around themes of memory and emotion:

- *How does the old Ungdomshuset still prefigure in the political lives of young people in Nørrebro today?*
- *How visceral are these links? Do young people still feel a sense of heritage in the BZ- movement? Or does Beck’s (2000) individualisation thesis - charting the perceived fragmentation of the ‘collective’ Left and emergence of individualised ‘life politics’ - fold more accurately into their present biographies?*

The BZ- movement, argue Mikkelsen et. al (2001),

[...] differed from most other social movements back then in *not* being institutionalized. Its resources came, not from market exchanges, but from commitments ‘embedded in the social relations of a community’ (Lo, 1992). The mobilization capacity of the movement, then, was grounded in the local community or, to be more precise, in the permanent squatted houses. These places constituted, in effect, the ‘cell structure’ of contentious action, characterised by: (i) a common identification of problems; (ii) proximity and interaction; (iii) equality - consciousness of being subject to the same exploitative conditions and the same authority, and (iv) a sense of community (*følelse af fællesskab*) and social solidarity.

Finally then, this project concludes calling for a more spatially and temporally nuanced interpretation of the political socialization of youth; seeing young people - rather than ‘disengaged’ (Skelton, 2010) or ‘voiceless caretakers of an uncertain future’ (Gordon, 2010) - as agentic *architects* and potential ‘alchemists of the revolution’ (Jeffrey, 2013). In this respect, the processual moments of youth *building fællesskab on the asphalt* might be caught lucidly in the following quote: ‘we are feeling our way, seeking out concrete and emancipatory paths toward the transformation of social relations’ (Wenzlaff, 2008). Is this then the architectural essence of a *youthfull politics*? One bloating and expanding with possibility. As one young activist gushed as we approached *Fælledparken*: ‘it is no longer simply about sanctuaries: youth and occupied houses. Now it is increasingly about class struggle and the trade union struggle [...] The Prime Minister can defend the anti-worker policies on all other days. The first of May is Labour Day. She should stay away.’

III. Generating materials

The (re)searching nomad

‘They start out by putting plastic sheets on poles, under which they sleep at night and pack up during the day. Over time, corrugated metal sheets replace the plastic, which become the walls and ceiling of the shack, to be later replaced by bricks and mortar’ (McFarlane, 2011)



Figure 2. Buildings of Fællesskab? (Mette Kramer Kristensen, 2014) *From Top to Bottom: The Folkets Hus (People’s House), Javtvej 69 (the site of the old Youth House) and the new Ungdomshuset (Youth House).*

Crossing a family in Sao Paolo who built their home slowly out of the reclaimed organs of the city, McFarlane's account speaks somewhat coherently and in poetical tongues to the messy, iterative and collaborative nature of our research project in Copenhagen. Indeed, rather than a linear process of extraction, all of our research materials and interpretations were accreted fractiously, on the ground and through conversations holding more than their immediate essences (Law, 2004). I still am, I confess *building* my own corrugated shack of understanding out of the fragmented memories, materials and organs of the city we briefly inhabited.



Figure 3. Copenhagen - A City of Bridges
(Keene, 2010) Note Nørrebro in red.

On the first of two days in Nørrebro - passing from the last of April into the first of May - several semi-structured interviews were organised with actors visible in Danish youth politics: the leader of the Danish Young Conservatives, a spokesman of the Socialist Youth Front and a social worker involved at the *Folkets Hus*. Gaining consent, all of these interviews were recorded, transcribed and subsequently coded. Following this, we visited several spaces in Nørrebro earmarked by the far left magazine *Red Pepper* (2011) as 'something radical in the state of Denmark': *Demos* (an antifascist bookstore), *Cikaden* (a café run by the International Forum), *Studivestrade 24* (the headquarters of the Socialist Youth Front), *Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke* (the headquarters of Action Aid Denmark), *Bolsjefabrikken* (the abandoned Candy Factory) the *Folkets Hus* (The People's House), *Jatvej 69* (the empty lot of the Old Youth House) and the new *Ungdomshuset* at *Dortheavej 61* (the site of the new Youth House).

Encountering

An openness to the poetics of encounter as such formed an elementary part of this 'nomadic' research methodology. Snowball sampling and the writing of brief, auto-ethnographic field notes were used throughout the project. Drawing on Rheingan's (2013) call for more grounded, dialogic ethnography ('let[ting] young people speak and make sense of their own experiences') several of the conversations we initiated at these sites were relatively fluid and open-ended. The narrative in this respect resisted a 'pre-script-iveness' yet folded subtly around several key themes: (i) the sense of community in these spaces; (ii) memory of, and sentiment towards, the old Youth House; (iii) personal conceptions of what it *is* to be 'political' and; (iv) feelings towards the Danish government, capitalism and the 'commercialization of cooperative property' (Bruun, 2011) in Copenhagen.

Equally then, these 'encounters' were recognised as ongoing co-productions (Whatmore, 2009). In several instances, staying in contact through social media with the young people we met enabled us to return to conversations we had left and gather new layers of material after coding. In retrospect, this emphasis on the *re-* of research was deeply necessary given the brevity of our stay



Figure 4. Protesting (Pedersen, 2014) Note bottom left (Tommy holding the flag) and top right (marching) are my own photographs

and the ‘awkward intensities’ (Gerlach, 2013) of our encounters; conversations often unfurling on a busy street in a city where, ‘people stand close to one another in subways, parks, and streets, but pretend that they do not see each other’ (Julie, personal correspondence). The second day of our research coincided with the May Day (Workers’ Day) festival in *Fælledparken*. As such, our research group split up to follow two separate marches - the ‘autonomous’ Anti-Capitalist and the Labour Unions’ - as they snaked through the city streets of Copenhagen.

IV. Architects of *fællesskab*

Fragments of memory and the fracturing present

The grounds of the old Youth House surfaced frequently in the conversations we had with several young people in Nørrebro. Jon - a young man involved in the activist group *Youth Nørrevoldgade 22* - spoke passionately about how ‘*Jagtvej 69 still belongs to us who work, live and move in Nørrebro*’ and to how the empty premises were being used currently for ‘*meaningless housing speculation contribut[ing] to the gentrification of the city.*’ The old *Ungdomshuset*, in this respect, prefigured as a rallying space for Jon’s social and political expression. Indeed his sense of collective identity and *fællesskab* within the *Nørrevoldgade* crew was deeply and processually entangled with the space of the empty lot and its past, present and future materiality. Jon spoke briefly about his involvement back in February in the ‘*occupation*’ of *Procasa*’s premises (the property developers who own the lot). Entering the offices, they ‘*ironically proclaimed the building a new cultural space*’, dangling a banner and holding a ‘*celebration until the police arrived*’.

This use of humour, horseplay and mock theatre was reminiscent of other campaigns that occurred in Copenhagen before the demolition of the Youth House: the satirical *Campaign for More Opera Houses* and *Operation Soft Front* in which the streets were filled with stuffed animals, young people danced in roller blades, a pirate group sailed around the channels and protests were accompanied with bubble making and balloons. Riley et. al (2010) as such suggest that this amalgamative performance of ‘protest and leisure’ is in part generated ‘through the neoliberal constructions of subjectivity and citizenship that have tightened relationships between identity, consumption and participation.’ Indeed, Jon spoke buoyantly of these events and of his identity within the *Nørrevoldgade* crew. The conversations we had, in this respect, furthermore support Pfaff’s (2009) suggestion that ‘political socialization is adaptation as well as construction’ in which the cultural and micro-political practices embedded in a youth culture - in this instance, the punk-anarchist ‘*speed squatting*’ of *Nørrevoldgade 22* - are recognised as generative practices *building fællesskab* and collective identity through the processuality of performance.

To this end, Jon’s involvement in a ‘*crew*’ that still used squatting as a technique and ‘*tactic of subversion*’ (de Certeau, 1976) and claiming ‘*a right to the city*’ (Harvey, 2009) suggests that the BZ- movement still prefigures strongly as an ‘*orienting*’ manifesto and memory in his life. Interestingly however, Jon spoke at equal lengths of the ‘*fracturing*’ of the movement and recognised that his crew’s activities differed greatly in rhythm and style from the ‘*old forms of occupation*’: ‘*moment*’ rather than ‘*movement*’, ‘*speedy and spectacular*’ as opposed to the ‘*long squats*’ of the *Ungdomshuset* and ‘*an entire street in the 80s.*’ Christian, a social worker at the *Folkets Hus* stressed similarly how,

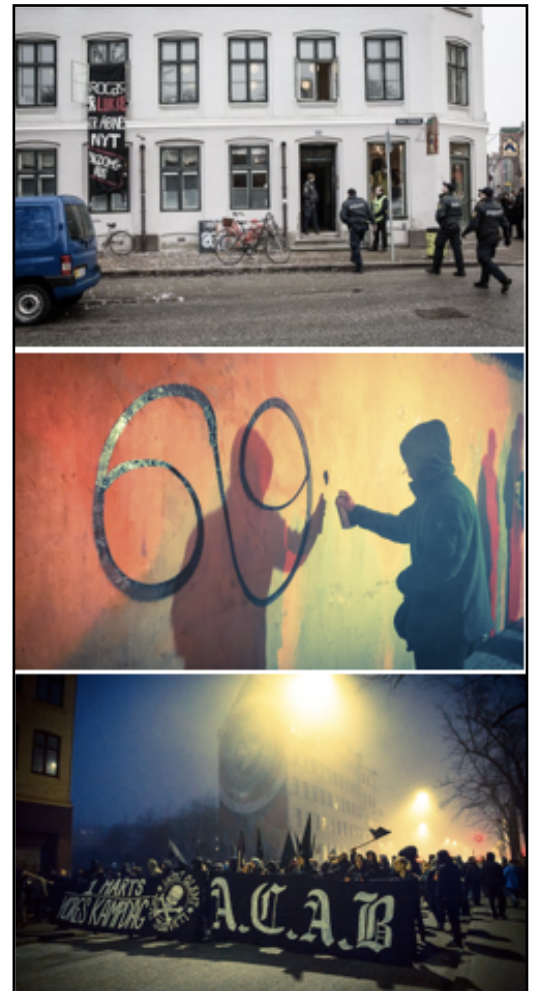


Figure 5. Occupying Procasa, ‘69 Never Forgotten’ (Mette Kramer Kristensen, 2014) *Jon is just out of shot on the second floor open window.*

'back in the 80s and 90s it [the BZ- movement] was a lifestyle and it's not the same anymore...people don't have the same commitment to do things for the long term, they are more content to do campaigns.' Speaking as such of a failed 'campaign' he was involved in a few years ago:

[it was] to do with the asylum system which is pretty fucked up and we had some big sort of collaborations with some refugees in the camps... a group of Iraqi refugees who were going to be sent out of Denmark and together with the movement we tried to get them asylum in the church...to get the politicians to try and stop the deportation...so yeah it became a sort of movement and afterwards it died out [claps his hands once].

Illeborg (2007) captures Christian's sense of frustration, when comparing how 'in the 1980s, Denmark was going through a rough spell with unemployment [...] political tension was in the air and recurring anti-nuclear demonstrations created a feeling of togetherness on the political left and among radical youths.' However today, Copenhagen is one of Europe's most affluent cities with a growingly libertarian middle class and 'no vacant property or opportunity for squatting.' In one instance then, this perceived 'generational shift' became molten as we chanced across some graffiti, scrawled on a wall in the *Bolsjefabrikken*, one of the last remaining 'long squats' in Nørrebro:

'BROKENHAGEN'

Yet as we were to discover, from Christian among others, to think of this as an admission of defeat by young people in Nørrebro, of apathy in the 'fracturing present', would be to ignore the discarded paint canisters by our feet, and the present absence of the *architects* not long gone. Were they out, I wondered, *building fællesskab on the asphalt?*

Ground 69 - building and 'botanising on the asphalt' ¹

After the event, things settle down, intensities dissipate. The memory of the event remains: not as image or recollection, but as kind of field of virtual potential that never quite exhausts itself in the process of becoming more than it never (actually) was. Over time, this field might precipitate vague but tangible senses of resonating augmentation and orientation, subtle shifts, twists, and turns in the multi-layered sensibility from which thinking takes-place (McCormack, 2009)

Several days after leaving Copenhagen, Jon informed me of some new 'occurrences' at Ground 69, in particular a campaign - *Byhave 69* - to grow a guerrilla garden on the empty lot and 'create a communal space' for the local people. As such on May 6th, about 100 people gathered at *Jagtvej 69* to discuss the 'ground-rules' and functioning of the urban garden. Bruun (2011) locates this type of sociality within a broader Danish ideal in which *groupwork* such as 'cleaning up lofts and courtyards, planting flowers, and keeping an orderly house are perceived as *building fællesskab* and social

¹ Walter Benjamin (1999)



Figure 6. Bolsjefabrikken (author, 2014) Note the faint words 'Brokenhagen' (bottom right)



Figure 7. Byhave 69 (Ivanna Rahm, 2014), DONG (author, 2014)

cohesion (større sammenhold) within a neighbourhood'. The importance of *gathering to fællesskab* was one equally expressed by Christian, who spoke of the '*uncanny links*' between performances of sociality in the old *Ungdomshuset* and those at the empty lot and *Folkets Hus* today.

At the time of our visit he was keen for us to come to a monthly event at the *Hus*, the Feminist People's Kitchen (*Feministisk Folkekøkken*) in which '*young people hang out, eat burgers, discuss activism [and] learn about what's happening in the city.*' Interestingly, this word '*activism*' rather than '*politics*' recurred in several of our conversations suggesting a want of disassociation and autonomy from the, '*once red, blue-turning*' government of Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Outside the *Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke* headquarters, Frederikke (a friend of Jon's) pointed out a small red sign 'DONG Energy' and the blue graffiti strewn across it. This he said, '*was because of the Socialdemokraterne government's recent sale of a majority stake [in the energy company] to Goldman Sachs*', which, combined with '*cuts in state education grants and wages, degradation in unemployment benefits and tax cuts for the wealthiest...really pissed people off, proud of Denmark's [socialist] history.*'

This coalescence of history, memory and emotion as motivating forces in the 'anti-political' (McDowell, 2013) activism and volunteerism of youth in Nørrebro resurfaced in later conversations surrounding the *Ungdomshuset*. Sophia - who '*lived in a small apartment only a few blocks from the House*' - reminisced fondly of '*playing in a punk band, doing yoga [and] running the vegan soup kitchen there*'. Like Christian, the *Ungdomshuset* prefigured as a sort of springboard into her present, occupational biography. Christian was currently involved in the refurbishment of the *Folkets Hus* and the creating of '*a house in the neighbourhood that [could] address some local problems and create a stronger community*'; Sophia was a freelance artist and recently photographed the *Folkets Park Initiativet* aimed at '*restoring and running a local park and playground for the inhabitants of Nørrebro.*'

Candidly, their stories could be read as individual 'departures onto new things', supporting Beck's (2002) thesis. Interestingly however, both Christian and Sophia still drew a sense of collective identity from the *Ungdomshuset*. Sophia spoke of the '*weekly film nights and gatherings*' she attended at the new *Ungdomshuset*. Frequently she would elide between talking about the old and new, mingling and disorienting a sense of past and present. For Christian, the old *Ungdomshuset* was a more conflictual resource, a '*place and memory*' he identified with as '*formative of his activist interests*', but equally which he now sought '*professional distance*' from, particularly since the riots of 2007. His work as such currently at the *Folkets Hus* was '*overseeing its renovation*'. Christian told us how the *Hus* had been '*vastly different*' several months ago, '*more chaotic*' and home to several '*squatter activists*'. In December however, these '*activists left the house*' following '*too many small conflicts with the local youth*' folding around race and cultural difference: '*they thought we looked weird, smelt weird and talked weird and so did we...there was no dialogue.*' More recently then, Christian along with two other employees have set about rebuilding the site with resources provided by the government's '*Fund for Open Space.*'

Christian spoke passionately and nostalgically about '*stabilising the situation*', creating a '*safe space*' and '*strengthening relations*' in a neighbourhood where '*gentrification*' and a high turnover of residents in social housing produced a '*tendency for fragmentation.*' It became clear that Christian's '*distance*' from the *Ungdomshuset* and riots of 2007



Figure 8. Folkets Hus - before and after (Brian Berg, 2014)

was less personal than motivated by a will to sustain government interest and materials for the re-building of *fællesskab* in the area. The events of 2007 equally were tied up emotionally for Christian with those a year later when a group of immigrant youths, 'calling themselves the boys from inner Nørrebro', set fire to garbage containers and cars in reaction to police brutality and racism (Politiken, 2008). Christian's 'individual biography' (Beck, 2002) thus in a sense was perpetually and 'processually entangled' to his 'collective biography' and to the experiences of political learning and socialization he had had as a young man in the *Ungdomshuset*. Indeed, he spoke at length of using the same 'non-hierarchical, non-racist and non-sexist rules' as the *Ungdomshuset* but 'opening it up and collaborating more' with the local youth. It was early evening when we left the *Folkets Hus*. Outside, several young people had gathered and were talking and laughing in a small circle. Perhaps they too were architects - Christian's collaborators - discussing floor plans? We thanked him, grabbed our bikes and were on the *Nørrebrogade* before too long, hurtling towards the city centre.

Beyond Nørrebro - Bursting on the asphalt

Red youth, punk vibes, music blurring, stopped at the lights, Surreal. Street buzzing, pavement static. Front of the march chant in unison. 'We aren't going to take it.' Middle fingers up at the parliamentary building, traffic static, strong stench of flare. Whistles going, booed at office people. Punk riding in a cart fires a water gun at police. Tommy takes a piss, the crowd is three minutes and thirty seconds long. Stuck at the back now with the families, cyclists. Atmosphere calmer, men picking up empty cans (Field Notes, May 1st)

The evening before joining the anti-capitalist protestors at Vesterbro, we met Julie, a 21 year old student studying anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. Currently, Julie was involved in Action Aid Denmark's *Taxpower* campaign. As we crossed Queen Louise's Bridge, on a route we were to repeat the next day, she pointed out a miniature tax haven island, floating in the lake, 'they had put there' as a satirical protest, 'raising awareness' of corporate tax avoidance. Interestingly, Julie's political activity was motivated by memories and emotions not immediately attached to the *Ungdomshuset* but to a gap year spent travelling in Tanzania and 'teaching at a school'. For Julie, she perceived a sense of apathy in young people today in which 'they have to be confronted or see something that really pisses them off [to get involved] because in our everyday life we have good schools, we get paid, we have roofs over our heads.' It was only travelling then and witnessing poverty beyond *Nørrebro* in Tanzania that she had 'become political' and found 'some sort of connection.'

In a sense, Julie's activism - immersing herself in 'temporary, ad hoc coalitions' (Juris, 2009) and 'single issue' campaigns she felt moved by - supports Beck's (2002) thesis of late modernity and 'lifestyle politics'. Paradoxically however, Julie also self-identified within a community (*fællesskab*) of activists. Passing the bridge, she continued speaking passionately of her and her friends 'handiwork' on the island (the architects?) and later invited us to a 'seminar' where a representative from UK Uncut would speak and other activists would discuss the possibility of 'mobilisation' and the 'creation of a DK Uncut'. By dark, we were huddled in a small pub, drinking øl and rambling about the *Ungdomshuset*, the riots and the student protests of 2010 in the UK. During these intimate



Figure 9. Taxpower (co-authored, 2014)
Note the wall art (top), the island (bottom left) and the 'Taxpower Pilsner' (bottom right)

exchanges of ideas, experiences, memories - I became increasingly aware of my own sense of *fællesskab* and identity as a young person with fears, anxieties and hopes of the ('adult') future. Furthermore in this *gathering, conversing* and *dispersing* of architects, Maffesoli (1996) would argue, were the contours of a new mode of social organisation, the "neo-tribe": 'small and temporary groups, distinguished by shared lifestyles, values and understandings of what is appropriate behaviour.' To this end, our nomadic (re)searching in and beyond the bridges of Nørrebro, was a 'continuous shift through a kaleidoscope of social identities and group memberships'; building senses of belonging, that, though fractured by our departure, lasted still as fragments of memory. Crossing the lakes the next morning in the climbing Nordic sun, we noticed several young people sitting at the sidewaters *chilling, drinking beers*. Julie later informed us that it was known locally as '*bridging*', a way of 'passing the time' (Jeffrey, 2010). How many too, I wondered, were hurtling through a kaleidoscope?



Figure 10. Bridging (self-photographed, 2014) *Note, these are stills from a film recorded whilst cycling past*

We joined the punk huddles at *Vesterbro* in the late morning, and by midday were snaking through the city streets - past *Demos, Cikaden, the Folkets Hus*. Though we did not pass the empty lot at *Jatvvej 69*, and it was never quite there with us *bursting on the asphalt*, it surfaced frequently in the conversations along the way - *angered, animated*, more than a memory. A man in a black shirt handed us whistles and quickly skirted off past the stilled traffic. Julie told us there were plans to '*drown out the Prime Minister's speech*' because she did not listen. Pulsing in the street river (de Certeau, 1976) - *re-architecting* the flows of the city - there was the sense then of a building '*political moment*', of momentum, *building fællesskab* as we moved in the throng to *Fælledparken*.

V. CONCLUSIONS

As a concept, *building fællesskab* emerges alongside more recent calls for youth studies to 'ontologically re-frame' questions of young people's political participation and engagement (Lesko, 1996; Skelton, 2010). In this vein, Jeffrey (2012) argues that '[t]here is an opportunity for geographers to influence [these debates]: by breathing new life into the Mannheimian language of 'fresh contact' to examine precisely what this contact might mean in terms of young people's relationship to materials, technologies, and spatial ideas' (Jeffrey, 2013). This project thus (re)frames the *political* as processual, performative and material, and locates within a broader affective and emotional turn in sociological research by exploring the role of memory and emotion as motivating forces in moments of building *fællesskab* (i.e. collective *socializing* and *mobilizing*). Fundamentally then, this project challenges Beck's (2002) 'individualisation' thesis on the rise of post-material, 'single issue' and lifestyle politics in which 'there are no historical models for the conduct of life.' In contrast, the motivations of, and for, youth politics in Nørrebro seemed to slide, elide and collide frequently around the collective experience and memories of 2007 and the demolition of the *Ungdomshuset*. These events pulsed through many of our conversations as (past) moments remembered yet emotionally still present in the the lives of the young people we met. Equally then, Jon, Christian, Sophia, Frederikke and Julie all expressed complex, individual biographies and were aware of the 'necessary political process of negotiating between collective and individual interest' (Rheingans et. al, 2013).

This project adds then to recent calls for a more spatially and temporally nuanced interpretation of the political socialization and mobilization of youth. As Gordon (2011) suggests - in reference to the politics of this project - if 'sociological research has a role to play in resisting myths of youth apathy as well as opening up dialogue and the real possibilities of collective resistance', then the sociology of youth has a duty in presenting honestly, positively and critically, examples of this political resistance where, and when, it does occur. This project has attempted in a sense then to 'follow the thing' (Cragg, 2009) and understandably, it emerges slightly impressionistically given the thinness of our time in Nørrebro. As such, there are several open ends and further lines of inquiry I suggest might be interesting for future research: (i) what are the roles of ideological spaces of learning such as the University of Copenhagen in moments of *building fællesskab*? (ii) has technology changed the biographical trajectories of political socialization and mobilization of young people in Nørrebro? (iii) beyond Nørrebro, how is the old *Ungdomshuset* remembered and what emotional attachments are present? and finally, (iv) comparatively, what similarities and differences in youth politics can be drawn between London and Copenhagen? Perhaps then, this ontological-metaphorical notion of *building fællesskab on the cracked asphalt* of Nørrebro might serve as a valuable heuristic frame for future research exploring the political agency, sociality and materiality of youth politics, and the future of young people as the 'last remaining cultural dissidents with a platform' (Willis, 1999) and the potential *architects* and 'alchemists of the revolution' (Jeffrey, 2013).

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APPENDIX

Christian: Folkets Hus is like a social centre, originally squatted in 1971 - same time as Christiania, back then in this house the people who were active in the house were mostly artists and folk musicians, they were ... the majority for 25/30 years, then a younger generation came in and wanted to be part of the house (that's what I understand) in part of the newer generation...a few of the old guys are still around

Interviewer: Has the centre's use changed?

We don't have so much folk music, more soup kitchens and parties nowadays, there's a cafe downstairs ... soup for the left-wing youth // the radical left wing in Copenhagen is based in Nørrebro and northwest .. this environment..

Do you have an affiliation with any major party?

No, but lots of the youth are now involved to the left

Do you have any relations with the Youth House people and Christiania?

It's more based on social relations... in Copenhagen there aren't many organisations, there's a base of activists in the youth house and some here ... Christiania keeps itself to itself

How would you get involved in the radical left here?

3 years ago we wanted to open up the outside environment to the locals ...at that point we were a very specific group of young people..university students

Has this bit outside all been redeveloped?

(he brings over photograph of the then and now)

a reminder of how fucked it was before ... wanted to have more space for people to chill out

to attract people from the neighbourhood ...we were an island before // had a lot of conflicts with the local youth so we started trying to solve these problems ...attempt to redefine the space

Upstairs is a hangout space for the local youth...mostly the immigrant youth

it's open in the afternoon and closes at 1 or 2 o'clock

You say there was conflict with the local youth before, what was the grounds for this?

I think it was basically a misunderstanding...we spoke different languages and had different ideas of the house...non-sexist, non-racist house we were focusing on...but then there was a reality outside the door that we couldn't cope with ...these boys had a completely different language and a completely different way of approaching people

they thought we looked weird, smelt weird and talked weird ..and so did we there was no dialogue...we only spoke when there was a conflict

So who owns the house?

The municipality .. we don't live here ...the rent is paid by the local government but we pay for all the utilities

they don't place too much structure on what we do

In December the whole activist left left the house because there were too many small conflicts ...a difficult atmosphere to have in a cafe

During Christmas the house was used by some of the boys...then we applied for some jobs..looked for a solution, 3 employees for one year, maybe two.

We do all the stuff together, it's not hierarchical

They want to leave the project, activist-based, they want to stabilize the situation, and then leave on the house for future youth to run

What are the main visions/goals of the activist crew?

We want to have a house in the neighbourhood that is part of our...can address some local problems can create a stronger community...and build relations between local youth, the neighbourhood right now is quite... one of the biggest threats

...fractured

yeah it is quite fractured, and it becomes more so...there are not a lot of people who go about to maintain the good atmosphere...but there's a tendency that these people or the next generation can't afford to keep up these relations // the whole gentrification

Are there a lot of people moving in here?

Yeah and they don't carry the same ethos...so we try to make a stable base here

So do you actively try and oppose gentrification?

I think its more indirectly, it's not...we dont ...i dont know how to say ...we want to strenghten the relations in this area...many different groups use this area ...we want to create a safe space

...where people can interact?

Yeah exactly

So when did this become quite a multicultural space?

O im not sure maybe in the 1970s 80s...im not too sure Ive lived here for 10 years but Im not from here

Ah okay, so have you always been interested in activism?

Yeah, as a teenager ive always been interested

So as a teenager what did you get involved in? still the radical left?

Involved in the youth house...the old one

Were you here when there were the riots?

Yeah, yeah...part of it

So were you in the house when they came to close it down?

Nonoo...no

What were there reasonings behind closing it?

I think in 2001 or 2 they sold the house to a company who was owned by a christian sect who had...like uh

...very strict values?

and it has religions reasons to tear it down...so yeah its pretty fucked up

So why did they sell the youth house but not the folkets hus? If they were both owned by the local government and they were happy for people to squat here?

Yeah I dont know I think the youth at the youth house at this point were...um..more attractive, the location..

But they havent actually built on the location now, have they?

Nonoo, yeah

...it's called ground 69 isnt it?

Yeah, yeah exactly

So what was the old house like?

It was very punk-dominated...which I think was pretty annoying ...it was all black. the aesthetics were very punk rock

So did you have debates and stuff as to what to change in society?

Yeah yeah, but see the problem with the youth house was that they didnt reach out to society it was like a closed environment ...so down here we wanted to do the opposite and...

bring people in?

yeah yeah and sort of use the same organizational structure but combine it with the working local which is pretty difficult because for example having meeting with these boys is difficult .. you know they're not used to debating topics for a long time..sitting on a meeting for three hours

So that also kind of like..

you have to be more flexible with the way you approach things?

Yeah, but also to try our own structure, our ways in this society and in reality , instead of creating isolated, sort of free spaces for the right people

...would you say that this is very different from the current youth house? Yeah we went there and it was closed and there were dogs // we werent allowed in I think there were lots of bands about..sort of heavy metal?

O yeah yeah theres a festival tomorrow...part of the punk culture is that youre arrogant

really?

yeahyeah definitely, thats my impression here in copenhagen there are lots of arrogant punks, which i think is really annoying ...so if you come by a choice and you look like you do then you know they will have a

a negative approach to us? Yeah yeah we stood out like a sore thumb Yeah and we also went to old bonbon factory, the candy factory and

O yeah yeah

And spoke to some guys on the roof...it was such a cool space

Yeah yeah its nice.

so was the old youth house more like that in that it was a bit more chaotic or was it more like ordered? Aesthetically, I mean like when we went there, there were like books on the floor, rubbish everywhere

I think that the new youth house is more trashed...i mean like people out there are more trashed than they were in the old youth house ...it was ..but you know the aesthetics were much the same ...all black and filthy (giggles)

There's an old man who lives there apparently? Who cleans it up and what?

ø!

Yeah maybe he was in his bedroom or something?

Ah Ol, yeah he's a weirdo but he's been on the radical left a long time

Ol? Isn't that how you say beer?

Yeah (haha) but they call him Agent Orange (more laughter)

So is the radical left quite well established? because we know in Oxford and London we're not even really sure if there is one, a scene

Yeah but no so big today, in the 80s there was the squatting movement, then in the 90s there was the Autonomous movement ...who were like..they were...they had some quite strong organizations and it was like a 'movement' ..but now its like more fractural and..

like lots of little groups?

Yeah exactly

Why do you think that happened, in the noughties?

I dont know...I feel like..I mean for the whole squatters movement.. first of all it was possible to squat in the 80s, its not now and there was also like a really big, urgency for housing..and there still is but I mean there are no empty houses any more...almost They squatted like a whole street, I think it was in the 1980s...so I think that, you know that movement, I think there were some struggles, you know it was more easy for people to join, like I mean there is still today but i dont know why it is less prominent today

With the radical left, I mean you know there is a sort of egalitarian, non-hierarchical structure, do you think that has kind of hindered in a way to the continuation of the movement? Because like once you have a generation in place, there's no real legacy as such so in that way it kind of difficult to keep it going?

Yeah, maybe yeah

Would you want another movement? Or is everyone kind of content just having youth houses around the city?

I mean um I miss kind of like having that kind of movement, one that struggles for something, because theres not like...I mean last year we had the whole house here was like based or run by activists and it was all volunteered and it was a lifestyle I mean back in the 80s / 90s it was a lifestyle and you know it's not the same anymore ...people you know dont have the same commitment to do things for the long term..people are more content you know to do campaigns ...I mean a few years ago we had some big campaign things to do with the asylum system which is pretty fucked up and we had some big sort of collaborations with some ..umm.. refugees in the camps..the refugee camps..and there was some thing we called you know Church asylum...it was a group of iraqi refugees who were like going to be sent out of denmark and yeah together with the movement we tried to get them asylum in the church ..to get um..i dont know to get the politicians to try and stop the deportation...so there was like a ..it became a sort of movement and afterwards it died out. (claps his hands once)

Did they achieve their goal?

No, no which I think was you know a lot of people down there..people got how do i say

Like disillusioned?

yeah exactly like disillusioned, and i think also

so there's lots of small movements that sort of upwell and then disintegrate?

Yeah, and the same thing as when the youth house got evicted, because like up to the eviction there had been massive campaigns and support parties..and they were growing a movement about the youth house ...but then when they got evicted that was why the riots were so big..because there were so many people who felt something about the youth house ... it was easy to recruit people to but you know afterwards...

once we got the new youth house it was you know completely died out

How long afterwards was it? Was there still this sort of brewing tension or did it filter out quite quickly?

Yeah yeah thats how i remember

because the police used military tear gas didn't they?
Yeah yeah its crazy

Just out of interest what's your current thoughts on the prime minister because shes gone back on many of her sort of socialist values that she claimed to have?

Yeah she's, but shes sort of a right wing politician, she represents the right wing in the social democratic party and they also, i mean the whole crew about her, that is closest to her, are also quite sort of the right wing of that party..i dont know, its not a working class party any more even though they claim to be... but right now the party who claims more or you know most working voters is the Danish folks party which is like the...

the racist one?

Yeah yeah which i think is like the second biggest party in denmark at the moment..

which is worrying?

Yeah yeah i think its pretty fucked up

That kind of thing has happened all across Europe though, in Spain and Italy and the UK...all these movements about leaving the EU and

yeah exactly, they have the values and its sort of ..

its populist, they try and sort of instill fears?
Yeah yeah exactly

Are the youth here sort of politically engaged, I mean do they have a voice?
Nonoo i dont think so

How old are you if you dont mind me asking?
What?

If you dont mind me asking how old are you?
28..

Yeah my impression is youth aren't too involved

I mean back in England, I consider myself relatively apolitical you know just sort of get on with day to day living as such...

yeah (pause) its more like for many people its difficult to uhh.. theres too much crap to deal with so you know .."I dont care" i just want to be good looking (laughs) yeahyeah drink beer

Do the state sort of demonise the youth in Copenhagen..you know theyre lazy etc?

Yeah yeah

But do you feel that thats a fair representation with the youth you work with here?

Well the whole you know rhetoric of the government is that people dont want to work ...but thats not true...when theres jobs enough, almost everyones in employment
so there arent enough jobs at the moment?

Yeah yeah exactly

So do you see a lot of right wing ideologies becoming a lot more popular?

Yeah exactly and i feel like the left wing party..they cant like address the problems related to immigration they dont dare to debate it so the whole thing is sort of framed by the right wing..

sort of captured by it?

Yeah yeah exactly

I mean are you linked here with employers, you know if people come to the house and they are unemployed, do you sort of give them ideas of what they could do?

Yeah, and we can also you know on longer term, maybe we can have some jobs around here where the government pays your salary..yeah

Auto Ethnography - Anarchist March (01.05.2014)

Church bells going mad earlier when talking to the Austrian man, moved here when he was 16, a lot of faith in young people, works in a youth after school club, feels they need a space outside of the 'institution' ...there have been bigger protests in the past he says, there's a woman with her kids in a pram, the boombox mobile got stopped by the policy, brief booing, met a philosophy student and a 9 year old kid in his first march. Red youth, punk vibes, music blurring, stopped at the lights, Surreal, city life on the left, protest black flags on the right in visibility, disruptive rhythms of the mass

crows, most extreme guys seem to be at the front, Warned by Liv about them, interesting anti capitalist march but everyone seems to be wearing designer shoes The front of the march chanted in unison and put their middle finger up at the parliamentary building, traffic static, strong stench of flare, someone just lit one..whistles going, booted at office people staring out of their office, visible tension zone between the street and pavement, the street is buzzed, the pavement seems static, dead tourist spectacle street, lorry driver just smiles, thumbs up, beer can flung across by a man wearing all black, are we on the tourist circuitry or off it? space looks different with all these people in it, on it, elderly man looks rich, passes by smiling bemused. Surreal whistles blowing, music saying 'we aren't going to take it', descended briefly into a dark street, cold back in the sun, snaking through the city, the crowd is three minutes and thirty seconds long, tommy takes a piss, stuck at the back with the families, cyclists, atmosphere much calmer, men picking up cans no bag. Punk being ridden in a cart fires a water gun some armed police, friends say stop, police smile, tensions escalate at a crossing in front of police, ironic? not between protestors and them, but a protestor and some young guys in a car beeping to go through the crowd, guy gets out of car, crowd gathers, grows, solidarity? Fight not eventuating, squaring up dissolves Mainly flares up ahead. Protestor involved in fight, changed clothes, changing skins, covert chameleon..reach Falledsparken Alternative party, set up through disillusionment with the current system, want more ecological and economic sustainability, man disagrees with the whistle blowers, thinks a better way would be to applaud her, bump into some Biafran men, Half of a Yellow Sun film, the whisky belt , people tend to have the same political values as people they've grown up with, current government are purple when they should be red, people become conservative as they get older, people come to the festival for the beer, state school have the day off, some private gymnasiums get the choice. No mixed schools in Denmark, the spatial politics, cartography of the park, beer drinkers in the middle away from the political tents, punk anticapitalists across the river in a skate park, complete detachment, from the park? society? fleshy, walking at a height above the sitting people

Auto Ethnography – Anarchist March 1/5/2014

11.09 – sat in the room waiting to leave for the anticapitalist march from vesterbro torv @11.30. feel like the political moment is coming – that yesterday was just a taste of the youth political eruption that could potentially occur today. Having seen the matte black 'politi' vehicles, excitement is building. Will there be violent clashes with the police? What will our position be within the group – in/out? Will we understand? Will we be able to converse/interview people? what will be the best way of doing so – record on phone or scribble in diary? Rob and I are on the anticapitalist march and Hannah/maddie are on the labour march that has already started. – I wonder how they're getting on.

11.16 – waiting for phone to charge, waiting is building excitement and anticipation. Want to get going. What will the people be like? Should leave soon so we can get there on time

notes from yesterday

-inclusion at the pub? Group dynamics

- feeling left out at factory – rob kicks over the can

11. 21 – we leave, coins in pockets are making a lot of noise, feeling very awkward – have chosen different attire to yesterday, no shirt. See protestors – everyone is wearing black! Thank god I;m not wearing a shirt but again don't exactly feel included. Feel like I stick out like a sore thumb. Should we grab a beer to feel more comfortable? Everyone else seems to be holding one. The atmosphere is happy, but still feeling a bit tense – looking for the girl that we know, I can't remember her name – Liv that's it. When we find her we ask about the black, she's not wearing black. She says its stupid and she doesn't like that everyone wears black all of the time. shes glad that other people are not wearing black, it fights the image and makes it seem more inclusionary for her. She seems to dislike the fact that a lot of people who are involved in this form of politics are quite exclusionary. We go to take photos. She stops us and says you better ask people before, those people in the vanguard, wearing all black, will "probably take your phone or be very aggressive towards you". That changes the way I feel a little bit. Still comfortable but more wary about the people around me – might have to watch myself especially with the camera. Definitely not recording people when talking to them – perhaps these people run in with the police and don't want to be nailed down to a location nor people to know they were here. Seems strange though, given the fact that they are engaging in a protest march – the most visible form of street politics. Hypocrisy? Undue paranoia? We're talking to liv about the whistles "we don't know if they're going to let us". "Anticapitalist peoples are not organized - its more just those from or engaged with the youth house in some way. This is all we can gather under".

Speak to the man with a beard. He gives me the flag to look after while he goes away. Interesting dynamic – he trusts me with the flag already, feel much more comfortable. The flag is an interesting political material, red and black diagonally split 50:50 with a star in the middle. Observation that people are friendly and know one another – he tells us that it is like a big family – "it's like meeting a family", he is clearly one of the core engaged peoples in the anticapitalist scene. We ask him about the politics, he says that the government and discourse is becoming more right wing. And actively engages with the colors blue and red to describe political opinions. We talk about the welfare state. He has an interesting perspective on this. He tells us "the welfare state actively depoliticizes us, people expect too much from their politicians". This is why he engages in anticapitalist politics, because he feels that true alternatives cannot and aren't expressed when people are numbed by the welfare state. We don't push him on this *RETROSPECTIVELY – I wish we had more of a debate around this issue.

He tells us that he left Austria when he was 16 for a Danish girlfriend and has lived there ever since. He was involved in the youth house and went to the protests in 2007/8, although he wasn't actually in the house when it was attacked by police he engaged in the space. He tells us that they were willing to move if they were given a new space and suddenly they were just attacked by the police. We ask him if he thinks he is engaged with youth politics He says "I'm 34 now I don't see myself as a youth". He tells us that since 1990 the non-parliamentary politics, including squatting etc. has declined, and youth are far less engaged. Lots of young people still involved in politics just not radically. He tells us that young people need a space where they can be expressive and creative and therefore realize their potential. This is why he works at an after school club for children from 7-10yrs he feels that he can make a difference to their lives, and puts on events like sport etc. We ask him for a photo which he is happy to give, he tells us that he doesn't share or like the insecurity of other leftist people on the march. He gives us a sheet from his blog, which I hope to look up when I get home.

12.00 the march starts – people walking, trumpets playing, chants and music blaring, whistles and beers being used. There is a clear reappropriation of the road. Interesting mobility where the walkers, usually confined to the sidewalks are walking methodically and slowly forwards as a continuous mass. Interesting dynamics where the cars now stop, literally the people taking back the streets. Further mobility defines those who are political, as the walkers are all moving and those just watching stop and watch, perhaps indicating a power dynamic between those in the march and those just observing. The vanguard seems to be those characterized as hardcore anarchists. They are much more densely packed and they seem to be almost exclusively males wearing black. They're the most vocal in terms of chants etc.

-the guy with flag beard and blog -

Start walking just after 12

Chants ring out the black and red flags of those at the vanguard seem to be the most vocal

We just stopped - the methodological walking has ceased creating an interesting array of noise

Young children are everywhere - 2 are asleep in a pram how can they sleep in the noise!

Take care of yourself a bit because the police are mad

More tense now we realise the reason we were stopped was that the police

One girl has taken her siblings - she's a uni student who used to be engaged in the red youth but now isn't in any formal organisations. Her brother is 9

Walking into the sun out of the shade brings with it a warmth - escaping the police and walking into safety?

The soundscape is layered with all different types of music and chanting

12.18 We've stopped again

Visibility in a group? Collective solidarity and disrupting the everyday flows and rhythms of the tragic

Reappropriating the streets

Every now and then a whistle and a chant rings out particularly when there are crowds watching side by side.

The use of bodies as political instruments is extremely interesting

Interesting that anti capitalist march but everyone is wearing bike Adidas shoes

One chant rings through as we pass the parliament building and in unison the vanguard puts it's middle finger up at it

Stopped by the police again and the march stops - or maybe it's to let people catch up so we move as a collective

See two guy Fawkes masks walking side by side

Flare goes off a walk through small

March gets louder and people start clapping, Danzig breaks out

Smellscape is changing with the flare that went off and the narrower street whyv high walls

Punk rockers beer and black seem to characterise a large number of the marchers but not all of them

Have moments where I feel unsafe and unwelcome especially given I'm often writing on the phone but then feel comfortable as part of the collective walking at the same speed and people seem friendly enough. Then again we have been told that people are not comfortable with photos and one girl was very unwilling to answer my question about what the chants meant

It's a nice way to experience Copenhagen - as both an outsider tourist but also as one of the marchers one of the many who is walking through the streets - people on the sidewalk look at us and see us as part of the collective

Flare goes up and one guy shouts throw it at them (the police) it's put on the road

The motion of all the walkers and the stillness of the onlookers - mobility defines the political here

1249. Just been given a whistle a bright yellow one - does this define my inclusion, will I use it against the pm?

God it's cold here in the Shade

The variety of music ja awesome

Strategy vs tactics of walking - on the street is

Are we allowed to blow our whistle or is that abusing our position as outsiders

Strangely were in the march but still feel detached from it inside physically but somehow outside

Songs were not going to take it goes down well with the crowd

Interesting walking towards the Denmark flags on norrevro bridge under them

smell of weed and perfume

1306 stop for the toilet - the sudden moment of stopping brings an interesting light in the rhythms of the crowd

Now were at the back which has a different atmosphere- less densely packed and more relaxed but have a desire to catch up with the front crowd

People at the back are picking up the leftover cans for the recycle in value

Police laughing then one girl cycles over to shirt her water pistol at them and the mood is suddenly more tense the smiles are wiped off of the police peoples face

Cross roads a fight is about to kick off because one guy refused to get out of the way and tension escalates - I want to stay to see how the dynamic splays out - one him guy in the car and hundreds of anticapitalisnprotestors who are willing to back him up

Fight defuses as other protestors pull the anarchist member away

Reach the park and happy pharell Williams is playing people dancing

Police are videoing the scene (see robs photo)

Lots of stalls as walk into the park

Find a green stall for the 3rd way -alternative party who have set up a series of chairs around a value of the party - humour, generosity, humility, etc in order to discuss between two people and perhaps help the party formulate their politics - founded by a 60 ye old man but mainly followed by young people

Vesterbro tor - parliament - 12.29 run left down favergarde - 1234 turn down radhusstraed left- 1245 reach the cross road at norregade- 1251 walking alongside a park having turned left again - gothersgade, - end bore fadkmagsgade turn right 1256 onto frederiksborggade - 109 turn right onto a road just after the joe and juice shop over the norrevro bridge - 1323 on the blegdamsvej turning left on frederik vs bej - were here at the lark