Do artistic methods enhance sustainability in cities undergoing change? – case studies of urban artistic/cultural interventions in Copenhagen

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If sustainability is a relation between what is appearing and what is disappearing, living cities will always be in a more or less sustainable flux. In adapting or mitigating climate change, cities need to further change toward sustainable futures. Public leaders, officials and consultants are in need of practical examples that can show new ways. Bridging the gaps between what is and what is to come and showing leadership.

Culture makes the urban fabric and creates understanding of its meaning. But how do cultural processes engage and exchange back into urban fabric? What are the qualities, what can be learned, and by whom? What perspectives are invited?

The artistic work seems to move from the experience of an urgency calling for a language/intervention, making sharing and learning possible; public institutions start with a structure seeking to uphold itself while creating events that can make it easier for citizens to make learning experiences. This is about furthering or supporting civil learning and enhancing potentiality. The audience appears in between the two in the experience of the artistic work in the frame of a public program.

The paper will look at cultural innovators/artists attempting to facilitate ways into a sustainable future, in Copenhagen in the last few years. How do these artistic interventions make it possible for audiences to make new decisions through tactile learning and co-creation? Do those decisions make audiences live more sustainably? Who are they? How do they relate to the artistic work? When do they learn? How does the relation between artistic work and audiences meet public ambitions of reaching out to citizens/civil society?

Cases to be examined can include Olafur Eliason – Ice Watch, Superflex – Superkilen, and Tagtomat, all engaging locally.

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