

The Domes at UC Davis: A Conflict-Ridden Narrative

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the recent history of the Baggins End Innovative Housing community - familiarly known as the Domes - on the University of California, Davis (UCD) campus. Built by students in 1972, the consensus-governed housing cooperative has cyclically been threatened with community closure and, cyclically, students and Dome supporters have managed to prevent closure. However, on January 24th, 2011, UCD Student Housing publically announced that they would no longer offer leases to student residents beyond the spring term. Supporters mobilized and, in spite of a five-month period of complete vacancy, the Domes successfully reopened on January 4th, 2012, now under the management of the Solar Community Housing Association (SCHA).

This thesis questions: how was the Domes community saved, yet again, and why is this significant? The Domes, as space, is representative of the imagined neoliberal utopian “community”, understood as “sustainable” in the contemporary moment. This community narrative, rooted in the modern Western logic of capital and utopian metaphors, has powerful implications in the field of community development. This thesis is an attempt to unpack the multifaceted relationships that underlie the continuity of the Domes, questioning how narrative constructions serve to both foster and threaten the community, in order to better comprehend, on a meta-level, how Western narrative imaginations – with particular values and ideologies – influence the practice and process of modern community development.

Dedication:

*To my Oma, Mildred Furness, for everything
To my father, Marcel Pardo, for your enthralling tales
To my mother, Gail Pardo, for your unconditional love
To my sister, Nicole Pardo, for always challenging me
To Reema Cherian, for your humble intellect and infinite generosity
To Nicolas Parraín, pour le temps passé ensemble
To Benjamin Pearl, for your unwavering dedication
To Elizabeth Ernst, for our extraordinary adventures together, and ever
To Frank Loge, for sincerely believing in me
To Karen Watson-Gegeo, for transformative lessons and shared teatimes
And, of course, to all Domies, past, present, future and imagined ...
This narrative is for you.*

Preface

Like many children growing up, I was a fan of the story, the imaginary. I related epic tales of ostriches and fluffy bunnies on adventures across the world, while my sister, only one school grade below me, catalyzed tales with her eager questioning; intricacies developed in the desire to please my only audience member. I learned the art of story telling from my father, a man skilled in engaging the listener, likely from his own practice of conscious personal presence. Growing up, the favorite family nighttime story was of our adolescent father and his hiking troop getting lost in El Ávila, a national park located along the central stretch of Venezuela's Cordillera de la Costa, their lives under threat at every turn from the poisonous snakes, to the danger of falling off of the mountain (especially in the dark), to the scarcity of known edible food. The story transforms on every occasion: how many days they were out (3, 5, 10), who was badly hurt, and how far they traveled in the demanding environment. The revisions never made a difference to us, as we implored for him to tell it again, to hear once more how the children came upon a farm and were saved, how the danger finally passed, how our father is alive to tell the heroic tale. Though he continues to relate the story, now it belongs to all of us: Marcel, Gail, Mildred, Nicole, Veronica, and perhaps others unborn; etched into our formative family memories, we are keen to interject our own renditions and imagined pasts, internalizing the story, drawing power of identity from its narrative.

Susan Friedman discusses the narrative as a "multiplicitous form of meaning-making thought," which, on a meta-level, "take[s] the form of story,

playing out agonistic plots of opposition and reconciliation, performing as well negotiations that move back and forth, weaving dialogic and heterogeneous narrative lines of inquiry.” She continues,

At another level, identity is literally unthinkable without narrative. People know who they are through the stories they tell about themselves and others. As ever-changing phenomena, identities are themselves narratives of formation, sequences moving through space and time as they undergo development, evolution, and revolution... Narrative is a window into, mirror, constructor, and symptom of culture. Cultural narratives encode and encrypt in story form the norms, values, and ideologies of the social order (Friedman, 1998, p. 7-8).

Guided by the notion of the power of the narrative, this thesis is an attempt to capture a story that is simultaneously mine and that of the people, identities, energy, space and time that encompass it. And it is a story, as the thread weaves through the theory of the work, illuminating how narratives - derived from powerful metaphors – distinctly influence our societal existence. It questions, what are the implications of this power as we consider the work of community development, or more specifically “sustainable” community development.



The Domes, aka Baggins End Innovative Housing, University of California, Davis

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Background

Originally developed as a “low cost ... resident designed and constructed”¹ housing project, the Domes² - also known as Baggins End Innovative Housing or Baggins End³ for short - is a consensus-governed⁴ cooperative on the University of California, Davis (UCD) campus, where fourteen fiberglass “igloo-like huts” house twenty-eight student residents on approximately four acres of agricultural land (Sangree, 2011). Completed by students in 1972 - with the financial support of the UC Regents, the oversight of UCD Student Housing, the guidance of EcoSystems, Inc. (led by contractor Ron Swenson), and the professional assistance of Central Coating Company⁵ - the Domes space is a result of a particular historical moment in which UCD actively supplied “alternative”¹ educational group living opportunities to students on campus. In the 1973 ‘Domes Status Report,’ Lynn Marchand, UCD Coordinator of Living Groups, notes that the Domes project was consistent with identified goals of Student Housing: “to provide for alternative living styles in our campus

¹ Marchand, Lynn, and Pat Lattore. *Domes Status Report*. Rep. University of California, Davis, July 16, 1973. Print.

² The Domes community mission statement reads, as members of the Domes Community, we choose to promote and exemplify a lifestyle that incorporates the following:

- living practices including organic agriculture and permaculture, low-impact construction, energy efficiency, alternative forms of waste management and the general reduction of our ecological footprint, which allow us to meet our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.
- interdependence on levels ranging from emotional to economic.
- understanding of differences and conflict resolution through the consensus process.
- To encourage creativity, inspiration, initiative, personal growth and diversity.
- To structure our place and our community as an accessible educational resource for each other, the University of California at Davis, and the greater community of the world.

³ For the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to the community as the Domes.

⁴ Consensus is a decision-making process that aims to include the whole, ensuring that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into group consideration (The Seeds of Change Collective, 2007 p. 63).

⁵ According to the 1973 ‘Domes Status Report,’ a loan from the UC Regents of \$93,000 was offered to the Domes in May 1972, after the necessary campus approvals were obtained. UCD Student Housing served as land manager of the Domes until July 31st, 2011. Photos and information concerning the building of the Domes can be found on the website ecotopia.com.

housing program ... allow[ing] students the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the determination of their environment” and “to be responsive to a wide variety of student needs” (Marchand, 1973 p. 8). Institutional encouragement of direct participation in the student environment supported the formation of the Domes: a distinctive physical⁶ and social space now emblematic of local Davis, California history and lore.

Endorsement for the Domes project was established within an explicit framework of expectation between stakeholders:

Perhaps our greatest challenge for the future will be dealing with the *public vs. private ownership*. We have successfully accomplished our goal of having students feel at home in the dome community with the ensuing feelings of *pride of ownership, identity and accomplishment*. However, in the end the public institution, through the operation of the Housing Office [now known as Student Housing], *must assume its role of landlord and manager*. How will we develop the appropriate balance that allows students to be continually involved and allows the University to maintain its role as owner? This challenge will be articulated in projects to be completed, style of community governance and the philosophies[sic] of management in the ensuing year. We are confident that the challenge will be met and both parties will be able to maintain their integrity (Marchand, 1973 p. 9, my emphasis).

However originally imagined, the Domes/University⁷ history is not without conflict. Forged within an idealistic expectation of adherence to moral and ethical principles, balanced amongst the private owner (student) and the public owner (University), the Domes project embodies the metaphor⁸ that community is utopia, where individuals – presumably with a sense of pride of ownership, identity and accomplishment - peacefully coexist under a dominant

⁶ See Appendix I for photos and explanation concerning the creation of the Domes structures.

⁷ For the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to UCD as the University.

⁸ The word metaphor comes from two Greek roots: *meta*: over/ across and *pherein* (like in Ferry) to carry. A metaphor then can be understood as a vehicle that can transport us, help us breach the obstacle (water) that naturally separates two levels of understanding, one internal, ideal and subconscious, and one material, sensual and concretely perceivable.

governing body. This utopian narrative, however, is seemingly unattainable. Cyclically, the Domes community is threatened with closure and, cyclically, students – with the invaluable backing of Domes supporters – have averted community closure through persuasive public outreach campaigns and coherent opposition narratives. Thus, while the Domes community is representative of ideals and values originally articulated by the University, this narrative belies the complicated social relationships that comprise a more conflict-ridden history.

The Domes community faced an unprecedented challenge on January 24th, 2011, when UCD Student Housing announced during a “Domes open forum” that they would no longer offer leases to student residents beyond the spring term. “A series of issues related to access, health and safety, maintenance and cost” were cited as the foundation for the decision (Sandy, 2011).

It is our shared conclusion that the costs to address each of these concerns, along with the work required to meet the current building codes, remains very substantial ... such a significant financial investment in the current Domes structures is not a good use of students’ rents, the present reserve and a loan that would create a substantial liability for future residents (February 1, 2011 Letter to Dome Residents Galindo, 2011).

Specifically, the costs were estimated at \$1,000,000: \$700,000 to bring the Domes up to University housing standards⁹, and \$300,000 to make it Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.¹⁰ Confronted with a “million dollar question ... literally¹¹,” Student Housing had a strong public narrative to close down the

⁹ Re-foaming each Dome for insulation was estimated at \$40,000, plus other expenses for internal repairs, such as electricity and loft re-construction.

¹⁰ The ADA is a wide-ranging civil rights law, enacted in 1990, that prohibits discrimination based on disability. Title III states that no individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability with regards to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, or accommodations of any place of *public accommodation* by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of *public accommodation*. At the Domes, this means the need for wheelchair accessible amenities.

¹¹ Galindo, Emily. Domes Forum, University of California, Davis. Tercero Main Lounge, Davis, CA. 24 January 2011. Open forum.

community for good. As a consequence, the Domes property was emptied of residents for the first time in its nearly forty-year history on July 31st, 2011.

Nevertheless, this did not mark the end of the Domes story. While the residence structures remained unoccupied for nearly five months, the Solar Community Housing Association (SCHA) - a local Davis non-profit whose mission is to encourage and create community and respect for environment through affordable, cooperative housing¹² - continued to negotiate with the University, in order to serve as the new land manager of the Domes. Already having established a working relationship with the University and the UCD student cooperative communities¹³ - as well as other beneficial relationships with Berkeley Student Cooperative (BSC)¹⁴ and North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) prior to the January closure announcement - SCHA was in a position to confer and consult with party members in order to reach a viable management solution. The relationship with BSC became crucial to University negotiations when the non-profit offered \$10,000, and an additional \$10,000 in matching funds, to support the Domes transition from Student Housing to SCHA. The demonstrated social and economic capital laid the foundation for University approval of the Domes Community Build. During November 3rd-6th, 2011, with the help of Community Build expert Tom Donch, SCHA, and over 450

¹² More information is available on the SCHA Website: schadavis.org

¹³ The Tri-Cooperatives: Agrarian Effort, Pierce Co-op, and the Davis Student Co-op, which accommodate approximately 13 students per house.

¹⁴ Specifically, the relationship with Alfred Twu, then Berkeley Student Coop Cabinet Member, was and continues to be essential. Twu serves as a staunch supporter of the Domes, openly volunteering his architectural and artistic expertise. Twu also recently completed a book titled, Save the Domes!

<https://sites.google.com/site/firstcultural/>

volunteers¹⁵, a majority of the necessary University-stipulated work, such as wheelchair accessible pathways, loft reparations, basic maintenance, etc., was completed at a fraction of the originally estimated cost¹⁶. The success of the build lent additional legitimacy to SCHA and their dedication, permitting the signing of a five-year ground lease between the non-profit and the UC Office of the President, on December 22nd, 2011¹⁷. On January 4th, 2012, a certificate of occupancy from UCD Design Construction and Management (DCM) for Domes 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 14 and 15 was released to SCHA management. Meanwhile, students were permitted to return to the site, which they did gladly. By spring quarter, the rest of the Domes¹⁸ were approved and filled.

Introduction

How did the Domes community garner the capacity to continue and why is this relevant? The current Domes story is significant because it demonstrates the powerful narratives that shape our contemporary, Western¹⁹ imagination of community development. Lee Cary (1979) posits that the earliest foundation of community development was developed through a set of principles around community needs, extensive citizen involvement, consensus, and local-decision

¹⁵ Integral to this process were the Domes Community Build Crew Leaders: Francesca Claverie, Derek Downey, Nicolas Parrain, Kase Wheatley, Kurt Vaughn, Margareta Lelea, Molly Reagh, Laura Damian, Jesse Schmidt, Benjamin Pearl, and myself.

¹⁶ Because the project is still in completion, the final cost is not yet known. It is estimated that the renovations will cost 15-20% of the original University \$1,000,000 estimation.

¹⁷ Replicating the model of BSC's arrangement with the University of California, Berkeley, the lease is costing SCHA \$1 a year. There are additional costs of approximately \$30,000 in order to do basic business on campus. This covers fees for Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), Fire, Police, Grounds, etc.

¹⁸ At the time of writing, Domes 7 and 8 have yet to be completed; they are being fully renovated for ADA accessibility.

¹⁹ I will refer to modern Western culture, which is the dominant culture of Europe and North America, throughout this thesis. Shaped by the classical period of the Greco-Roman era, and Christianity, it is derived from a tradition of rationalism in favor of free thought, human rights, equality and democracy. It has also grown from an urge to adopt, adapt, and ultimately influence other trends of culture, often in damaging ways – witnessed through colonialism, the Vietnam war, Operation Iraqi Freedom, et cetera.

making. According to Cary, the wide appeal of democratic principles and practical application established a community development practice in which principles are reiterated with little modification, resulting in a lack of theoretical or empirical underpinning within the community development profession. In other words, there exist seldom-questioned professional assumptions around how a healthy community is formed, what it looks like, and how it acts, thus perpetuating a limited utopian community imaginary.

In the current context, this imagined community is established within a neoliberal framework, strained by ideologies and values that simultaneously reject and support the hegemonic governing body, one motivated almost exclusively by capital exchange. David Harvey explains: “In so far as neoliberalism values market exchange ‘as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs’, it emphasizes the significance of contractual relations in the marketplace” (Harvey, 2005, p. 3). These contractual relations, while idealistically understood as existing in a liberated and harmonious framework, can actually reproduce patriarchal and hierarchal structures embedded in the system of material production.

Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations ... The same men who establish their social relations in conformity with the material productivity, produce also principles, ideas, and categories, in conformity with their social relations (Marx, 1963, p. 109).

Despite idealistic notions of freedom, the contemporary labor force remains a gendered and class-based space where an amassing and distributing of capital within categories is considered the primary language of social relations.

The neoliberal utopian community – rational and free - is expressed in the contemporary Western imaginary of the sustainable community and its balance of economics, equity and the environment. In order to better comprehend, on a meta-level, how narrative imaginations influence the practice of community development, this thesis is an attempt to unpack the multifaceted relationships that permit the continuity of the Domes, questioning how narrative constructions serve to both foster and threaten the Domes community, exposing the pretense that all is well in community utopia.

Methodology

The following reflections are the product of an ethnographic study, and, as Kamala Visweswaran (1994) explains, “ethnographic accounts are constructed, and tell particular stories.” The account, or story, embodies “politics of representation,” and demonstrates how “different narrative strategies may be authorized at specific moments in history by complex negotiations of community, identity, and accountability” (Visweswaran, 1994). As she states, “fiction, as we know, is *political*” (Visweswaran, 1994 p. 15, my emphasis). Thus, the construction of this account is established through the complex negotiations of the political, representing the tension and interplay between dominant and obscured narratives, as well as my own narrative.

In many ways, it resembles an “autoethnography,” which Carolyn Ellis defines as a “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis, 2004, p. xix). The research is delimited by my personal experiences and understandings. Yet, simultaneously, the many roles I engaged in - Domes community member,

UCD graduate student, member of the Sustainable Living/Learning Task Force²⁰, UCD Housing Co-op Advisory Board member, et cetera - provided a means to greater insight, and entrée to different realms of the narrative.

Informally, I have been collecting data for this thesis since October 2010, when I first realized that the Domes were under threat of closure. At that time, I did not know that I would be using my notes and conversations via email for a research project. Initially, data were accumulated within a grounded theory framework. A considerable body of the historical data was drawn from documents in special collections at the UC Davis library. These documents span nearly forty years of history, though there are often gaps in information, or numerous duplicates of comparable information. Other data were gathered through on-site documents and materials, participant observation, field notes, and eight semi-structured interviews²¹ among individuals I have come to know, primarily through my involvement with the Domes. These individual ties, professionally and personally, afforded me tremendous access to significant data.

In addition to notes and special collections documents, I have a database of recent and past media articles and film clips. I found the majority of these on the Internet, though one film was given to me by a former Domes resident. I also transcribed audio clips of the two Domes open forums held by UCD Student Housing, on October 25th, 2010 and January 24th, 2011. Analysis of this data set,

²⁰ Attempting to alleviate student concerns about the closure of the Domes community, the University created the Sustainable Living/Learning Task Force to explore “the long-term future for sustainable student living-learning communities on campus” and develop “a plan by June [2011] for the next generation of housing inspired by the legacy of the Domes community” (Easley, 2011).

²¹ I received IRB Exempt Review approval for this research on April 13, 2012

in addition to numerous personal conversations with Domies²², Domes supporters, and those not in support of the project, has revealed principle categories that demonstrate the dominant and invisibilized narratives of the story, weaving together a complicated and deeply contextualized history.

Narrative of Capital

Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman argue for the concept of social capital, supported by a theory of rational action, or “economy of practices,” in which, “each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events” (Bourdieu, 1986/Coleman, 1988). Bourdieu claims we live within the “games of society,” where capital is “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its ‘incorporated’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (1986). In this manner, social capital, through social relationships, is embedded in the principles of economics through labor and “is *productive*, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98, my emphasis).

Coleman asserts social capital depends on the “trustworthiness of the social environment, which means that obligations will be *repaid*, and actual extent of obligations held” (1988, my emphasis). Social relationships, in this narrative, are an exchange of obligations, made stronger by “trust,” investment, and user value: “the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at

²² “Domies” refers to residents of the Domes, past, present, and future. Alumni often refer to themselves as Domies.

establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (Bourdieu, 1986).

Bourdieu and Coleman, however, fall short in their description of social capital, not fully examining the origins of the theory, reinforcing a capitalist, “productive,” game-like narrative, which conceals other narratives of exchange and social relationships. In their version, trust is gained through a particular mode of economic operation, or value-based exchange, and with it, underlying expectations amongst actors. This kind of social organization is Western in nature, not encompassing of all cultural narratives.²³ While Coleman (1988) does acknowledge “a given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others,” he fails to address from what social narrative the growth model of “accumulation” comes, and how this model perpetuates dominant paradigms, or what Bourdieu (1986) calls “the immanent structure of the social world.”

The capital, or “power” notion reproduces a Westernized discourse where power is collected and capital distributed according to relationships, defined through dominant social, economic and cultural narratives (Bourdieu, 1986). In addition to social capital, Bourdieu outlines cultural capital, which is institutionalized through Western notions of proper education. According to Bourdieu, both social and cultural capital can, in the right conditions, be converted to economic capital. It is through this construction that the prevalent means to gain so-called power is formed: amass capital.

²³ I argue that, while the exchange of capital forms the majority of our social fabric, there are potential alternatives to the capital paradigm where other forms of wealth, such as health and happiness, are esteemed. See other capital examples in the “gift economy” (Crocombe et al., 2003).

Capital of the Domes

How does the capital narrative affect the Domes community, in theory and in reality? The Domes, as a “Davis landmark and local sanctuary” exhibits a “power that is not entirely real,” thus factoring into people’s “local imagination” of community and building its capital (Sarnat, 2011; Anonymous. Personal interview. 3 May 2012.). “Imaginary constructions can have very real effects on people's lives” (Anonymous. Personal interview. 3 May 2012.). Supported by the locality of Davis, the Domes as a community is protected within “Davis culture” where relationships are forged through mutual capital - social, cultural and economic - producing “what makes Davis good.” (Vaughn quoted in Miller, 2011). UCD Human and Community Development professor, Ryan Galt, calls this phenomenon “social reproduction,” and explains, “once people form something that they like, they want to see it replicated and continued, even in their absence” (Galt, Ryan. Personal interview. 17 May 2012.).

In the case of the Domes community, the idea is reinforced through local historical narratives, and reproduced, as more people engage with the place over time. Thus, time and place offer a space in which to amass reproductive capital; “The longer the University was ... allowing people to live here, the stronger the community base got in the sense that the number of domes alumni grew” (Loge, Frank. Personal interview. 4 May 2012.). There was a “tipping point” where “enough people lived” and “passed through” the community that it “gained momentum such that the University couldn’t shut it down. It couldn’t shut itself down” (Anonymous. Personal interview. 3 May 2012.). Meanwhile, this momentum is potentially perpetuated through “good faith” relationships amongst those that share the same narrative, to find a “solution that is acceptable

and beneficial to all concerned” (Brandow, 2011). Those concerned are comprised of distinct actors, bound by similar values and ideologies with shared capital.

Though the Domes as an organized body maintains a certain amount of capital, the social, cultural, and economic capital of discrete actors is not equivalent. This imbalance creates spaces where the “right” people can make decisions and negotiate around the grand vision and management of the space. Actor agency differs depending on whether one is a student, faculty member, administrator, alumnus, or community supporter.

The cyclical nature of students brings energy and vitality to the vision, but is temporary in nature, hindering capacity to create long-term relationships and increase individual capital. Thus, the Domes as a space and living body within which students cycle is crucial and allows for enduring relationships by way of its own being.

Faculty possess “academic legitimacy” (Galt, Ryan. Personal interview. 17 May 2012.) They know “the do’s and don’ts” of the university, “who to approach,” and “how to present things to the campus” (Loge, Frank. Personal interview. 4 May 2012.). Yet, they are also limited by the “appropriate role” they must play (Van Horn, Mark. Personal interview. 26 April 2012.). They have to negotiate an apolitical professional space, being careful not to threaten their careers.

Administrators make decisions through “risk management” (Hernandez, 2011). They are restricted by the “parameters” of their job description in terms of what decisions they have the capacity, and interpretation of authority, to make

(Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.). However, they are also representatives of the University at large and thus possess dominant rhetoric.

Those not directly involved in the University system, like alumni and community supporters, have varying degrees of capital depending on their willingness to invest in the University, or through the pressure they can exert as a collective body. Of course, individuals can assume multiple roles, but the distinct categories are significant in terms of perceived and attributed agency in the visioning and development process. The particular actors form specific relationships with one another, merging behind a common ideological goal, and increasing general capital. Galt describes the “really strong trusting social relationships” he built “with people across a variety of different places within the University” where he could call on their “expertise and knowledge” during the process (Galt, Ryan. Personal interview. 17 May 2012.). In this manner, the social and cultural capital of the Domes is increased, while also delineating more or less capacity to particular actors. Thus, Western notions of communication through capital shape the process by which the actors can participate.

While the Domes has maintained enough historical capital to overcome cyclical threats – and engage in institutional negotiations - the future continuity of the community depends on additional capital obtained. Within the neoliberal context, this means clearly articulating the value of the Domes in a market accessible format. Civil and Environmental Professor, and Domes supporter, Frank Loge explains:

What is it that's unique about the Domes that's worth maintaining? ... I think that's what the community needs to articulate ... until someone can articulate what are the unique elements ... worth preserving ... until someone can do that, it's not worth sustaining and preserving ...

[articulation is] necessary to be able to interface with the ... outside world (Loge, Frank. Personal interview. 4 May 2012.).

The Domes must communicate its worth to the “outside,” consumer world. This is essential if the community intends to amass capital for long-term survival.

Loge continues:

Internal to your community ... people understand the value of the Domes and living this way ... it's more of a feeling than any sort of rational thought that you can then articulate and say it's A, B and C. The problem is that, unless you live here, you don't feel that ... from the outside perspective, you ask the question, what is worth sustaining about the Domes? ... if the community can't articulate back to those people, what are the elements, they don't understand (Loge, Frank. Personal interview. 4 May 2012.).

The “value” must be rationalized as tangible elements that can be understood as “worth sustaining” in the University-framed marketplace. From this Western perspective, capital is the universal language understood to represent space, and the productive human relationships within it. “Representations of space ... are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Knowledge concerning value is symbolized and codified for effective relations within the marketplace.

Space relations have been radically restructured since around 1970 and this has altered the relative locations of places within the global patterning of capital accumulation... residents find themselves forced to ask what kind of place can be remade that will survive within the new matrix of space relations and capital accumulation. We worry about the meaning of place in general when the security of actual places becomes generally threatened (Harvey, 1993 p. 6).

While this capitalistic framework remains in direct conflict with internal values of the Domes community²⁴, during times of crisis, the space is often reduced to

²⁴ From an emic perspective, the culture of the Domes is one that rejects the perceived capitalist society. One example of this is that the community yurt is not to be used for events that charge money.

terms of capital in publicity campaigns.

Capital and Communication

The Domes community does not comprise a vast body of the UCD student population, yet it continues to garner sizeable public support when under threat. For the most part, public campaign representation of the Domes community has remained tactical in nature. A tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” where “the space of the tactic is the space of the other” (Certeau, 1984 p. 37). Here, “it must *play on and with* a terrain imposed on it,” operating in “isolated actions, blow by blow,” taking advantage of “opportunities” (Certeau, 1984 p. 37, my emphasis). Through a game of tactics, the Domes community plays on and with the University framework, often garnering temporary capital, for “what it wins it cannot keep” (Certeau, 1984 p. 36). This differs from a strategy, which endures in the hegemonic framework.

I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects or research, etc.) can be managed (Certeau, 1984 p. 35-36).

In other words, strategies are employed in the established boundaries of acceptable practice, within a spatial or institutional localization. In this manner, the Domes community retains some power of strategy, existing in a “place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it,” but also constituted by cycling students, who are “dynamic,” “passionate,” and “energetic” in nature (Certeau, 1984 p. xix; Van Horn, Mark. Personal interview. 26 April 2012.). Comprised of

both a proper physical location and regularly shifting social relations, the Domes community negotiates a creative resistance that employs the dichotomic variable pair strategy/tactic. Consequently, in the face of a University strategy, the dynamic nature of the Domes population permits contextual responses, while the social and cultural capital generates a language that can prompt public concern.

During the recent effort to save the Domes, this tactic/strategy approach took the form of media communication and a substantial letter campaign, with over 3000 letters sent to UCD administrators asking them to accept an alternative solution and endeavor to keep the Domes. Domes campaigners, under the guidance of Fodor²⁵, produced a “coherent” and “compelling message” that responded to and created a “stronger frame” than the University, or “opposition” (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.).

As Lakoff and Johnson describes, a common metaphor we live by is the notion that argument is war (Lakoff, 1980). Thus, we structure arguments in terms of the metaphor of war, where battles are won or lost amongst allies and foes. This narrative serves well for media entertainment, where it creates binaries of for or against, appealing to the emotion and identity formation of the public. Here, “the ‘heads’ of the political system” can be “confronted by cooperatively organized antagonists, with a ‘definition-making power’ of media-directed publicity ... which can essentially codetermine and change the agenda of politics” (Beck, 1992 p. 194). In this neoliberal framework, the consumer determines the course of action. Strategically, the University is continually participating in media-directed publicity through the office of Government

²⁵ Fodor served as a communications organizer during the campaign. Nick Buxton and Juliette Beck, who do communications strategy for a living, are personal friends of Fodor and were there to help during the campaign as well.

Relations, in order to garner consumer support. To combat this strategy, Fodor and others drafted and distributed media releases telling the Domes side of the story. Incidentally, local newspapers in Davis, Sacramento, and the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as media outlets like Good Day Sacramento, covered the impending closure. This “large and broad faced publicity bombardment on the University” involved “lots of different tactics” which afforded the Domes crucial publicity, creating “a small, but forceful groundswell of community support for the Domes project” (Vaughn, Kurt. Personal interview. 18 April 2012.).

Garnering support meant representing the Domes in a language common to the University. Capitalizing on neoliberal ideologies, various FAQ sheets positioned the Domes as “an educational resource and creative think-and-do-tank,” a “hub for social and environmental innovation at UC Davis,” and a “Davis landmark ... on the cutting edge of green building, solar technology, sustainable agriculture, alternative transportation, and the local food and cohousing movements.” Represented as a sustainable community, the Domes community engaged in the mainstream narrative, increasing social capital. Simultaneously, Domes “continuously engaged in a positive way with the administration,” strengthening both internal University relationships and the Domes public representation (Vaughn, Kurt. Personal interview. 18 April 2012.).

Capital, Risk and the Body

One challenging narrative for the Domes to contest was the element of risk. For months, the University reasoned that delamination of insulating foam compromised the structural integrity of the Domes, putting the lives of residents

in jeopardy. Public pressure, however, persuaded the University to hire Art Ross, a 3rd party engineer who ultimately confirmed that foam in the Domes is not structural. Foam delamination was one of several risk narratives readily employed by the University to justify the community closure. Because risks “are based on *causal interpretations*, and thus exist in terms of the (scientific or nonscientific) *knowledge* about them, they can be “changed, magnified, dramatized or minimized within knowledge, and to that extent they are particularly open to *social definition and construction*” (Beck, 1992 p. 22-23). Risk is a powerfully dominant narrative, suitable for manipulation within varying social conditions. It can serve to perpetuate an imagined state of emergency, creating a space where leaders are presumably forced to make difficult decisions in a time of crisis; “It was a tough decision and we had to take all the factors into play. Where we landed had to do with the safety of the students and the financial burden that the necessary renovations would present” (Galindo quoted in Cary, 2011). One may “postulate that the corporate leader” could “benefit from a state of continuous (perhaps manufactured) crisis, an imaginary of crisis, leading to what one might term the routinisation of crisis, in order to legitimate his/her authority” (Kerr, 2008 p. 204). It is the administrators “responsibility” to manage risk and find solutions, reinforcing the notion of the justified leader.

I hope you can appreciate the *responsibility* that I [Emily Galindo] have as the Director of Student Housing. I am *responsible* for all students that live on the campus. And if you include all the ones that are in family housing as well we're talking about, about five thousand students. Okay? And so when I took on the, this *responsibility* about three years ago, it's about the same time that Fred took on *responsibility* as Vice Chancellor. There are a number of issues that we had to, became my *responsibility* and had to take

a look at, kind of look for some solutions for... so it led to a lot of *responsibility* on my part to, to respond in some way (my emphasis).²⁶

The responsibility extends to the body. Ramona Hernandez, associate director for business services in Student Housing, declared in the January Domes forum, “if somebody gets hurt, you may not come after me, but you may be hurt in such a way that your viability ... your career path that you're studying here at UC Davis becomes compromised.” Governing bodies employ a discourse of safety around the body to sustain their authority, in which “biology is drawn into the domain of power and knowledge” (Marks, 2006 p. 333). The risk of the body is understood as capital risk in the labor market, which is inversely alleviated through growth of capital.

Narrative of Community

Through its derived capital - assumed tactically, strategically, and through time, space and social relations – the Domes struggle reveals a contemporary metaphor of community, where community is capital. This metaphor supports and undermines the narrative of community that encompasses the Domes.

Supporting hundreds of Domies in what alumnus Kurt Vaughn calls an “incredibly dynamic” place, the Domes community fosters a strong culture of experiential learning, and a “we can do it” attitude (Vaughn, Kurt. Personal interview. 18 April 2012.). Resident activities span the spectrum: composting, taking care of chickens and bees, managing the gardens, planning dance parties, serving community meals, performing construction and maintenance, initiating workshops according to interest. As “friend, alumni, ally” Danielle Fodor explains, it is “also a learning community where people are learning exactly the

²⁶ Galindo, Emily. Domes Forum, University of California, Davis. Tercero Main Lounge, Davis, CA. 25 October 2010. Open forum.

same lessons as people before them,” which is, “a beautiful and wonderful thing that people do in college” (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.). Alumna and long-term resident Margareta Lelea appreciates it as a “group of people with both a shared vision, but also divergent visions that then have to learn how to work together to create a place to live that feels like home for everyone” (Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.). I first came to know the Domes through a link on the UC Davis Student Housing website, complete with photos, and a “Baggins End Innovative Housing Application” that introduced a “cooperative”, “self-governing”, and “socially-responsible community.”²⁷ More Internet searching led me to a video titled, “Domes,” on UC Davis NewsWatch, in which pioneer²⁸ alumnus Clay Brandow calls the community “a place for the counter-culture to sort of hang out ... and thrive in Davis.” In a utopian sense, the community appeared to simultaneously embody popular Western ideologies I had long internalized, like quality of education and “eco-conscious” living, with a “counter-culture” spin, represented in the notion that Domies “make all their own decisions” in a “communal” and “nurturing” environment.²⁹

The “thriving” Domes community is in many ways a reflection of the Davis community I grew up with, as a teenager selling baked goods and seasonal fruits at the Davis Farmers Market. Beloved “eco-conscious” symbols of the California city, like the Davis Food Co-op and Village Homes, were partially developed through the internal and external relationships of the UCD Domes

²⁷ Domes Application 2011: housing.ucdavis.edu/__pdf/form_DomeApp.pdf

²⁸ Pioneer refers to the first students to build and live in the Domes. Building occurred from 1971-1972, with students moving in fall of 1972, and completing project work into the school year.

²⁹ *Domes*. Youtube.com. UC Davis NewsWatch, Feb. 2008. Web.

and Tri-cooperative³⁰ environments and their interests.³¹ Judy Corbett, a lead organizer in the participatory resident-informed creation of Village Homes, wrote her thesis, "Student-Built Housing as an Alternative To Dormitories," on the Domes community, ultimately demonstrating the value (not without its own challenges) of "user involvement" in the architectural design of residences (Corbett, 1973). Once deemed "America's Weirdest City" by the tabloid *Weekly World News*, Davis is a place that ostensibly values "recycling," "alternative housing projects," "potholes preserved for posterity," "quality of life," and "safe passage" for toads.³² "But", as one quoted resident warns, "if outsiders think our city is weird, they probably should stay away, because they wouldn't be happy here."

Though not all Davis residents would ascribe a description of the unusual to their city, Davis as an alternative space is a product of the narrative, or imaginary, that exists in the construction of a notion of "community": "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, 1991 p. 6). These imaginations determine the outsider from the community member, establishing community ideologies and values that differ from the excluded: "the same sentiments that generate community attachments clearly authorize exclusivity on the part of communities" (Creed, 2006 p. 11). In this manner, the Domes community is both a construction of the imagined space of students who have lived there, but also

³⁰ The Tri-cooperatives are another UCD student cooperative group that is comprised of three houses, averaging 13 students per house.

³¹ Other influences include the Davis Bike Collective, SCHAs, and the Whole Earth Festival

³² Alexander, Jack. "America's Weirdest City..." *Weekly World News* 1995-1997? Print.

of the broader Davis community who share (and reject) similar ideologies.³³ Davis Food Co-op posters, with background images of Domes in bright colors (see Appendix II), advertise, “WELCOME TO DAVIS,” asserting that they have been “BAGGIN’ THE BAGGINS SINCE NINETEEN SEVENTY-TWO,” skillfully weaving an imaginary of community amongst these narratives: the Davis Food Co-op, the Domes, and the city of Davis, exclusively for the purposes of capital gain.

Gerald Creed describes what he conceives as three component meanings of community, “a group of people, a quality of relationship (usually with a positive normative value), and a place/location.” The Domes community and other communities (Davis, UCD, etc.) share these standard elements. Creed speaks to the “seductions of community,” or what he defines as popular qualities associated with community: “harmony, homogeneity, autonomy, immediacy, locality, morality, solidarity, and identity, as well as the idea of shared knowledge, interests, and meanings” (Creed, 2006 p. 2). He warns of the “fetishization of community,” but fails to problematize how deeply embedded in the Western ideal these popular qualities he speaks of are. Steven Brint also critiques the romantic community concept, associating more interpersonal elements to the definition:

It is not at all surprising that the idea of community retains its power as a symbol and an aspiration. The term suggests many appealing features of human social relationships - a sense of familiarity and safety, mutual concern and support, continuous loyalties, even the possibility of being appreciated for one's full personality and contribution to group life rather than for narrower aspects of rank and achievement (Brint, 2001 p. 1-2)

³³ And those beyond Davis, though the scale of community diminishes with geographical distance.

Thus, community embodies a romanticized ideal, commonly bound by a group of people, their identifying relationships, and their location, all the while shaped by contextual needs and the “symbols” and “aspirations” of that moment. The power of community is reinforced through an evoking of the entirely positive imaginary. Raymond Williams explains:

Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it never seems to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term (Williams, 1976 p. 66).

Never used “unfavorably,” an invisibilizing of the divergent nature of the concurrently inclusive/exclusive community occurs. Notably, it can serve as a “persuasive” mode of power for bodies of “social organization.” Projecting one reality, but concealing many, a tension in the community narrative remains. This tension, which I ultimately identify as a difference in ideological understandings, is plainly expressed in the history of the Domes community and its relationship to the University of California, Davis (UCD) and Davis. Community then becomes one narrative, among many, that characterize the Domes story.

Save the Domes!

Presently located along the southern curve of the Domes Yurt³⁴ is a large file cabinet that contains archival pieces of Domes history, photocopies of handwritten meeting notes, posters publicizing entertainment events, and a plethora of “Save the Domes!” memorabilia. One notable piece from 1989 is a t-shirt bearing a prohibition sign (a red circle with a diagonal line through it), and

³⁴ This commonly used space on the Domes property was completed in 2008, and purchased from the company ‘Pacific Yurt’ through community funds. The company calls a Yurt, “a modern adaptation of the ancient shelter used by Central Asian nomads for centuries.”

the image of a massive bulldozer encroaching on three Domes, nestled between trees. In bold typeface, the shirt reads, "SAVE THE DOMES."

Since its inception, the Domes community has been a source of contention for UCD and the city of Davis. In the "Discussion" subsection of her thesis, titled "A Question of Values," Corbett writes, "the Davis county planning commission has called [the Domes] 'unsightly igloos' and the 'type of housing the county should not encourage'" (Corbett, 1973). Plagued by a history of controversial "values" or ideologies, the Domes community symbolizes an alternative space, where lines are drawn between what is deemed to be the acceptable norm, and what is not. In other words, the "culture" versus the "counter-culture," representing a "revolutionary" and "iconic power on a local [Davis] level" (Anonymous. Personal interview. 3 May 2012.). Yet, underling the counter-culture community narrative is a community in crisis narrative that is repeatedly affirmed. In this manner, we are always in the process of saving the Domes and the relationships that encompass it. This is derived from several interrelated metaphors of community: utopia, pastoral and the Garden of Eden, which support a salvation discourse of saving or delivering the Domes from any risk.

Community as Utopia

On May 25th, 2011, supporters of the Domes, led by a bagpiper, rolled four wheelbarrows filled with flowers and 3,000 letters of support for preserving the commune into UCD's Mrak Hall, where Fodor told the crowd:

What I want to see out of today is the same thing I discovered when I did my thesis. Which is that seeming diametrically opposed people like the housing department, the larger university superstructure and a group of rag-tag but inspiring, amazing and super-intelligent students can come together and make beautiful things happen (Golden, 2011).

Here, “utopian nature, or nature as the ideal unity of the opposites” is performed, and seemingly opposed ideas, such as “passion and order,” or “innocence and maturity,” are represented cleanly and simply, “in unity” (Merchant, 1980 p. 7). Combining forces, the contraries merge as one, constructing a paradise of sorts, where “beautiful things happen.”

Community, like utopian nature, assumes contrary notions, such as inclusion and exclusion, but is imagined as only a positive entity, capable of great things. In the Domes example, it can establish “partnerships,” where, in “dialogue with the larger campus community,” there is the potential to “find a common goal,” and to form stronger community bonds. (Van Horn, Mark. Personal interview. 26 April 2012.). The Domes, and its “potential,” is conceived as part of the “long term vision of the campus,” which is a more sustainable UCD community: socially, environmentally and economically (Galt, Ryan. Personal interview. 17 May 2012.). The utopian restorative narrative, through the imagined Domes opportunity, is “integrated” into the “larger campus community” to create “a positive space” with “productive” relationships (Loge, Frank. Personal interview. 4 May 2012.).

Still, the connection arises from a place of disharmony, or what Fodor calls “a fond antagonistic relationship, an annoying friendship, a marriage with the positive and the negative” (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.). The strained relationship must be “nurtured,” in order to reinforce “institutional links” with “allied administrators” and “critical partners,” striking a utopian balance between Domes and the University (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.).

Appeals to shared values and ideologies are the glue that conceivably binds, bringing together “the right people” and “the right resources” in order to institutionalize the dream (Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.). Underlying this narrative of a shared-vision community is the liberty to dream, which is made possible by our assumed mutual social and cultural capital. Without the imaginary of a utopian community, in the contextual space and time that the Domes exist, the community would not have, in the perception of the actors, the capacity to endure.

Internal to the community, the idealistic narrative also thrives. “Domes Utopia 1972,” reads an inaugural steppingstone, now bordered by a colorful mosaic depicting a bucolic community scene in front of Dome 7. The message is clear: here exists a shared vision of utopian community, where walking on property is like walking on “pebble stones of potential” (Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.). It is a place, “where reinvention of self and throwing away society’s markers for success,” while “inventing your own markers” for success are “part and parcel of the values of community and the transformations people make” there (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.). Inspired by “Bag End,” hobbit home of Bilbo Baggins in J. R. R. Tolkien’s fictional “Middle-earth,”³⁵ it is not surprising that the space embodies an imaginary appeal, where almost anything appears to be possible.

The cyclical character of students supports the experience because nothing remains static. Projects and behaviors shift according to who is in the community and at what time. Lelea believes it’s “uncertainty that breeds” the “vision and potential” in a “constantly fluctuating space that makes it possible for people to

³⁵ See *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, and *Unfinished Tales*.

go through a sense of transformation and jump in and say... let's do something, let's create something... I can do this" (Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.). Lelea contrasts the energy and vitality of the Domes to her grandparent's village in Romania where they are "suffering from depopulation," and there is a "heaviness of absence of people dreaming and people visioning and people being energized and engaged with wanting to create something" (Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.).

However imagined the utopian community is within Western discourse, the Domes offer a space for personal transformative experience. Vaughn, who lived in the community for nearly five years, calls it a "magical little melting pot for open minded and creative individuals to tear down walls that divide people from each other and to learn from each other" (Vaughn, Kurt. Personal interview. 18 April 2012.). The Domes is "a place that allows people to imagine what they could be and helps them figure out how to get there" (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.). While the utopian imaginary exists for many alumni and Domes residents, this faculty is derived from a specific context of social, cultural and economic capital. In other words, Domies can dream because of the dynamic community they live in, and because of their role of being privileged university students in an affluent U.S. city. This position is principal to the continuity of the Domes community, and is important to consider as we examine other community struggles, taking care not to conflate one experience with another, recognizing that distinct narratives shape particular outcomes and actor agency.

What ultimately makes the space as an imagined place of dreams a reality for so many? The Domes social and cultural capital permits visioning around the

positive construction of “community.” This collective vision is one embedded in Western narratives, derived from the metaphors of the pastoral and the Garden of Eden, and re-imagined in the contemporary as “sustainable.”

The Paradise of Sustainability

How much better when the whole land is a garden, and the people have grown up in the bowers of a paradise. – Ralph Waldo Emerson³⁶

In her seminal work, *The Death of Nature*, Carolyn Merchant speaks to a Renaissance pastoral tradition, with roots in “nostalgia for the Homeric Golden Age,” “the uncorrupted Garden of Eden,” and an “escape from the ills of the city” (Merchant, 1980 p. 8). This narrative of nature supports the renewal of paradise in a space separated from the industrial environment, while the pastoral image of nature as “benevolent female” refers to and suggests a passive nature that can be cultivated for the purposes of commodity and relief: “transformed into a garden to provide both material and spiritual food to enhance the comfort and soothe the anxieties of men distraught by the demands of the urban world” (Merchant, 1980 p. 8-9).

The garden as provider narrative is reenacted and perpetuated in our neoliberal “progressive” society.

Since the scientific revolution of the 17th century, the *mainstream story* of western culture is that humanity can recover the Garden of Eden through science, technology, and capitalism by remaking the whole earth into a garden... All of this is part of a “*progressive*” narrative that technology can be used to interact with and to dominate and control nature (Merchant, 1996, my emphasis).

³⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Young American,” *The Dial* 4 (1844): 491

The salvation narrative of Eden survives as a powerful “mainstream story” justifying our dominance over nature, and the yearning to return to an imagined paradise. Merchant continues:

Narratives are important to us because they shape our lives ... we each act out our part in a larger narrative, a narrative we're often not even conscious of ... many of us in American culture have been shaped by this meta-narrative of recovering Eden, even though we might not recognize it ... we all have been players in it, enacting it, for the last three centuries. (Merchant, 1996)

Thus, the “meta-narrative of recovering Eden,” forms our cultural and personal understanding of the ideal community (Merchant, 1996). As witnessed in the case of the Domes, salvation and return to paradise is deeply embedded in the Western utopian understanding of community and its development, re-imagined and reproduced in the contemporary through the notion of sustainability.

UCD Student Farm Director, Mark Van Horn, calls the Domes and its environs the site of “amazing potential... for students to learn more about sustainability and community” (Van Horn, Mark. Personal interview. 26 April 2012.). Here, “we have shared ideas for how to create a more sustainable and more compassionate and more cooperative world together,” where people are “motivated and inspired by the bigger vision of the place” (Lelea, Margareta. Personal interview. 2 May 2012.). The University manifestation of this dream, when the Domes were thought to be closing, was the Sustainable Living/Learning Task Force. This was a venue for each of us to play out our appropriate roles - student, faculty, staff, architect, planner, et cetera - in the University performance of capital exchange.³⁷ Compartmentalized, we were rationally understood to bring specific capital and agency to problem solving, in

³⁷ Interesting to note is that all task force members, excluding myself, were white men. Later, student Lauren Cockrell joined ad hoc at the request of Professor Ryan Galt.

order to develop a sustainable University community. This neoliberal imagined community is marketable, just, and balanced in its capital.

With the Domes community functioning again, it is free to be absorbed into the “Sustainable 2nd Century” University narrative. Incidentally, the Domes now holds a spot on the updated 2012 UCD Sustainability Map, recently distributed at the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference. Symbols, one representing student communities³⁸ and another farms and community gardens³⁹, mark the bike tour stop within the “Sustainable Research Area,” where the University is “building a sustainable living/learning laboratory.” The student community, represented in the symbol of two white stick-figured people holding hands (see footnote 38), is imagined as living in consensus where members gather the fruits of labor from the garden, weaving together the metaphors and narratives of community, capital, and paradise.

In Conclusion

In the Western hegemonic framework, we are often restricted to consider human exchanges as exchanges of commerce or capital, where we attribute monetary value to different “things,” or goods and services, realizing only one dimension of their material, utilitarian value. Groups and organizations that enjoy certain prerogatives and advantages can justify their existence – and the cost or risk they represent to the larger community – if they have something valuable to offer in exchange. One principal reason why the Domes community remains historically in conflict with the University is because the community value is not readily apparent in capital form. However, when the Domes is in

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crisis, supporters recurrently engage in a language of market representation. This is problematic when we consider that it is important to the Domes community to be, “a rebel,” “in struggle,” “an outsider,” “an anomaly,” “an exception,” or metaphorically, “the sand that makes the pearl in the oyster,” for “that’s part of what makes the community amazing and attract really creative people” (Fodor, Danielle. Personal interview. 27 April 2012.).

Alternative, experimental, counter-culture communities can be innovative, challenging conventional methods and seeking new paradigms, potentially altering the status quo and affecting change. In this manner, the interplay between culture and counter-culture is fundamental for the vigor, continuation and adaptation of the larger community. We find examples of this in the success of community initiatives and positions at one time considered counter-culture by the prevailing majority, such as the civil rights movement.

However, it is critical to not conflate the Domes conflict with central struggles like the civil rights movement. The counter-culture represented by the Domes community is specific to its location in the city of Davis, its UCD student constituents, and an imagination that stems from Western narratives and metaphors. Moreover, though community values may be anti-commodity and anti-capital, the continuity of the Domes often depends on market representation. Thus, the Domes counter-culture struggle is a flawed representation of its lived reality. This is particularly significant when we consider the necessity of counter-culture spaces. Where can we turn to think about the world differently if counter-culture is actually reproducing hegemonic culture?

While further study is required to answer this question, the Domes story – as a living metaphor - reveals how narratives and metaphors, normally invisibilized through habitual use and processes have powerful effects on our lived realities. Because it is a human organization run by fallible beings, the Domes is never going to fully materialize the metaphors it represents. However, developing and evolving as a living entity, it fulfills the critical role - intangible and impossible to quantify - of materially and physically representing the archetypal yearning of community.

Nevertheless, exploitation of powerful metaphors for capital in the modern context is not evocative of the originally conceived community development principles. Because we have not thoroughly reflected on or reassessed these principles in practice and process, we continue to develop communities on assumptions that may or may not be demonstrative of community wants, needs and desires. Furthermore, the paradigm of capital and materialism obliges us to think of financial loss as the greatest community risk, failing to address other forms of wealth, like creativity and happiness. These are crucial issues to address as we continue to engage with communities through the efforts of the community development profession.

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Appendix I



Making the frame for Dome mold



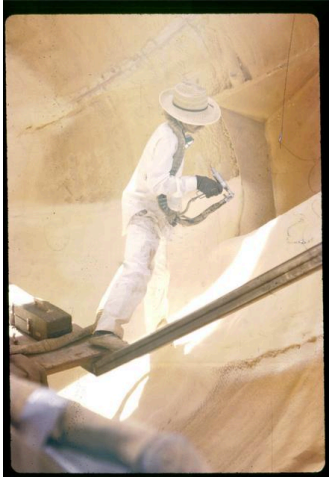
Lining the frame with muslin



Digging the hole to hold the mold



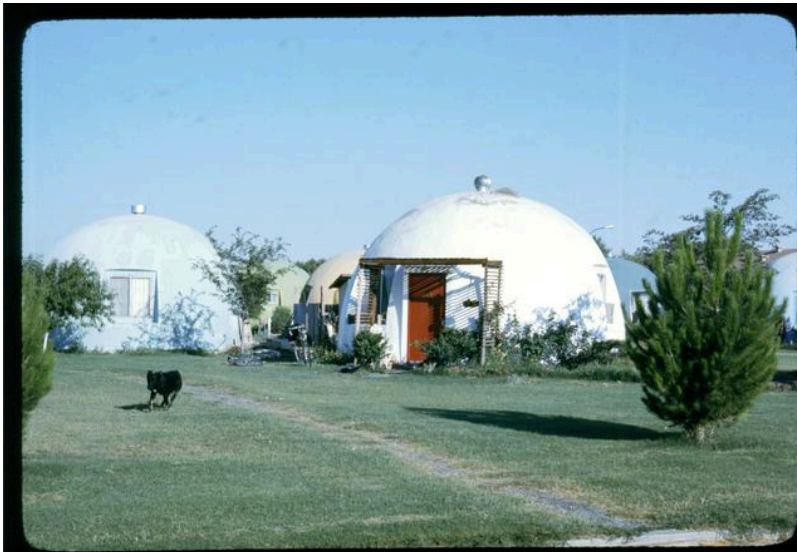
Moving mold to hole



Spraying the mold



The birth of a Dome!



The Domes, circa 1976

Photo credits: Ron Swenson, ecotopia.com

Appendix II

