

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: A (MORE) LIVABLE COMMUNITY:
COMMUNITY, COOPERATIVE
ECONOMICS, AND RESISTANCE AT A
STUDENT HOUSING COOPERATIVE IN
COLLEGE PARK

Anton Andrei Medvedev, Master of Arts, 2016

Thesis Directed By: Associate Professor Christina Hanhardt,
Department of American Studies

Radical thinkers and activists have put forth “building community” as a political alternative, but what does “building community” actually entail? This thesis examines how a student cohousing group in College Park builds community in a rapidly changing college town. The group was founded to help house low-income tenants in the face of increasingly unaffordable housing. I ask how the group creates organizational structures and personal relationships that give rise to alternative housing opportunities. I examine how community shapes, and is shaped by, features of cohousing such as democratic decision-making and cooperative economics. I give particular attention to tensions that occur within the cooperative due to faults in democratic decision-making, the ability to perform cooperative duties, and the demographic makeup of the cooperative. Finally, I ask what transformative features, if any, the community possesses in the face of the city’s development.

A (MORE) LIVABLE COMMUNITY: COMMUNITY, COOPERATIVE
ECONOMICS, AND RESISTANCE AT A STUDENT HOUSING COOPERATIVE
IN COLLEGE PARK

by

Anton Andrei Medvedev

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2016

Advisory Committee:
Associate Professor Christina Hanhardt, Chair
Associate Professor Nancy Raquel Mirabal
Assistant Professor Jan M. Padios

© Copyright by
Anton Andrei Medvedev
2016

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
A brief history of cohousing	2
What is CHUM?	6
Why does studying CHUM matter?.....	8
Radical Political Communities	10
Cooperative Economics	14
Space and Place.....	17
Methodology	19
The shape of the thesis to come	21
Cyborg Teddy, A Campus on Fire, and a Project Unfinished	22
Chapter 2: A Smart Place To Live	25
From land grant college to flagship university	26
Transforming Maryland	30
A Path to Excellence	31
A Vision of the Future	38
The neoliberal cultural politics of the university community	42
Chapter 3: "Sound like a fantasy? It isn't."	51
CHUM's Economic Backbone	52
Rent, Utilities, and FIRE.....	52
Food	56
Shared Labor	60
A house of one's own?.....	66
The power of a student cooperative	72
Chapter 4: "A good fit for CHUM."	74
Finding a good fit.....	75
The trouble with consensus.....	81
"We need some non-white people at this house".....	83
It's too radical/It's not radical enough	86
Partying for diversity	89
Parties.....	90
House shows	94
Is the party any good?	98
Chapter 5: Holding it together	102
The cheese incident.....	104
House cultures.....	105
Meetings and Mentorship	107
The democratic ideal.....	110
The things CHUM decides on.....	112
Issue 1: The eviction policy	113
Issue 2: How political should CHUM be?	115
Democratic frustrations.....	118
The trouble with consensus.....	119

Growing pains	122
A way forward?.....	122
When democracy falls apart.....	125
Conclusion	131
Chapter 6: "An important, ugly pimple."	133
Of gardens and politicians	134
Claiming the right to the city	141
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	148
Bibliography	152
Primary Sources - CHUM Archives	152
Primary Sources - University Special Collections Archives	153
Primary Sources - University Online Archives	156
Primary Sources - Government Archives	158
Secondary Sources	159

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ask any self-identified radical worth her salt about what change we need in the world and she'll tell you about the importance of fostering community and building local alternatives to dominant political institutions. Radical thinkers and activists have put forth "building community" as a political alternative, but what does "building community" actually entail? Anarchist scholar and Occupy Wall Street organizer Mark Bray provides a preliminary answer: "we need to construct groups, movements, and projects that nourish person-to-person bonds in neighborhoods, apartment buildings, workplaces, and communities."¹

The cohousing (cooperative housing) movement in the United States seems like a natural model for figuring out how to cultivate and keep these relationships over time. Under cohousing, people come together in rural and urban areas to live cooperatively in houses, apartment buildings, farms, and neighborhoods. These groups follow principles of democratic decision-making, provide emotional and financial support for their members, create person-to-person bonds, and commit to radical change and social justice. Some of them, like the Twin Oaks commune in Virginia, have existed for decades. These groups have long struggled and worked to resolve the issues of how to manage collective space to building group cohesion to consensus decision making.

¹Mark Bray, "Five liberal tendencies that plagued Occupy," Roar Mag, 14 May 2014. <http://roarmag.org/2014/05/occupy-resisting-liberal-tendencies>

This thesis asks what the cohousing group Co-Op Housing University of Maryland (CHUM) can teach about building community. CHUM is located in a rapidly changing college town where housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable to many students. The cooperative was founded specifically to help house low-income tenants in the face of these developments. I ask how CHUM creates organizational structures and personal relationships that help create this alternative housing opportunity. In exploring these dynamics, I ask how features of cohousing such as democratic decision-making and cooperative economics are shaped by and shape CHUM's community. I give particular attention to tensions that occur within the cooperative due to faults in democratic decision-making, the ability to perform cooperative duties, and the demographic makeup of the cooperative. Finally, I ask what transformative features, if any, CHUM's community possesses in the face of the city's development.

A brief history of cohousing

Cohousing is a branch of the cooperative movement. According to the International Co-operative Alliance the cooperative movement officially began in 1844 when a group of 28 artisans came together to organize against miserable work conditions and low wages in the cotton mills of Rochdale, England. They decided that "by pooling their scarce resources and working together they could access basic goods at a lower price."² While there were earlier recorded instances of co-operatives, the founders at Rochdale created a set of principles called the Rochdale Principles that have been the founding basis of cooperative institutions internationally --

² International Co-operative Alliance, "Co-operative identity, values & principles," 2014. Web. 15, October 2014. <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

including stores, childcare collectives, and bike shops. In essence, the principles hold that anyone should be able to join a cooperative, cooperative members should have democratic control of the cooperative and its economic resources, and the cooperative should value autonomy, independence, cooperation, and community.³

Cohousing has an unclear starting point in the United States. Some trace its origins back to the 1970s when Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant brought the Danish idea of *bofaellesskaber*, or living together, to the United States. As architecture students in Denmark, the co-founders were impressed by the advanced state of cohousing in the country as well as the cohouses' ability to find a balance between privacy and community. They hoped that cohousing could solve America's social ills revolving around the "basic human needs for identity, belonging, and even accountability."⁴

The history is not so simple. While cohousing proper may have started with Durrett and McCamant, the practice of choosing to live together with cooperative aims has long existed in the United States. In the 1800s, socialists Robert Owen and Charles Fourier inspired a spate of utopian communities based on cooperative values in New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin. These communities were based on utopian socialist philosophies and sought to create a model society that more aligned with the values of worker cooperation and collective living. In the 1920s, disillusioned anarchists sought refuge in avant-garde artist colonies and established

³ The principles are: 1) voluntary and open membership, 2) democratic member control, 3) member economic participation, 4) autonomy and independence, 5) education, training, and information, 6) cooperation among cooperatives, and 7) concern for community.

⁴ David Wann, "Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing," ed. Wann, David. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing. 2005.

rural land settlements in response to the 1920's Red Scare and the anarchist movement's' failure to organize the working class. They desired to live a life where they could express their politics while enjoying social cooperation and interdependence that was otherwise unavailable to them.⁵ A focus on green living and countercultural lifestyle birthed hundreds of communal land projects in the 1970s.⁶ The anti-nuclear and environmentalist movements came together in temporary encampments that prioritized non-hierarchical decision-making.⁷ Furthermore, the political practice of squatting, or living on unused private land in accordance to a set of political commitments, has been widespread in the United States since the mid-1800s and used by radical political groups to tackle larger questions around race, poverty, and environmental destruction.⁸

It is clear that the desire to live communally for political principles has a strong precedent in the US. For my project, I choose to focus on cohousing as an urban phenomenon where people come together to live according to a set of cooperative values like those set out by the Rochdale Principles.⁹ My approach to cohousing uses Durrett and McCamant's useful terminology, but places the starting

⁵ Andrew Cornell, "For A World Without Oppressors: U.S. Anarchism from the Palmer Raids to the Sixties," Diss. New York U. 2011.

⁶ Malcolm Miles, *Urban Utopias: The built and social architectures of alternative settlements*, London: Routledge. 2008.

⁷ Barbara L Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*, Berkeley: U of California, 1991.

⁸ Anders Corr, *No Trespassing*, Cambridge: South End. 1999.

⁹ I define urban in a broad sense that captures housing projects in cities, suburbs, and exurbs. I differentiate the projects I focus on from land-based rural projects like Twin Oaks in Virginia, Idyll Dandy Acres in Tennessee, or Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina. While the categories of urban and rural are imperfect and bleed into one another, I use this distinction to limit the scope of my study to a particular set of housing projects closer to shared homes in cities than to communes surrounded by farmland.

point before Durrett and McCamant's trip to Denmark in the 1970s. It also allows cohousing to be theorized under a number of cooperative theoretical frameworks -- not just the Rochdale Principles.

Cohouses share a set of common features including participatory planning, intentional neighborhood design, private homes and common facilities, resident management, and non-hierarchical structure and decision-making.¹⁰ Susan Saegert and Lymari Benitez conducted a literature review of U.S. and Canadian research examining Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives (LECs) -- low-income housing options that are collectively managed by residents. The authors found that LECs fill a market niche for those who cannot afford or don't want a single family home. Alongside providing stable housing, LECs had a number of social and economic benefits including shared cost of living, higher resident satisfaction, and increased community involvement. When managed properly, LECs could resist downward economic cycles and benefit marginalized groups -- such as young adults, women, and people with physical disabilities. In addition, residents benefit from communal support, social interaction, sharing resources, environmental sustainability, lower living costs, and resident participation in making decisions.¹¹

While cohousing has been studied widely, there is dearth of literature on student cohousing. This is surprising because student co-ops kicked off the cohousing movement in the 1970s and cooperative housing has been part of universities like UC Berkeley since the 1920s. Just like non-student cooperatives, student co-ops are part

¹⁰ David Wann, "Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing," ed. Wann, David. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing. 2005.

¹¹ Susan Saegert and Lymari Benitez, "Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives: Defining a Niche in the Low-Income Housing Market." *Journal of Planning Literature* 19: 427 – 429. 2005.

of the larger North American Students of Cooperation and are recognized by major national co-op organizations such as the Fellowship for Intentional Community and the United States Federation Of Worker Cooperatives. I hope to address this gap in the literature and put the spotlight on these important cohousing formations by focusing on the student cooperative housing group, CHUM.

What is CHUM?

CHUM is a relatively young co-op that has been around for seven years. According to their website, CHUM was started by University of Maryland students in response to the lack of affordable housing in College Park and a fractured sense of community between students.¹² The organization initially rented three houses and currently rents five -- with a sixth one opening for rent in the summer of 2016. CHUM's website states that the organization offers much cheaper housing than other providers in College Park. The organization is able to rent double rooms for \$260 to \$390 per month and single rooms from \$375 to \$515 per month.¹³ Students living together are given the chance to form community on the basis of cooperative housing principles and group decision-making. CHUM members are currently trying to raise enough money to make a down payment for a house and become recognized as a valid form of cooperative housing by the city.

According to their by-laws, CHUM is governed by a Board of Directors that is elected annually by CHUM membership at a Special Meeting. The Board has the

¹² "History." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.
<http://chum.coop/#history>

¹³ According to one CHUM interviewee, this is much cheaper than the typical price for a room on campus, in University apartments, or off-campus housing -- which range between \$700 to \$1000 per month.

power to create committees and structure CHUM as it sees fit. In addition to the Board, CHUM members elect a President, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary. The President fulfills requests by the Board, the Treasurer handles the organization's finances, and the Recording Secretary takes minutes at all General Body, Special, and Board meetings. General Body Meetings occur twice a month to discuss issue pertinent to the co-op and are open to all members. CHUM members can also take part in weekly and bimonthly committee meetings for committees like the New Membership Committee, the Bringer of Fun Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Mediation Committee.¹⁴

To join CHUM, an applicant must complete a membership process that consists of filling out a membership form, disclosing one's income, undergoing a brief phone interview, completing a new membership orientation, and attending a house dinner and tour. Housing is available on a first-come, first-serve basis, but special exemptions are made for low-income individuals. If an applicant doesn't get accepted into a CHUM, she is waitlisted until a room becomes available. In a preliminary survey of CHUM members, I found that people join CHUM for a variety of reasons -- be it poor dorm experiences, a desire to live out their ideals, or financial need. Out of the twelve people I surveyed during a previous project, nine said that they heard about CHUM through word-of-mouth from their friends, significant

¹⁴ "Bylaws of Co-Op Housing University of Maryland, INC. Bylaws - Google Docs." Co-op Housing University of Maryland, Incorporated. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08. <http://ter.ps/CHUMbylaws>

others, family, or co-workers at cooperative enterprises like the Maryland Food Cooperative.¹⁵

CHUM members are mostly students in their late teens and mid-twenties. In a preliminary survey, I found that a majority of CHUM members are politically left, but that they do not share a commonality in stance. Of the people I surveyed, three people identified as radical and three identified as leftist. Two identified as moderate and one identified as libertarian. Four refused to identify at all -- citing politics as unimportant or uninteresting. A 2015 internal survey of 40 CHUM members laid out the demographics of the cooperative clearly. 79% of the cooperative identified as white, while 21% identified as people of color -- including Asian American, Black, multiracial, and Latin@. 5% of the cooperative was transgender, while 95% was not. The survey didn't provide comprehensive data on how many men or women lived in the cooperative.¹⁶ Finally, 74% of the cooperative was straight, while 26% of the cooperative identified as either lesbian, queer, bisexual, or gay.

Why does studying CHUM matter?

CHUM challenges common academic knowledge about cohousing -- which is based on non-student cohousing projects. While non-student cohousing projects enjoy a relatively stable population, CHUM's members constantly flow in and out of the co-op as old members graduate from the university and new students join. The organization cannot rely on stable housing because they rent from landlords instead of

¹⁵ Sarah Hartge, Georgeanne Matthews, and Anton Medvedev, "Understanding the Community of Student Cooperative Housing." (class paper, University of Maryland: College Park, 2014).

¹⁶ Instead of asking members to pick from a list of options, the survey asked people to self-identify the gender. The responses are a mix of the identifiers like male, female, normal, trans, femme for a guy, and others.

owning property. They cannot lay claim to intentional neighborhood design and control of space like resident-owned cohouses. While non-student cohouses are able to maintain long-term traditions and structures by living in the same space, CHUM members face the challenge of passing on their traditions and structures to new residents while moving into new housing spaces. They develop a unique institutional memory that is kept alive through a combination of institutional practices, written text such as zines and organizational by-laws, word-of-mouth, and communal learning. By focusing on CHUM, I show how student cooperative formations work differently from non-student cohousing projects while being able to provide many of the same benefits despite structural difficulties.

CHUM also strives to develop cooperative living and cooperative economics as alternative models of living and interacting with one another that go beyond the dominant models they see in the outside world. CHUM attempts to take these values and practices outside their houses and extend them into their neighborhoods, the city of College Park, and the University of Maryland. Through studying CHUM, I show how its members live together cooperatively and justly in short-term spaces that promote autonomy, collective decision-making, and a sense of community and group cohesion. I also examine the challenges of cooperative economics and communal life as forms of alternatives to the dominant order. I show how neoliberal logics of development pushed forward by organizations such as the city of College Park and UMD, as well as the demands of landlords and housing economy, interplay with CHUM's mission. In pursuing this line of inquiry, my study of CHUM also addresses

central questions in the study of radical political communities, cooperative economics, and how cooperatives remake space and place.

Radical Political Communities

The concept of community plays an important role in cohousing formations. In the CHUM by-laws, the group states that its general purpose is to provide “community-centered housing to low-income individuals.”¹⁷ For cooperative housing, community can encompass everything from cooperation and sharing to fostering sustainability through restoring an everyday sense of belonging.¹⁸ John G. Bruhn argues that while there is no single definition of community, most conceptions of community share key features such as strong relationships between a group of people in a specific geographical location. He also states that communities have a set of boundaries, social norms, and can create bonds of trust among its members. These features of community contribute to what Bruhn characterizes as a *sense of community* that emphasizes being welcomed, fulfilling an individual’s needs, and creating a positive shared emotional connection between community members.¹⁹

Elizabeth Frazer gives a glimpse at the density of meaning packed into this concept in her philosophical inquiry of how community-oriented activists employ the word community in their writings and political formations. Community can both be a value and ideal as well as a category and set of variables. It can be thought of as an entity (x is a community) or as a set of relations (Y is in community with Z). These

¹⁷ “Bylaws of Co-Op Housing University of Maryland, INC. Bylaws - Google Docs.” Co-op Housing University of Maryland, Incorporated. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08. <http://ter.ps/CHUMbylaws>

¹⁸ David Wann, “Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing,” ed. Wann, David. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing. 2005.

¹⁹ John G. Bruhn, *The Sociology of Community Connections*, London: Springer. 2011.

conceptions can be broken down into specific subsets of analysis (e.g. patterns of relations, kinds of relations, individual's orientations to relations).²⁰ Furthermore, the entity/reasons divide is not a simple split, as Ruth Landman illustrates in her ethnography of four cooperatives in Washington DC. Landman argues that people joined these cooperatives in order to restore a lost sense of belonging that they believed to be common in small towns and villages. Social and economic participation among individuals in these cooperative ventures brought the participants into closer relations with one another. Through becoming closer, these participants began to deliberately create a community and enact the ideal of community they found missing from their lives. In other words, community encompasses both how you feel about one another as well as what you do to cultivate that feeling.²¹ These texts show how the word "community" holds multiple meanings in political projects. Participants in activist political projects use the word community to demarcate a host of practices (e.g. "we are building community", "we want to harness community values"). The researcher must therefore be careful to specify, describe, and analyze what these invocations entail and how they impact participants' interactions with one another.

Not all communities are equal in the eyes of political radicals. Miranda Joseph argues that community can supplement rather than displace forms of capitalist oppression by forging social bonds based on capitalist modes of production (e.g. trade associations, places of business, membership in a work group) rather than across

²⁰ Elizabeth Frazer, "The Concept 'Community'" in *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict*. Pp. 47-85. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1999.

²¹ Ruth H. Landman, *Creating Community in the City: Cooperatives and Community Gardens in Washington, D.C.* London: Bergin & Garvey. 1993.

difference (e.g. middle-class gay playwrights in San Francisco fighting in solidarity with maquiladora workers).²² The French insurrectionary anarchist group The Invisible Committee critiques organizations that bring people together based on a shared interest -- be it science, sports, or anarchism -- as counterrevolutionary social milieus that stifle one's ability to take advantage of present conditions to make social change with "supple texture, their gossip, and their informal hierarchies."²³ In the eyes of the Invisible Committee, communities in and of themselves are not agents of social change. They can be stifling to a political revolutionary project. By creating a sense of belonging among politically like-minded individuals and nothing more, communities become the realm of cliques and jockeying for status rather than political projects actively working toward an end goal. That said, communities and person-to-person bonds are important for political projects: "those with shitty relationships can only have shitty politics."²⁴

Cohousing stands at a pivotal intersection in this debate over whether communities can bring about social change. The Rochdale Principles emphasize democratic member control, autonomy, independence, and cooperation within cooperatives. The Principles state that "co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members."²⁵ While cooperatives strive to operate along these principles and values, the question of

²² Miranda Joseph, *Against the romance of community*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

²³ Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, Cambridge: MIT Press. 2008.

²⁴ Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, Cambridge: MIT Press. 2015. 19.

²⁵ International Co-operative Alliance, "Co-operative identity, values & principles," 2014. Web. 15, October 2014. <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

how successfully they apply them remains open. In her 1960s analysis of “communes in the cities,” Rosabeth Moss Kanter emphasizes the conflicts and tensions that took place in cooperative houses dedicated to democratic participation and egalitarianism. She shows how democratic decision-making is polluted by the pressure to conform to collective norms and the ability of some members to exert more influence than other members on the basis of their oratory prowess or their status as an adult over a child.²⁶ Furthermore, she finds that the tension between individual values and communal solidarity can lead to protracted fights over issues like what it means to have a clean common space.²⁷ Housework, childrearing, and decision-making are among many other structural issues that challenge “the spontaneous, emotion-laden feeling of belonging together.”²⁸ Kanter observes that communes are unable to bear this tension and thus can only exist as short-lived and unstable projects. Despite their radical hopes, these cooperative projects came crashing down.

Pinpointing the radical merits of a community is notoriously difficult given the amount of disagreement among radicals, theorists, and activists. It is tempting to use broad terms like “social justice,” but these are open signifiers that can hold a host of ideological meanings and mask disagreements among radical thinkers. Instead, I choose to forgo the issue of how to define whether a project is “radical” by looking at the values a project puts forward and how well it implements those values.

²⁶ Rosabeth M. Kanter, “Communes in Cities” in *Co-ops, Communes & Collectives*. ed. John Case and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, New York: Pantheon Books. 1979. 128.

²⁷ Ibid, 120.

²⁸ Ibid, 126.

In this thesis, I show how CHUM fosters the relationships and organizational structure necessary to cultivate and realize a shared set of values. I argue that members create a culture where students feel invested in the cooperative by way of their membership recruitment practices, person-to-person interactions in the cooperative, and institutional practices such as democratic decision-making and conflict mediation. I show that while social bonds in CHUM's cooperative community are often tested and experience a great deal of tension, the cooperative culture of the cooperative ensures that the project lasts over time.

Cooperative Economics

CHUM was founded on cooperative economic principles. Rachael Maddox, a former undergraduate student in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, kick started CHUM while writing a senior thesis on cooperative student housing for College Park. This thesis became CHUM's founding document and laid out its core goals and mission. In the thesis, Maddox writes "cooperative housing is one step in the direction of reversing inequitable and discriminatory ownership opportunities. It is not merely an initiative for community—but it holds deep political justice values aligned with equality, fairness, opportunity and participation."²⁹ For Maddox, co-ops do not merely exist for community, they also exist to end the discrimination against minorities and students. She highlights that the rich, along with white people of all classes, own a disproportionate amount of wealth in the US and that cooperatives play a major role in offsetting this trend through their affordability. Likewise, the Rochdale Principles

²⁹ Rachael Maddox, *Co-op Housing Project: Action Plan & Resource Guide*, April, 2009. Web. August 8, 2015. <http://socialeconomyaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Co-op-Housing-Project-Action-Plan.pdf>, 4

hold that “members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative.” This capital should be used to help the co-op meet its “common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”³⁰

The common use of capital to meet collective needs places cohousing formations like CHUM into conversations about what ideal cooperative economics arrangements ought to look like. In the 1990s, political philosopher Michael Albert and economist Robin Hahnel proposed an economic model “parecon”, or participatory economics, as their alternative to capitalism and socialist centralized planning. Parecon seeks to create a classless system by combining systems of “social ownership, balanced job complexes, remuneration for effort, and sacrifice, and participatory self-management.”³¹ The Invisible Committee's commune, a more radical formulation of the cooperative economic model, seeks “to break all economic dependency and all political subjugation” by destroying the state and capitalism in the long run, while creating resilient institutions that are filled with liberatory potential for insurrectional warfare against the state in the short term.³²

It is easy enough to call for full communization, but it is another matter to do something about it. While parecon and the Invisible Committee talk about what ideal scenarios ought to look like, they don't provide the framework for how they should be enacted nor how to navigate the complexities that arise during their formation.

³⁰ International Co-operative Alliance, “Co-operative identity, values & principles,” 2014. Web. 15, October 2014. <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

³¹ Michael Albert, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, London: Verso. 2003.

³² Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, Cambridge: MIT Press. 2008.

From dumpster diving to creating neighborhood compost heaps to holding working groups on how to best help low-income members, CHUM members are actively engaged in enacting their cooperative economic principles. By focusing on CHUM's concrete practices, I explore the ways in which communal economic formations actually take place, how members take part in them, and how these economic formations impact the lives of cohousing members.

I also show how the economic components of cohousing projects sit alongside their communal nature. The Invisible Committee claims that “a cooperative wood shop or auto repair shop will be just as irksome as a paying job if they're taken as the aim instead of the means that people have in common.”³³ The end goal of a cooperative economic enterprise should not be the enterprise itself, but rather the collective relationships and bonds that people build while running the enterprise. Working at a food cooperative can be just as alienating and disempowering as working at a grocery store if the participants focus purely on getting a wage or food credit instead of coming together to form person-to-person bonds with one another. Put simply, in order for cooperative economics to succeed, one needs community. In this thesis, I examine this intersection of community and cooperative economics taking place in cohouses. I show that community building and cooperative economics actually depend on one another to succeed.

Furthermore, I look at how issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality color this interdependence and how CHUM's community responds to address possible inequities in the cooperative's community and structures. I do so because the

³³ Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, Cambridge: MIT Press. 2015. 24.

assumption that cooperative economics and communal living will bring universal benefits to all is ill-founded. In her survey of cooperatives across the United States, Genna R. Miller finds that gender inequalities in job tenure, income, and work-schedule policies persist in US cooperatives -- though to a lesser extent than their private counterparts.³⁴ As Miller's research shows, the actual impacts of cooperative practices need to be examined in greater detail. If inequities are found within cooperatives or a solution to these inequities presents itself, it is in the best interest of people who want to build a more just world to know about it.

Space and Place

Community and cooperative economic interactions in CHUM are mediated by space -- the way people interact with their natural and built environment. Space is not simply a neutral backdrop, but rather a site for multiple meanings that are constructed individually by the participants. As De Certeau puts it, space is the theatre of action created by people interacting with inert matter like rooms, buildings, and gardens.³⁵ In order to understand how space is built through these interactions, one must conceptualize oneself within a constructed space that holds multiple meanings for the actors using it.³⁶ By understanding this process of meaning-making, one begins to see how space is impacted by issues of power. Boundaries, or contests over the use of

³⁴ Genna R. Miller, *Gender Equality in Worker Cooperatives*, Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 7. <http://geo.coop/node/615>

³⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. trans. Steven F. Rendall. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2011.

³⁶ Miles Richardson, "Being-in-the-Market Versus Being-in-the-Plaza: Material Culture and the Construction of Social Reality in Spanish America" in *The anthropology of space and place: locating culture*. ed. by Lowe, Setha M. and Denis Lawrence-Zuniga. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2003.

And, Margaret Rodman and Matthew Cooper, "Boundaries of Home in Toronto Housing Cooperatives" in *Setting Boundaries: The Anthropology of Spatial and Social Organization*. ed. Deborah Pellow. London: Bergin & Garvey. 1996.

space, manifest in the discourse and actions of community members. For example, at one General Body Meeting, CHUM members debated whether they should have an organization-wide drug policy that mirrored the University of Maryland's policy of expelling drug users from student housing. Some people in the co-op wanted to implement it in order to protect themselves from legal sanction. Others said that they were adamantly against the drug policy because they wanted to focus on caring for the drug user instead of kicking them out. This conflict over how to handle drug use is a clear example of a contest over the boundaries of the US government's legal apparatus in the cooperative.

In addition to the interior workings of the house, the cooperative also operates spatially in the neighborhoods that it occupies and the space of College Park. CHUM's houses are located right outside the University of Maryland in the Calvert Hills and Berwyn neighborhoods. CHUM members take part in local College Park politics, maintain a community garden right off the Trolley Trail in Calvert Hills, and operate a neighborhood compost system. The cooperative also took part in the city's Neighborhood Stabilization and Quality of Life Work Group and worked with the City of College Park in developing the city for students.

Given these levels of involvement, it bears looking at how CHUM interacts with space in the house, in the neighborhood, and in the region. Lefebvre argues that we should pay attention to space in terms of social practice, representations of space, and representational space. In other words, we must look at how people interact with spaces on a daily basis, the relations of production -- the verbal signs, codes, and knowledge -- that create the space, and the symbolic imaginary that exists about the

space.³⁷ These three levels of analysis are organized along the cultural lines of class, gender, ability, and race, as well as by economic activity. Dolores Hayden argues that urban landscapes serve as “storehouses of memory” that tie different social groups to places.³⁸ Politics of identity are baked into the memories that people have about how a certain place was used or occupied. Likewise, the very construction of space is imbued with cultural characteristics -- as well as a component of economic power. As Sharon Zukin puts it: “if visible culture is wealth, the ability to frame the vision brings power.”³⁹ Spaces and their meanings are constructed and contested by multiple actors ranging from residents to non-profit organizations to businesses to developers to the government. In order to show how CHUM interacts with spaces in the house, neighborhood, and the community, I examine the social, political, economic, and cultural forces that exerted their influence over the City of College Park and the University of Maryland.

Methodology

To study CHUM, I conducted participant observation in a variety of settings including weekly potlucks, bi-monthly General Body Meetings, public events, and weekly committee meetings in the Fall of 2015. In addition to these more formal gatherings, I also hung out with CHUM members at their house and talked to them while they were making their way home from UMD's campus. Through this process, I gained rapport with CHUM members and gained access to spaces that would

³⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*. Translated and Edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. 38-39, 46-53.

³⁸ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, Cambridge: MIT. 1995.

³⁹ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers. 1995.

otherwise be unavailable to me such as CHUM houses during non-event times. In addition, I reached out to CHUM's Secretary and she helped put me in touch with CHUM members she thought would be interested in my project.

I identified potential respondents to interview one-on-one during participant observation through convenience sampling. I staggered the interviews throughout my fieldwork so that I could hone my questions as my understanding grew. I interviewed a mix of CHUM members from different houses ranging from those occupying elected office to those who barely took part in the collective governing. I primarily conducted these interviews in quiet places such as a room in CHUM, in a restaurant off-campus, or in a classroom -- though sometimes members chose to hold them in common spaces like the living room or the kitchen. I asked CHUM members questions about the organization's consensus process, what they did in CHUM, and their favorite and least favorite parts of the organization. The interviews lasted for about an hour. In doing these interviews, I gathered data on why people join and stay in CHUM, their feelings on the community, an understanding of what issues currently matter the most to CHUM members, and an understanding of how cooperative living impacts their financial situation.

In addition to ethnographic methods, I also employed archival research. I used the Special Collections and University Archives at the Hornbake Library, CHUM's internal archive and public-facing website, University of Maryland documents, and online newspaper archives for publications like the *Diamondback* and *The Washington Post* to do my research. My first goal was to learn about the development of CHUM as an organization and its involvement in the politics of College Park. The

second was to learn about the history of the housing shortage in College Park, understand the university and City's response to the crisis, and situate the development of CHUM within a political moment.

The shape of the thesis to come

This thesis asks how CHUM builds community, how it provides affordable housing, and what transformative features its community has in the face of the political economy of the city and the university. In Chapter 1, I lay out the features of this political economy by exploring how the city of College Park and the University of Maryland developed from their founding in the 1800s to today. I trace how changes in the global and national economy pushed these two entities to develop in ways that raised the cost of living for students in the area. I conclude by pointing out how CHUM came up as a response to these changes.

I then look at how CHUM functions as an alternative, affordable housing provider that has lasted for seven years. In Chapter 2, I examine the cooperative economic features of CHUM that make the cooperative affordable. I argue that the cooperative's economic backbone fosters a culture that helps perpetuate these structures form year to year. I continue to explore this cooperative culture in Chapter 3. I show that CHUM recruits a population that holds the cooperative's values through their New Membership Committee. I then go on to show how CHUM's recruitment practices foster a cooperative culture while exploring how they may lead to a lack of racial and ideological diversity in CHUM. In Chapter 4, I argue that this cooperative culture is not a given in the cooperative, but must rather be maintained through a series of democratic practices. I explore CHUM's democratic decision-

making and show how membership participation in this process helps strengthen the cooperative's culture.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I bring together the political economy of College Park and CHUM to see what transformative effects the cooperative has on the city's development. I show that CHUM forces us to think about the role of political projects in response to the political economy. I argue that while CHUM is still in the process of creating a permanent alternative to housing in College Park, the cooperative does reveal what a claim to the right to the city may look like in the current political economy.

Cyborg Teddy, A Campus on Fire, and a Project Unfinished

When I was an undergrad, the University of Maryland: College Park was a hotbed for radical student activism. A university best known for its terrapin mascot and well-respected reputation as a research university was home to a small but busy group of radical students that put out a 40-page Disorientation Guide every year, led school-wide protests over the firing of a Diversity Coordinator, and started a student-led cooperative organization that sought to make housing affordable for all students. Five years later, I'm happy to say that the Disorientation Guide is still coming out, but saddened to report that many of those organizations have disappeared entirely. Of all those radical projects, CHUM was one of the few that grew and kept the practices from seven years ago alive. As I finish my time as a Master's student at the University of Maryland, I'm pulled to asking why CHUM survived.

In some ways, this is also an attempt to finish a project I started after I graduated from UMD as an undergrad. My friend "Cyborg Teddy" and I set out to

interview and videotape radical students on campus before they graduated. Our hope was to document and preserve their knowledge about campus activism on a website for future UMD students. I drew up a model for the site in one of my women's studies seminars, came up with a list of questions to ask, and worked to procure the camera equipment we needed for the project. It was my first ever experience with ethnographic interviewing and activist archiving. I knew that this project was necessary and that I needed to do something to catalog the student activism that made such an impact on UMD. A combination of growing apart, software issues, and server crashes led to the project failing. Ever since then, I've been wanting to finish the project I never had the chance to see to completion.

This isn't just a nostalgia trip for me. I hope to contribute back to the CHUM community with my research. I will follow the ethos that David Graeber laid out in *Fragments of An Anarchist Anthropology*:

One obvious role for a radical intellectual is to... look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities -- as gifts.

During my fieldwork, I found that CHUM was dealing with the issue of institutional memory loss. One member is attempting to resolve that issue by gathering information on CHUM and creating a handbook to give new members. I hope to help CHUM in the process. I have already created a zine based on a term paper I wrote about the cooperative and given it to the community. I plan to give CHUM a copy of my thesis, discuss it with them at a General Body Meeting, and help them figure out how to best put it to use for the organization's memory.

There's still a lot to learn about what building community and person-to-person bonds means for radical activist practice. For better or worse, the focus on radical community has been on the forefront of activist movements from the Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter. I hope that my project helps shed some light on the larger question of how community can be radical and informs the practice of activists to come.

Chapter 2: A Smart Place To Live

For many years, one of the first things you saw when you drove into College Park was an arched sign proclaiming the city's motto: "A Liveable Community." The sign was also one of the first things that people would joke about when discussing the town. As an undergraduate at the University of Maryland at College Park (UMD), I often heard complaints about the lack of social things to do in College Park followed by chagrin over the town being a "livable" community and nothing more. In 2011, the City hired a design contractor to give College Park a new logo and slogan. After working with UMD, local government officials, and residents, the City decided to rebrand itself as "A Smart Place to Live." In an email to the local student newspaper, the assistant to the city manager explained the decision behind the slogan was to, "encourage people to think about how College Park is a smart investment because of its close proximity to both D.C. and Baltimore, because of the University community living here, as well as the beautiful neighborhoods and close-knit community of neighbors."⁴⁰

In just a few years, College Park went from being liveable to being a smart investment. The story of how College Park changed its logo is just one small example of how the area is changing dramatically to adapt to the pressures of a neoliberal global economy that incentivizes universities and their college towns to become increasingly marketable and business savvy in order to attract students, create business partnerships, and revitalize the local and regional economy. To develop a full understanding for why a student cooperative emerged in College Park, one must

⁴⁰ "City settles on new slogan, logo design." *Diamondback*. January 29, 2013.

understand the history of College Park as a town, the major role UMD has played in developing and cultivating the city, and how the area has transformed with the university's growth as an institution. One must also pay particular attention to how these changes impacted the quality of student life at the university.

In this chapter, I trace the history of UMD from land grant college to flagship university. I show how the university's student housing could not keep up with increased enrollment -- leading to boom and bust cycles in housing that underserved students and pressured them to move off-campus. I then describe how UMD began to reimagine itself and its goals after becoming a flagship institution. In particular, I pay attention to how UMD's conception of its "community" and responsibility shifted from its inception as a land grant university to its current place as a globally acclaimed flagship institution. These shifts directly impacted student life at UMD by making the university increasingly unaffordable and pushing students into precarious living conditions. I will conclude by demonstrating how these changes led to the creation of CHUM.

From land grant college to flagship university

UMD has been the flagship public university of the state of Maryland since 1988 -- serving as the top school in the state's university system and as a benchmark for comparing Maryland's public higher educational institutions to other states.⁴¹ The university touts its standing as one of the top schools in the nation and around the

⁴¹ William E. Kirwan, "Charting A Path to Excellence: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland at College Park." March 27, 1996. President UMCP, Office Of. Box 1. P24.008. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

world in several national and global ranking reports.⁴² Home to over 27,000 students, the university is considered one of the premier public universities in the country and draws students from across the U.S. and internationally.

The urban campus started its life in a more bucolic setting as the small Maryland Agricultural College (MAC) in 1858. The MAC served as a place for white men to learn about the trade of farming and gain basic English and math skills. It became a land grant college under the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and received federal funding to teach students “agriculture, mechanical arts and military tactics.”⁴³ The MAC experienced turbulent years where the college failed to open and became bankrupt. In 1916, the state of Maryland took control of the college and renamed it Maryland State College -- later renaming it again the College Park branch of the University of Maryland. The campus grew throughout the 1920s and 1930s and became a fully-fledged university recognized by the Association of American Universities in 1925. What started as a small college to educate 30 or so white farmers grew into a university with unique departments, fraternities, sororities, and student housing -- attended by hundreds of white men and women. It took some time for UMD to integrate students of color. While the University of Maryland was open to all men “without distinction of race or color” under the second Morrill Act, the first African American students didn’t enter the college until the 1950s.⁴⁴

⁴² “Just the facts.” Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Last accessed 2016.
<https://www.admissions.umd.edu/about/JustTheFacts.php>

⁴³ “University of Maryland Timeline.” The University of Maryland: College Park, last accessed 2016.
<http://www.umd.edu/timeline/>

⁴⁴ The University’s website notes that Maryland did have two notable graduates during this period: Pyon Su, the first Korean to earn a degree at a U.S. college and Chun-Jun. C. Chen, of Shanghai,

UMD experienced its first major boom in student enrollment during the post-World War II years -- growing from 2,066 students in 1935 to over 10,000 students in 1946.⁴⁵ These new students, enrolled under the GI Bill, crammed the university to capacity. Incoming veterans lived in overcrowded dorm rooms or en masse in military bunker-style beds set up in the Armory gym building.⁴⁶ Faced with this housing shortage, three-fourths of the students lived off-campus at their parent's homes or at houses sanctioned by UMD's housing department.

UMD expanded its student housing by building new facilities and renovating existing dilapidated buildings in the 1950s. The struggle to keep up with increased enrollment would become a recurring problem for the university as student enrollment continued to increase during the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1970s, the university received increased state funding to renovate nineteen residence student halls. Though the housing capacity increased, UMD still maintained a large off-campus population composed of commuter students from nearby areas and students living off-campus in College Park.

College Park grew alongside UMD since its inception. It was founded near the MAC and began to develop into a primarily residential area in the early 1900s. In the 1920s, the city developed commercial districts due to increased automobile traffic, its presence next to the commercial Route 1, and the growing population working at

entered Maryland as its first Chinese student.

⁴⁵ "University of Maryland Timeline." The University of Maryland: College Park, last accessed 2016. <http://www.umd.edu/timeline/>

⁴⁶Robert C. James, "Report on Men's Permanent Dormitories Including Proposed Changes." December 7, 1948. Geary Eppley. Dining Hall 1938-49. Fraternity House Inspection 1951-53. Accession No 15. Series 1. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

UMD. College Park was officially incorporated in 1945 as a suburb of Prince George's County. Today, College Park shares the characteristics of many college towns. It is a youthful town full of renters with a higher standard of living than the rest of the country.⁴⁷ In 2015, the median age of 21 in College Park is much younger than the United States' median age of 37.⁴⁸ 62% of the population was between 15 and 29 years old -- with roughly 51% of the population renting housing.⁴⁹ The average household income is \$75,892 -- just above the US average of \$74,669. Though the city sits next to a large university campus, it remains a small college town with a population of roughly 34,000.

UMD plays an outsized role in the city's development. Today, the university is the city's primary employer and largest property owner. This relationship between the city and the university has been the same since its founding in the early 1900s. One only needs to look at the case of the College Park Metro station to see the impact that the campus has on the city. In the 1970s, the City of College Park, the county, and UMD were deciding whether to build a Metro station in College Park. UMD's President Wilson Homer Elkins and other administrators opposed building the station on campus because "some campus officials and others feared that a Metro link between the District and College Park would make it easier for African-Americans to come to campus."⁵⁰ For over a decade, racism within the campus administration

⁴⁷ Blake Grumprecht, *The American College Town*, Hunt Valley, MD: Sheridan Books. 2008, 4.

⁴⁸ "The World Factbook - Median Age." CIA. Last viewed February 2016.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2177.html>

⁴⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. "2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates" using American FactFinder to look up College Park City, Maryland. February, 2016..

⁵⁰ "Metro stop? Metro: Stop! The Politics of Transportation Planning." Urban Studies and Planning Program, The University of Maryland: College Park. Last modified September 1994.

created delays and roadblocks for the Metro station until a new University President came to power in the late 1970s. At this point, the county had already decided that it was going to build a Metro station in College Park. The University President came together with community leaders in College Park and university officials to argue for the station's development and ensure that it benefited the campus community.⁵¹

Today, the College Park station serves as a major connecting hub for residents and students traveling to Washington DC and Baltimore for work, internships, and recreation. If UMD had accepted the train station on campus, then College Park would be a very different place today -- easing the commute of many students and making UMD one of the first things one sees when one exits the station. The College Park Metro station is just the first of many UMD-led major restructuring projects that had an area-wide impact. In the three decades after the drama over Metro development, UMD pursued a series of development projects to attract students and investments under the pressure of a new economic environment. The next section will discuss how these projects boomed when UMD became a flagship institution.

Transforming Maryland

In 1988, UMD reached the highest enrollment in its history with 38,679 students and became the flagship campus of the State of Maryland. Under the new flagship banner, UMD was tasked by the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly to compete with partner institutions around the country, develop the regional economy, and become a top-tier educational institution. These tasks required creating a new vision for UMD, a vision written into a series of documents called

<http://rethinkcollegepark.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/CollegeParkStationStudy.pdf>, 5-14.

⁵¹ Ibid, 7-4.

Strategic Plans. These plans discuss the university's goals for the upcoming years, how well the university is currently meeting those goals, and what projects the university will undertake in order to fulfill these goals. In this section, I analyze UMD's Strategic Plans from 1990 to 2015 and trace how UMD adopted a new set of development policies. I demonstrate that UMD adopted market-based techniques and priorities to deal with new demands from students and the State of Maryland, inconsistent state funding, and fulfilling its mission as a flagship institution. I place these strategies in context of the neoliberalization of higher education. Finally, I show how the redevelopment of College Park became a major strategy for UMD to meet its new demands.

A Path to Excellence

The 1970s proved to be a pivotal decade for the global economic system. Fiscal crises, unemployment, and inflation rocked the Global North. A system of government regulation that had delivered high rates of economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s just wasn't working anymore. In response to the growing crisis, governments in the US and abroad adopted a set of economic and political policies currently grouped by scholars under the category of neoliberalism.⁵² These policies sought to loosen government regulatory frameworks, expand corporate agency, and privatize government-controlled industries. The thinking was that the old system led to an economy that stifled innovation and let poor business practices slip by because of government support. Privatizing industries, curtailing government, and opening

⁵² David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2005. 11-13.

private markets would fix the economy by pushing actors to compete against one another.

As US industries and financial markets were deregulated and privatized, more and more sectors of society -- including higher education -- were forced to follow market logics as state support for them dwindled. Universities found themselves underfunded and forced to find new revenue streams or perish as the economy became increasingly guided by a neoliberal logic of development between the 1970s and 1990s. While state funding and tuition money had previously covered the cost of higher education, plummeting state and national support pushed universities to look into more profit-driven ways of accumulating money to stay open and fund their growth. These new strategies included raising tuition, selling patents on the market, and pursuing profit-sharing ventures with industry partners.⁵³

The changes between the 1970s and 1990s marked the third phase in what Rhoten and Powell call the missions of the American public research university. Previously, the public university had been a land grant institution and a federal grant institution. These two conceptions of the university created two sets of underlying myths of what the university ought to do for the public. Under the land grant model, the university was charged with teaching basic agricultural and military skills to students while doing research on behalf of local communities. The responsibilities of the university expanded to a national scale under the federal grant model. The federal grant university was responsible for training workers for mid-management positions while conducting scientific research to help advance the country economically and socially. In the 1970s, the university entered the third stage of its development as a

⁵³ Wesley Shumar, *College For Sale*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press, 1997. 87-88, 94-100.

patent grant institution. It became an “‘international salesman’ responsible for taking knowledge products directly from the laboratory to the market, reinvesting earnings to enhance prestige and reputation, and carrying the country forward into a globally competitive knowledge economy.”⁵⁴

Rhoten and Powell argue that these three myths of the university are still active today and create tensions between the market-oriented approach of the patent grant university and the public good models of the land grant and federal grant myths. They state the public university could not fully embrace its money-making potential as well as its private counterparts under the patent grant model because it is limited by its mission to do good for the public. In effect, the public university suffers a crisis over its internal mission -- a crisis I later argue is resolved by the transformation of space and the creation of a workforce ready to succeed in the marketplace.

UMD felt the full force of these policies during the 1990s and 2000s. In 1996, UMD President William E. Kirwan presented the Board of Regents with a Strategic Plan entitled “Charting A Path to Excellence.” In it, Kirwan states that UMD is playing a whole new ball game as a flagship institution. Yet, state support for the university had dropped 35% when adjusted for inflation since 1990 and federal support for research was dropping steadily under a Republican Congress. At the same time, UMD was tasked with serving as a catalyst for regional economic development and providing undergraduate students with educational opportunities for careers in a rapidly changing world. Kirwan writes that “an increasingly diverse workforce and global economy have changed the nature of the education our students need in order

⁵⁴Diana Rhoten and Walter Powell, “Public Research University: From Land Grant to Federal Grant to Patent Grant Institutions” in *Knowledge Matters: The Public Mission of the Research University*. ed. by Rhoten, Diana and Calhoun, Craig. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 2011. 322.

to succeed in the workplace of the next century.”⁵⁵ This rapid pace of technological change and skill-obsolescence also necessitated that a UMD student must become “a more highly-skilled and self-reliant employee” once they enter the workforce.⁵⁶

Kirwan pledged to take on a number of initiatives to ensure that the university was ready to meet these demands. One key initiative was developing UMD’s entrepreneurial capacity. The campus infrastructure was insufficient to meet the challenge presented by the new global economy. In order to build the university up, Kirwan argued UMD needed to diversify its sources of support as it was unwise to only rely on the State government. He proposed tapping the university’s largely undeveloped entrepreneurial potential: “Joint ventures with industry, executive education and other non-degree instructional programs, licensing and patenting, instructional television, and technical-assistance centers.”⁵⁷ Among other possibilities, he suggested developing a research park near the College Park Metro station, increasing corporate giving and endowments to the university, increasing UMD’s fundraising capacity, and using the university’s own endowment to support ties with governments and industries in “East Asia and Chinese-speaking world.”⁵⁸ Kirwan’s initiatives reflected a broader trend of privatization and entrepreneurship happening across university campuses in the United States. Faced with slumping state

⁵⁵ Kirwan, William E. "Charting A Path to Excellence: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland at College Park." March 27, 1996. President UMCP, Office Of. Box 1. P24.008. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016. 9.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 23-25.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

support and the pressure to grow, universities fostered their entrepreneurial capacity and began to sell patents and services on the private market.⁵⁹

UMD doubled down on these initiatives in the 2000 Strategic Plan “Building on Excellence” presented by newly elected President Dan Mote. Here Mote conceives of the public university as “an active partner with industry, non-profit organizations, governing agencies, and State systems.” Mote argues that creating strong partnerships with these entities fulfills UMD’s mission to give back to the public. He states that one of the greatest contributions that the university can make is the creation of the knowledge economy in the region. By collaborating with national laboratories and the defense establishment, UMD could foster information-based industries like the information sciences and biotechnologies. In order to promote this collaboration, Mote underscored the need to develop a campus research park to foster local economic growth and development. He also noted the need for faculty to partner with area K-12 schools in order to prepare students to work in the area’s knowledge economy.

With the university set to “build on excellence,” the transformation of space became essential to meeting the demands of a neoliberal economic mission. The planned research park was one of the university’s major undertakings, but the university also had to deal with a real problem that had been plaguing it since the 1940s: the problem of student housing. The student housing situation at UMD is best

⁵⁹ Wesley Shumar, *College For Sale*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press, 1997. 94-100.

encapsulated by one phrase from a 1948 document on dormitory housing: “admission does not guarantee housing accommodations.”⁶⁰

During the 1940s and 1950s, the Dean of Men and Dean of Women maintained a registry of suitable off-campus housing for students, though veterans and women over twenty-one were allowed to make their own arrangements. Students in the 1960s protested against the segregation of housing into men and women’s units and the overly paternal approach of the university. They won important gains in co-ed housing and being able to choose to live how they wanted. However, they did not improve their odds of being placed in on-campus housing. The demand for on-campus housing completely outpaced the university’s ability to supply it.⁶¹ There were several internal reports from both inside and outside the university on the importance of fixing this housing deficit.

Student housing mattered. Many students who wanted to go to the university, such as students from the nearby Eastern Shore and western counties, could not even consider it due to housing shortages.⁶² The problem wasn’t unique to the on-campus housing. Off-campus housing near the university was inaccessible for many students due to rent increases, two month security deposits, credit rating scores, the need for a

⁶⁰ Robert C. James, “Report on Men’s Permanent Dormitories Including Proposed Changes.” December 7, 1948. Geary Eppley. Dining Hall 1938-49. Fraternity House Inspection 1951-53. Accession No 15. Series 1. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

⁶¹ “1974 Report by the Chancellor’s Committee on Campus Housing.” Student Affairs, Division Of. January 1975. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016. 6.

⁶² “College Park Housing Status Report”. Student Affairs, Division Of. January 1975. UPUB S22. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

co-signer, and minimum salary requirements.⁶³ In response, UMD received increased state aid to renovate and create all new residence halls around campus.

By 1999, all 9,000 of the university's beds were full and UMD was once again challenged to improve its housing stock. The university added an additional 2,500 beds in 2004, but was faced with a new problem.⁶⁴ In 1998, the Board of Regents -- the governing body of the university -- had instructed UMD to develop public-private housing rather than taking on debt to develop university-owned housing. The debt capacity, they stated, needed to be used to construct research facilities and classrooms.⁶⁵ Providing housing through public-private partnerships became imperative in order to meet the university's other goals. Public-private partnerships meant that the university could partner with developers that would help build and run student housing. In exchange for complete ownership of the properties later, the university would let its private partners gain all the profit from running the housing for a number of years. This way, UMD could continue to expand without having to fully front the costs of building new student housing.

UMD is nothing without its students. As a flagship campus competing nationally with other public research universities, UMD needed to bring in the academically strongest students who could take advantage of the university's research facilities and top line education. If students "striving for excellence" weren't able to

⁶³ "1974 Report by the Chancellor's Committee on Campus Housing." Student Affairs, Division Of. January 1975. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016. 16.

⁶⁴ "University Senate - September 13, 2004 Minutes." Senate meeting October 5, 2004. Records of the University Senate (2000-). Series I. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

⁶⁵ Senate meeting minutes, Records of the University Senate (2000 -). Series I. Box no 4. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

go to the university, all the initiatives to improve research, develop the economy, and create a new workforce would be fruitless. While the university is by no means the sole provider of student housing, it needed to continue to take in more students in order to expand. This necessitated dealing with the student housing shortage by increasing the amount of student housing available in the College Park area. UMD found that it could kill two birds with one stone by partnering with the City of College Park to develop a mix-use residential/business district. This district could tackle the issue of housing demands while fostering development on a local and regional scale.

A Vision of the Future

The first iteration of the university's transformation of space took the form of the East Campus Development Plan -- a \$900 million development plan to build an East Campus Town Center and a campus research park. In a presentation to the University Senate in 2006, UMD's Vice President explained that the area east of campus needed to be transformed in "recognition that a world-class university should have a stimulating environment to enhance the experience of faculty, students, and staff."⁶⁶ The goal of the project would be to "attract and retain outstanding students and exceptional faculty." Creating an attractive college town was not part of the university's original mission, but the heads of the institution now felt that they must offer this sort of experience if they hoped to stay competitive with other universities. In addition to attracting students and faculty, the plan served area development

⁶⁶ "University Senate - December 11, 2006 Minutes." Senate meeting February 15, 2007. Records of the University Senate (2000-). Series I. Box No. 4. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

purposes. In a 2008 Strategic Plan entitled “Transforming Maryland,” the university administration writes that it sought to “transform Route 1 into an attractive gateway... [and] build housing for 5,000 students.”⁶⁷ The project would also serve as a connection between the College Park campus, the research park, and the College Park Metro.

The East Campus Development would consist of various amenities including “affordable graduate housing, an infant and daycare facility, upscale housing, and a bookstore” as well as a “Hilton hotel.” It would be a dual use retail and office space while also having a public area that served as a focal point for the university and community. In essence, the East Campus Development would tackle the three issues of community enhancement, student housing, and appropriate local and regional development.

The East Campus Development proved to be too grand of a venture as the 2008 recession impacted the availability of state and private funding. The university had to start over as developers and business partners pulled out of the project. In 2012, the university partnered with the City of College Park to create a “University District 2020 Vision.” The university had learned from its East Campus failure and sought to pursue a rapid development plan that would be fully funded and completed within a few years. The University District has three goals: expand student housing, create a commercial district, and encourage home ownership by professors and faculty in the city of College Park. The hope is that these developments will expand

⁶⁷ “Transforming Maryland: Higher Expectations.” 2008. President (UMCP), Office of the. Strategic Plan Information. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

private, professional employment along Route 1 and integrate the university more fully with the development of College Park.

The university is already well on its way to accomplishing some of its goals. UMD is breaking ground on a four-star hotel that will be used to house four restaurants, convention space, and 10,000 square feet to serve UMD startup companies.⁶⁸ The university is also developing an “Innovation District” that will “support startups and mature businesses that want to partner with university researchers and students.” This new district will link with the campus, downtown, and UMD’s research park to create “a mutually supportive, integrated innovation ecosystem.”⁶⁹ In addition, the university is creating multiple mixed-use public-private housing spaces to help expand the student housing stock available in College Park.

UMD’s role in the creation of this research park and downtown mall area fits into what Shumar calls the mallification of the university. He argues that playing a larger role in downtown and regional development is one of the ways that “knowledge production is moved to an instrumental and product-oriented form.”⁷⁰ Under neoliberalism, universities were no longer producing knowledge for the sake of a higher intellectual calling or serving the public good, but rather engaged in knowledge production for an end-goal that results in the creation of consumer spaces. These spaces reshape the urban environment and the campus into what can best be

⁶⁸ “2020 Strategic Plan Update of the University of Maryland.” University of Maryland: College Park. Last modified December 10, 2015.
<https://umd.edu/Flagship2020/pdf/StrategicPlanUpdate-12-10-15.pdf>

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Wesley Shumar, “Space, Place and the American University” in *Structure and Agency in the Neoliberal University*. New York, NY: Routledge Press. 2010. 74.

described as a mall -- a place to buy goods and visit stores. The development of the mall space serves two purposes. First, it attracts consumers to the area as well as creates a space for the cosmopolitan researchers who can work in the knowledge economy.⁷¹ Second, it destroys existing infrastructure and makes room for new infrastructure.⁷²

The process of mallification goes hand in hand with UMD's need to create new revenue streams. UMD creates commercial and conference spaces that it rents out to area business. It also partners with private entities to develop housing spaces for students and families. These spaces bring in new consumers, faculty, and students into the area while helping facilitate the economic growth of the university and the city. These new revenue streams give the university room to expand and invest in developing its research capacity. The mall helps create the research space while the research space helps justify the creation of the mall.

This new form of knowledge production creates a space in higher education that reimagines the public good mission of the public university as one that demands the creation of development strategies in service of capitalist accumulation. By pushing students and faculty to excel in the knowledge economy, UMD establishes itself as an innovation hub that creates a quality workforce and speeds along the development of industry and government in the region. These services help the university stand out as leaders in the global higher education marketplace, thereby attracting further investment from industry and government. UMD is thus able to meet its public good mission of helping the State of Maryland by fostering economic

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid, 76.

growth while diversifying its revenue streams and staying afloat under the pressure of irregular state funding. In effect, UMD's pursuit of neoliberal development strategies can be construed as a kind of public good. The university no longer depends on the public dollar. It is able to provide all the services that the State of Maryland requests without relying on the state for funding. There is no conflict between the university's public service mission and privatization if both are done in service of economic development.

The neoliberal cultural politics of the university community

Attracting excellent students to a neoliberal space in higher education is one thing, but ensuring that students use that space appropriately is another. In this section, I explore how UMD creates a university community in order to show how the neoliberal economic and political policies in previous sections dovetail a neoliberal cultural politics. I discuss how students are encouraged themselves as citizens in a university community that will prepare them for the demands of the workforce. I then describe how CHUM arose as a response to these cultural politics.

When UMD began as the MAC, it had a very regimented code for students under a form of management called *loco parentis*, or in place of the parent. Men were held under tight military orders and the university was seen as a strict paternal figure for students while they were away from home. When women entered the university in the early 1900s, they were placed under even tighter security and rules. They were not allowed to choose where they lived off-campus without university permission, stay out past certain hours, nor congregate with men outside of strictly supervised locations. As UMD grew larger, standards slacked, though rules of conduct were

maintained for visitation hours, what could and could not be done on campus, and where men and women could and could not live.

The *loco parentis* style of management was common to many universities across the United States. In the 1960s, a student radical movement that sought to break with the authoritative convention of the 1950s and strive for personal freedom and free expression emerged across campuses nationwide. This movement protested against the university codes of conduct and demanded co-housing, unlimited visitation, and other demands. Students at UMD and across the United States won and universities shifted from playing the role of a parent to a supervisor of a learning community. In a 1963 letter to the Deans, the head of Resident Life announced that the purpose of the residence hall was to serve as a learning environment that augmented the classroom. The residence hall program would provide students with a place to study alongside a housing environment that teaches students to maintain a "well-balanced schedule of work and recreation."⁷³

The university would enforce the rules of this environment through a system developed by the Department of Resident Life's forerunner in the 1940s. Dormitories for students were supervised by a dormitory manager and three housemothers who supervised the dormitories for "cleanliness and neatness."⁷⁴ A student proctor -- usually a senior student -- was assigned to a section or floor of the dormitory and tasked with maintaining order and cleanliness, referring students to the right

⁷³ Joseph S Hall, "Letter to All Deans, Department Heads, Faculty, and Staff Associates". February 6, 1963. Archives -- Housing, Office Of. Correspondence and Miscellaneous Information. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

⁷⁴ George Eppley, "Letter to Mr. R.E. Manchester." July 16, 1947. Geary Eppley. Dining Hall 1938-49. Fraternity House Inspection 1951-53. Accession No 15. Series 1. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

departments for help, and leading students in intramural activities. Disciplinary hearings were handled by a student-elected Dormitory council. The ultimate goal of this system was "student self-government" where students enforced UMD's rules among themselves and their peers. This system of monitoring has remained relatively the same, though the house mothers were replaced with cleaning staff and the titles of the positions changed.

An internal 1994 Strategic Plan from the Division in charge of the Department of Resident Life outlined new priorities for student development. In addition to creating a space conducive to student study, the division would also "enhance its commitment to prepare students for the responsibilities of citizenship and the demands of leadership" by giving students a chance to become involved in the university community. Their hope was that by taking part in the community, students would be prepared "to enter a competitive, global workplace." The university's goals as a flagship university were reflected in the ways they conceived student life on campus.⁷⁵

This university community manifested in the different ways students found housing at UMD. Student handbooks given to freshmen describe the university as several "university neighborhoods" situated on and off campus. Some communities were academically engaged "honors" communities while others were "living-learning" communities that allowed students to live together based on their shared interests in subjects like foreign languages, poetry, or civic engagement. Others were defined by their place on campus. For example, one university handbook

⁷⁵ "Strategic Plan." Student Affairs, Division Of. 1994. UPUB S22.001. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

differentiates between the North and South Campus communities by describing the housing units' proximity to the center of campus and different academic buildings. In each of these communities, students are exposed to a variety of programming that helps them succeed in their education as well as prepares them for their chosen career fields.

The university community represents what Lisa Duggan calls neoliberal cultural politics.⁷⁶ The economic and political mandates of neoliberalism are never wholly accomplished through policy proposals or institutional reforms. They are also carried through cultural projects that embody the values of privatization and personal responsibility while being deeply vested in the hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality. I argue that UMD buttresses its goals of being a flagship university and gaining new forms of revenue through the cultural project of creating a university community.

First, a university community helps UMD develop a future community of potential alumni who will look fondly back on their time at the UMD and give back to the campus by way of financial gifts, job opportunities, and industry connections. UMD's alumni association has become increasingly important in the university's development strategy as it gives the university a new source of revenue as well as increases the institution's marketability as a place that helps develop a globally competitive workforce. It is no surprise that one of the major goals of UMD's 2008

⁷⁶ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and The Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press. 2003.

Strategic Plan was to “increase alumni involvement as indicated by volunteer participation and growth in dues-paying membership from 30,000 to 50,000.”⁷⁷

Second, the university is able to market its community in promotional materials. According to the university’s brand website, UMD's primary goals as a brand are to elevate the university's academic and research reputation, recruit and admit the best high school graduates to the college, and to drive alumni engagement.⁷⁸ In order to achieve these goals, the university has several messaging priorities, including: “Providing the best possible student experience, including out-of-classroom opportunities, living and learning environments, and study abroad programs to empower students to make a global impact.”⁷⁹ UMD highlights these living and learning environments in Visitation Guides given to students who go on a tour of the campus, a virtual online tour of the campus, and a large-scale recruitment event called Maryland Day. By creating an excellent learning environment, the university is able to show prospective students and employers that UMD is a campus that prepares its students to succeed in a competitive knowledge economy.

In the late 1990s, UMD added another layer to its marketing by including increased diversity and minority enrollment as part of its community goals. Not only would the university become a prevailer of excellence, it would also be a place where all students feel respected and welcomed. There is no doubt that there were positive motivations behind this plan. UMD has a legacy of graduating more students of color

⁷⁷ “Transforming Maryland: Higher Expectations.” 2008. President (UMCP), Office of the. Strategic Plan Information. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

⁷⁸ “Brand Toolkit.” The University of Maryland: College Park. Last modified 2014. <http://www.brand.umd.edu/brand.cfm>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

than their peer institutions in the South. Today, UMD remains committed to closing the achievement gap for students of color and becoming a national leader in diversity and inclusion. Yet, there is a clear competitive incentive for increasing diversity on campus as it prepares students to enter into the workforce. As current UMD President Wallace D. Loh states, “In this global economy, our graduates will be expected to collaborate on the job as part of diverse teams.”⁸⁰ The project of expanding student diversity to include more students of color, international students, and gender and sexuality minorities becomes another marketing point in the neoliberal development strategy of the university.

Finally, a campus community establishes a standard of appropriate behavior for students by which the university can monitor and control the campus. Every freshman is given a handbook that explains what they are and are not allowed to do while going to the university. It details the campus’ disciplinary procedures and instructs student proctors to enforce these rules within the residence halls. The university has also expanded its administrative presence into College Park in order to monitor students who live off-campus in public-private partnerships and College Park neighborhoods. The UMD Code of Student Conduct now applies throughout College Park and the campus police force’s jurisdiction includes an ever increasing portion of the city.

As the university develops into College Park, it needs the cooperation of the local residents to keep going. UMD’s development could grind to a halt if residents

⁸⁰Seabolt, Kristen. "University of Maryland Continues to Make Strides as National Leader in Diversity and Inclusion." UMD Right Now. Last modified September 15, 2015. <https://www.umdrightnow.umd.edu/news/university-maryland-continues-make-strides-national-leader-diversity-and-inclusion>

band together to stop the university from encroaching into its neighborhoods or pass legislation to keep students from renting houses off-campus. A local county councilman has already threatened to pass legislation doing just that due to students partying and disturbing their neighbors.⁸¹ The university appeases the resident's anxieties by extending its disciplinary apparatus into off-campus student housing so that they can "promote family-friendly behavior in local neighborhoods."⁸² The campus and the city are supposed to be safe places that provide security and a good environment for learning. To maintain this atmosphere of safety, the university needs to develop the power to control and manage risk within the student population.⁸³ These risk-management strategies include the ability to expel students who break the rules and threaten the university community wherever it may be.

The university community is a place where the excellent student is courted and invited to UMD. If she follows the rules, takes part in her community, does well in school, and manages to keep her finances together, she will graduate with a degree from an excellent university that will help her find a job in the knowledge economy. At least, that is the ideal for the university, but the neoliberal dream is threatened by a sluggish economy and student poverty.

The Great Recession made it harder than ever for college graduates to find jobs. According to The Institute for College Access And Success (ICAAS), the

⁸¹ Domen, John. "Battle Raging Over Student Rentals In College Park." CBS DC. Last modified July 16, 2014. <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2014/07/16/battle-raging-over-student-rentals-in-college-park/>

⁸² "Housing and Development." The University District - College Park City-University Partnership. Last accessed February 2016. <http://collegeparkpartnership.org/housing-development/>

⁸³ Jennifer Doyle, *Campus Sex, Campus Security*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2015. 28.

unemployment rate for graduates has been above 7%, with a peak of 9.1% in 2010.⁸⁴

As the prices of tuition and textbooks continue to rise, students are forced to take on massive student loan debt just to attend college. ICAAS reports that the average reported debt of Maryland's new graduates grew 118% between 2004 and 2014 -- more than twice the national growth rate for the same period.⁸⁵

Things today have gotten so bad that students are cutting their budgets for food and becoming food insecure. The number of food banks on campuses has increased from one in 2007 to 121 food banks in 2014.⁸⁶ The University of Maryland is no stranger to this problem as it opened its own campus pantry in 2014.⁸⁷ Middle-income students that have financial support from parents or family can somewhat weather the storm, but low-income students are facing a crisis where they struggle to survive while getting a college degree.

All the while, students have less and less say over where they can live on or near campus. The median gross rent for off-campus housing was \$1,471 in 2014 and made up 47.4% of the household income taken home by residents.⁸⁸ On-campus rent is slightly better with students being charged between \$700 and \$800 a month, but

⁸⁴ "Student debt and the class of 2014." The Institute for College Access and Success. Last modified October 2015. ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2014.pdf 2-3.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁶ Bahrapour, Tara. "More college students battle hunger as education and living costs rise." The Washington Post. Published on April 9, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/more-college-students-battle-hunger-as-education-and-living-costs-rise/2014/04/09/60208db6-bb63-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html

⁸⁷ "UMD Campus pantry provides food assistance for campus community." Department of Student Affairs. Last modified April 6, 2015. <https://www.studentaffairs.umd.edu/news/umd-campus-pantry-provides-food-assistance-for-campus-community>

⁸⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. "2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates" using American FactFinder to look up College Park City, Maryland. February, 2016.

there is no guarantee of housing.⁸⁹ Students are faced with gambling on finding space on campus or hoping to scrape together enough money to live nearby campus in a private apartment. Alternatively, they can find a place to live outside the DC area, but the added commute to the university adds another barrier for low-income students. Going between one's job, school, and home is difficult enough when they are close by. If the three are spread out, students waste precious time sitting in traffic.

The university's cultural project is faced with a tension of making itself more diverse while being increasingly unaffordable for low-income people -- many of whom are the very people of color, gender and sexual minorities, and international students that the university wants to attract. The university wants to give Maryland a workforce ready to compete globally, but an ever increasing amount of qualified Marylanders can't attend the flagship university because they are struggling to get by. Those who are able to attend are encouraged to think of themselves as citizens while being placed under a disciplinary apparatus that they have little control over. These very tensions made the conditions ripe for the creation of CHUM. It is a cooperative created with the purpose of housing those that cannot afford to live in College Park. It shares resources to help students pay for rent, utilities, and food. It gives its members full control over the kind of community they want to live in. It is a response to the university's neoliberal project.

⁸⁹ "Proposed Residence Hall Fees for 2016-2017." Department of Resident Life, last accessed February 2016. <http://reslife.umd.edu/housing/housingfees/>

Chapter 3: "Sound like a fantasy? It isn't."

As the university built dorms and developers constructed luxury student housing, Co-Op Housing University of Maryland (CHUM) envisioned a completely different reality for College Park. On its website, CHUM members write that they strive to create an organization where residents live in affordable high-density houses, democratically manage their own affairs, create a sustainable culture, and maintain a community in spite of a transient student population. They are actively working to build a zero-equity cooperative where a non-profit organization owns property that it cannot sell for a profit. They cite cooperatives in Boulder, Colorado, Bloomington Indiana, and Takoma Park, Maryland to show that this reality is possible. They boldly proclaim, "Sound like a fantasy? It isn't."

Yet, CHUM is a fundamentally different kind of cooperative than the examples they provide online. They are a student cooperative. The organization rents all its housing units while other cooperatives own their properties. Membership in CHUM rotates yearly due to students graduating, studying abroad, and moving. Other cooperatives enjoy a relatively stable population. With these organizational constants, it is important to understand how CHUM manages to actualize its vision of affordable housing and community. In this chapter, I explore the cooperative economic backbone of CHUM and the structures that sustain it. At its core, CHUM works because it is able to reduce the cost of living in College Park through a variety of cooperative economic practices. I show how the cooperative is affordable to students by looking at how CHUM manages its rent, bills, food, shared labor, and property. I discuss how these cooperative economic practices help create a culture that in turn

sustains the practices that make them possible. In particular, I explore how CHUM members reshape the space that they occupy to facilitate a cooperative community among themselves.

CHUM's Economic Backbone

CHUM bills itself as a cooperative community that is open to people who will contribute to the cooperative in ways specified in the CHUM membership contract. This includes paying rent and bills, taking part in house meetings, and actively participating in CHUM's culture in different ways -- including doing chores, joining committees, and volunteering with the organization. Most of the cooperative members I met were University of Maryland students in their early twenties -- with the exception of a small handful of people who were graduate students, not going to school and working full-time, or pursuing education at a vocational school. The cooperative was majority white and skewed towards female -- though men, women, and gender nonconforming individuals who self-identified as Black, Latino, Bangladeshi, and Asian-American were present. During interviews with CHUM members, students indicated that almost everyone who lived in CHUM relied on a mixture of job income and parental support. Few people could think of members who didn't work at least part-time. Given this population, one of the main draws for joining CHUM is the affordable housing in an otherwise unaffordable area.

Rent, Utilities, and FIRE

CHUM's major advantage as a housing provider is its ability to keep rent well below the median gross rent of College Park. According to the CHUM website, rent in a double room ranges from \$260 to \$390 per month, while rent for a single room

ranges from \$375 to \$515.⁹⁰ Housing prices go even lower for people willing to make their rooms triples and quads. The benefits of grouping up also carry over to utilities as residents are able to pool their resources together to keep electricity, gas, water, internet, and TV costs from \$30 to \$60 a month.

In the past, CHUM has considered pushing at the boundaries of College Park's house zoning laws by placing more than five residents at a house. In College Park, a brothel-era law from the 1920s states that a residence can have a maximum of five unrelated people living together at a time. Every year, the City of College Park sends an inspector to CHUM houses in order to ensure that they are living at this limit. Landlords are supposed to give residents one-day notice before an inspector arrives. Upon receiving this notice, CHUM members would have to scramble to ensure that everything appears to be in order. Houses would have to make it look as if only five people live there. Rooms without windows would be remade to look like storage spaces, those with windows would become guest rooms. Any cooperative signage or system indicating that more than five people live in a house would have to be removed and hidden. One member recalled discussing this possibility and the difficulty of making it happen: "It would be a hassle to do the night before or the morning of. I remember talking about how we would need to carry things upstairs and doubling up beds. It sucks. I wish that it wasn't a rule."

This discussion about the law shows a fundamental difference between CHUM and other housing options in the area. Residents in CHUM are able to reshape their living conditions to meet their needs. One CHUM resident explained: "In

⁹⁰"Cooperatives." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08. <http://chum.coop/cooperatives.html>

general, CHUM does accommodate for people in ways an apartment wouldn't. They have regulations to follow. Apartments are designed to be a certain way. CHUM's rooms and houses are altered to what is needed. We can make a room a double or triple. We can even make it a quad if we organized internally." In this way, CHUM allows residents to enact values of democracy and self-determination by giving them the means to come together and reshape the conditions of housing, rental rates, and structure in the area.

In addition to rent and utilities, CHUM residents pay in \$10 a month to the Financial Investment and Rent Emergency (FIRE) fund. The purpose of FIRE is to create a safety net for those who can't pay their bills. As one member of the Finance Committee explained it, CHUM lives by the principle "you can't pay, you can't stay." If one is not able to pay, it throws the cooperative into disarray. CHUM is currently in the process of figuring out how to buy a house, but since CHUM doesn't own its own properties yet, it has to pay landlords at the end of the month regardless of the circumstances. Students with low incomes are forced into difficult financial positions by covering the cost of delinquent residents. FIRE serves to mitigate these disasters.

CHUM provides as much aid as it can to students who cannot pay their rent with the goal of helping low income students who have to pay their way through college. Once or twice a year, a CHUM member falls on hard times because they get fired from their job or they can't work as many hours as they need to. FIRE allows these students to borrow some money in the short-term if they pay the cooperative back. A member of the Finance Committee explained that they help residents who cannot pay rent brainstorm possible alternatives:

If they can't pay, we give them chances. Can you babysit? Is there anything on campus you can do? Well alright, you can choose, do you need a payment plan? Can you just pay something? If you can't pay at all, within ten to twelve weeks, can you pay then? We encourage payment plans. Every week you give something. We try to give people options first before we think about evicting. What I suggested to one kid that I've done and another CHUM member has done, it's kind of risky and a last resort. If there's no other money, no other way their parents can help. Go and do clinical trials for the Silver Spring. Those type of studies together over a few months, you can get \$1200.

The stakes are high for students trying to pay their way in College Park. CHUM creates the conditions where students facing desperate times can put off losing their housing and still attend the university. FIRE mitigates the inability to pay during these periods and CHUM members help borrowers find alternative revenue streams to help pay back their loan from CHUM. It is a built-in safety net that allows students to survive through conditions of hardship imposed due to a bad labor market, infrequent hours, or other unforeseen conditions. It is a continuation of CHUM's ability to reshape their conditions of housing by grouping together.

Ultimately, this ability has its limits. If a CHUM member is unable to pay rent, they are forced to leave the cooperative. Members told me that in years past people in the cooperative up and left because they didn't have the money to pay their rent. In those moments, the disaster that FIRE is supposed to mitigate reemerges: "Suddenly we're stuck with finding a replacement and we're stuck with using FIRE to pay the landlords. And we're losing money." That said, when everyone is able to pay, CHUM serves as a bulwark against the area's high housing costs and lets students attend school: "CHUM helps make things more affordable. I wouldn't live in College Park without CHUM. A person that used to go here says that apartment prices here are the same as in NYC and this is bumfuck nowhere."

Food

Food is another major shared monthly expense -- averaging about \$80 per person.⁹¹ A CHUM house pools together money every month in order to buy shared food for the whole house -- this food is called General Use Food (GUF). Food that is for personal use, such as snacks, is called non-GUF food (NGUF) . The two kinds of food are kept separated throughout the cooperative houses. One house had a large GUF fridge and two smaller NGUF fridges. Other houses maintained the separation by having a special shelf dedicated to NGUF while the rest of the space was used for GUF.

One CHUM member explained that GUF was the main source of food for CHUM houses. She relied on GUF food because she didn't have a car and couldn't make it to the grocery stores in the area. She said that when NGUF accumulated and took over the common space, it was generally a symptom of grocery problems in the house -- ones that threatened her food security. GUF, at its core, served as a guaranteed food source for CHUM members who may otherwise be food insecure.

Each house has its own procurement strategy for GUF. One house pooled its grocery money together every month and went on a shopping trip to Costco. Another house preferred to buy in bulk from an area distributor. A member from that house told me about the merits of buying food in bulk over driving every month : "It means we don't actively have to seek food out. It's cheap and cuts down on food waste. It's delivered here and we don't have to rely on someone having a car. It's really nice." Most houses take on a mixed strategy of buying from grocery stores and bulk buying. At a CHUM community potluck, members told me about the variety of things they

⁹¹ "Cooperatives." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08. <http://chum.coop/cooperatives.html>

bought. People joked that riding around with fifty pounds of lentils was a common occurrence for CHUM. One woman told me that they had “CHUM portions” of foods like cheese: “It’s like a human baby made of cheese! That’s a CHUM portion.”

Some houses chose to supplement their grocery stock further because they were concerned with amount of unused food wasted in the food production system. They saw their supplementation as one way to combat these inefficiencies. One house subscribed to a food recovery network that gave them “gleaned” produce -- the produce leftover after a field of crops is harvested. A group of CHUM houses practiced dumpster diving in teams of two. People went to a dumpster by a local grocery store and rescued food that looked edible. Sometimes they came home empty handed, other times they came back with eight dozen eggs and boxes of bananas. During an interview, an active diver explained that these practices aren’t meant to replace GUF, but rather allow CHUM members to practice sustainable living and cut down on corporate food waste. He admitted that part of it was fun too: “My friend is a dumpster whisperer. It’s awesome to come home with a ton of food.” This diver enjoyed the act of going out to a dumpster with his friends and bringing back an impressive haul to the amazement of his roommates.

GUF food is used to prepare shared meals for people in CHUM. Houses cook meals for their residents at least five times a week. The cooking system at CHUM differs from house-to-house but ultimately follows a set structure. For five days out of the week, CHUM members pick one cooking and one cleaning shift. People who don’t know their way around the kitchen or simply don’t want to learn how to cook in bulk quantities double up on cleaning shifts. Cooks make food for the house using the

GUF food supply and cleaners clean up after the cooks are finished. The type of meal differs from house to house, but CHUM usually serves vegan meals. As one member explained: “We do vegan meals. We try to have one protein, one carb, and one vegetable each night. It usually happens. It’s decent food.” When the food is done, CHUM members sit and eat together. Though scheduling conflicts get in the way of the whole house coming together every day, each house tries to have a fully attended family-style meal once a week.

Potlucks happen every Sunday night and rotate weekly between the five houses. These potlucks give CHUM members from across the organization a chance to come and eat together. Students sit together in circles and talk about subjects ranging from leftist politics to their work to problems in the cooperative. Food is central to the potluck and everyone grabs second and third portions of food throughout the night. Everyone who attends brings a dish from their own house, though the host house is responsible for providing the main meal. At the potlucks I attended, dishes ranged from snacks like popcorn and animal crackers to larger entrees like lasagna, vegetable curry, udon noodle soup, and vegetable rice. Some houses even brought homemade and store-bought desserts like pie, brownies, and cake. Similarly to house meals, the food is generally vegan and non-vegan items are labeled as such. At one potluck, a woman walked around announcing “This pie is not vegan!” throughout the night.

There are multiple benefits to CHUM’s shared cooking arrangement. One member explained that having everyone cook clears up time for other activities: “I don’t have enough time to cook for myself every night. It’s one less thing not to

worry about. Everyone's pitching in. It frees up a lot of time." Students busy with school and jobs are able to help one another eat well on a budget by coming together and taking turns cooking. Another member explained that shared food promotes a family atmosphere for CHUM members: "It's like Thanksgiving dinner every night! Everyone is nice. It's something I didn't have every day growing up. It's really nostalgic for some people." Another member cited the communal benefits of shared meals: "House dinners are cool. Everyone is home and people like it. At meals, everyone is nice. Same at potlucks and at events. Community building is what that falls under."

CHUM's collective food ownership provides students with a guaranteed quality meal at a time when students around the country face increasing food insecurity. By pooling resources together and shopping in bulk collectively, a house is able to reduce food costs in the cooperative to \$80 a month per person. This lowered cost of living is coupled with an increased communal feeling for people in the cooperative. Food preparation is a shared chore and communal food is exchanged regularly at cooperative potlucks and house dinners. These sharing strategies not only save CHUM members time and energy, but also deepen interdependence and social bonds in the cooperative. CHUM members become reliant on one another for dinner five times a week and are able to come together to share meals in a space that is dedicated for friendly interaction. Furthermore, the collective decision over how to get food allows members to share their values with one another by taking part in local CSAs or dumpster diving. GUF thus serves as a cohesive binding force that keeps

cooperative members in conversation with one another while providing the benefit of food security and time saving through shared cooking labor.

Shared Labor

CHUM members also engaged in shared labor by divvying up chores in their houses. Chores generally involved cleaning different areas of the house like the bathroom, kitchen, living room, and miscellaneous places like stairs and back porches. One CHUM member explained that people understood cleaning to be a constant process: “If someone makes a giant mess in the kitchen on Thursday after you’ve cleaned on Wednesday, it’s your job to clean that mess.” Sometimes houses had special chores they assigned to people such as baking food or cleaning a particularly undesirable area. One CHUM member explained that part of his chores was acting as a handyman for his house: “Our hot water heater broke and it needed specific parts to get fixed so I fixed that. The landlord was not competent at getting it fixed. Our range went out, the dishwasher stopped working, the washer and dryer broke, I had to rebuild the front steps.”

Different houses used different chore systems. Some people used a chore wheel and assigned two chores a week per person. Others had a volunteer sign-up system that they kept track of using a simple sheet of paper that they hung in a common space. Other houses tried more unconventional approaches. One house piloted a system of assigning chores at the beginning of the semester, but the system broke down when chores were unevenly distributed. Chores that would take members a few minutes were counted the same as longer chores that took hours. The house had to readjust chore distribution to account for this discrepancy. Another house tried a

point-based system where people were given points for completing their chores every month. The system worked well during the summer, but ultimately failed when people kept putting off their chores until the end of the month and racking up a full point score.

Houses had different rules for enforcing their chores. In some houses, there were chore reminders hanging on the walls of the area to be cleaned. These reminders explained the basic barebones that a person had to do daily, a more intensive task they had to do weekly, and a particularly laborious thing they had to do at the end of the month. For example, a person might just tidy up the restroom daily, but they may need to clean the shower curtains monthly or clean the bathtub weekly.

One house had a special “House Mom” to make sure everything was in order: “Anybody can be a House Mom. That person checks each week to make sure people have done the chores on their sheet. And they take the garbage out. They’re our mom. *laughs*” The “House Mom” was responsible for making sure that chores were done in the house and the role was regularly rotated as part of the chore wheel so both men and women occupied the role. While the role may seem to perpetuate a rigid stereotyping of the “nagging” mother, I argue that this role exemplified the important insight that, just like physical labor, emotional labor ought to be dispersed throughout the house. By rotating the task of chore enforcement between different members, the house recognized that the task of making sure chores were done was as taxing on an individual as cleaning the floor or grocery shopping. Reminding people to do their chores when they’re already busy with school and work is an awkward job that may make people feel resentful towards the “House Mom”. The rotation of the chore

helped make sure one person wasn't overloaded with the responsibility and that the emotional labor that was traditionally taken on by women was now shared equally among genders.

The "House Mom" is just one example of how CHUM members are given the room to experiment with chore systems and ensure that they are working correctly. Weekly house meeting are another avenue. At these meetings, CHUM members come together to discuss issues pertinent to the house. Every meeting I attended had a section on chores and checking in on how they were going. Not doing chores is a common issue. One CHUM member explained: "There are good weeks and bad weeks. People have classes, work, and jobs so things come up. We're usually good about getting it done by the end of the week." When things don't work, CHUM members adjust the process by talking about it at the house meeting:

C: I completely forgot about chores. I will get to them after this.

B: I started cleaning the living room but stopped. I'll finish tonight.

H: I didn't do mine.

C: We need to be better about remembering chores. House awareness.

O: How should we do it?

E: Last time, we did our chores last minute.

B: But at least it got done. We should send a group.me reminder before the meeting and make sure people do their chores before we meet.

Q: I can send that reminder. I used to send an email reminding people to do their chores last year.

In this case, CHUM members had a consistent problems of not having chores done before their house meeting. Before they assigned their chores for the week, they took turns saying whether they had done the chore assigned to them from the last week. Many members had partially completed the chores or not done them at all, so they decided to bring up the issue as a "house awareness" that the house should work on and pay attention to in the coming weeks. In the case above, the house seemed to

finish chores when they were given a concrete deadline, so they decided to create a reminder system.

The house meeting itself could be an avenue for fixing chore problems. One house faced a dish problem where an unknown group of people left their dishes in the sink without washing them. In spite of addressing the issue like the members in the excerpt above, the perpetrators did not change their behavior. It took a series of lengthy house meetings about the issue to achieve the desired result. A CHUM member explained: “People got better about it. We got tired of talking about it constantly. House meetings can be short and sweet. Other times they drag on for hours. Oh my god! We have lives and homework to do. People not doing their dishes got it in their heads that it was important to do it because we had so many meetings about it. And no one got singled out, I don’t think.” The very act of having a house meeting about the same topic over and over again had the offenders change their behaviors because they saw how important the issue was to other members of the house and the amount of time their behavior would take up weekly.

Some people in CHUM felt upset that others don’t feel the need to keep the house clean. A woman in CHUM said: “People forget to do chores all the time. We need to be better and stress it's important to do. We need to communicate how cleanliness can be important to other people and their well-being.” To some people, a clean environment was necessary to feel at ease and be able to function in their home space. One member explained that the conflict over cleanliness happened because people with different backgrounds understood the concept of cleanliness differently. He had grown up in an environment with two parents who had mental disabilities.

“People have a hard time understanding how people’s brains works so radically different,” he said, “they see a pile of dishes and go ‘Aaah!’” He explained that some people who neglected to do dishes didn’t do so out of ill intent, but rather because they didn’t have the executive function to do dishes, got stressed out by the mess, or because they grew up in environments where doing chores wasn’t important.

He posited that the reasons people join CHUM may also give rise to the conflict. Certain members of his house had joined CHUM because they shared the ideals of the cooperative. Others joined because they were broke and needed a cheap place to stay. The CHUM member stated that a dirty dish becomes a sign of disrespect against the collective for the former while it remains a task to complete later for the latter. He argued that while both types of members benefited from CHUM’s low rent, the more idealistic members of the cooperative could find other avenues for housing in College Park. This analysis belies a class tension within the cooperative. CHUM must ensure that at least 75% of the membership qualifies as low-income and 20% qualify as very-low income due to its commitment to be a housing cooperative for low-income residents. These differences in income may give rise to conflict due to different social norms for cleaning or the amount of time one group has to clean over the other. People with more wealth may seek to enforce norms and codes of behavior that people with less wealth may see as unnecessary.

Despite these tensions, shared labor provides many of the same benefits that shared food does. Students who otherwise have to work and go to school are relieved of the burden of cleaning an entire house by themselves. One student remarked that she was happy “to come home to a (hopefully) clean house” every day. Another

woman explained that conflicts over chores helped gauge how well housemates communicated among themselves. One time, she had an especially difficult period in her life and stayed in one spot for a whole day without moving or changing her clothes. Her friend C came to check on her and learned that she was having a hard time. Later in the day, she received a text message from E aggressively asking her to clean up a dirty pot full of crusted-over chili that had been in the sink for a couple days. She got mad and cleaned the pot because she knew it was the right thing to do. She was angry that E ignored her feelings. She went on:

E came downstairs and gave me a really big hug after I finished cleaning the pot. She apologized for being so aggressive. It's nice to know about the little things. I know the dirty pot bothers her and she knows that her aggressiveness bothers me. C took the time to explain to E that I was having a time and E understood and listened. It's about communication.

The immediacy of an incomplete chore pushed two members into a conflict that could have ended in a disastrous fight about a dirty pot. Since channels of communication were open in the group, the two members managed to mitigate their anger toward one another while also resolving the unfinished task. Chores served as a way to have frank and open discussions about cooperative space, how it was used, and the users that occupied it.

By sharing chores, CHUM members are able to disperse physical and emotional labor throughout the cooperative. Members are each given a specific area to clean each week, but are also tasked with ensuring that all members of the cooperative follow through on their assignments. This system helps ensure no one person is overburdened with the responsibility of cleaning the house or ensuring that the cooperative functions as it ought to. Through this process of shared responsibility,

members are given the chance to discuss issues within the house and hopefully resolve them amicably. In effect, sharing chores becomes a good way to ensure that members of different CHUM houses come together and engage with one another in building the cooperative community.

A house of one's own?

CHUM rents all of its houses from landlords in College Park. They cannot afford to build a house from scratch nor can they buy a house. Ensuring that a rental house is ideal for cooperative use is paramount for the organization. When CHUM considers renting a new house, they schedule a visit with the potential landlord in order to get a better sense of the quality of the house, safety issues, tenant's rights issues, the space's potential for cooperative activities, the house's relation to other parts of College Park, and the landowner's willingness to rent to a collective.

One member had experience doing building safety inspections as part of his professional training. He lamented the quality of the housing stock in College Park: "I wish the quality of housing stock was better, but that's a problem with the housing stock in the country in general. Houses are falling apart, but their cost continues to appreciate. My house is an example. Things break a lot and the landlords aren't the best." During his time at this particular CHUM house, he had to fix a lot of the house's steps, piping, and counters because the landlords were unresponsive. Another knowledgeable member explained that the low-quality housing stock led to safety issues: "If there's basement rooms I make sure there's windows so people living there can crawl out in case of a fire. That the dryer's not next to the only exit of the house. The number one reason peoples' houses catch on fire is because the lint trap isn't

cleaned out and it catches on fire. Foundation issues, all that type of stuff.” The low quality of housing stock forced CHUM members to make choices between houses that were falling apart or were built in an incredibly unsafe way.

If a house is safe enough to live in, CHUM members have to ensure that they are getting a quality landlord. In order to get a sense of the landlord, they ask questions like “How do you feel about the landlord? Are they really strict or really chill? Will they drag their feet when it comes to maintenance issues?” Some CHUM members on the Housing Committee -- the committee responsible for procuring new houses for the organization -- explained that they have to be really knowledgeable when it comes to landlords. One senior member explained, “A lot of kids who come to CHUM, they don’t know anything. This is their first landlord, they always lived in dorms.” The House Committee teaches them when a landlord can enter the property, what the landlord can and cannot evict them for, and the fact that landlords need to pay them interest for their housing deposit.

Once a house and the landlord have been vetted, CHUM members have to consider whether the house is suitable for members. CHUM members visiting the house have to get a sense for how many rooms there are and whether they can hold more than one person. They assess whether the rent is affordable with minimal overcrowding. They look for big common spaces that would be good for organizational events like potlucks, General Body Meetings, and parties. They assess the house’s closeness to the Metro and to different parts of the University of Maryland campus. A CHUM member explained, “We try to get houses that are close together. If we got houses on the other side of College Park and campus, it’d be too

hard to get there for potlucks. It's one of the reason we don't have houses in the Hollywood neighborhood beyond Berwyn. It's just too far away. We try to keep them close together."

Finally, members make sure that the neighborhood is safe by checking online to make sure that there hasn't been an "abnormal" amount of recent break ins, muggings, or car robberies in the area. A member admitted that it was difficult to find any place without crime in College Park, but that they wanted to make sure that they lived in areas that were less likely to be hit. In addition to the online check, members try to make sure all possible CHUM residents would feel safe in the area. One member told me that a previous house was located next to a fraternity. The fraternity men were disrespectful towards the cisgender and transgender women, transgender men, and nonbinary CHUM members that lived in the house. One time, a member had to fend off fraternity members with a stick because they wouldn't leave them alone. CHUM members now attempted to get a sense for the neighbors by meeting and talking to them before moving into a house.

Once this extensive vetting process is complete, CHUM members have to decide whether they want to add on to CHUM or replace one of their existing houses. If they decide to add on, they have to make sure they have enough interested members to occupy the space and keep the rent affordable. Over the years, CHUM has gone through a number of different houses before finding its current crop. They left the previous dwellings due to safety concerns, finding a better house, or not having enough members to fill the property.

CHUM currently rents five houses around College Park. Every one of the houses has a unique back story and a nickname. The Mad Ox is named after one of CHUM's founders, Rachael Maddox. The Crow's Nest is named after the previous tenants decorative stuffed crow collection. Red Debra's is named after the house mascot, a papier-mâché woman named Debra. As one of the most northern houses in College Park, Winterfell is named after the most northern town in the show Game of Thrones. Finally, the Ghost Office is named after a previous CHUM house called the Toast Office.⁹² Four of the houses are large family-style homes with three floors and one is a smaller two-story townhouse. Two houses are closer to the North side of campus -- where a majority of the engineering and science buildings are located. The other three are closer to the south side of campus and a short walk from the Metro. All houses are within walking distance to UMD's free shuttle system. All the houses share the features of a common room area, a kitchen, and a dining room.

The rental arrangement is less than ideal for CHUM. On their website, the cooperative contrasts itself to the "single family property owners who often charge high rents for a small supply of poorly maintained properties."⁹³ CHUM wants to be a housing provider that serves as an alternative to these options, but currently rents from the very people they are striving to replace. Fortunately, this arrangement is not permanent. While FIRE's primary use is to help cover the cost of living for members, the \$10 taken from everyone's rent is also saved to help CHUM put down money for

⁹² "Houses." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.
<http://chum.coop/houses.html>

⁹³ "History." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.
<http://chum.coop/#history>

a house down payment. When I interviewed CHUM members in the fall and winter of 2015, they had just decided to move towards buying a house. A member of the Finance Committee explained the impetus behind buying a house: “What’s going to make or break CHUM is owning property. How can we give people affordable housing prices without owning property? Land is power here in College Park. My landlord and his wife own a bunch of houses in College Park. A few people own a bunch of the real estate in the City. Imagine if they had to compete with us.”

Buying a home is difficult enough as it is, but for students it’s even harder. One of the senior members of the Finance Committee explained that they needed a \$80,000 down payment on the house. FIRE alone would not be able to cover it, so they would have to turn to alternative funding sources.⁹⁴ A member of the Finance Committee created a business plan that CHUM could take to the City of College Park in the hopes of convincing the City to help CHUM buy a house. She explained: “Apparently they like us a lot. They’re willing and a few landlords are willing to fund us to help us own a home. And, there’s been talk of some landlords letting us rent to own a home.” Even with that funding, the member presumed that getting the house would be a long term goal. CHUM membership fluctuates every two to three years and the expertise that comes with those members vanishes. “There’s a lot of reinventing the wheel,” she said, “I remember last year it was me learning what we can do as a nonprofit with tax exempt status. We can take money from the government to help us achieve our goals. But no one from the year before who had

⁹⁴ A grant from the national cooperative organization North American Students of Cooperation organization was one option, but getting funding from them was competitive as CHUM was just one of several small cooperatives trying to expand and establish permanence.

left who was aware of all this told anyone. That type of stuff. There's going to be some setbacks."

Getting the house is one thing, keeping it is another. The benefit of renting houses is that CHUM technically doesn't have to worry about major repairs to the infrastructure of the house. If a water heater breaks or a window is broken, the landlord will take care of it. If they owned a house, CHUM members would be completely responsible for upkeep and maintaining the house while keeping rents low. These are difficult risks and responsibilities that CHUM is only beginning to explore and understand in their journey towards home ownership.

CHUM ultimately decided to rent-to-buy a house they called "The Flamingo Paradise" due to the kitschy flamingo ornaments left by the landlords. The house is roughly ten minutes away from the Metro on foot and about eight minutes from the closest CHUM house. The house boasts large common areas, hardwood floors, a compost system, a large back patio, a fireplace, and a front and rear garden. The Flamingo Paradise represents a bold step in CHUM's attempt to create an affordable cooperative alternative in College Park. The cooperative had always depended on renting houses from landlords, but they could finally occupy a space of their own. They would be free to alter the house to suit their needs, improve the condition of the house, and make basic repairs on their own terms. Members I talked to were ecstatic when they thought about owning a house: "I love that idea. It's my first time hearing about it. The end goal is to own your home and to rent them. It'd be truly providing people with an alternative to landlords and commodified spaces. It would entrench CHUM even more into the community. It would not be so easily dissolvable at that

point.” With this new house, CHUM could begin to meet its goal of an affordable housing alternative that is democratically managed and cooperatively owned.

The power of a student cooperative

A student cooperative is very much like the students that inhabit it. It is in the process of growing and figuring itself out. It has aspirations, but may still be murky on how to achieve them. The point is that it is working towards attaining them.

Unexpected circumstances and problems may be thrown its way, but it will hopefully have the fortitude and structure to overcome these challenges. The strength of CHUM’s cooperative economic backbone is that it allows the cooperative to grow towards its goal of zero-equity housing while providing students with an affordable experience in the meantime. It is a resilient structure that has grown and matured since CHUM’s founding in 2007.

Unlike other cooperatives, CHUM cannot rely on long-term membership, ownership of property, or capital investment. This may seem like a detriment at first, but it is actually a benefit. As a small cooperative, CHUM is forced to innovate to meet its goals while providing students with an affordable housing experience.

Grouping up, sharing food, sharing labor, and maintaining FIRE are adaptations that help the cooperative continue to survive in spite of members leaving and new members joining cyclically. They are structures that are passed down across generations of students. They bear the seeds of a community that arises from engaging in cooperative labor. The seeds blossom and incentivize members to maintain these structures and grow them across time. Yet, community is not simply

present within the structures in themselves. In the next chapter, I will examine how CHUM cultivates its community by way of recruitment, mediation, and mentorship.

Chapter 4: "A good fit for CHUM."

It has been seven years since CHUM moved into their very first house. This longevity is impressive in its own right, but it is especially significant given the high rates of failure among cooperatives. According to a nationwide survey of all worker cooperatives in the United States between 1977 and 1980, the median life of a cooperative is 5.8 years.⁹⁵ Gamson and Levin argue that one of the primary drivers for a cooperative's dissolution is the "the lack of a common culture of social contract in which there is a widely accepted set of values and processes that guide behavior."⁹⁶ Cooperative organizations start from a point where they may share a common desire for a cooperative culture, but this culture may never manifest itself. Instead, people espouse high-minded ideals about how a cooperative ought to work while the cooperative languishes due to the lack of shared values and agreed upon standard of conduct among the members.

At the point where cooperatives tend to fail, CHUM shows no sign of receding. It is thriving. During my interview with CHUM members, several people told me that there have been more people than ever interested in joining the cooperative. In this chapter, I argue that CHUM thrives due to the group's efforts to recruit a population that holds the cooperative's values. By doing so, CHUM lays the

⁹⁵ Robert Jackall and Joyce Crain, "The Shape of the Small Worker Cooperative Movement" in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984. 97.

While the data are out of date and the authors state that their survey is by no means a predictive indicator of the failure rates of cooperative enterprises, this number does stand as an imperfect measurement for the viability of cooperative institutions.

⁹⁶ Zelda F. Gamson and Henry M. Levin, "Obstacles to the Survival of Democratic Workplaces" in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984. 222.

base for a resilient cooperative culture that keeps the organization going from year to year. First, I look at how CHUM's New Membership Committee attempts to recruit what they call "a good fit for CHUM." I go on to show how the process of finding new members can lead to a homogeneity of identity and ideological views within the cooperative. I conclude by discussing how CHUM members try to combat this homogeneity through nontraditional recruitment practices like parties and house shows. I show that these practices not only help expand the pool of potential applicants to CHUM, but also help create a cooperative culture among new and existing members.

Finding a good fit

A member of the New Membership Committee looked me in the eyes and confidently smiled as she explained the importance of the committee: "We're the answer to the question of 'will CHUM survive this year or not?'" The New Membership Committee is endowed with the responsibility of reading through new and returning membership applications, deciding on who to accept, and placing the accepted applicants into houses based on their ability to pay and their lifestyle preferences. The committee serves as a bulwark that ensures that CHUM's cooperative culture functions as it is intended. They look to ensure that the people who join the cooperative hold the values that keep the cooperative functioning. Through this screening process, the New Membership Committee helps lay the groundwork for what Gamson and Levin call "a common culture of shared beliefs and understandings about appropriate behavior for members" of cooperatives.⁹⁷ This shared culture helps members stay aligned on the values of the cooperative and

⁹⁷ Ibid, 225.

ensure that the organization doesn't fall into self-destructive tendencies like infighting, bullying, the refusal to pay rent, or apathy. The committee ensures that people who join CHUM share the desire to live cooperatively and democratically, and this consensus on values helps ensure that members stay engaged in the cooperative.

Every winter, spring, and summer, the New Membership Committee meets to decide on who will be part of CHUM for the coming season. Committee members explained that they had the most control over who moved into CHUM for the fall season. Interested applicants would submit their applications in the spring semester. Since the school year was in session, the committee could get a jump on processing through these applications early and have more time to deliberate on who would be a good match. Finding housing for the spring and summer seasons proved to be more hectic as members left College Park when the school year wrapped up. The committee was short staffed as it scrambled to help fill housing gaps for members who were studying abroad, going home for vacation, moving out, or graduating.

The process for applying to CHUM is fairly straightforward. People first apply online, then go through an interview over the phone or in person. The online application comes in two parts -- an income disclosure form and an online questionnaire. The income disclosure asks you to check whether your total income in the most recent calendar year was less than \$37,650, between \$37,650 and \$49,200, and more than \$49,200. CHUM must ensure that at least 75% of the membership qualifies as low-income and 20% qualify as very-low income due to its commitment to be a housing cooperative for low-income residents. The online questionnaire consists of Applicant and Emergency Contact information (name, contact info, etc.),

six multiple choice questions about room placement, nine short-answer questions that help the cooperative “get to know you better,” and ten short-answer questions that help find a “good fit” house for the applicant.⁹⁸ Questions range from ones asking the applicant to show that they can match the expectations expected of someone who joins CHUM to ones about the applicant’s preferences for a quiet study environment.

After the application is submitted, the New Membership Committee meets to discuss who will “be a good fit” for the CHUM membership next year and decide on where these members will live. The first criteria for a good fit is whether someone can pay to live in CHUM. As the previous chapter shows, “if you can’t pay, you can’t stay” is incredibly important to the survival of the cooperative. If the applicant can pay, the committee looks at the applicant’s attitude towards cooperative life. One of the members in charge of running the committee explained, “Not many people know what a cooperative is and it's difficult to explain to UMD students. People who sign up to join CHUM don’t really know what it is. On my application, I said cooperative meant commie granola hippie brothel. *laughs* Once we describe a coop and tell them the responsibilities, we judge whether they’re enthusiastic about it.” The New Membership Committee doesn’t expect applicants to know what a cooperative is from the get-go. Instead, they look for students who they judge to be selfless and interested in living communally. They value the predisposition to cooperative values over knowledge about cooperatives.

The committee then looks at issues of personality and character. They need to decide on how well different member would get along with each other and group

⁹⁸ “Apply”. Co-Op Housing University of Maryland N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.
<http://chum.coop/apply.html>

them by house. One member explained that this process is a dizzying game of mixing and matching: “We have a giant spreadsheet with lots of questions. Is someone vegan? Do they take animals? It’s trying to balance a house. All these things can really disrupt a house.” With twenty five long-form and short-form response questions coming from as many as a hundred applicants a season, dealing with this vast amount of data proves difficult for a committee that consists of less than a dozen volunteers who work and go to school. “It’s a chicken running around headless, but we manage to do it every year,” a member of the committee joked.

The judgment of the New Membership Committee plays a huge role in figuring out whether a house will work or not. Most choices made by the committee are based on subjective calls of personality traits and the perceived fit with a cooperative environment. As one member on the committee explained, “New Membership holds a lot of power. There’s so much room for why a house is not working. The challenge is to check our biases when it comes to people. We’re still deciding on a way to objectively evaluate people. I’m personally proud of the people I’ve recruited and accepted. I think they’re fire.” Given this tremendous power, members of the committee have to create a honed sense for the internal dynamics of CHUM and what elements are necessary for people to thrive in the cooperative.

One member told me a story to show how New Membership decides whether an applicant will be a good fit or not. During one winter semester, a student planned to study abroad and leave her double room. As per CHUM policy, members were responsible for finding a sublet to carry out their lease, but were encouraged to consult with the committee. “Sometimes Craigslist sublets work out, sometimes they

don't," the member said, "last year, a sublet borrowed money and didn't pay it back and disappeared. It's been a problem since I've been here. It could totally be prevented. Most people who did that were subletters or were not thoroughly vetted. That's why New Membership is so much more important than people give it credit for." She went on to say how a CHUM member found two subletters off Craigslist. She encouraged this member to vet the new subletters, but wound up having to do it herself. The two subletters were ultimately rejected because one could not afford to pay the rent and the other wanted to live in a single, not a double. "If I had vetted them myself, I could have found that out from the get-go. CHUM works because you have people committed to making it work," she said, "it's so obvious when someone is here for free rent or other benefits. People have to pull their weight. It's blindingly obvious when people don't pull their weight."

As this member shows there is something that is "blindingly obvious" to her about people that apply to be a part of CHUM. People on the New Membership Committee have an internal sense of the kind of cooperative CHUM ought to be and the type of members that can make that cooperative work. This read on CHUM's internal culture helps create a consensus among the members on the committee on the kind of values and characteristics they need to look for in an applicant. By finding these characteristics in applicants and placing them into conducive home environments, the New Membership Committee members are able to keep the cooperative running smoothly.

While these characteristics are highly subjective and are based on the interpretation of the committee, I was able to distill some common elements of what

members look for based on my interviews. First, there are very basic signs of whether someone wants to live in a cooperative or not. Members of the committee can easily spot a red flag if an applicant reacts negatively to the prospect of living in a group home and working in a cooperative structure. Second, members of the committee are able to identify character traits that would negatively impact the cooperative based on their previous living experiences. The member that told me about people who were obviously not pulling their weight talked about how these members didn't show up to meetings, dragged their feet on paying the rent, and were hardly seen by other members of the cooperative. Members of the committee are able to mitigate against these kinds of people by checking their finances to ensure that they are able to pay and relying on their own internal sense of whether someone feels like they would work out when compared to previous members. It is a highly subjective take based on an applicant's response to the application questions, but members on the New Membership Committee go with their gut when they feel uneasy about someone based on their application or interview. New Membership makes sure to come together to check on these gut feelings and assure one another that they aren't overreacting. Granted, these feelings are by no means a guarantee that their read will be right. That's why the New Membership Committee is currently trying to figure out a set of objective criteria they can apply to their selection process. Based on my interviews, I managed to observe that the committee looks for members who are excited about the prospect of cooperative living, are good communicators, live and work well with people of different backgrounds, and have the time to take part in the cooperative. More often than not, the committee is able to create houses that fit well

together. As such, the New Membership Committee's consensus on what is good for CHUM determines just how well the cooperative will function from year to year.

The trouble with consensus

Gamson and Levin argue that while consensus is an essential component in making democratic cooperative organizations possible, it “may require from the outset substantial homogeneity among members.”⁹⁹ This homogeneity may manifest in different ways including shared life experiences and values, but it may also take a less salutary forms like hostility towards certain points of view or identities. CHUM tries to combat these versions by pledging to follow the cooperative principle of Voluntary and Open Membership -- meaning that the cooperative is open to everyone who can comply with the responsibility of membership “without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.”¹⁰⁰ Rachael Maddox's founding document also highlights the need to combat against the “discrimination against minorities in the U.S.” by committing to equal-opportunity acceptance in CHUM.¹⁰¹ In short, CHUM values race, class, gender, sexual, and ideological diversity in the cooperative.

These forms of diversity are front and center as part of CHUM's membership application process. The questionnaire asks people if they would be uncomfortable

⁹⁹ Zelda F. Gamson and Henry M. Levin, “Obstacles to the Survival of Democratic Workplaces” in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984. 95.

¹⁰⁰ “Cooperatives.” Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.
<http://chum.coop/cooperatives.html>

¹⁰¹ Rachel Maddox, *Co-op Housing Project: Action Plan & Resource Guide*. April, 2009. Web. August 8, 2015.
<http://socialeconomyaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Co-op-Housing-Project-Action-Plan.pdf>

living in a cooperative “alongside people from diverse orientations and backgrounds whose... identity and values may be different from yours.”¹⁰² This diversity practice doesn’t stop at the membership application, they are present throughout daily life in CHUM. A member who just recently joined the cooperative said, “at meetings, we ask people to state their pronouns. At any event, on Facebook, we say this is a safe space. We say that if people act like an asshole, we will kick them out and we do.” The member emphasized that CHUM will welcome anyone -- be they a member, friend, or guest -- regardless of their “racial background, sexual preference, gender identity, dietary preference, or class background.” While nobody had been an “asshole” in this member’s experience, he gave examples of people who would use slurs against minority populations, bully people, or invalidate other people’s identities and life experiences when I asked him to elaborate on what being an “asshole” meant. Safe spaces are thus places where everyone should feel welcome to participate without having to fear being insulted or their identity being questioned. While these spaces are traditionally associated with issues of gender and sexuality, the member’s understanding showed that safe spaces sought to protect all possible marginal identities within the cooperative.

While it is clear that CHUM takes great care to promote diversity by way of safe spaces and using people’s gender pronouns, I found that some CHUM members are dissatisfied with the ideological and racial diversity of the cooperative. Their issue

¹⁰² The full question reads: “In our housing co-ops you will be living and working alongside people from diverse orientations and backgrounds whose social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual identity and values may be different from yours. Do you think this will be a problem? Please elaborate.”

wasn't with how welcoming CHUM was to the members who already lived there, but with the fact that CHUM didn't recruit the racial or ideological diversity it sought to foster. People said the cooperative became ideologically and racially homogenous because of the way people found out about CHUM. It was one thing to make people feel safe in the cooperative and it was another to actually make sure that people lived there.

"We need some non-white people at this house"

During a house meeting, one member put it bluntly: "We need some non-white people at this house. We're so white." The lack of racial diversity came to a head in 2015 when G, a black woman in CHUM, was bothered by the lack of people of color in the organization. She posted a message on Facebook about it and got a variety of reactions. G's white housemate explained that she saw the reactions as really weird: "We're not actively keeping people out, but no one seemed to think [the lack of racial diversity] was a problem. People who tend to have low income are minorities, so why aren't we helping minorities. G was faced with silence. CHUM, prides itself as an open community, but yet members didn't seem to think that the lack of diversity was a problem." I asked this CHUM member if things had improved at all since G had brought up the issue. The member responded negatively, "It's changed a little bit. Thinking about my house. The demographics have changed. Other houses are majority is white. They don't even have a minority in some CHUM houses. I still think a majority in CHUM is still white females."

This housemate gave a damning account of the state of racial diversity in CHUM. The cooperative was built on the explicit goal of making sure non-white

people of color had access to affordable housing, but CHUM was currently failing to meet it. In *How Racism Takes Place*, George Lipsitz argues that white supremacy produces living conditions that are built to benefit white people. A history of segregation, redlining, and economic disinvestment in communities of color created conditions where “even poor people who are white live in better neighborhoods, attend better schools, and face less exposure to environmental hazards than many middle-class people who are Black.”¹⁰³ By failing to meet their racial diversity criteria, CHUM was unintentionally taking part in a history of the racial reconstruction of space to benefit white people. The advantages of CHUM’s cooperative space unevenly flowed to white people by virtue of the racial composition of the cooperative.

Surprisingly, G was very positive when I asked her to tell me about CHUM’s diversity in general. Perhaps she answered this way because she felt that the diversity at her house had improved, she didn’t want to give a negative impression of CHUM, or she genuinely felt that the diversity in CHUM had improved since she brought up the issue. She stated that CHUM’s goal was to build diversity and that her house had high diversity in it. She explained, “it’s ethnically diverse or people come from different financial backgrounds. Or they’re different from what I was exposed to growing up. Even their personalities can be different. Being part of CHUM exposed me to a lot more than I would have been exposed to in a dorm or a house.”

A CHUM-led survey of 23 members showed that 20 people thought racial diversity was a problem at CHUM. The survey showed that CHUM members thought that the organization had roughly four black people, three Asian people, and five

¹⁰³ George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place*, Philadelphia: Temple University. 2011. 35-36.

“other minorities” based on their personal read of CHUM’s racial diversity. A majority of the respondents attributed CHUM’s lack of racial diversity to a friend-of-friend word-of-mouth effect. A member explained, “A lot of people who came into CHUM are friends of people in CHUM. Unless you have people who are diverse you can’t bring them in.” The member stated that white people tend to have white friends and that CHUM’s word-of-mouth recruitment biased the potential recruiting pool towards white people. Fixing the problem of racial diversity in CHUM thus required fixing the ways in which people found out about CHUM.

I was surprised by CHUM’s problem with racial diversity because the cooperative excelled in gender and sexual diversity. According to a 2012 Gallup Poll, 3.4% of U.S adults identified as LGBT.¹⁰⁴ A 2015 internal survey of CHUM members showed that 5% of the cooperative identified as transgender and that 26% of the cooperative identified as either lesbian, queer, bisexual, or gay. Clearly, CHUM’s demographics on gender identity and sexuality far exceed the national numbers, yet CHUM lags behind the nation and the University of Maryland on race. The 2010 Census found that 72.4% of Americans were white while 27.6% were people of color.¹⁰⁵ According to UMD’s 2012 strategic plan for diversity, 34% of the undergraduate student body consisted of students of color -- with African Americans making up 12%, Asian Americans making up 15%, and Latin@ students making up

¹⁰⁴ Gary J. Gates and Frank Newport, "Special Report: 3.4% of U.S. Adults Identify as LGBT." Gallup. Last modified October 18, 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Humes, Karen R, Nicholas A. Jones, and Robert R. Ramirez. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010." US Census Bureau. Last modified March 2011.
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>

29% of the undergraduate student body.¹⁰⁶ In CHUM, 79% of the cooperative is white while 21% is people of color. This is alarming given CHUM's mission to provide affordable housing to minority populations who have been historically disenfranchised. Put simply, racial diversity was a problem for CHUM. Fixing this problem became paramount if CHUM hoped to meet its mission.

It's too radical/It's not radical enough

Two older member of CHUM lamented the lack of ideological diversity in CHUM -- though from completely opposite sides of the spectrum. Let's call them the conservative and the radical. The conservative complained that CHUM was too hostile to more conservative viewpoints while the radical disliked how much less activist CHUM had become. The conservative said, "There's an immense diversity of diversity markers, but it's homogenous in its political leanings. Sometimes when one holds the minority view, you get shot down. I wish people were more tolerant." He thought that CHUM had become "a safe space" where personal views were not to be challenged, but believed that this undermined the values of truth, scientific reasoning, and proper argumentation: "College is the time when people are most amenable to being challenged and changing their views." He stated that while the cooperative imagined itself to be a place that was open to diversity, it had the feeling of shutting people out who disagreed with the progressive political leanings of the membership.

On the flipside, the radical said that CHUM had "become a lot less openly queer, trans, and militant. CHUM feels more white and cishet than when I joined. It's

¹⁰⁶ "Transforming Maryland: Expectations for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion." The University of Maryland: College Park. Last modified 2012. <https://issuu.com/umaryland/docs/22628>

a lot less activist-y than I would like to see: few people are engaged in contemporary issues like sexism, catcalling, and race.” This member had come to CHUM by way of his activism in different student groups on campus. Students who were part of those groups lived in CHUM and had invited him in. Now, this member saw that there were fewer students involved in activism and the cooperative seemed more like a place to come home to relax rather than do social justice.

Both members tempered their feelings about the lack of ideological diversity. The conservative said that CHUM had welcomed libertarians and people who had worked for the CIA in the past. Likewise, the radical stated that while people were less actively engaged in social justice issues, the people who were engaged were very motivated and helped CHUM have a larger footprint on campus social life. And, he admitted that the supportive home space was a welcome break from his social justice work: “You’re not forced to use complicated activist language or be bathed in theories. It’s more of a reprieve. Social justice work and social justice people can get extremely overwhelming as you’re forced into the space all the time. CHUM’s more laid back like that now.”

These conflicting viewpoints reveal a tension in CHUM. Whether it is radical activism or listening to more conservative points of view, these members felt that the CHUM community was not doing enough to foster spaces where people could safely exercise their ideological diversity. This lack of space limits the cooperative from attracting the kind of people both students felt were necessary for the cooperative to be more in line with their vision. Granted, these two members don’t express the views of the cooperative as a whole. A new member of CHUM told me that he felt blessed

to find people “to discuss social issues and political matters. This house has strong stances on animal rights, the environment, and international stuff I won’t go in on the specifics with. I had to keep stuff to myself back home.” However, even in the face of this optimism, the radical’s and the conservative’s frustrations lead to the question of how CHUM can promote ideological diversity in the organization.

Guaranteeing ideological diversity in CHUM serves to ensure that the cooperative provides affordable housing to everyone outside of a niche social group. As the conservative argues, people who may not match with CHUM’s activist nature might feel unwelcome in the cooperative even if they badly need affordable housing. His fear is that CHUM’s hostility to different points of view will keep the cooperative from attracting anyone besides people on one side of the ideological spectrum. On the other hand, the radical feared that CHUM will become nothing more than a housing provider without an activist mission. CHUM would lose its identity as a countercultural institution that made sure to prioritize the well-being of minority identities in a world that was becoming increasingly hostile to them. At the heart of both these fears is that CHUM will stray from its core mission and devolve into an organization that bears no resemblance to the diverse and welcoming place that these two members joined. Ideological diversity ensures that the cooperative never goes that way because no one ideology will become dominant in the organization. Instead, members will be forced to communicate with one another and choose the best path forward for the cooperative.

Partying for diversity

CHUM's Outreach Committee is in charge of advertising to new members each semester. When the issue of diversity was brought to their attention, they began to advertise to more places on campus that the advertisers perceived as being bastions of racial diversity such as the Nyumburu Cultural Center. However, one person brought up the point that, "You can't just target people and say we need more of you." It's one thing to try and increase the racial diversity of CHUM and it's another to tokenize people and try to bring them in to fill some sort of quota. A member explained, "we need to keep advertising. We need to make sure people see it. We need to make sure people are more aware. We need to remain an open community." While advertising is the official way that CHUM reaches out to recruit new members, it does little to curtail the word-of-mouth phenomena. Certainly, students will see the advertisements, but unless they're especially interested in cooperatives, it's doubtful that they'll join a non-traditional form of housing and go through CHUM's lengthy application process.

When I interviewed CHUM members, they listed their friends as the number one reason that they got involved in CHUM -- whether it was a classmate, a coworker, or someone who was living in CHUM already. When friends talk to new members about CHUM, they're not just advertising the fact that the cooperative exists. They also give weight to the idea that living in CHUM will be a good fit for the member and lend credence to the idea that the cooperative arrangement actually works for the people who live there. Since most members who apply to CHUM don't know what a cooperative is, the friend's encouragement functions as a stamp of approval. It makes the cooperative housing scenario feel less strange and more

credible to people who are probably more used to dealing with university housing, rental agencies, and landlords.

Solving the word-of-mouth problem requires finding a way to give credence to the concept of cooperative housing while exposing a broader range of people to the cooperative. I found that CHUM accomplished both through parties and house shows. These social gatherings gave CHUM members and people who may have heard of CHUM a chance to come over to the cooperative and experience the CHUM community for themselves. Through these events, CHUM presents itself less as a housing organization and more of as a place to have fun and hang out while enjoying music or socializing. If the event goes well, more people will want to come to the next one and bring their friends. In effect, CHUM gets advertised beyond a member's immediate friend group.

Parties

Field notes from CHUMsgiving: This was the most people I had ever seen in a CHUM house at once. I arrived at the Thanksgiving party a little after 730pm and it was already in full swing. The hostesses were dressed up but other people were more casual fall outfits. I even saw some people walk around with shirts and sweatpants. Someone in the kitchen said the hostesses looked "hella fly." The dining room table was flush with food and E - who was wearing a sparkly golden dress - told me that the labeling system for vegan food was long gone.

I went into the living room and saw people sitting together in the common area. There were four individual circles of five to ten people having conversations with one another -- joking, meeting one another for the first time, catching up, and telling stories. I hung back by the pool table and a white boy with a curly goatee complained to me about how everyone had brought food and nobody had brought drinks.

Most of CHUM's parties are organized with the help of the Bringer of Fun Committee. The committee tries to have three major parties during the year: a

Halloween party, a “CHUMsgiving” party for Thanksgiving, and a spring break party. The committee also organizes a few other parties during the semester. To organize a party, a point person from the committee has to get consent from a house to throw a party. Usually, parties happened at the house where the chair of the Bringer of Fun Committee lived because the chair’s housemates were easier to convince. After a house has consented to the party, the Bringer of Fun point person asks people in the house to chip in money for cups, drinks, and games to play during the party. Finally, the Bringer of Fun Committee publicizes the party on CHUM’s Facebook page as a public event and sends out an invitation to the CHUM email listserv.

Attendance at parties ranged from as many as seventy-five people to as few as fifteen people. With the exception of a few internal events like CHUM’s fifth year anniversary, parties were open to the public. A person on the Bringer of Fun Committee said, “Students come to the parties and learn about CHUM. It’s outreach. I’m trying to spread the word. It’s a good tactic for our age group for some reason. We like to be social. People go, ‘Did you go to the CHUM party? Oh yeah! That was so cool.’ That’s what I’m aiming for.”

She saw the parties as a key tool for diversifying the cooperative: “People will bring a range of people to a party. That’s how you build diversity. I always thought this was a good way to meet people. I found out lots by meeting people at a party. Frats party with their recruits and their recruits like them. Why can’t that work for CHUM?” Attending parties is akin to attending a frat rush. They give people in

CHUM a chance to show the cooperative's culture and why the cooperative would be a good fit for new members.

The Bringer of Fun member emphasized the role parties play in recruiting new members and making them feel like they're a part of CHUM. She said that she tries to have a new membership recruitment party in conjunction with the New Membership Committee every semester. New CHUM members were encouraged to come to the party and bring their friends. This exposed CHUM to a variety of new people, but also helped new members feel like they and their friends are welcome in CHUM. The chair of the Bringer of Fun Committee took great care to ensure that new members felt welcome: "I'm intense about making sure people are having a good time at parties. I try to figure out what's wrong. I get them to play a game, a drinking game, well only if they're 21. It lightens them up. I dance with them and try to make things engaging. We go to McDonalds. I feel like food is the cure for all things." She explained that the strategy was effective, "The friends that came said CHUM was cool and that they would definitely apply next year. I had lots of friend requests at the end of the night."

The Thanksgiving party I attended also showed how members in CHUM took care to make people feel welcome at large scale events. While at the party, I saw circles form and dissolve in a matter of minutes as CHUM members floated around the party and talked with one another. Even though I was fairly tired and kept to myself during this party, several CHUM members who I had not met before introduced themselves to me and took an interest in my project. This party showed that most CHUM members, not just the Bringer of Fun Committee, cared deeply

about being hospitable and friendly towards new people. These practices in turn gave new people a sense for CHUM's community and a better idea of whether they wanted to join the cooperative.

While this Bringer of Fun Committee member didn't specify the kind of diversity that she sought to foster at parties, I believe that parties have the potential to bring in racial and ideological diversity to the cooperative. People generally came to parties in one of two ways, they were either invited to the event by their friends in the cooperative or they wandered in from outside during a college party night. The word of mouth effect could limit the party to just being white people of similar ideological backgrounds, but there was also the possibility that people of color and people with diverse points of view may come in. Though being faced with a majority white space may turn some members off from the cooperative, CHUM members at parties took care to make sure new people felt welcomed. People openly invited partygoers into group conversation on topics varying from classes at UMD to cool places to activist groups to join on campus. This array of topics and warm atmosphere has the potential to make new people feel welcome and increase their desire to keep coming to the cooperative.

Of course, the challenge to parties is their infrequency and the potential of the word-of-mouth effect to backfire. There are usually two parties a semester and there is no public way to find out about the parties unless you're already involved in the cooperative or have friends there. Wandering in from the street is always an option for people, but that hardly seems like an effective answer to CHUM's problems of racial and ideological diversity. While parties are a potential avenue that could lead to

increased racial and ideological diversity, they need to happen more frequently and be advertised more broadly to have this intended effect.

House shows

Field notes from a house show at B's house: The basement was packed full with 30 people with barely any standing room. The petite blonde white singer stalked up and down the crowd as she talked about how people of color shouldn't have to fear for their lives when they deal the police. She jumped on the washing machine and asked if people were ready to protest in the streets or if they were just going to watch the action happen from their Facebook feeds. The band broke out into a heavy metal song and a mosh pit exploded in the cramped space. As the band finished, people, sweaty and bruised, filed out of the basement.

Folks outside were smoking. I noticed two white women in black jackets and black jeans kissing on the stairwell as their friends looked on. One of them said "I can't believe you've never kissed a girl. Now you have."

Two men who identified themselves as biracial and Asian talked about the commodification of Indian art in hipster cultures and festivals

A Latina woman and three white dudes argued about vegan ethics and straightedge. The woman tried to convince the men that eating beef burgers was morally reprehensible. One guy said that you can't claim moral superiority over veganism if you have an iPhone in the 21st century first world. This turned the conversation heated and the booker stepped in to calm things down. The men tried to avoid conversations about veganism and burgers after that -- even though the woman wanted to talk about it. One of the guys joked, "Let's talk about something less controversial? Israel?"

Parties weren't the best fit for everyone in the cooperative. While we ate food at a vegan cafe in College Park, B explained that her house decided to stop hosting parties because too many people got belligerently drunk and started fights. At the very last party they hosted, complete strangers started a large fight outside the house and the cops came. B wanted the house to remain social, but wanted to create a community with a culture where people came to participate in the event and do more than just get wasted. So, she began to book shows and open mics.

Covered in piercings and tattoos, B seemed like the perfect fit for a show booker. B had wanted to do house shows ever since she was in high school. One night she asked her house members if they were okay with her hosting shows and they said yes. Since B worked and went to school full-time, shows required a lot of forward planning. Bands would message B a month in advance and ask her to help book a show. B would get in contact with local musicians and then promotes the event on social media and on campus. B relied on two fellow cooperative members who went to audio-engineering school to lend their gear and run sound for the show. B explained that all shows were donations-based and that no one would be turned away if they couldn't pay. At the moment, her house was the only one that hosted shows, though another house used to help before deciding to stop when the cops were called one summer evening.

B said that the shows brought new people who were interested in the music to CHUM . She explained that after a series of shows, she saw “friendships come together. At the start, everybody was milling around. Now they’re bringing their friends and recognizing each other!” What started out as strangers coming out over a shared love of music quickly turned into a scene of people who came together to watch shows at the house. B’s house became an event space for this scene to gather and keep in touch with each other.

B told me that her house was just one venue in the larger punk scene developing in College Park. She pointed out that the campus radio station, food cooperative, and a nearby punk house all held shows. She saw members from these venues come to CHUM and members from CHUM flow to these venues. She thought

that this was a good thing: “CHUM feels less isolated in the ‘CHUM bubble.’ The bubble grew to encompass a lot of campus.” While CHUM may have been isolated before, it was now engaging more broadly in the campus community.

Another member said that house shows are a form of outreach. New people who come to the show get an informal tour of one of the cooperative houses. At the show I attended, people sprawled throughout the entire house -- watching bands in the basement, smoking and drinking on the back porch, buying merch in the dining room, and playing pool in the living room. By using the space recreationally, people got somewhat of a sense of what life at a cooperative house could be like if they lived there. While they may not see the cooperative’s economic backbone or the democratic culture, they do get to experience the traces of cooperative life by seeing the chore charts and other pieces of cooperative memorabilia hanging on the walls.

The radical member dissatisfied with CHUM’s ideology pointed out that he saw hope in this emerging scene: “Politics are wrapped up in this punk scene. It can be more powerful because more people are involved and connected. It can lead people to work on issues they care about. ” At the show I attended, I heard people talking about everything from sexism to the merits of abstaining from drugs to veganism to cops harassing students. The punk show helped create a space for people to come together over their shared love of music. Given the political nature of punk shows, it also let students pursue conversations about political topics. These conversations created a space for students to hash out their differences and explore positions that they may not have otherwise considered. B also told me that these kind

of conversations happened at the new open mic night series where audience members got to showcase their art and engage in conversation with one another.

B's house had become a landmark house that people knew that they could go to see shows and hang out with their friends. While the show I attended consisted of a majority white crowd and white bands, I saw people of color who were not CHUM members in the audience and performing that night. People smoked together outside, played pool in the living room, and talked to one another on the stoop. As the excerpt above shows, people discussed a variety of topics -- often times disagreeing, but not to the point where the conversation became too heated. Racial and ideological diversity were woven into the social fabric of the show. People were part of a scene that they knew that they could come back to and engage with on a regular basis both at B's house and outside of CHUM. In effect, B's house exposed a variety of people to the kind of organization CHUM was and opened up the opportunity for them to join the organization.

A major drawback of the shows is that people see CHUM as a venue rather than a cooperative organization. B's house is just one house in the organization and people only see it as a performance space rather than a collective living space. The rest of the organization is obscured from view. Furthermore, the show I attended gave no indication that show goers could apply to live in the cooperative. Bands would thank CHUM for putting on shows and encourage the audience to support the punk community that it creates, but there was no direct engagement or recruitment at the event. The house shows tapped into the punk scene at UMD and gives newcomers access to CHUM, but it does not formally pull them into the organization itself.

Is the party any good?

House shows and parties hold the potential to increase CHUM's racial and ideological diversity, but it is still too soon to tell whether they'll positively impact the membership selection process of the New Membership Committee. Shows and parties rely on promotion from CHUM's members and their friends. While this promotion holds the potential of expanding to further reaches of campus, the word-of-mouth problem may persist as the white membership in CHUM may only invite their white friends who in turn extend CHUM's reach into a white social network. Even if people of color or applicants with different ideologies show up to the cooperative, it is still another matter of whether they'll join the co-op. House shows and parties help people mingle and learn about the space, but they don't actively help show the cooperative living elements of CHUM.

There is also the further issue of whether applicants of color or of different ideologies will believe that they can fit into the cooperative. While I did not go to enough parties or house shows to observe these phenomena directly, I believe there is merit in speculating about how "fit" could be a racialized and ideological concept. In the case of ideology, potential applicants may feel that CHUM is simply too politicized to join. If one goes to a house show and sees people discussing everything from veganism to #BlackLivesMatter, they may think that the cooperative is too full of activists and refuse to join. Likewise, members on the New Membership Committee may read a lack of political willingness as a lack of a good fit. While a potential applicant could do well in a cooperative environment, their inability to show their enthusiasm during an interview may cut them from consideration. In essence,

ideological diversity may be hampered by the very means by which the cooperative attempts to attract it.

The racialization of “fit” is another problem for the cooperative. According to a 2003 study done by the National Bureau of Economic Research, stereotypically White names like Emily Walsh or Greg Baker received 50% more callbacks for interviews than stereotypically African-American names like Lakisha Washington or Jamal Jones. The authors of the paper sent fictitious resumes to job postings in Boston and Chicago newspapers. The resumes were all the same, save the name of the applicant and the place they lived.¹⁰⁷ While I don’t believe anyone in CHUM is an out-and-out racist, there could be an unexamined racial bias affecting the selection process of CHUM’s New Membership Committee.

Furthermore, the organization’s history as a majority white cooperative may create barriers to people of color joining the co-op. Whether it is a party, a house show, or a potluck, when one enters a CHUM event, one enters a primarily white space. It’s not difficult to find reasons for why people of color have a difficult time in white spaces. For example, there have been many pieces written by punks of color about racism in the punk scene from "The Punk Anteriors: Theory, Genealogy, Performance" issue of *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* to a *Pitchfork* piece by Hanif Abdurraqib entitled "I Wasn't Brought Here, I Was Born: Surviving Punk Rock Long Enough To Find Afropunk." A unifying theme in these pieces is that punk rock is an imagined white community that either outright erases people of color entirely from its history or masks racism against them under the guise

¹⁰⁷Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, "Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination." National Bureau of Economic Research. July 2003. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w9873.pdf>

of shared fraternity and sisterhood. It is hard to be a person of color in punk spaces -- especially if one wants to belong there.

In "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival," Mimi Thi Nguyen shows how riot grrrl is often imagined as a sisterhood that elides all differences on the sole basis of gender. In doing so, it erases the representations and struggles of women of color in the scene by putting forward a dominant narrative of white women's performance and accomplishment. In effect, women of color are passed over in the history of the genre and their struggles within the scene are ignored by White women who want to maintain an idea of "sisterhood." This epistemological violence is often paired with both physical and verbal violence. As Harif Abdurraqib shows in his article, going to a punk show holds the promise of fitting in with a bunch of outsiders who want to rebel against authority and convention. He writes that his experience as a black man in punk showed this promise to be a farce. White people didn't help black men when they passed out from dehydration in moshpits. He couldn't go to a show without hearing a racist joke. Abdurraqib found that the space of punk is as unsafe to black men as the rest of the outside world.

In CHUM's case, the cooperative's history as a majority white space may turn off people of color from joining or taking part in it due to a fear of hostility or racial tension. While I do not have any hard data to back up this assertion, I do want to open the question of how CHUM can directly engage with and foster the involvement of people of color. People of color definitely do take part in the organization and it would greatly benefit CHUM members to figure out why they take part in the organization, what they like about it, and what they would like to change. CHUM

must be careful not to treat this issue too lightly. As of right now, the University of Maryland is doing a better job at recruiting students of color. If CHUM hopes to compete as a housing provider with UMD, much less claim that it is addressing racism in housing as a cooperative, it must begin to think about how it recruits and supports people of color in the organization.

I do not want to end on too pessimistic a note. CHUM's value as a partner organization and as an event space may attract people from around the campus to go to the cooperative and partner with it for events that bring in a variety of people. During my time at CHUM, I saw students in the organization partner with the student government, the college radio station, environmental organizations, labor support projects, pro-Palestinian groups, and a political Latin@ social justice organization. These groups gave CHUM avenues through which the organization could discuss various ideas while also tapping into social networks much broader than the organization's friendship group.

Whatever winds up playing out in terms of recruitment, CHUM will have the membership and the culture to continue growing. The New Membership Committee is ready to take in applicants who are willing to be participants in CHUM's cooperative culture. Hopefully, increasing advertisement, parties, and house shows will help expand that pool of applicants to be more diverse and help CHUM live up to its values.

Chapter 5: Holding it together

A laughed when I asked her what she made sure to communicate to members who are just joining the organization, “CHUM’s not as disorganized as it may appear at first glance.” From a new member’s perspective, CHUM may seem like an organization perpetually in the process of putting itself together. The cooperative is essentially run on the volunteer labor of members who work, go to school, and take part in extracurricular activities outside the organization. Buried underneath this seemingly chaotic system is a series of structures that keeps the cooperative community intact. A explained, “The more I get into CHUM... I didn’t realize how much maintenance it takes. Maintenance of existing CHUM structure takes a lot. The more I learn, the more complex it seems. And it should be complex.”

CHUM operates on principles of direct, participatory democracy. Every member gets a say and decisions are made collectively by cooperative members during group meetings. Gamson and Levin (1984) state that a cooperatives like CHUM can dissolve due to “the lack of democratic norms for decision making; and... an inappropriate mixture of skills for the needs of the enterprise.”¹⁰⁸ If members constantly fight, then the cooperative may dissolve due to its inability to agree on anything. On the flip side, if members simply don’t care and don’t show up, then the cooperative will dissolve due to inactivity. Furthermore, if members aren’t trained to carry out the task of running the cooperative, then the enterprise may morph into a

¹⁰⁸ Zelda F. Gamson and Henry M. Levin, “Obstacles to the Survival of Democratic Workplaces” in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984. 222.

hierarchical organization with decision-makers at the top running the cooperative with minimal input from below.¹⁰⁹ For a cooperative to survive, it needs to mitigate against these possibilities by creating structures of democratic participation.

It is one matter to have these structures and it is another to make sure members feel invested in them. As Chapter 3 shows, CHUM attempts to recruit a membership base who is predisposed to the task of running a cooperative. However, predisposition towards the task does not entail that members will actually take part in doing it. In addition to creating structures for democratic decision-making, CHUM needs to create a resilient democratic culture that gives members a sense of ownership over the cooperative as well as the skills they need to run it.

In this chapter, I show how CHUM creates this democratic culture. I look at CHUM's process of democratic decision-making in order to demonstrate how members become invested in the culture of the cooperative. I first look at how internal house cultures, house meetings, and mentorship by older CHUM members encourage new members to take part in the cooperative. I then examine the process of democratic decision-making within CHUM's house meetings and General Body Meetings (GBMs) to show how taking part in these meetings deepens one's feeling of belonging in the cooperative. Finally, I turn to what happens when democratic decision-making breaks down. I show how CHUM's Mediation Committee attempts to reconcile conflict within the cooperative when participatory democracy reaches a standstill. I conclude by explaining how these cooperative practices enable people to build a community that lasts from year to year.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 226.

The cheese incident

Field notes from a house hang out: CHUM members sat in a circle in the living room and discussed their small pet peeves. G said how it took about a month for her house to learn a pet peeve and identify the culprit. G wasn't packaging cheese properly. She would return the cheese into the fridge with the package that it had come in. This caused the end to become hard and inedible. The proper way to put away the cheese was to use a ziplock bag. For weeks, people brought up this concern at the house meeting but it never crossed G's mind that she was "the person who fucked up the cheese." She joked that eventually someone found out and yelled at her -- then the whole house yelled at her. She said she didn't mess up the cheese anymore.

Gamson and Levin ask, "In a situation where no one is boss, how do workers hold one another accountable? If responsibility is vested in the group as a whole, how can any particular individual feel responsible?"¹¹⁰ The answer to these grand questions could come in something as simple as someone forgetting to seal cheese in a ziplock bag. Food in CHUM is communally shared and everyone in the house has an interest in maintaining its freshness and shelf life. When someone "fucked up the cheese," the house came together in order to right the wrong and hold the person accountable for what they did.

One doesn't arrive at a successful resolution to the cheese incident from scratch. CHUM's shared resources and collective decision-making give members the opportunity to enforce and negotiate proper social codes of behavior for the organization. This process of enforcement benefits the cooperative by setting norms of cooperative behavior among members. Gamson and Levin write that "exposing new members to discussions of the social code and its application" and introducing "them rather quickly to the expected behavior that characterizes the organization"

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 234.

helps them fit smoothly into the cooperative by being trained on what matters to the organization and how to follow the organization's procedures.¹¹¹

A system of internal house cultures, meetings, and mentorship by older CHUM members undergirds this negotiation and enforcement of social codes. This system helps ensure that new members buy into the cooperative culture and feel like they have a sense of control and belonging in the organization. The New Membership Committee's house placement decisions are at the very basis of these relationships. When the New Membership Committee puts members into different houses, each house develops its own distinct house culture.

House cultures

Manifestations of house culture appear in multiple ways such as the way houses are decorated. One house had a distinctly activist flavor and had social justice posters on environmentalism, police brutality, and fair elections. There was an LGBT rainbow flag hanging in the living room and a sign that said "ACAB: All Cops are Bastards" hanging by the front door. Another smaller house only had the bare essentials of cooperative life on display -- a white board with a meeting agenda, chore charts, and a mail calendar. There was a ukulele made out of soda cans hanging on the wall that members told me was inherited from previous tenants.

House cultures also manifest in the ways that members talk about their houses. One member told me that two houses that he had lived in were completely different environments. One was a social party space while the other was much more conducive to doing homework and studying. These differences in the environment

¹¹¹ Ibid, 229.

were apparent when I asked members from both houses to describe their house culture:

Ghost Office: “We’re a little rowdy. We’re loud, especially the girls. Though guys have joined in. We’re either all excited about something or we’re like ‘What are we doing? Get yourself together!’ Sometimes I’m a little too loud. It’s sweet. Little things will become big things in a good way. After Thanksgiving, S came with homemade stockings for each of us -- even for the cat! It was so sweet! Last weekend, her and her sister made the house Christmas for us. It distracted us from finals, but it was worth in. There are people in the house who aren’t loud. We can certainly take a joke, but nothing offensive or assaulting. People stay within the realm of ‘This is an appropriate joke.’ We throw a lot of shade. It’s good. I like it.”

Crow’s Nest: “It’s a working house almost everyone here has a job part-time or full-time. Lots of people in CHUM work because it’s cheap and they can’t afford other options. There’s quite a few vegans and vegetarians in the house. That was a decision membership made. They were going for compatibility, so most vegans live together which was a good idea. Many people here are... what’s the word. They express what they’re trying to do with school and work and academics. There’s not much chaos. It’s a balanced house and we’re cooperative with one another. There’s no major conflicts between people. We’re a well functioning house. I was surprised. I heard stories about houses that became shit shows. It’s easy to laugh about in retrospect, but I’d lose my mind if I lived there. There’s not much nagging the other person here. That best describes it.”

The people who lived at each house helped set up the kind of culture they wanted by coming together and deciding on what they wanted their house to look like during house discussions. The Ghost Office did not become a social space overnight, rather it took a concerted effort by members to start organizing events at the space and making it more socially oriented. Likewise, the Crow’s Nest became a study space because members met to agree on quiet hours and how to manage noise in the house. These decisions came about organically by housemates talking to one another and then bringing up the issues at house meetings.

Meetings and Mentorship

House meetings happen weekly at each house. At the meetings, members come together to decide on chores and discuss issues affecting the house. One person usually takes notes while another member facilitates. Meetings begin by members going around and saying how they are doing that week. They then jump into announcements that members of the house may have about on-campus activities or CHUM-wide business. This includes inviting members to on-campus events or making sure that people know what happened at a GBM. After this portion, members get into the nitty-gritty of addressing issues that affect the house. This could include anything from making sure people aren't delinquent on their chores to making sure one person isn't hogging up all the cabinet space in the kitchen. Finally, members assign chores for the week and then go around one more time to discuss how they felt about the meeting.

These meetings are social events for the house that are usually accompanied by a house dinner before or afterwards. They provide members with a chance to have a say on how things are going in the house and whether anybody wants to do anything differently. Getting new members to take part and have a say in these meetings does not happen from the get-go. Instead, older members make sure that newer members feel included in the cooperative. One member told me the story of how a new member in CHUM almost dropped out because she could not find someone to learn from in the organization. This new member thought that CHUM was massively disorganized and that she could not accomplish the cooperative things she had signed up for within that structure. Eventually, she made friends with an older member who encouraged her to stay. Together, they pioneered gardening and composting at the cooperative.

Now, this new member is really involved. The member telling the story said, “The house experience makes or breaks a person's experience with CHUM. If you don’t meet someone to learn from, it’s hard.”

Another member explained the basic ways that she makes sure that new members are involved in CHUM. “If we’re all hanging out, we leave the door open and get people to spend time with us. If they walk past, we yell ‘Hey what are you doing?’ You’re part of the house and you’re part of us.” Making sure that people feel involved and like they have a say in the house can have an immense impact on their feeling of belonging in a house. A member gave an example of how one of her housemates stayed in his room playing video games all day and stopped doing his chores. She got together with older members of the house and took him out for a hike at a lake nearby the cooperative. By spending time together and making him feel involved, the house managed to break his slump of isolation and hook him back into the cooperative.

As the examples above show, a new member’s knowledge of how they can take part in the cooperative makes or breaks their experience at CHUM. If members are dissatisfied, they have a say over how they want things to be done differently, but they can only learn this from watching older members. Older members are thereby tasked to make sure newer members know about these possibilities. “People don’t realize how much of a voice they have in CHUM,” a member told me, “It’s really powerful. It’s something as simple as asking ‘can we buy snacks?’ It’s saying this house is a mess and can we clean it up because I can’t work in a messy situation and

it impacts my life? It's on older members to communicate that and ensure new members know that."

This practice of engagement is not exclusive to new members either. At one house meeting I attended, members made sure to assign fewer chores to a graduating member who seemed disengaged. Members explained that this person was having a hard time with finding a job and spent most of the day alone in his room. This formerly social member had withdrawn in such a way that was unusual for him. Members at the meeting believed that by giving him less chores to do, he'd be less stressed and feel more able to engage with the cooperative again. This example shows that while it is certainly important for new members to feel included in the ownership of the cooperative, it is no guarantee that long-time members won't need the same kind of nurturing. Mentorship is not a one-and-done task, but rather one that reemerges continually through the life of the house.

When New Membership puts members into a house they use their best guess to ensure that the house will get along, but it is ultimately members taking care of another and making sure that everyone in the cooperative is engaged that decides whether a house will succeed or fall apart. As one member put it, communication is key. A house will fall apart if members aren't talking to each other or being honest about the kind of house they want to live in. Facilitating this communication requires a level of nurturing and care amongst the housemates. Members have to engage with one another in a way that lets them yell at each other light heartedly about "fucking up the cheese" without any hurt feelings or resentment. This can only be done if

members are looking out for one another's well being and openly making decisions that ensure that people get engaged.

Individual houses guarantee their cohesion through these practices, but CHUM is larger than any of the five houses. A new member explained the importance of "making sure people understand what CHUM is and that we are coming together frequently. We need to have a goal and something that binds us." By coming together, CHUM helps members create a stake in the cooperative that is larger than a stake in the individual house. It is a stake in the organization's collective mission to provide affordable housing to people in College Park while living by cooperative principles. In the next section, I argue that democratic decision-making on the organizational level is a key component in ensuring that CHUM members feel like they have this investment in the organization.

The democratic ideal

C was one of CHUM's newest members. She had moved from one of Maryland's rural eastern counties to go to the University of Maryland and relied on CHUM to be able to afford housing in the area. It was too far of a commute to make every day and CHUM was the only way that she could afford to go to school. Yet, it was the cooperative nature of CHUM that convinced her to join. She had been looking for a place to meet with like-minded people and live together cooperatively ever since she first heard about the principle of cooperatives in high school. C told me: "I like that I live with people who are dedicated to the same ideas and values as I am. The democratic ideal that everyone has a say and that we can decide together. The ideal of community and living together. It proves that this can be done on a grand

scale. We can live together happily and peacefully. We're not at odds. We find unity through our differences.”

While C may not have known it, she came to the organization during an ambitious experimental phase in democracy. The year I observed CHUM was the organization's first year without a President. The organization had always had a Board of Directors consisting of a Treasurer, Secretary, and New Membership Committee Chair along with a number of committees responsible for various parts of CHUM. The heads of these committees and the members on the Board of Directors were elected annually during a General Body Meeting by representatives from each of the five houses. The Treasurer was tasked with ensuring that CHUM's finances were in order and helped run the Finance Committee, the New Membership Committee Chair headed the New Membership Committee, and the Secretary attended all General Body Meetings and Board of Directors Meetings and took notes for the organization. Usually, a President was elected to head the Board of Directors and help make decisions on behalf of the organization, but CHUM had decided to operate without a President after some members were unhappy with the past President's behavior. According to some members, the President would make big decisions for the cooperative on her own without consulting everyone else. This made CHUM members uncomfortable and led to the decision to test run CHUM without a President for the year. In effect, CHUM was run purely by the committees and GBMs while the internal finances and membership recruitment of the organization were pushed forward by the Board of Directors. To borrow from Ann Arnett Ferguson

statement about a bread bakery collective: “The machinery that keeps this system in motion is a never-ending cycle of meetings.”¹¹²

Democratic decision-making at these meetings is the baseline for student’s participation in the organization. C explained that she didn’t have time to participate in anything besides house meetings in CHUM because she had to work full-time while going to school. However, taking part in house meetings taps one into the broader culture of the organization. Every two weeks, CHUM holds a GBM that votes on issues concerning the cooperative. Each of these meetings is attended by two members from each of the house. During the meetings, it is common for people to discuss a large issue affecting the cooperative, bring the issue back to their house to discuss during house meetings, and then return in two weeks to vote on the issue as part of the GBM. Through this delegation process, CHUM members who are as busy as C get to have a say on what goes on in the cooperative even if they are unable to directly participate in the organizational-level decision making.

The things CHUM decides on

There was a stark contrast between what was discussed during house meetings and what was discussed during the GBMs. Internal house meetings were used to decide on matters like whether someone was too loud when they played video games late at night or how mail should be handled when it comes into the house. Other times, people discussed their finances and how much someone owed for food and rent. On the other hand, GBMs dealt with matters that were larger than any individual house and impacted the cooperative as a whole. The two issues that were part of

¹¹² Ann A. Ferguson, “Managing Without Managers: Crisis and Resolution in a Collective Bakery” in *Ethnography Unbound*. Los Angeles, LA: University of California Press. 1991. 114.

CHUM's zeitgeist for the year were the upcoming eviction policy and the question of just how political CHUM should be as an organization. While none of these matters came to a vote in the semester that I observed CHUM, they were widely discussed by the membership of the cooperative and it was common for people to bring up the matters to me during interviews.

Issue 1: The eviction policy

At one GBM, the chair of the New Membership Committee brought up that she wanted to start an eviction policy work group. At the time, CHUM didn't have a policy for evicting members who didn't work out for the cooperative. People reacted enthusiastically to the policy both within and outside the GBM. A member at the GBM explained that they were going to pass a policy last year, but that people couldn't decide on one that worked due to many complicating factors. There was a general feeling that the cooperative was hamstrung by the lack of a policy. "People sign a contract to CHUM and sign a lease and instead of following through with them, they up and leave," a member explained, "two years ago, five students just up and left because they thought they could do that. We're all students and it's really hard to pursue them in court. That's why we want something more clear and legally binding."

It may come as a surprise that CHUM would turn to a legal eviction policy. Members told me that they feel reluctant to call the cops and have had problems with the police coming to shut down house shows and parties. However, members said that they decided to get a legal eviction policy because they needed some way to ensure that people living in CHUM wouldn't scam the organization or feel like they could

break the rules without repercussion. A legal eviction policy would give CHUM a way to enforce their rules and by-laws with non-cooperative members who simply refused to take part in the cooperative based on good faith. While it may seem counterintuitive to bring in the law in a place based on democratic decision-making, the eviction policy operates in very much the same way as the organization's status as a nonprofit organization. Members came together to decide to incorporate as a non-profit and the non-profit status is clearly in the by-laws for new and potential members to see. Members could come together to decide and dissolve the non-profit status at any time. In other words, the eviction policy, like CHUM's non-profit status, would interface directly with the state but it is a relationship that is still entirely based in CHUM's democratic decision-making procedure. The state can make demands of CHUM, but CHUM is still in control of whether it wishes to comply with those demands. This way, CHUM can maintain its autonomy as an organization while receiving the benefits of legal and state recognition.

Approving an eviction policy is a multi-step process. First, the eviction policy working group has to come together and agree on a policy. Then, they would have to send the policy through GBM and ensure that everyone was okay with moving forward with it. Once they got feedback from the GBM, they would need to edit the policy and run it by a legal aid on campus to make sure what they were doing complied with the law. Finally, they would have to review the policy again as a committee and then present it again at the GBM. If the GBM voted to approve the policy, then it would become part of CHUM's infrastructure and by-laws.

A member explained that voting for these kinds of policies went through the same basic framework each time: “Basically, if someone has an idea, we present it. We have a temperature check. We have discussion. If anyone wants to add onto it or have problems with it, they say so. We may change their proposal or reframe it, then we vote. It can’t pass if someone has a problem with it. Someone might say that they’re going to leave CHUM because of it. Everyone has to be cool with it or not care either way.” At any point through this process, a member could vote against the policy and stop the process in its tracks. Every member of CHUM has veto power in the organization. Though vetoing is rare, CHUM members need to adapt their proposals in order to ensure that everyone in the cooperative either agrees with them or at least decides to stand aside from the vote.

The temperature checks and the multiple phases of discussions ensure that every member gets to have input into the policy and gives people who originated the policy a sense of whether their proposal is likely to pass. Given the sensitive and systemic nature of the eviction policy, it was crucial that the policy writers treaded carefully to make sure that the policy passed. If any member at any level of the organization had an objection, it needed to be addressed lest the member decided to veto the proposal. In effect, every member of CHUM had a say in what happened in the cooperative and the power to ensure that other people don’t ruin the experience for them.

Issue 2: How political should CHUM be?

Not every CHUM policy goes through as lengthy of a process before being discussed among the membership. During one GBM, members met to discuss

whether they wanted to take a group photo holding a sign saying that they support Syrian refugees coming to America. CHUM members were divided on just how much they should say about this international issue. They disagreed on just how political they wanted the cooperative to be.

At a meeting, a member spoke passionately about making sure that CHUM took a stand. He said, “With the Syrian Refugee crisis -- we need to respond in a time sensitive manner. There’s not much disagreement or contention, but we’re afraid to take a stand. I’m really disappointed. We’re not a political organization, but there are organizations that are far less political than we are that will support Syrian refugees and won’t hesitate to make that decision. I would be disappointed if we delayed this decision if this is an issue that everyone agrees on.”

The woman facilitating the meeting quickly spoke up, “I know one of our housemates is concerned about CHUM making big political statements because they're afraid it will affect career later in life. They want to work for the government later. Not that CHUM should never ever speak up about these things, but we should keep that in mind as well.” Another member joined in and said he had concerns with attracting new members to the organization, “It would detract people. It’s easy for folks on the outside to be misled or have a bad impression of CHUM.” He went on, “I can have a view but be careful how I express it if it's not truly reflective of the full organization. It's tricky. It reflects on the level of the organization. It depends on the issue. It’s different for local issues that's realistic for CHUM to stand on. We have no bearing on international issues.”

The woman facilitating the meeting brought the discussion to a close by summarizing the different opinions members held about the issue: “I’m hearing lots of different things. People like CHUM because we’re politically outspoken but, on the other hand, we need to be sensitive about things that can be contentious like issues some can’t agree on or not everyone’s informed about. Or, how what we say has different levels of controversy because it could affect people in different ways.” She suggested that members take the issue of supporting Syrian refugees with a group photo back to their house to discuss at a house meeting. Then in two weeks, they could come back and hold a vote on the issue if they had a quorum.

Instead of mollifying the conflict, the facilitator at this GBM encouraged CHUM members to actively hash it out and have a discussion. The conflict served a productive purpose for CHUM members because it allowed them to decide on the kind of values they wanted to hold as a cooperative and the ways in which they wanted to express those opinions. As Gamson and Levin explain, “Conflict is a central feature of democratic decision making... the question that faces democratic workplaces is how to treat such conflict as a normal part of the decision-making process by using it in a productive way to explore and select among alternatives.”¹¹³ Given that people in the cooperative had different reactions to the proposal, it was important that everyone have their say on the topic before it came to a vote. That way every member of the cooperative have a say, change their minds, or choose to veto. Even if people were largely in agreement with one another, this conflict gave people a chance to ensure that this was the truth and make sure nobody’s opinion was ignored.

¹¹³ Zelda F. Gamson and Henry M. Levin, “Obstacles to the Survival of Democratic Workplaces” in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984. 235.

By bringing these issues to as many members as possible, CHUM is theoretically able to select the best way to move forward for the cooperative. All CHUM members get a direct say on the issues whether they are able to be present at the GBM or not. In theory, this ensured that everyone is equally invested in the cooperative and gets to have a say. However, this theory depends on consensus working smoothly, which is not always the case.

Democratic frustrations

The slowness of the consensus process frustrated people in CHUM. When consensus worked smoothly, it took a while. It took even longer when it was faced with logistical and participation issues. One member explained her feelings about consensus, “Sometimes it’s natural, other times it’s irreconcilable. I like the consensus structure, but it feels like it gets in the way of doing things efficiently or quickly. Sometimes, I just want to go alpha female. I’m not gonna ask you guys to review this email to the landlord or I’m just going to buy this thing! I don’t actively do that, but I wish I could.” This member in CHUM felt hampered by the consensus process because she didn’t feel like things were getting done quickly or efficiently enough to meet the needs of the cooperative.

One of the members on the New Membership Committee worried about the future of consensus as the organization grew bigger. She explained, “The more people who get involved, the less expedient consensus can be. If there’s a GBM and a proposal, people come in not having read or not knowing the proposal and then block it out of gut reaction issues.” This member feared that it may become impossible for everyone in the cooperative to have input if the organization kept growing. People

may just not have the time to be involved and thus may block policies out of sheer ignorance.

Other people were adamant about this slow process being a positive feature of the cooperative rather than a nagging frustration. “It’s a lot. It is a lot,” a member admitted, “but we have to go through it democratically. It’s better than assuming people can do whatever they want without repercussion or thinking about others. It’s not what co-ops do. The more eyes are on it, the better.” While CHUM was slow to act on certain issues, the slowness ensured that everyone had a chance to look over the finished product before it moved forward. It was a way to ensure that everybody was equally represented in the cooperative and that no one person could tyrannically move forward without consulting anyone else. Consensus was a way to ensure the cooperative stayed egalitarian and avoided the rise of hierarchies within the organization.

The trouble with consensus

While organizational-wide consensus had the benefit of making sure that all members had the chance to become involved in CHUM’s decision-making process, membership participation turned out to be one of the biggest roadblocks facing the organization:

Field notes from a GBM: It was 3:30pm, the GBM should have started already. Six of us were sitting in the kitchen of the Mad Ox and waiting for people to come from Red Debra’s. The frustration was palpable. “Can anyone access the agenda?” N asked, “How much time should we give the other houses to arrive?” We decide to give them five more minutes before meeting without quorum. N had to leave for work at 4 and could not stay to keep the full quorum if everyone else had arrived. She had expected the meeting to start on time and end fairly quickly, but people were taking too long to come. “It’s 3:30, this is ridiculous, we all have things to do,” she exclaimed.

As the frustration above shows, GBMs faced the problem of being held up because a few members didn't arrive on time. All of the members representing their houses had to be present for a GBM to reach quorum and be able to vote. Since the meeting above lacked two members from each house, they could not reach quorum and couldn't make decisions on how to move the organization forward. At one point, this problem of absenteeism became so bad that one house was put on a probationary period where they were threatened with losing their voting privileges within CHUM if they didn't regularly attend GBMs.

One member at the meeting explained that burnout was a recurring problem that kept people from taking part in the organization. He told me that people got excited about CHUM and wanted to be really involved, but that they gradually lost steam. CHUM wasn't their first priority and there wasn't much structure for making sure things got done in CHUM beyond individual will. He hypothesized, "In general, people are more focused on the stuff they did before CHUM, especially because people hear about CHUM later on. They don't get started in freshman year. You don't grow in CHUM. You start with other things so they stay your first priorities. There are people in CHUM who are there for affordable student housing. They need to pay rent so they need to work and can't do CHUM. In CHUM, it's more socializing than things that are more constructive to the co-op. Things like potlucks, house shows, NASCO. They're more socially oriented. It's a social community so it makes sense." He argued that indifference was an understandable part of the cooperative, "We're all students. Well, most of us are. We all have work, responsibilities, jobs. CHUM things are not our top priorities. It comes down to bureaucracy and people's investment.

Some people don't care much and feel like they're not supposed to care. I'm sure that's true in any organization, not just CHUM."

Consensus depends on the assumption that all members have an equal investment in the cooperative and that they will show up and participate. As the example above shows, CHUM faces the problem of membership participation that grinds consensus to a halt. Part of the reason could be that students are just busy with other activities, but I believe the issue of organizational growth plays an important role in this dilemma. As an organization grows, the dynamic that people have within it shifts. Rothschild and Whitt argue that "the face-to-face relationships and directly democratic forms that characterize the collectivist organization probably cannot be maintained if the organization grows beyond a certain size."¹¹⁴ CHUM started out as a small group of friends living together at a few houses. As the cooperative grew, so did the amount of people necessary to consult for consensus. It becomes increasingly difficult to make decisions in the direct democratic way given the limited ability of all students to participate within the cooperative due to other obligations. Even if all students were actively willing to participate, finding the time that works for everyone would be a logistical challenge. Since CHUM's goal as a cooperative is to become a housing provider for the area, the cooperative is challenged with the task of overcoming the problems of indifference and logistics in the consensus decision-making process while expanding as an organization.

¹¹⁴ Joyce Rothschild and J. Allen Whitt, *The cooperative workplace: Potentials and dilemmas of organizational democracy and participation*. London: Cambridge University Press. 1986. 91.

Growing pains

A member who had just returned home from a conference to NASCO gave an example of the kind of issues CHUM was unequipped to face as it grew as an organization. She told me that larger cooperatives had to deal with major crises that required them to make snap judgments in difficult situations:

When I went to the NASCO conference, I went to panels about co-ops with exec boards as the decision-making entity. Those are larger cooperatives and exec boards. We have an exec board, but it's not a united group. I'm not sure how it would work in CHUM. Having people make big decision in CHUM seems unnecessary at this point and against the spirit of the co-op. But we need to make big decisions. It's easy for small issues where houses vote and then go to the GBM, but it's harder for touchier issues. For example, a member of a larger co-op died. They overdosed. Everyone was evicted and the house was turned into a common space for the rest of the co-op. The President and the exec board made the decision overnight. What would we do? I hope it never happens. I hope we'd be tight enough to say "Hey, are you ok?" In times of craziness, I don't think CHUM always has a way to deal with it. There's a question of who should deal with it. It's gray on touchy situations -- should every member, whether they're engaged or not, have a say if they have nothing to do with it?

Even if one assumed that all students were equally motivated to be involved in CHUM, consensus-based decision-making frameworks would be slow if members disagreed on an issue. They would have to bring up the disagreement at a meeting, bring it home to their cooperative houses, find a time to discuss it within the house, and then bring it back to GBM. This decision-making model would be challenging to use if CHUM was ever forced into a crisis situation where fast action was necessary.

A way forward?

People in the cooperative were mixed on how to handle these issues. One member suggested that the President could take on the role of a facilitator that pushed forward CHUM's needs as a cooperative. The President would act to ensure that

projects were consistently running and being managed. He explained, “If there were people monitoring and encouraging these efforts consistently, more things would get done. Now individuals are driving it. We need facilitators to guide the process effectively and efficiently.” Another member agreed with the principle of the position. She felt like CHUM didn’t need an all powerful executive board that served as a “federal government to the house’s state government.” She believed that the President could take over handling crisis scenarios like the one described above in lieu of a GBM. She raised additional concerns about the people chosen to handle these crises, “Is this person the most ethical? The most reasonable? It shouldn’t be just a few people making a decision either. All of CHUM should be aware and know these people could affect their lives. These people would be very important to know. I don’t want people to monopolize CHUM either. Sometimes you need to calm yourself down, you can’t take over CHUM -- as nice as the title Queen of CHUM would be.”

Some member had high hopes for the horizontal-style model of the organization. People that I interviewed said that the committees were functioning smoothly and that the cooperative was doing a good job at ensuring that people were involved and getting things done. New members jumped in to fill gaps on existing committees and even started entirely new committees to address needs that weren’t being met by the organization. For example, the Bringer of Fun chairperson started her tenure because she saw that nobody was named Bringer of Fun for the year and decided to take on the role herself. When older members who were in charge of the aforementioned committees felt burned out by the process and had to step back, new

members jumped up in their place. Entire committees -- including the New Membership Committee and the Mediation Committee -- were being run by new members. An older member in CHUM explained, "It feels like we're building an infrastructure that raises leaders and organizers that know what they do. People aren't micromanaging. People are stepping up in cooperative and horizontal ways. They feel empowered to take leadership roles."

This older member believed that it was possible to convince CHUM members to step up and take ownership of the organization. He explained that these crises could be mitigated with good organizing:

People need to start realizing as organizers that people want to take space and make sure that tasks get handled and deadlines get met. People's identities become wrapped up in organizations and these failures become personal. So organizers take tasks that are about to have a deadline and work to meet it. They creep and act on tasks that aren't theirs. I'm also guilty of it big time. We have to let it go. Sometimes things will fail, sometimes people will fill in the space. If people have the room to take a task or have something fail, people understand the importance of things getting done. They have a new stake. One of the most important things an organizer can do is let things fail or miss the mark. They should not see it as a personal failing or loss. People around us are complex and intelligent and capable. With space, they can become empowered.

In this point of view, failure and slowdowns were a natural part of the horizontalist cycle. The challenge was to accept them as natural parts of the decision-making process and ensure that all members are empowered to stand up and take charge of CHUM as an organization. If everyone in CHUM felt bound by the organization's mission and stepped up together, they could tackle these larger democratic frustrations.

CHUM is faced with an internal tension as it grows as an organization. The participatory democratic culture of CHUM is necessary to make sure people feel

invested in their houses, but it also plays a major role in making sure that people have a say. People can theoretically have input at any point in the process, but not everyone is as equally invested. The cooperative faces the question of whether horizontal decision-making is good enough to help the cooperative reach its goals. It is a delicate question as taking away people's chance to give input via consensus shifts the internal dynamics in the cooperative to give certain people more sway than others -- creating a potential internal hierarchy. As can be seen in the desire to go without a President after the individual decision-making style of the last one, CHUM members are not open to this sort of dynamic in the organization. In fact, they are more dedicated to grassroots horizontalist approaches. As one member explained, most people who are involved in CHUM are also involved in organizations on-campus that value horizontal decision-making and open communication. Furthermore, the cooperative itself is based around principles that value participation and every member having an equal say. Finding an answer to the decision-making question requires CHUM to be committed to its horizontal principles while ensuring that there is a structure in place to move things forward. In the next section, I argue that CHUM's Mediation Committee serves as a salient model for how this can be done at the very frays of the democratic culture.

When democracy falls apart

Inevitably, there will be times when the consensus framework breaks down. A group of people may not be able to agree on an issue or someone may not follow through on completing a task even though they've been asked to do so multiple times.

That's where CHUM's Mediation Committee steps in. The role of the Mediation Committee is to facilitate open discussion between people who have a dispute or a concern around issues that involve housemates, committees, or multiple CHUM members. A mediation only takes place after both parties have consented to the mediation and the Mediation Committee has sent a mediator to help them. According to the Mediation Handbook, the goal of having a mediation is to resolve the conflict through "goal-oriented discussion, respectful dialogue, and an exploration of best possible solutions for both parties."¹¹⁵ All mediations are confidential. Members of the Mediation Committee and people who take part in a mediation sign a confidentiality agreement at the beginning of the process -- though members of the Mediation Committee do talk about their mediations with one another so that they can learn from each other and get insights about the process. Participation is completely voluntary and any member of the mediation can pull out or recuse themselves at any point.

In order to request a mediation, a member must identify a problem in their cooperative life and send an email to the Mediation Committee. The Mediation Handbook makes sure to point out that conflicts in CHUM aren't bad, but rather a necessary part of the cooperative process: "Conflict is a natural part of life--we all deal with conflict!--but we aren't always ready to deal with them on our own, which is where mediation comes in!"¹¹⁶ Once Mediation receives the email, they assign two people in the committee to handle the mediation. One person handles writing emails

¹¹⁵ "CHUM Mediation Handbook, 2015-2016." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.D. Web. 2016, February 2. <http://chum.coop/committees>. 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 3.

and communicating between the two parties while another member is in charge of ensuring that the parties follow through on doing what agreed to do during a mediation session. After assigning mediators, Mediation reaches back to the person who emailed them and asks them if they can contact the other party to set up a mediation. If they receive consent from the member, they reach out to the other party to get their side of the story. Afterwards, they schedule a meeting between both parties to discuss the issue openly and “work towards conflict resolution in a setting where everyone can feel empowered, respected, and listened to, as well as collaborate on reaching that resolution.”¹¹⁷ After a week, the Mediation Committee checks in on the parties to ensure that everything is going well. If another meeting is appropriate, the committee sets it up, though they may decline if they believe that the mediation meetings are simply being used to attack the other party.

A member on the Mediation Committee told me that mediations broke down into two categories -- relatively minor ones and major ones. She provided two examples to show how different the two situations were. At one house, the members had a problem with several people not doing the dishes. The problem of undone dishes was plaguing the house and members were unable to resolve it by themselves without the issue getting intensely emotional. Bringing in the Mediation Committee helped resolve the situation “without a blow up.” She explained that “Mediation made people hold back and not be as emotional as they would be. Maybe it’s because someone was watching. It made us feel silly about the problem and it’s good that we had someone there to help us realize this was a silly problem we could get through.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

Then, there are major mediations that are a lot less manageable. She explained that, “It’s about knowing and understanding how fast to respond to things and knowing when non-professionals should step back. Things can get out of hand really quickly if we don’t respond to them right away or realize that we can’t handle it. It’s just my opinion. We’re still finding those boundaries. We’re still setting up guidelines. It’s never going to be perfect, unfortunately.” These types of mediations deal with major issues in the house such as power dynamics where one person may try to control other people through bullying or intimidation. These kinds of mediations may require members of the Mediation Committee to recognize that they are not equipped to handle the emotional difficulty of the situation and to hand off the mediation to professionals.

Members on the Mediation Committee stress their status as non-professionals through every point of the process. The Mediation Handbook indicates that they are there to offer referrals to professional providers, facilitate conversations, and offer emotional support. They are not there to take sides, make decisions, or provide professional counseling or mental health care. Instead, the Mediation Committee is working to supply a set of outside resources that CHUM members can reach out to when things get beyond their ability to handle them. They are also working on setting up workshops that make sure CHUM members are trained on how to go through a mediation.

These resource gathering efforts were primarily driven by new members. The Mediation Committee is currently composed of five returning members and five new members. A senior member explained that new members brought new energy to the

committee. They dove head first into mediation and helped create new structures that are promising for CHUM: “An example of that is the developing partnership with PG County Mediation. This woman, Dr. E, is leading the mediation process at one of our houses. We’re all being trained and helping and will eventually be certified as mediators. This process is led by new members.”

Being on the Mediation Committee takes a toll on the members and burnout is a real issue. “We’re not trained and can’t do it ourselves. We try to avoid getting sucked into a problem. We see ourselves as who you talk to on the way to real resources. And we’re all volunteer,” one member explained, “Mediation Committee is one of the most stressful jobs if people aren’t realizing your limitations.” The Mediation Committee doesn’t have any system set up to ensure that members aren’t getting burnt out, rather it is more of a personal endeavor by all members of the committee. A senior member on the committee explained how it was on older members to check in on younger members to make sure they weren’t getting burnt out: “If someone’s not answering in a group chat as much, we check in. For returning members it’s on us to take on things when new members can’t. It’s asking ‘Hey can I ask that for you? You don’t have to do that all if it’s taking up a lot of time.’ You don’t let it carry over to your members who you’re mediating with. It’s human to get agitated, but you have to reign it in. It’s ok if you have a test and making sure you can say that. We want to make sure people are part of the committee, but not spending their whole lives on it.”

At the breakdown of democracy, the Mediation Committee offers a path forward for CHUM by showing how members that are part of a horizontal committee

can create resilient structures that keep the cooperative afloat. The Mediation Committee is trying to set up a system that CHUM lacks while moving forward without a permanent structure in place. Members of the committee handle crisis situations as best as they can at the moment while building connections to professional organizations and training themselves to be capable of handling the challenges of mediation. The members that do join the committee are highly motivated people who want to help CHUM succeed in the realm of mediation. It is hard work and members on the committee take care of one another by making sure one person isn't overloading themselves or getting too emotionally invested.

By building a mediation structure together, members of the Mediation Committee also find issues that the whole cooperative should discuss and decide on. One member pointed out that, "we can't rely on people in Mediation to decide because we don't have rules and policies in place. We need to develop a structure in what role Mediation should play in deciding what happens to people. People in Mediation handle decision that should be made by larger parts of the co-op." Members on the Mediation Committee currently make decisions that this member believes should be made in consultation with the whole cooperative.

In this uneasy tension of hierarchical decision-making may lie the answer to CHUM's problem of horizontalism, non-involvement, and structure. Members on the Mediation Committee fill a vacuum created by the absence of rules and policies. While the cooperative gears up to fill this absence, the Mediation Committee is able to take action on mediation-related matters without leaving them unresolved. Some member may see this as a problem and start the slow process of organization-wide

consensus in order to create a set of rules and policies. Meanwhile, members in the committee had already started to think about what these might look like. They ensure that the organization doesn't have to start from scratch when creating future systems, but rather build on the structures that the committee had already set up. Not everyone in CHUM can be equally involved in these planning efforts. More motivated people move them forward, but those who are less motivated or less able to take part in the cooperative can react when the issue catches their attention. It is by no means a perfect solution, but it provides a way for CHUM members to tackle these issues in a horizontalist manner that resonates with the values of the organization.

Conclusion

I asked A about what she thought about the future of CHUM. She answered, "The actual organization will survive. CHUM seems to get better and better each year. You have the ability to fall back on other people in CHUM emotionally and even physically. You can't do that with a random person in your class. Even though I don't get to talk to people from other houses much, when I do people do the coolest things I don't know about. I think everyone's smarter than me and I love it because I can learn a lot." What A demonstrates is that CHUM as an organization will survive and improve every year because of the people who are part of the organization. She is able to rely on them for emotional health and physical support -- whether it's looking out for her when she's in a bad place or helping her do chores that she isn't able to accomplish. She likes that people in the organization help her grow as a person. Underlying this feeling of dependence is a series of democratic organizational

structures that give everyone in the cooperative a chance to participate in the democratic decision-making of the cooperative.

Through being able to participate in these structures, members in CHUM are all able to have an equal stake in the cooperative, but this isn't without its problems. Some members may feel like they aren't able to express themselves adequately or accomplish what they need to. Others may feel like they don't have the time or energy to participate. Still others may have problems with the pace of the consensus process. CHUM is able to overcome these issues due to the care and support of more motivated members of the cooperative -- members who look out for people who aren't as involved as they once were or make sure that people aren't taking on more than they can handle. These practices of caring and nurturing keep the cooperative membership engaged and actively participating.

The individual drive of more motivated members poses the cooperative with a problem: how does CHUM ensure that projects don't fall apart when an individual loses interest or moves away? I argue that the less-involved and the more-involved members are able to keep tabs on each other. While the more involved members build, the less-involved will see the structure and have a desire to have a part in its making. Through this process of engagement, they are able to hash out policies and structures that will become part of CHUM's institutional identity. This process of give and take works because it meshes with the cooperative's horizontalist identity and creates the space for everyone to have a say. It accounts for the fact that not everyone will be equally engaged in the cooperative and instead manages to keep people in the loop at different levels of involvement.

Chapter 6: "An important, ugly pimple."

One cool autumn night I sat on a stoop outside with X as she smoked a cigarette. While she took a drag, I asked, "How does the University of Maryland view CHUM and how would you like the university to view it?" Her eyes widened and she exhaled the smoke quickly so that she could answer, "I don't think the university views us in any way. We're kind of an ugly pimple, but it's not important to deal with. Well, I think we're an important, ugly pimple. It's due to size. If we had more power, the structure would change and recognize us. I would like the university to view us as a good off-campus option. They put out a brochure of off-campus housing and we were not in it. Such sass was had over that."

CHUM has existed for seven years in College Park and yet the organization has yet to be recognized as a good off-campus option by the University of Maryland. Earlier in this thesis, I characterized CHUM as a response to the University of Maryland's neoliberal development. I have shown how CHUM provides students in College Park with an affordable housing space while giving them a community where they have a say over their housing conditions. Yet, I have not put the cooperative project and neoliberal project into conversation with one another. In this final chapter, I look at CHUM's larger goals of becoming a place to find affordable housing and discuss how it fits into the political economy of the university and the City of College Park. I look at CHUM's relation to other student groups at UMD, the City of College Park, and the university administration. I show that while CHUM is not yet large enough to be recognized as a major supplier of affordable housing, it is striving to become that entity and in the process it creates a resistant practice that allows

alternative projects flourish. I then discuss the significance of this resistant practice when it comes to radical political projects. CHUM forces us to think about the very foundations of radical communalism and the potential of political projects when they hit the ground. I finish by arguing that CHUM reveals what a claim to a right to the city could look like for cooperatives in a neoliberal age.

Of gardens and politicians

Walk along the Trolley Park trail in College Park and you'll come across four raised beds filled with tomatoes. In 2014, the President of CHUM secured a small grant for wood and compost from the City of College Park. The goal was to create a community garden that CHUM members and neighbors could build and share together. A CHUM member directed the construction of the garden and was helped by five community members and a dozen CHUM members. Members of the community were highly supportive and the community association gave CHUM \$75 to buy seeds to plant in the garden. Since then, CHUM has had work days to ensure that the garden is taken care of and tidied up.

This garden is one of many small projects that CHUM runs in the community. These caught the attention of the newly elected Mayor of College Park and several members on the College Park City Council. They reached out to CHUM in the hopes of working with the cooperative. By luck, T, a CHUM member involved in the UMD's Student Government Association, sat on the City of College Park's Quality of Life and Diversity Committee at that exact time. This City Council Committee was dedicated to expanding affordable housing options for students in College Park.

T explained to me that the Mayor and the legislators saw CHUM as an example of students having a positive impact on the community. Residents in the neighborhood disliked students living in the neighborhoods because they were loud, had parties, and upset the older residents who were trying to raise families -- so much so that a legislator once proposed banning students from living off-campus entirely. The residents who hated these forms of student housing loved CHUM because of how CHUM interacted with the community. The member explained that, "We're not loud, we have a lot of community projects, we build community gardens and have film screenings. Some politicians are saying, 'We don't want to kick all the students out. Look at CHUM, we support CHUM.'"

Some members on the City Council supported CHUM for purely ideological reasons. T explained that five of the ten members on the City Council really care about students and housing affordability. He told me, "They're trying to reach out and coordinate because they want more cooperatives. They're trying to help CHUM get bigger. They see CHUM as a seed for more co-ops in College Park. They're trying to get the university to support us." The newly elected Mayor tasked T with creating a CHUM taskforce that would help raise awareness of the cooperative to students, buy a house, and change the zoning laws so that CHUM members could live in a house together legally.

To T and CHUM's credit they did a lot of the work they were asked to do. T set up the taskforce, did outreach to CHUM's committees, helped write a grant proposal for the house, and met with his City Council representative to ask about the

zoning question.¹¹⁸ Members of CHUM attended the UMD's Off-Campus Housing fair to advertise the cooperative as a housing option. CHUM members came together to develop a business plan for how to expand CHUM in the long term. Some members figured out the details of how to buy a house while others worked on the question of what they wanted the cooperative to be as it grew. Unfortunately, T and other students lost steam due to their commitments to school, work, and extracurricular activities.

S put the matter pithily as we talked to one another across a kitchen counter late one night: "CHUM's better at potlucks and gardens -- we're not good about showing up to City Council meetings." S was an older member of CHUM who had already graduated from college. He took part in the CHUM taskforce and came away with a bleak view of the CHUM-College Park collaboration. He believed that a big reason for why this effort failed was because students felt "disempowered and strung out" because of school and work. He told me, "A lot of people in CHUM are paying their way through college with full time jobs and don't have time to be active in more than one place. The ageism makes it feel like their voices don't belong in the City Council." Taking part in activities with other students was hard enough. Walking into the halls of power was another matter entirely. S believed that students didn't feel empowered to make their voices heard in City Council because it was a place

¹¹⁸ The City Council member gave T a runaround answer that changing the zoning laws would be incredibly difficult as the capacity of a house was based on how many people could occupy a bedroom. It was assumed that only one person could occupy one room, even though CHUM felt that many more people could live together. The City Council member suggested that T should look at other cities with cooperative houses and copy their laws. The question fell to the back burner as T's involvement fizzled out.

reserved for older people in College Park. It was an issue of perception that discouraged already busy students from taking part in the City's democratic process.

Surprisingly, S told me that "the university showed zero interest in the task force and put in no effort." CHUM and cooperatives seem to present the answer to the university's problem of creating "family-friendly behavior in local neighborhoods." Yet instead of promoting cooperatives, the university administration has chosen to expand the Student Code of Conduct and enforce it through increased police surveillance of local neighborhoods. S believed that UMD had a strictly political reason for its actions:

"Honestly, I think it has to do with CHUM's legacy of political activism. CHUM's been a place for people to make protest signs and people in CHUM were at Occupy UMD and Feminism Without Borders. Disorientations guides were made here for a while. UMD has no interest in CHUM. They have a lot of financial stake in the high rise expensive apartments. In general, the university is turning more and more profit driven despite being a state flagship campus. They're trying to bring in more wealthy out-of-state students and put them in the high rises. It's more about generating a revenue stream. There's less poor and middle class students from Maryland. Basically, they don't give a rat's ass about CHUM existing."

From S's point of view, CHUM was both an affordable alternative to the university's high-rise apartments and a direct challenge to the administration as a politically active institution. The university didn't want to help CHUM because it went directly against their interests in generating revenue. Whether S's take is an accurate read on the UMD administration or not, he is fundamentally right about CHUM presenting a challenge to the university's current developmental strategy. CHUM was messy and student-run. UMD supported students running their own affairs on-campus, but didn't want things to get in the way of their plans to build a high-caliber flagship institution.

There were rules to be followed and enforced. UMD had final say, not the students living in the building.

I want to amend S's statement that CHUM is better at potlucks and gardens than at City Council. CHUM is also better at being part of student-run organizations than ones run by the City. While CHUM members had a difficult time showing up to City Council meetings, many students I met were actively involved in on-campus groups and activities. The Student Government Association, Student Labor Action Project, Students for Justice in Palestine, Sierra Student Coalition, and a Latin@ student organization were just a few groups students mentioned taking part in outside of school and work.

X told me that while she was happy being involved with these groups, she wanted to increase partnership and collaboration among CHUM and these groups. It was one thing to have members involved and it was another to actively collaborate. This collaboration held many benefits for CHUM. First, X explained that the SGA gives student groups money for holding joint events, so partnering with other organizations would give CHUM more money for event programming. Second, CHUM would get a chance to network with the members of these organizations. X told me that members from these student organizations would be able to tap into CHUM as an organizing space and a place to live. And, the groups would be able to collaborate together to reach common goals on-campus. X told me that all the groups CHUM currently collaborates with have the goal of building student power on-campus and making life better for students.

At the time, the University President Wallace D. Loh had started a speaker series where he hoped to engage in dialogue with the student community and uplift student voices on challenging issues like racism on campus. X reacted negatively to the President's gesture, "If he supports building student power on campus, he should lift up spaces like CHUM. He doesn't uplift people to organize at all. If he's serious about community, he'd say more about the rising cost of tuition and of living. He's shutting out a lot of people by not uplifting CHUM. We're losing lots of great minds and things that could be good to the university because of money. It's a ridiculous barrier." X believed that by coming together students could force the administration to do more than just offer token gestures of listening. She didn't think that Loh's listening series were ill-intentioned, but she abhorred the fact that student voices didn't have any real power to change UMD's policies. She believed that the university needed to work hand in hand with students to change its development strategy and open the campus up to students who couldn't attend the university due to the rising cost of living and tuition.

I find the assertion that President Loh should lift up spaces like CHUM particularly interesting as it underscores CHUM's strategy for transforming College Park. On their website, CHUM singles out UMD, developers who build luxury apartments, and single family property owners in College Park as the causes of unaffordable housing in the city.¹¹⁹ Instead of working to change the behavior of any of these entities, CHUM seeks to carve out an alternative that forces these entities to compete with it in the housing market. X's statements have this strategy in the

¹¹⁹ "History." Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08. <http://chum.coop/#history>

background. Rather than asking Loh to act on issues surrounding rising costs of living, she wants to push Loh to recognize spaces like CHUM and send students to these spaces. Pursuing this alternative institution strategy keeps CHUM independent and resists incorporation or absorption by UMD. Members of CHUM are able to create and run an organization that can stand up to the university, landlords, corporations, and others to fight for what they believe is necessary on issues surrounding costs of living and tuition. This alternative gives CHUM and their allies the power to demand what they want rather than having to wait for the university to act. In order to make any demand, CHUM must be recognized as an entity worth taking seriously. Without this recognition, CHUM is a sideline actor that can't influence the university. Benevolent recognition by UMD would be ideal, but since the university refuses to do that, CHUM must grow so large that the university can't simply ignore it anymore.

At the current juncture of the university's development strategy, CHUM seems like a non-factor. The university has chosen to ignore the cooperative in spite of the potential benefits it could bring to the university and the area. Through a concentrated effort, CHUM members could work with the Mayor and the City Council to grow and push UMD to recognize them as a viable alternative housing option. Yet, as Chapter 4 shows, CHUM members have a difficult time staying involved within the organization itself -- much less with major undertakings like rewriting the City's zoning laws. Projects and initiatives that succeed are largely driven by individual will and passion. There are ways to stave off burnout and ensure

that these efforts move forward, but CHUM is still in the process of figuring out how to do that within the organization.

The cooperative structure and community will continue to survive and grow as long as there are passionate members recruited into CHUM. The organization and its mission trudge forward slowly as members pick up projects, drop them, rediscover them again, and build structures to more firmly embed them in the cooperative. By its constitution as a cooperative targeted towards low-income earners, members in the cooperative will always have to balance work, school, extracurriculars, and communal responsibilities. Yet, even members who barely have time to spare manage to sit on committees and organize events like house shows. Even though CHUM is unable to take on a long-term activist campaign in the City Council at this juncture, it succeeds in building something equally impressive. It creates a space for resistant practice right in the heart of the university's college town. A space that reinvigorates itself year to year and keeps alternative possibilities alive in College Park.

Claiming the right to the city

The anarchist insurrectionary group The Invisible Committee argues that communes -- whether they are production co-ops, consumer co-ops, housing, education, or credit co-ops -- work because of the bond connecting the participants with one another and their means of existence. It writes that one finds strength, stamina, inventiveness, and happiness by "inhabiting a situation of exception on a daily basis" -- by coming together to face the world cooperatively. Through inhabiting an alternative to the dominant economic and political system, one begins to live a joyful, shared life that is communist and free from government intervention. It

states that “in this sense, the commune is the organization of fertility... a commune was a pact to face the world together. It meant relying on one’s own shared powers as the source of one’s freedom. What was aimed for in this case was not an entity; it was a qualitative bond, and a way of being in the world.” The Invisible Committee argues that this shared bond has operated in the squares of Tahrir and in the parks of Occupy Wall Street. It is a bond among people that one must learn to trust and rely on.

The Invisible Committee believes that when people bring in questions of direct democracy and formal organizations that ensure one doesn’t impose their will on another, one is returning to the premise that we must all be governed. One who worries has no trust that communal bonds will lead to interactions where things can be resolved. Instead, one must create procedures. The Invisible Committee writes, “We want to be sure that nothing will occur that is not covered by some procedure. That no event will exceed our capacities. That the situation will remain something we can handle.” It argues that democracy springs forth in the commune out of a desire to quell an anxiety. It does not wish to denounce democracy because it does not want to denounce an anxiety. Instead, it argues that we must trust in the bonds of the commune -- the bond among the people in the commune -- to resolve questions and tensions that would otherwise be left to some sort of democratic procedure.

The trouble with this sentiment is that it becomes difficult to hold when one encounters governing agencies. As David Graeber puts it in *The Utopia of Rules*, radical projects tend to flounder once they enter into the world of “large, heavy objects: buildings, cars, tractors, boats, industrial machinery” because “they are surrounded by endless government regulations, and are effectively impossible to hide

from the government's armed representatives.”¹²⁰ CHUM's houses are six such heavy objects. Members in the cooperative need to ensure that they pass government and landlord inspection. Furthermore, residents in CHUM need to pay rent to the landlord at the end of every month. If anyone, for whatever reason, is unsatisfied and decides to leave CHUM, the cooperative project is thrown into a miniature crisis. CHUM's focus on direct democracy, cooperative economics, and mediation keeps the organization afloat by building the resources it needs to sustain itself. While the commune may be an organization of fertility, the joy and anger that sprouts from an insurrection will not last forever. Living together cooperatively is a challenging thing. Even the most mundane issues can create tension in the cooperative as people get on each other's nerves, disagree on how to do the dishes, and fail to be as considerate as they ought to be. Creating structures of mediation and democracy is a necessity to ensuring that the project continues rather than a perversion of a fabled original bond that takes hold at the beginning of a commune.

Still, even if we somehow entered into the world of communes where strong bonds mended difficult conflict without procedures, it is difficult to see how the commune in and of itself could serve as an explicitly political project against the current order. In August 2015, the *New York Times* published an article called “The Millennial Commune” that profiled start-up coliving companies that provided communal housing to residents in New York City and San Francisco. These companies offered residents a chance to live with roommates who hold a similar worldview while sharing resources and building space. They bought up housing stock and sub-leased it out to tenants on a monthly basis as part of a recurring membership

¹²⁰ David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*. New York, NY: Melville House Publishing. 2015. 85.

contract. The price ranged from \$1,600 to \$4,000 a month for a room shared with a roommate.¹²¹ The companies offered community events like potlucks and fitness classes, services like cleaning and laundry, and a hand selected network of influential tenants who work in various industries.

While these benefits definitely drew tenants in, the companies primarily advertised their ability to create community among the residents. As one resident put it,

“Laundry services and cleaners and masseuses — all of that is icing,” he said. The real perks are the people he has met along the way. “How cool is it that I walk in the door and they ask me, ‘How’s your day?’ And I am genuinely interested in hearing from them,” said Mr. Jackson, who considers himself the Den Dad to the other tenants, who generally are two or three decades his junior and stay a month or two at a time.¹²²

This statement sounds like it could come straight out of a profile on a cooperative house. Coliving businesses like WeLive, Krash, Campus, and Pure House are opening shop in major cities across America and offering members who can afford the rent access to an experience that is very similar to the one I profile in this thesis. What is the difference between the joyful bond experienced by members of a coliving business and the one of a commune? I believe the difference lies in their political motivations.

While the Invisible Committee is clearly basing its theory on anarchist communist principles, the point needs to be underscored: People can feel the mythic bond that they describe as the commune, but that very bond can bolster the current economic and political system rather than creating an alternative. The *New York*

¹²¹ Ronda Kaysen, "The Millennial Commune." *The New York Times*. Published July, 31 2015. www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/realestate/the-millennial-commune.html

¹²² Ibid.

Times piece cites advocates who disparage the coliving spaces for driving up property rates in the area. The businesses profiled buy large unused spaces, pack them full of wealthy residents, and jack up the rental rate far beyond what it used to be in the area. The coliving millennial commune is gentrification by another name.

Neil Smith argues that gentrification happens when developers and landlords seek to make the most profit possible on a given building or plot of land by using two strategies: 1) increasing the amount of profit earned on an existing property by neglecting basic repair services and amenities while drawing rent from the residents; and 2) repurposing the property for higher profit functions like luxury condos. These strategies often work in tandem with one another. Landlords disinvest from properties in poorer areas. This disinvestment makes them cheaper to purchase or rebuild for new uses. Developers then buy up cheap swatches of property and build expensive housing on them, thereby raising the property rate and cost of living in the area. These investment strategies create a supply of property that draws in wealthier residents to poorer areas while displacing the poor residents already living there.¹²³

Coliving spaces are just another manifestation of gentrification. Other than the clientele they cater towards, it is difficult to see the difference between coliving spaces and developers buying buildings and jacking up rents. Both pursue profits with little regard for what happens to the residents who lived in the neighborhood previously. This is why CHUM's founding mission as a zero-equity cooperative that owns property but does not profit from it is so important. Without it, CHUM could devolve into being just another housing provider for wealthy students. It is because

¹²³ Neil Smith. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. New York: Routledge Press, 1996. 61-70.

CHUM is dedicated to the principles of providing affordable housing to students that are low-income that it matters as a space of resistance to UMD's development strategy. It is also because of this mission that CHUM's commitment to racial and ideological diversity matters. A space of resistance that is all-white and of one mind cannot tackle the challenges faced by people who need affordable housing in College Park.

Facing these challenges and accomplishing these goals will not be easy. That is why CHUM is a political project that is working towards a long-term alternative. Unlike the communes at Occupy or Tahrir, CHUM's cooperative project is more covert and less intrusive. It is a project that works alongside the government in some cases and resists it in others. I believe that CHUM is one expression of what a political project working towards the right to the city could look like. The right to the city is a concept that states that we must have democratic access to urban resources so that we may shape the kind of city we want to live in.¹²⁴ Social movements come about to this right in different ways. Squatters claim abandoned buildings and plots of land out of necessity, to protest the government's refusal to provide affordable housing, or to do away with the practice of private property ownership. Movements like Occupy claim the right to public space in order to protest against capitalism and the current system of governing. CHUM seeks to push against the forces of UMD's development project by creating a permanent structure that provides cooperative housing for low-income students and members of the community.

¹²⁴ David Harvey, "The Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53, September - October 2008. <https://newleftreview.org/II/53/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>. 23.

CHUM's state of flux serves as a particularly poignant example. As a set of policies, neoliberalism tends to favor governing and markets that are flexible and adjust to the needs of financial capital. Workers aren't guaranteed permanent jobs and are expected to switch between careers as the market dictates. UMD trains students to enter into this world while also simultaneously simulating it. Students enter the university, stay there for a few years, and then find work and move away from the area. The college town is a strangely permanent yet impermanent place where workers-to-be come and go, but never stay. Yet, the town and the university remain fixed there in spite of this turbulence.

CHUM is becoming another institution that remains. CHUM's membership flows in and out. The cooperative is forced to adjust to meet each successive generation's needs. Yet, with each group of students, the cooperative continues to grow, build internal structures, and interact with the university and the City of College Park. By basing itself around the concept of affordable housing and actively recruiting students from activist student groups, it creates an alternative to the university's development project.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

On a particularly chilly October night, I biked home to Washington DC from one of the northernmost CHUM houses. The house was a small, two-floor row house just a bit off the main drag of College Park. It was surrounded by luxury apartment complexes with names like The Enclave. These towering buildings had everything -- a built-in gym, multiple restaurants, a bar, parking for cars and bikes, a laundromat, and a community bank. The CHUM house seemed miniscule in comparison. That particular night, I remember stopping at a tall hill on the Piney Branch Trail and looking in the direction of College Park. At this distance, all I could see was the tall luxury apartments. I remembered feeling a twinge of hopelessness as I gazed into the distance. Pitted against these behemoths, how could CHUM ever hope to compete?

I reminded myself of an important difference between CHUM and those towers. CHUM was there seven years ago and the luxury apartments were not. In spite of operating on a shoestring budget and the volunteer labor of low-income members who were busy with many other activities, CHUM has managed to survive and thrive. The area had become increasingly unaffordable to students, yet CHUM is an organization on the ascent. CHUM has a constantly changing membership, but the organization is able to welcome new students into a thriving community every year. Through a combination of cooperative economic structures and a robust, democratic culture, CHUM creates robust person-to-person connections that allows the cooperative to engage in large organizational projects such as forming a mediation process, buying a house, and setting up community gardens throughout the city.

CHUM faces several challenges as it continues to grow. First, the cooperative must address its lack of racial and ideological diversity. CHUM's mission is to create an affordable housing space that benefits low-income residents regardless of their race, sexuality, gender, ability, or ideology. Currently, there is a sense among some cooperative members that ideological diversity isn't satisfactory. There is also quantitative evidence that the cooperative is majority white. CHUM must seriously think about their recruitment process and the ways in which it fosters racial and ideological diversity within the cooperative. Movements with a primarily economic focus risk losing sight of issues relating to identity. In the process, they may amass a homogenous group of supporters while failing to incorporate others. Given CHUM's mission to provide affordable housing regardless of one's identity, it would be a great loss for the cooperative if it were to do so.

Second, CHUM must contend with changes in its culture of democratic decision-making. As CHUM grows in size, it becomes more and more difficult for the cooperative to reach consensus and maintain face-to-face relationships across the organization. The cooperative must face larger challenges that require faster solutions than the consensus model may offer. For example, houses may have to deal with a member who is impossible to live with or who refuses to pay money. Or, they may deal with emergencies regarding landlords or law enforcement. Members in the cooperative have proposed multiple answers to these issues ranging from trusting in consensus to creating formal structures and policies to expanding the role of the President in the organization. While the conversation is still in its nascent stages, it is clear that it will become a larger issue as the cooperative itself becomes larger.

Finally, CHUM must begin to imagine its future role as an alternative housing provider in the city of College Park. UMD's development plan is set to be completed in 2020 and CHUM will operate in a very different housing market. The University District and faculty housing initiatives will expand luxury apartments for students while increasing rates of homeownership among faculty. UMD is also set to demolish old housing nearby campus and rebuild it as new dorms.

With student housing in flux during this intermediary building period, more students have shown interest in living in CHUM. Members told me that some students that live together have asked to join CHUM and offered up their group homes as potential future housing sites for the organization. Whether CHUM is able to take advantage of this groundswell of interest depends on the organization's ability to incorporate more houses or change the housing laws to allow more residents to live in existing houses. If CHUM is able to do either, it will increase its ability to draw funds into FIRE and speed up the purchase of a house for the cooperative. CHUM will be able to speed this process up even more if the organization is able to work with the City Council and friendly landlords.

CHUM's future direction depends on how it decides to act in the next four years. I have heard members express interest in everything from growing CHUM into a larger housing organization with a different decision making structure to being one cooperative organization in a growing ecology of College Park cohouses. Whichever direction CHUM members take, they will have to contend with recognition from UMD. This recognition could take two forms -- administrative and communal. From the administrative perspective, recognition from parts of the UMD's bureaucracy

could have immediate benefits to CHUM. Something as simple as being listed as a viable option by the Off-Campus Housing Services would be an immediate boon to the organization's membership. From a communal perspective, if CHUM is recognized as a viable housing provider by the university's student community, then it will gain access to a larger pool of potential applicants without any of the messiness that comes with dealing with the UMD bureaucracy. Through my conversations with CHUM members, I saw that they were pursuing both options by building university recognition among the student community. The hope was that this increased recognition would either raise the student body's awareness of CHUM as a *de facto* alternative or force the administration to recognize CHUM as a *de jure* one.

CHUM must contend with these challenges in recruitment, direct democracy, and growth to outlast the massive towers popping up around College Park. I hope that this thesis helps the organization as it continues to grow. I have attempted to distill what it is that works so well about the cooperative as well as show what the organization can improve. I offer this work not as a prescription of what CHUM ought to do, but rather as a suggestion of the organization's possibilities and potentials -- as a gift.

Bibliography

Primary Sources - CHUM Archives

“Apply”. Co-Op Housing University of Maryland N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.

<http://chum.coop/apply.html>

“Bylaws of Co-Op Housing University of Maryland, INC. Bylaws - Google Docs.”

Co-op Housing University of Maryland, Incorporated. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08. <http://ter.ps/CHUMbylaws>

“Cooperatives.” Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August

08. <http://chum.coop/cooperatives.html>

“History.” Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.

<http://chum.coop/#history>

“Houses.” Co-Op Housing University of Maryland. N.d. Web. 2015, August 08.

<http://chum.coop/houses.html>

“CHUM Mediation Handbook, 2015-2016.” Co-Op Housing University of Maryland.

N.D. Web. 2016, February 2. <http://chum.coop/committees>

Maddox, Rachel. *Co-op Housing Project: Action Plan & Resource Guide*. April, 2009. Web. August 8, 2015. <http://socialeconomyaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Co-op-Housing-Project-Action-Plan.pdf>

Primary Sources - University Special Collections Archives

“1974 Report by the Chancellor’s Committee on Campus Housing.” Student Affairs, Division Of. January 1975. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

“Building on Excellence: The Next Steps.” May 4, 2000. President (UMCP), Office of the. Strategic Plan Information. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

“College Park Housing Status Report”. Student Affairs, Division Of. January 1975. UPUB S22. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

Eppley, George. “Letter to Mr. R.E. Manchester.” July 16, 1947. Geary Eppley. Dining Hall 1938-49. Fraternity House Inspection 1951-53. Accession No 15. Series 1. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

Hall, Joseph S. "Letter to All Deans, Department Heads, Faculty, and Staff Associates". February 6, 1963. Archives -- Housing, Office Of. Correspondence and Miscellaneous Information. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

"Housing." Dormitories 1939-1954. Geary Eppley. Dining Hall 1938-49. Fraternity House Inspection 1951-53. Accession No 15. Series 1. Box No. 3. Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

James, Robert C. "Report on Men's Permanent Dormitories Including Proposed Changes." December 7, 1948. Geary Eppley. Dining Hall 1938-49. Fraternity House Inspection 1951-53. Accession No 15. Series 1. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

Kirwan, William E. "Charting A Path to Excellence: The Strategic Plan for the University of Maryland at College Park." March 27, 1996. President UMCP, Office Of. Box 1. P24.008. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

Senate meeting minutes, Records of the University Senate (2000 -). Series I. Box no 4. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

“Strategic Plan.” Student Affairs, Division Of. 1994. UPUB S22.001. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

“Transforming Maryland: Higher Expectations.” 2008. President (UMCP), Office of the. Strategic Plan Information. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD.

“University Senate - December 11, 2006 Minutes.” Senate meeting February 15, 2007. Records of the University Senate (2000-). Series I. Box No. 4. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

“University Senate - September 13, 2004 Minutes.” Senate meeting October 5, 2004. Records of the University Senate (2000-). Series I. Box No. 3. Special Collections - University Archives. University of Maryland: College Park, MD. March 27, 2016.

Primary Sources - University Online Archives

"2020 Strategic Plan Update of the University of Maryland." *University of Maryland:*

College Park. Last modified December 10, 2015.

<https://umd.edu/Flagship2020/pdf/StrategicPlanUpdate-12-10-15.pdf>

"Brand Toolkit." *The University of Maryland: College Park*. Last modified 2014.

<http://www.brand.umd.edu/brand.cfm>

"Housing and Development." The University District - College Park City-University Partnership. Last accessed February 2016.

<http://collegeparkpartnership.org/housing-development/>

"Just the facts." *Office of Undergraduate Admissions*. Last accessed 2016.

<https://www.admissions.umd.edu/about/JustTheFacts.php>

"Proposed Residence Hall Fees for 2016-2017." Department of Resident Life, last accessed February 2016. <http://reslife.umd.edu/housing/housingfees/>

"Public Safety." The University District - College Park City-University Partnership.

Last accessed February 2016. <http://collegeparkpartnership.org/public-safety/>

Seabolt, Kristen. "University of Maryland Continues to Make Strides as National Leader in Diversity and Inclusion." UMD Right Now. Last modified

September 15, 2015. <https://www.umdrightnow.umd.edu/news/university-maryland-continues-make-strides-national-leader-diversity-and-inclusion>

"The University District." The University District - College Park City-University Partnership. Last accessed February 2016.
<http://collegeparkpartnership.org/university-district-vision/>

"Transforming Maryland: Expectations for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion."
The University of Maryland: College Park. Last modified 2012.
<https://issuu.com/umaryland/docs/22628>

"University of Maryland Timeline." The University of Maryland: College Park, last accessed 2016. <http://www.umd.edu/timeline/>

"UMD Campus pantry provides food assistance for campus community." Department of Student Affairs. Last modified April 6, 2015.
<https://www.studentaffairs.umd.edu/news/umd-campus-pantry-provides-food-assistance-for-campus-community>

Primary Sources - Newspaper Articles

Bahrampour, Tara. "More college students battle hunger as education and living costs rise." The Washington Post. Published on April 9, 2014.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/more-college-students-battle-hunger-as-education-and-living-costs-rise/2014/04/09/60208db6-bb63-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html

“City settles on new slogan, logo design.” Diamondback. January 29, 2013.

Domen, John. "Battle Raging Over Student Rentals In College Park." CBS DC. Last modified July 16, 2014. <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2014/07/16/battle-raging-over-student-rentals-in-college-park/>

Kaysen, Ronda. "The Millennial Commune." The New York Times. Published July, 31 2015. www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/realestate/the-millennial-commune.html

Primary Sources - Government Archives

Humes, Karen R, Nicholas A. Jones, and Robert R. Ramirez. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010." US Census Bureau. Last modified March 2011. <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>

"The World Factbook - Median Age." *CIA*. Last viewed February 2016.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2177.html>

U.S. Census Bureau. "2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates" using American FactFinder to look up College Park City, Maryland. February, 2016.

Secondary Sources

Abdurraqib, Hanif. "I Wasn't Brought Here, I Was Born: Surviving Punk Rock Long Enough To Find Afropunk." *Pitchfork*. Last modified August 10, 2015.
<http://pitchfork.com/thepitch/862-i-wasnt-brought-here-i-was-born-surviving-punk-rock-long-enough-to-find-afropunk/>

Albert, Michael. *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*. London: Verso. 2003.

Bertrand, Marianne and Sendhil Mullainathan. "Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination." *National Bureau of Economic Research*. July 2003.
<https://www.nber.org/papers/w9873.pdf>

Bray, Mark. "Five liberal tendencies that plagued Occupy". Roar Mag, 14 May 2014.
<http://roarmag.org/2014/05/occupy-resisting-liberal-tendencies>

Bruhn, John G. *The Sociology of Community Connections*. London: Springer. 2011.

- Carlsson, Chris. *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-lot Gardeners Are Inventing the Future Today*. Oakland, CA: AK. 2008.
- "Student debt and the class of 2014." The Institute for College Access and Success. Last modified October 2015.
ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2014.pdf
- Cornell, Andrew. *Oppose and Propose!: Lessons from Movement for a New Society*. Oakland, CA: AK. 2011.
- Cornell, Andrew. "For A World Without Oppressors: U.S. Anarchism from the Palmer Raids to the Sixties." Diss. New York U. 2011.
- Corr, Anders. *No Trespassing*. Cambridge: South End. 1999.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. trans. Steven F. Rendall. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2011.
- Doyle, Jennifer. *Campus Sex, Campus Security*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2015.
- Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and The Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press. 2003.

- Durrett, Charles, and Kathryn M. McCamant. *Co-housing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press. 1994.
- Epstein, Barbara L. *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*. Berkeley: U of California, 1991.
- Ferguson, Ann A. "Managing Without Managers: Crisis and Resolution in a Collective Bakery" in *Ethnography Unbound*. Los Angeles, LA: University of California Press. 1991.
- Frazer, Elizabeth. "The Concept 'Community'". In *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict*. Pp. 47-85. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1999.
- Gates, Gary J. and Frank Newport. "Special Report: 3.4% of U.S. Adults Identify as LGBT." *Gallup*. Last modified October 18, 2012.
- Gamson, Zelda F. and Henry M. Levin. "Obstacles to the Survival of Democratic Workplaces" in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984.
- Graeber, David. *Fragments of An Anarchist Anthropology*. Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press. 2004.

Graeber, David. *The Utopia of Rules*. New York, NY: Melville House Publishing.

2015.

Grumprecht, Blake. *The American College Town*. Hunt Valley, MD: Sheridan

Books. 2008.

Hartge, Sarah, Georgeanne Matthews, and Anton Medvedev. "Understanding the

Community of Student Cooperative Housing." (class paper, University of

Maryland: College Park, 2014).

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University

Press. 2005.

Harvey, David. "The Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53, September - October

2008. <https://newleftreview.org/II/53/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>

Hanson, Chris. *The Cohousing Handbook: Building a Place for Community*.

Vancouver, British Columbia: Hartley & Marks. 1996.

Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*.

Cambridge: MIT. 1995.

International Co-operative Alliance. *Co-operative identity, values & principles*. 2014.

Web. 15, October 2014. <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

Invisible Committee. *The Coming Insurrection*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2009.

Invisible Committee. *To Our Friends*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2015.

Jackall, Robert and Joyce Crain. “The Shape of the Small Worker Cooperative Movement” in *Worker Cooperatives in America*. ed. by Jackall, Robert and Levin, Henry M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1984.

Joseph, Miranda. *Against the romance of community*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Kanter, Rosabeth M. “Communes in Cities” in *Co-ops, Communes & Collectives*. ed. John Case and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, New York: Pantheon Books. 1979.

Landman, Ruth H. *Creating Community in the City: Cooperatives and Community Gardens in Washington, D.C.* London: Bergin & Garvey. 1993.

Lefebvre, Henry. *Writings on Cities*. Translated and Edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Lipsitz, George. *How Racism Takes Place*. Philadelphia: Temple University. 2011.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. 1984.

"Metro stop? Metro: Stop! The Politics of Transportation Planning." *Urban Studies and Planning Program, The University of Maryland: College Park*. Last modified September 1994. <http://rethinkcollegepark.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/CollegeParkStationStudy.pdf>

Miles, Malcolm. *Urban Utopias: The built and social architectures of alternative settlements*. London: Routledge. 2008.

Miller, Genna R. *Gender Equality in Worker Cooperatives*. Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 7. <http://geo.coop/node/615>

Nguyen, Mimi Thi. "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival." "Punk Anteriors: Theory, Genealogy, Performance." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*. Issue 22.2-3. Ed Beth Stinson and Fiona I.B. Ngô. 2012.

Richardson, Miles. "Being-in-the-Market Versus Being-in-the-Plaza: Material Culture and the Construction of Social Reality in Spanish America" in *The*

anthropology of space and place: locating culture. ed. by Lowe, Setha M. and Denis Lawrence-Zuniga. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2003.

Rodman, Margaret and Matthew Cooper. "Boundaries of Home in Toronto Housing Cooperatives" in *Setting Boundaries: The Anthropology of Spatial and Social Organization*. ed. Deborah Pellow. London: Bergin & Garvey. 1996.

Rothschild, Joyce and J. Allen Whitt. *The cooperative workplace: Potentials and dilemmas of organizational democracy and participation*. London: Cambridge University Press. 1986.

Rhoten, Diana and Walter Powell. "Public Research University: From Land Grant to Federal Grant to Patent Grant Institutions" in *Knowledge Matters: The Public Mission of the Research University*. ed. by Rhoten, Diana and Calhoun, Craig. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 2011.

Saegert, Susan and Lymari Benitez. "Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives: Defining a Niche in the Low-Income Housing Market." *Journal of Planning Literature* 19: 427 – 429. 2005.

Shumar, Wesley. *College For Sale*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press, 1997.

Shumar, Wesley. "Space, Place and the American University" in *Structure and Agency in the Neoliberal University*. New York, NY: Routledge Press. 2010.

Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. New York: Routledge Press. 1996.

The Invisible Committee. *The Coming Insurrection*. New York: Semiotext(e). 2008.

The Invisible Committee. *To Our Friends*. New York: Semiotext(e). 2015.

Wann, David. *Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing*. Ed. Wann, David. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing. 2005.

Zukin, Sharon. *The Cultures of Cities*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers. 1995.