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## The Copenhagen Experiment:

### **Measuring the Relative Effectiveness of Creative vs. Conventional Forms of Activism**

#### **Summary**

Creative forms of activism, drawing inspiration from the arts and popular culture, and utilizing story, sign, and spectacle, have become increasingly popular, both as a practice and as an object of study. Leveraging the affective qualities of the arts and the effective capabilities of activism, the practice has been embraced by artists looking to have social impact, activists operating on an increasingly media-rich political landscape, cultural institutions seeking civic relevancy, and civic organizations looking for creative ways to engage the public and change perspective, discourse, behaviour, and/or policy. The effectiveness of creative activism, and particularly its effectiveness compared to more conventional forms of activism, however, has been more an article of faith than an assertion of fact.

While there has been a great deal of descriptive and theoretical work done on creative activism, what is missing is an evidence-based, empirical study of the variable impact of creative vs. conventional forms of activism on a public audience in terms of ideas, ideals, and actions. To address this knowledge gap the authors, both of whom are experienced creative activists as well as academic researchers, designed and staged The Copenhagen Experiment, the first ever public experiment on the comparative effect and affect of artistic activism vs. more conventional forms of activist interventions.

Over the course of three days in 2018, the authors and their research team mounted multiple activist interventions around a current environmental issue on a popular and well-traveled bridge in the middle of Copenhagen, Denmark. Each day a conventional activist intervention: public speaking, petitioning, or flyering, was paired with a “creative” way of accomplishing the same task in a classic A/B experimental model. Volunteer observers watched interactions and took notes, interviewers stopped passersby to ask their opinions and gather contact information, a camera person filmed the interactions to capture micro-dynamics and general movement patterns, and a survey was sent out two weeks later to inquire about recall and resulting action.

The data for our analysis included 108 spot interviews, 30 observation sheets, petition and pamphlet tallies, hours of film footage of the events, and 25 follow-up survey responses.

Our design allowed us to analyse differences and similarities on several levels relating to attention, thought, feeling, action, and memory. We found that a creative approach was more effective than conventional means at delivering upon traditional advocacy objectives like awareness, engagement, and receptiveness. In addition, the affective responses of most of those we interviewed and observed were decidedly more positive towards the creative interventions than the conventional methods. Creative activism also proved to be more memorable, and result in more follow-up actions on the issues.

Specific findings include:

- Conventional activist methods of approaching individuals to talk to them about an issue, gather signatures, or receive a flyer are, in general, not positively perceived or received.
- Words and phrases used by respondents to describe the different forms of interventions are markedly different. “Annoying,” “lecturing,” “predictable,” and “unnoticeable” were frequently used to describe our conventional forms of activist intervention. Words like “funny,” “different,” “surprising,” and “captivating” were used to describe the creative interventions.
- The novelty, surprise, humor, and “productive confusion” of creative forms of activism disrupted people’s everyday automatic way of thinking about issues and activism, attracting attention, stimulating curiosity, and creating openings for new social interactions and political impressions.
- In nearly every quantitative measure we employed: observations of interest, number of signatures gained on a petition, the quantity and speed of flyers handed out, the creative approach proved more successful than the conventional one in attaining the desired objectives.
- Qualitative measures suggested a more positive immediate reception of creative forms of activism. Creative interventions also tended to be recalled more vividly, with better informational retention, and lead to more follow-up actions than conventional forms of engagement.

The Copenhagen Experiment has limitations due to the cultural specificity of its urban setting in an European social democracy. Furthermore, the experiment only tested the relative effectiveness of creative vs. conventional forms of activism in delivering very instrumental and immediate activist objectives, and not what creative forms of intervention may do best: shift perspectives and stimulate imaginations. A future study will include staging an experiment in

different demographic, geographic and political contexts, and applying a wider definition of artistic activism and its impact.

Nonetheless, the empirical data generated by this experiment points decisively to the conclusion that creative forms of street activism are more effective, in part because they are more affective, than conventional tactics. This is an important conclusion for social actors seeking to maximize the impact of civic engagement in public spaces, as well as scholars looking to understand the dynamics of effective and affective activism.

With The Copenhagen Experiment we have also shown that the relative effect and affect of creative activism can be measured. We hope his challenges, and inspires, agents in the field to apply rigor in evaluating the effective and affective impact of even the most creative of activist interventions.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Mise en Scène**

It is a beautiful late afternoon Spring day in Copenhagen and on the Dronning Louises bridge that spans Peblinge lake and links the neighborhoods of City Centre in the East to Norrebro in the West, tourists wander aimlessly, workers return from late lunches or set out to early drinks, bicyclists (many of them, for this is Copenhagen) whiz by, and young people lounge on the benches or sit on the walls that line the bridge, enjoying the sun after a long, gray Scandinavian winter. Suddenly this idyllic, urban scene is interrupted by a loud noise. "Brrraaapp!" and then a few seconds later: "phhhhhffttttttt, phhhhhffttttttt," followed by a thundering: "BraaaaaaaaaAApt."

Loud fart noises continue emanating from a bright red sound system mounted on a bicycle frame and parked in the middle of the bridge. Over the sound system a large banner flies, and across a bright red and yellow background are the words: "This Shit is an Issue," accompanying a large picture of a mound of cow dung. Positioned at strategic points in the middle of the bridge are four cows, standing erect on two feet, handing out colorful flyers to passersby that call for a tax on meat production to limit methane gas that is harmful to the environment. The people passing on the bridge have slowed down to watch the spectacle, and also their feet. For on the sidewalk, interspersed to create a minefield across the walkway, are little mounds of real cow dung, each with its own protest sign sticking out repeating the claim: "This Shit is an Issue."

People smile, laugh, and sometimes shake their heads as they walk by, while the cows hand out their flyers and talk to the curious who engage them. Bicyclists stop their commute to figure out what is going on, pulling over to the side of the bike path and to take pictures on their smartphones. "Facers," out collecting signatures or donations for other causes, stop by to ask what is happening. After 15 minutes two police vans arrive, lights flashing, in response to a

complaint that has been called in, but soon leave after being assured the cow dung will be cleaned up later. More people, attracted by the police presence, stop and take more flyers.

Around the perimeter of the action a group of young people, dressed conspicuously in white lab coats with the name of a local university emblazoned across their chests, jot down notes on how people are reacting to the intervention, while other lab-coated volunteers stop people to conduct short interviews, asking passersby what they think and feel about the issue and the action, and whether they would mind being asked a few more questions in two weeks time. After less than 20 minutes the flyers are all gone, the cows strip off their masks and costumes, the banner is rolled up, the cow dung is swept into bags, someone hops on the sound bike to guide it back to the nearby NGO office from where it was borrowed, and everyone goes to a nearby pub for beer.

Had one walked over Dronner Louises bridge an hour earlier, they would have witnessed a very different scene: no farts, no cows, no dung. Only a black and white banner with the message “Meat Production is the Biggest Cause of Pollution on the Planet” and earnest “facers” handing out monochrome flyers. (And, if one was looking carefully, the same lab-coated individuals on the periphery.) Had one been on the bridge the previous day, one would have seen conventional facers vs. farting cows trying to gather signatures, or the day before: a traditional soapbox speech vs. a musical rap about cows, methane, and the importance of curbing meat production through taxation.

“What’s going on here?” was a question heard many times over the course of those three days. There were two ways to answer that question. The first: this is an activist intervention to convince people of the harmful effects of meat production on the climate. The second answer: This is “The Copenhagen Experiment,” the first, and so far only, public experiment comparing conventional and creative forms of activist interventions. This paper is the long explanation of the latter.

(Watch a three-minute [Video](#) of the Copenhagen Experiment.)

## **1.2. Who We Are**

The authors of this study have extensive scholarly and practical experience with creative activism. Stephen Duncombe, Professor of Media and Culture at New York University, has authored and edited six books on the intersection of culture and politics. A life-long activist, he co-founded a community group in New York City that received an award for “creative activism” from the Abbie Hoffman Foundation. For the past decade Duncombe has been the Co-Director of the Center for Artistic Activism, a research and training institute that “helps activists to create like artists and artists to strategize like activists.”

Silas Harrebye is an Associate Professor of Social Science and Head of Studies of Global Studies at Roskilde University in Denmark. He has written a number of peer reviewed articles on

creative activism published in international scientific journals. His two latest books on this particular topic are *Social Change and Creative Activism in the 21st Century - The Mirror Effect* and *Democratic Coma Demands Shock Therapy*. Harrebye has been a board member in a number of political and non-profit organisations, and has worked as a professional consultant on global development projects.

Together, Duncombe and Harrebye have written articles and given lectures on creative activism (Duncombe & Harrebye, 2016). After a joint lecture in Oslo, the authors were approached and encouraged to apply for a grant by a representative of the Fritt Ord foundation, a Norwegian funding organization whose mission is “to protect and promote freedom of expression and the environment for freedom of expression.” (Fritt Ord, 2019). With funding secured from Fritt Ord, we turned to two Copenhagen-based NGOs with an interest in creative forms of activism and advocacy -- Action Aid and RAPolitics -- for help with volunteers and logistics.

### **1.3. Audience for this Paper**

Our research findings will be presented in different ways for different audiences. Among these are a [video](#), academic articles, and essays for the popular press. This white paper is the long version for the serious agent, whether they are an academic, artist, activist, campaign strategist, or any combination thereof. We hope this report will be applicable whether one is acting independently, is part of a broader social movement, or working with an NGO or state agency. We believe that the lessons of this study will be useful whether one is a private or governmental funder looking for ways to conduct and evaluate effective and affective civic initiatives, or an individual or group applying for funds from such organizations.

The experiment upon which this paper is based can, we think, serve as another possible model for evaluating the efficacy of advocacy work. Social experiments like this are relatively common in fields like urban planning and design, behavioral economics, and social psychology, but are far rarer in evaluating methods of advocacy. We trust that this study can serve as another vantage point from which to continue the discussion about the relationship between arts and social change - and the contributions that creativity can bring to advocacy work.

Perhaps, most importantly, we hope this report will be of interest to everyone who wants to know what really works when it comes to influencing hearts, minds, and bodies in order to bring about social and environmental change. This study provides scientific validity for what many activists and advocates have probably always believed to be true, but never had an authoritative reference to support, namely that creative intervention design does have some advantages over more conventional ways of mobilizing. We hope that this paper functions as an inspiration for doing more effective, and affective, advocacy work.

## **2. THEORETICAL CHALLENGES**

### **2.1. The Current Political Situation**

Liberal democracies around the World are under pressure from outside and within (Castells, 2019; Mounk, 2018; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Fukuyama, 2018; Runciman, 2018 - including data from freedomhouse.org and economist.com/democracyindex). Populists are hailed as saviors, to the left and the right, and traditional elites are distrusted and disparaged (Müller, 2016; Judis, 2016; Hoffman & De Vries, 2016; De Vreese, 2017). The representative systems seem outdated, while the direct participation of citizens is increasingly socially skewed and individualized, even in Scandinavian countries (Frederiksen, 2019; Harrebye 2019; Lykkeberg, 2019; Boje, 2017). The deliberative culture which lies at the heart of liberal democracy, is challenged by social media and the mediatization of politics. Emotional appeals and staged spectacles hold sway, while reasoned explanations and empirical fact are dismissed as “fake news.”

Protest and prefigurative politics from below have always been vital for our democracy as they have challenged, legitimized, and improved political reforms -- not least true in the Scandinavian countries (Mikkelsen, Kjeldstadli, and Nyzell, 2018). Such citizen advocacy has developed democracy through a broad spectrum of political participation: from street protesters to petitioners, community organizers to online bloggers, fee-paying NGO members to social entrepreneurs, and from people risking their lives to anonymous columnists. Yet, conventional forms of civic advocacy often seem unable to keep up with the changing political landscape, relying more on traditional forms of protest and engagement that may have worked in years past but seem increasingly out of step with the march of time. Current developments in the political landscape make it more important than ever for funders, political organizations, social movements, and advocates and activists themselves, to know how best to spend their time, labor, and energy in seeking influence and bringing about change.

## **2.2. Cultural Turn**

The study of social movement and collective action has often had a certain rationalist bias (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004; Goodwin et al., 2001; Gould, 2009). This is obviously explicit in rational choice theory (Olson, 1965), but it is also strongly implied in both the political process approach (McAdam 1999; Tarrow, 1989; Tilly, 1978) and resource mobilization theories of social movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). As Douglas McAdam, amongst others, has pointed out: “the early proponents of these main approaches failed to assign any real explanatory importance to emotions” (McAdam, 2017).

Increasingly, however, analysts of social movements have realized that emotions are a necessary -- and key -- causal component of any explanatory theory (Jasper, 2011). Political opportunities and constraints, along with organizational vehicles and the resources they possess, make up the structural *potential* for political action. But action is almost always triggered by shifts in popular thought and feeling. Emotions of fear, anger, and hope therefore need to be channeled into identity and ownership -- especially with less tangible issues like climate change (Nisbet, 2009; McAdam, 2017). This recognition of the affective dimensions of

political mobilization, as well as an activist understanding of a changed political landscape, has begun to change the practice of activism.

### **2.3. The A/Efficacy of Creative Activism**

The past decade has witnessed a surge in “creative activism,”<sup>1</sup> both in its practice and its study. Leveraging the affective qualities of the creative arts and the effective capabilities of activism, the practice has been embraced by artists looking to have social impact, activists looking for new tactics, cultural institutions seeking civic relevancy, and civic organizations searching for creative ways to engage the public and change policy (Bishop, 2006; Groys, 2014; Kester, 2013; Lippard, 1984; Mouffe, 2007; Reed, 2005, 2016).

This recent surge in interest in creative activism makes sense. Today, we live in a highly mediated world where the political topography is characterized by signs and symbols, stories and spectacles. If the first rule of guerilla warfare is to “know your terrain and use it to your advantage,” the savvy activist has learned that drawing from the arts is an effective way to wage successful battles on this cultural landscape. Our current “post-truth” environment also provides fertile ground for artistic activism. Even for those committed to telling the truth, it has become clear that the simple presentation of facts falls upon deaf ears, and if facts are to be heard and heeded they must be made into engaging stories and compelling images that capture attention and resonate with the ways people make sense of their world.

While creative activism has become an increasingly established practice, its foundation is still a matter of faith rather than fact. That being said, some theoretical work has been done on the question of the affect and effect of the practice (Animating Democracy, 2015; Bacon & Korza, 2017; Borstal & Korza 2017; Cohen-Cruz, 2016; The Culture Group, 2013; Dwyer, 2012; Jackson, Herranz & Kabwasa-Green 2003; Stern & Seifer, 2009; Williams, 1997). Practitioners have been interviewed regarding their own ideas and own assessments of what constitutes “success,” (Duncombe, 2016; Duncombe, forthcoming). Survey studies have been conducted on how different groups of citizens view the strengths and weaknesses of artistic activism compared to other types civic engagement (Harrebye, 2011; Olesen, forthcoming). A few research projects have looked at what the power elites think and feel about various forms of creative activism (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017; Uba, 2017; Harrebye, forthcoming), and a study has been done to map how “ordinary citizens” view these actors (Olesen, forthcoming). Some NGOs (e.g. Action Aid International) work with integrated evaluation formats of their Global Platform creative activism courses and activities, but no systematic processing of them has yet been made.

For all the attention that “creative activism” has received over the past decade or so, a systematic review of literature and organizational practices reveals little to no data on whether

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<sup>1</sup> “Creative activism” goes by many names: artistic activism, socially engaged arts, social practice arts, community-based arts, arte útil, political art, activist art, aesthetic activism, activism -- each with slightly different emphases. What unites them all is the mobilization of both affect and effect.

this form of creative activism actually works. Instead, most often guiding the design and execution of creative forms of activism are anecdotes, wishful thinking, and the fear or resentment of assessment itself (Duncombe, forthcoming). What has not been done is an evidence-based, empirical study of the variable impact of creative forms of activism on a public audience in terms of ideas, ideals, and actions.

Some of this resistance to testing the impact of creative forms of activism arises from commonly held ideas and ideals about the arts and creativity. Creativity, after all, seems like the very thing that can not be measured systematically. It is something felt, appreciated, given as a gift from the muses, but not a force to be measured. The sentiment by artists and activists alike is often that if one was to do so, creative mystery and artistic integrity would somehow be lost in translation. It might be easy to dismiss objections to assessment as a historical hangover of the 19th Century anti-utilitarian ideal of “art for art’s sake” (Cousins, 1818; Gautier, 1835) but there are better reasons to resist evaluation than romantic ideals of the autonomy of the arts. We currently live in an evaluation society where ever more of our endeavours need to be assessed and accounted for. This is not productive when people start to feel surveilled, deprived of time better spent on their core assignment, or when indicators do not measure what they are supposed to. Furthermore, there are a number of good reasons why a simple cause and effect approach is complicated in a political context (see methodological reservations below). As Irene Guijt, head of Research at Oxfam Great Britain and a member of Accessing Social Change, notes (2008, 4-5): social change is 1) nonlinear and unpredictable; 2) the result of multiple efforts on multiple fronts; 3) takes place over a long term; 4) has “fuzzy boundaries” that constantly shift; and, as such, it is 5) difficult to recognise “valid” results.

The aesthetic, political, and scientific critique of assessment are relevant. Our response to these challenges, however, should not be a foot-dragging one. We propose rather to focus on the areas where it *does* make sense to become more aware of how and to what extent our actions serve our purpose, and to start developing our own metrics instead of just criticising those imposed on us by others.

## **2.4. A Theory of Change**

A theory of change can either be used by analysts to understand why change has happened or used by actors to *make* change happen. It can be an evaluation tool or a planning instrument. Change is messy and complicated. But that does not mean that we should not make plans. It just means that we should be ready to adapt to changing conditions as we move forward. To do this well, and not get lost along the way, we need to understand the underlying premises of our theory of change.

In social science the dynamics between the explanatory importance of structural conditions on one hand and the change agent on the other is fundamental. A good theory of change needs to take both into consideration. For this experiment we have focused on the creative activist as a

change agent, well aware that they are culturally conditioned, the topic is politically framed, and our experiment is socially situated. Our premise is that actors and events can influence change.

Traditional theories of change typically operate with causal logic, clear linkages, and a linear timeline. Consultants typically use backward mappings, from end-goal to means and measures, to clarify and justify how they plan to operate step by step. Underlying these *particular* theories of change (from John Kotter and Kurt Lewin to Karl Weick and Otto Scharmer), however, are larger, often unexamined, *general* theories of change. It is at this broad level of theory that we hope this experiment intervenes.

We believe that social change happens when people are “moved” to make change. This happens when there is a convergence of people’s material experiences, ideas which help them make sense of those experiences in new ways, and, critically, an emotional charge which moves people to action. Activism is a practice which aims to move people toward social action. Its practice, however, is often limited to the first two conditions of social change: presenting ideas to people to engender a critical understanding of material conditions. The missing element is the emotional, or affective, charge. This is where creativity -- the art of activism -- comes in. Because people are “moved” to act by *affective* experiences as much as they are by ideas or material circumstances, creativity is an *effective* means to engage people in social issues and move them toward social change.

With the motivation and the premise for our experiment explained, we can turn to the experiment itself: the challenge of designing a study in such a way to allow for the empirical measurement of the impact of creative activism.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Hypotheses**

For the purposes of our experiment we operationalized our theory of change into the following hypotheses:

- A. As they are more affective, creative interventions are going to be more effective than conventional ones in delivering short term, instrumental, activist objectives.
- B. Insofar as it is memorable and “moves” people toward action, creative activism will also result in longer-term impact.
- C. Creative forms of activism may attract attention, but will not convey information as well as traditional forms of activism. Conversely, traditional forms may not attract as much attention as creative forms, but will be able to deliver information accurately and effectively.

D. Effectiveness of creative activism *can* be tested, measured, and compared.

### 3.2. The Experiment

In order to test these hypotheses we mounted a series of activist interventions over the course of three days -- 15, 16, 17 May, 2018 -- in the middle of Dronning Louises Bro, a popular and well-traveled bridge in Copenhagen, Denmark. Each day, from 15:00 to 17:00, we paired a conventional activist intervention -- public speaking, petitioning, flyering -- with a creative way of accomplishing the same task in a classic A/B experimental model. In each case we replicated “the ask” but varied the sensory experience. We were looking for differences or similarities between those who had experienced the conventional vs. the creative interventions on several levels:

*Attention:* listening to speech, providing a signature, or taking a flyer.

*Thought:* opinions and knowledge about the issue.

*Feeling:* positive or negative emotions about the intervention and the activists.

*Memory:* of both the intervention and the issue.

*Action:* changes in behavior in response to the intervention.

In order to test the impact of our intervention on the attention, thoughts, feelings, memory, and actions of people, we wanted to use an issue that was real and current, yet not widely known. It needed to have a robust informational component, and be an issue about which most people did not have strong and fixed preconceptions and biases. Had we used migration, for instance, which was being widely debated and contested in Denmark and across Europe at the time, it would be more difficult to tell whether we were measuring the impact of our experiment or the attitudes and emotions people had brought with them. As such, we chose as our issue a “Meat Tax” being proposed in Denmark as a way to curb climate damaging methane emissions produced by meat production. This issue had been recently introduced in the Danish Parliament by a small political party and was therefore a current concern, yet not one that had been much discussed or debated by a wider political public. The connection between meat production, methane gas, and climate change also necessitated a bit of explaining technical information. Finally, in Denmark where taxes and plant-based diets are not as controversial as in many other countries, the issue of a meat tax was likely to spark interest rather than immediate confrontation.

We also picked an issue having to do with climate change because the abstract and extended time horizon that people associate with climate change has affective implications. When we persuade ourselves that the possible damaging effects of climate change lie in a distant future, while we still have time to minimize their damage, “our fear of climate change is more likely to be of a dispassionate, intellectual nature than the more visceral fear that catalyzes action” (McAdam, 2017). As such, using creative methods and thus raising the affective charge around such an issue has practical implications for effective advocacy.

To conduct the experiment, a research team was assembled from students from Roskilde University and volunteers with two Copenhagen based advocacy groups: Action Aid Copenhagen and RAPolitics. A core group of 8 volunteers was involved over the course of the experiment, with up to 10 additional helpers rotating in and out on any given day. Trained a day in advance, volunteer observers watched interactions and took notes, a camera person filmed the interactions to capture micro-dynamics and general movement patterns, and interviewers stopped passersby to ask their opinions, recording their responses and gathering contact information for a follow-up survey we administered via email and SMS two weeks after the intervention.

With our observations, we were interested in gauging the quantity and quality of interest in the interventions: recording how many people stopped to listen (and for how long), as well as their receptivity to signing petitions and taking flyers. We also observed the quality of these interactions, noting such things as interactions with the “activists,” looking for and recording reactions like laughing, clapping, or scowling and documentation with the ubiquitous smartphone.

In our spot interviews, our team introduced themselves as researchers attached to a local and international university (those of the PIs) and asked people who had shown interest in the intervention what they thought and felt about the issue, as well as the intervention, and how likely they were to take some sort of action based upon what they had seen and learned (see Interview Scripts, Appendix 4). These interviews averaged 2-3 minutes each. At the conclusion of each interview, we asked if we could follow up with a few questions in a later and gathered their contact information. In two weeks time we sent out a short, 4 question survey asking whether they had thought about the action and issue since, what they had thought and felt, and whether they had taken any subsequent action (see Survey Questions, Appendix 5). The interviews were conducted primarily in Danish, as were all the surveys. Interviews were transcribed, and both interviews and surveys were translated into English, and then checked for accuracy by the native Danish PI.

More detailed methodological descriptions and reflections are provided as we present the data and our analysis.

### **3.3. Intervention Description**

*Day 1.* We compared a conventional activist speech on a soap box with a creative alternative: rapping about the same cause with the same information. In preparation, a freestyle rapper from the Danish group RAPolitics, Pelle Møller, was provided with factual information regarding the issue and with the PIs assistance and examples of conventional activist speeches to guide him, he wrote a standard political speech. Pelle then took the same information and composed a rap, using his personal story and his own mixed emotions about eating less meat to convey the importance of the issue (see Text and Lyrics, Appendix 3). On the day of the intervention, Pelle

stood atop a platform in the middle of Dronning Louises Bro and, in a manner someplace between a tired politician and a shrill activist, delivered his speech. Behind the “speaker” was a banner that stated, in a plain font, “Meat Production is the Biggest Cause of Pollution on the Planet. We Need a Green Tax on Meat.” After waiting for a few minutes for the old crowd to pass on, Pelle then rapped his message. This time the banner was flipped to reveal a colorful design, illustration, and provocative message: “This Shit Is An Issue! You Need to Think of this Shit When You Eat.” Each version of the intervention was staged multiple times, in staggered intervals, to maximise audience diversity. Observers noted the interactions and coded them on prepared worksheets to account for audience Attention, Interest, Uninterest, Anger, Interaction, Participation and Documentation (see Observation Sheet, Appendix 6). Interviewers stopped and chatted with people who seemed interested in either the speech or rap.

*Day 2:* We took on the much loathed, and sometimes very necessary, activist practice of petitioning. We created a petition for people to sign, pledging support for the Meat Tax, that would be later sent to the relevant ministry in Denmark (see Response Letter, Appendix 7). Volunteers were divided into teams: Petitioners -- or “Facers” as they are commonly called in Denmark -- Interviewers and Observers. Facers were assigned to asking strangers for their signature, while also making a record of those whom they approached who declined to sign. Interviewers -- in white lab coats -- followed up with those who agreed to sign, and asked them why they agreed to sign the petition and what they thought and felt about being approached to do so. Observers watched the entire process, paying special attention to those who refused to stop and sign. The creative approach was executed first: colorful banner, facers dressed as cows wearing personal bluetooth speakers, backed by a massive sound system on a bike emanating *loud* fart noises, making the sonic argument that cow farts are the leading cause of methane emissions. Cows approached people and asked for signatures, leading with: “I fart. It’s an issue.” This continued for a set time and then, after a brief rest and a count of the approaches made and signatures received, we switched to the more conventional approach. The sound system went silent, the banner was reversed to its monochrome message, and facers striped off their cow outfits and asked passersby for signatures with the conventional approach of: “Do you have two minutes?”

*Day 3:* This day different methods of flyer distribution were tested. Two versions of a flyer were created that conveyed the same information about the meat tax, meat production, and the environmental impact of methane gas. One was black and green and leads with facts. The other displayed a picture of a pile of cow shit, with the provocative statement: “This Shit is an Issue!” (See photos F and G, Appendix 2). The flyers were divided into pre-counted packs and volunteers were asked to hand them out to people on the bridge, keeping track of how long it took to get rid of each set of flyers. Other members of the team observed the process or interviewed people who had taken a flyer. We begin with handing out the conventional pamphlet while wearing civilian clothes. Next volunteers donned the cow costumes, rolled out the mega-fart sound machine, and placed the *pièce de résistance*: mounds of real, smelly, cow dung in a minefield across the walkway of the bridge, each pile with its own little protest sign proclaiming, “This shit is an issue.” Now dressed as bovines, the facers hand out the colorful

and provocative flyers.. The response was markedly different: big smiles and wrinkled noses. In the middle of it all, a police car and van with flashing lights pulls up and a burly cop walked over, looked around, and said, "We got a call about people throwing shit around." Trying to keep straight faces while our explanation was periodically punctuated by super-loud farts, the PIs described the aims of the experiment to the officer. The cop agreed "that [the complaint] was clearly an exaggeration" and he and his partners drove off. That night the biggest tabloid in Copenhagen led with a story of our "demonstration."

### **3.4. Caveats**

#### *3.4.1. Political, Cultural, and Geographic Context*

The circumstances under which this experiment took place does, of course, have implications for the extent to which we can generalize our findings and recommendations across cultural, social, political, and historical contexts.

Copenhagen is, in many ways, an ideal place to undertake such a study. Because it is a safe and open environment we did not need to worry about police surveillance or arrest, we did not fear a hostile violent crowd reaction, and we could count on a relatively well educated and informed population within which to stage such an experiment. The people of Denmark live in a social-democratic, universal welfare state characterized by open democratic processes, freedom of speech, low levels of corruption, relatively high levels of trust, and a peaceful political climate. The Danes have a tradition for direct action and a vital, although today relatively formally organized, civil society. Danes, most of them anyways, also have, we are convinced, a Rabelaian sense of humor, which was important given the scatological approach to day three of the experiment. The exact location in Copenhagen, a bridge in a vibrant hipster/working class neighborhood, likely also influenced the interactions taking place which might well have been different had the experiment been done in a shopping mall in Brøndby on the outskirts of Copenhagen, or in Hellerup Harbor in the upper class gold coast of the city. Furthermore, the political climate of the day, and the current interest in and responsiveness to environmental concerns, probably influenced people's issue-responsiveness and general mood. Just as the weather might do the same, as one of our respondents said, "Sunny weather probably just makes us more friendly." But with our interval design the sun would shine on the conventional and the creative activists equally.

All these factors are relevant when analyzing the responsiveness of citizens on the street. Had we done the same experiments in New York, Accra, Singapore, in a different location in Copenhagen, another town in Denmark, or on a cold and rainy day, the response may well have varied.

That being said, we believe our conclusions transcend the local, and can be applied across contexts, and by different actors in various organizations. Even though Dronning Louises bro is known for a particular segment of youngsters who hang out there (its nickname is "hipster

bridge”), for facers working to advance their causes, and as a space for cultural events to take place, there is also a regular traffic of “ordinary” and diverse passersby. This particular passage is actually one of the busiest in Copenhagen, measured in bikes and pedestrians, which makes for an ideal and somewhat more generalizable location than other places in the city. Our investigation of case studies of creative activism around the world, extensive interviews done with artistic activists across the globe, patterns of participation based on quantitative data (such as the European Social Survey), as well as our practical experience in staging creative activist interventions in areas as diverse as San Antonio, Texas in the United States, St Petersburg in Russia, Skopje in Macedonia, and Conakry in Guinea, convinces us that even with regional and cultural differences of audience response, geographical landscape, and intervention by authorities, the same basic assumptions and interaction apply. The particular content of the interventions would need to differ according to local culture and customs (we can imagine, for example, farting cows and mounds of shit *not* working well in other countries) but the general principles regarding the effect and affect of more creative forms of intervention on the attention, thoughts, feelings, actions, and memory of people, we believe will remain constant. Finally, the climate of the day, natural and political, is always changing, whereas the political nature of people seems to be more constant. Cultures differ, but human beings are still much the same.

### *3.4.2. Methodological Reservations and Delimitations*

There are a couple of minor additional methodological considerations that should also be highlighted.

In the more than one hundred interviews we conducted with passersby on the bridge, some of the people interviewed -- typically those sitting and not passing through -- witnessed both the conventional and the creative intervention, which we have accounted for in our processing. This unforeseen problem was particularly apparent on the first day, when we rapidly shifted between the speech and the rap format multiple times. This led us to change our experiment design in the following two days. In addition, our core research team did not change throughout the days of our interventions. But the team of volunteers, as mentioned, did change, both the people and the size of the group, which meant that we had to adapt our observation designs to fit the action and the volunteer base. This meant moving from a formal observation sheet on day 1 (Observation Sheet, Appendix 6) to a more informal note taking system on subsequent days. The wording of the interview scripts was also altered slightly over the course of the three days in order to correct for early confusion and reflect the specificity of each action, but the themes of each script: attention, thought, feeling, and action -- remained constant (Interview Scripts, Appendix 4).

The main delimitation of our study, however, has less to do with context or methodology, but rather intent and outcome. What The Copenhagen Experiment tests is the relative effectiveness of creative vs. conventional forms of activism in delivering very instrumental and immediate activist objectives: listening to a speech, collecting signatures, distributing flyers. We are not testing what creative forms of intervention may do best: stimulating new perspectives on the

world as it is and creating new visions of the world as it could be. This was a conscious choice on the part of the PIs, who believed what was first needed was a test of whether creative means could better deliver on conventional aims, before testing the effect and affect of creative activism on more creative outcomes. But we are now better prepared to do that in a future experiment (see Future Plans below).

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis

The data for our analysis included 108 spot interviews, 30 observation sheets, petition and pamphlet tallies, hours of film footage of the events, and 25 follow-up survey responses. To begin the analysis, let us take a look at the numbers.

#### 4.1.1 *Capturing Attention*

On the first day of the experiment, in which we compared political speech with a political rap, we stationed five observers around the action site. Three of these observers were on the sidewalk on the same side of the street where the action was taking place, one was seated on a bench behind and next to the action, and a fifth was across the street to gain a broad view, as well as observe the reactions of people on the opposite side of the intervention. Each observer was provided with two worksheets: one for observing the speech, the other for the rap. Each sheet was divided into seven columns, each marked with a different possible audience response to observe, and rows corresponding to the number of times the speech or rap occurred, five times each. (See appendix #6)

The observer was instructed to make a small hash mark in this simple grid every time they observed a certain behavior. For example, if they saw someone take a picture while watching the speech, the observer would pencil in a hash mark in the Document column. If that person stayed watching for more than 10 seconds they would also gain a mark in Attention. If the passerby frowned, yelled, or made an obscene gesture, then the observer would place a mark under Anger, and so on. The observers used a different row for every time an action was performed, and a separate sheet for each type of action. At the end of the day, the total number of hash marks were tallied for each observable behavior for each version of the intervention.

As one might imagine, there was a great deal of variance between observers. Even with universal criteria provided, what constitutes an observation of “Interest” for one person may not be so for another. As such, comparing *between* observers tells us little. However, comparisons *within* any one observer’s records are valid as these observers, it is safe to assume, are using the same personal criteria for observation and notation whether they are observing the conventional or creative intervention. Because the comparisons of audience response to the speech vs. the rap are what we were interested in, these are the numbers that matter.

Taken together, the observers noted people giving almost twice as much Attention, defined as “person stops and takes notice [for] 10-15 sec” when the subject was rapping their message rather than merely giving a speech (300 observations to 151). When it came to Interest -- “get closer / smile / nod / point / talk to friends about” -- observers noticed a nearly 3 to 1 difference (131 to 53) favoring the rap to the speech. The number of times observers noticed people who “look bored or confused” that is, displaying an Uninterest in the actions, was about even, with a small (dis)advantage given to the speech over the rap (68 people marked as Uninterest[ed] in the speech, as opposed to 64 for the rap). Instances of Interaction, such as “laugh / clap / call out” were not as common as the former behaviors, but where it was observed, again, the rap far out performed the speech by more than 3 to 1 (36 to 1). While observations of people who Participate, characterized as “ask question / join in discussion,” was split evenly, the participation observed with the traditional speech was largely negative, with people voicing their objections to what was being said. When it came to observing passersby Document, or “take photo / video” of the intervention, more than twice the number of people were observed documenting the rap as opposed to the speech (27 to 12). As for observations of Anger, those who “look upset or mad,” there were none.

*To sum up: in every category of favorable audience behavior observed -- Attention, Interest, Interaction, Participation, and Documentation -- the creative rap out performed the conventional speech, and in many categories this difference was substantial.*

Table 1. Speech/Rap Observations

SPEECH RAP	Attention person stops and takes notice 10-15 sec	Interest get closer/ smile/ nod/ point/ talk to friends about	Uninterest look bored or confused	Anger look upset or mad	Interact laugh clap call out	Participate ask question join in discussion	Document take photo video
Observer 1 street side	72 124	14 44			2 11	2 3 (speech: 1 arguing against climate change)	6 11
Observer 2 street side	6 19	6 4	10 12			0 1	1 1

Observer 3 street side	40 98	23 50	4 5		2 9	3* 1 *speech: "I'm gonna eat more meat"; I ain't giving up shawarma" ; "I don't believe that CO <sub>2</sub> leads to climate change"	3 9
Observer 4 across street	20 45	6 31	14 10				2 (1*) 6 *speech: 1 taking photo of river in opposite direction
Observer 5 bench	13 14	4 2	40 37		7 16		
TOTAL Speech Rap % diff.	151 300 99%	53 131 147%	68 64 6% decrease		11 36 227%	5 5 0%	12 27 125%

#### 4.1.2. Getting Agreement

Quantitative data from the second day of the experiment, contrasting a conventional and creative approach to petitioning, was gathered by comparing the number of signatures obtained, relative to the numbers of approaches made, within a set time period of 35 minutes. By comparing "facers" dressed in casual street clothes soliciting signatures in front of a rather plain banner to the same volunteers wearing wearing cow costumes, and backed up by a colorful and provocative banner and cow-fart sound track (see photos C and D, Appendix 2), we were able to determine which approach was more successful in obtaining signatures.

*Again, the creative approach outperformed the conventional one. Each of the four volunteers were able to attain more signatures relative to approaches dressed as farting cows than as human facers.*

Although there were predictable differences between the facers -- both in numbers of signatures attained, people approached, and the amount of difference -- taken together, we see a clear pattern in the data. Of the 248 people approached by the traditional facers, 42 agreed to sign a petition asking the government to consider a meat tax, a success rate of a little less than 17%. Dressed as farting cows, the same four petitioners approached 145 people and were able to get 41 people to sign, a rate of success just a bit more than 28%.

Interestingly, traditional facers were able to approach many more people than the farting cows -- 248 to 145 -- over a similar 35 minute period and so the absolute number of signatures received by each method is approximately equal. What explains this? One explanation may have to do with a difference in the number of people crossing the bridge at each time. Pedestrian traffic has ebbs and flows, depending upon the time of day, and this may account for some of the difference. Unfortunately, because of equipment failure we were unable to account for this variable (see below). Another explanation, and one suggested by the data supplied by both the speech/rap observations as well as the spot-interviews and follow-up surveys, is that the duration of the interactions with passersby is longer when creative tactics are used. In other words, the cows were able to approach fewer people because the people they did approach were curious or surprised and wanted to talk longer with the cows. The conventional facers, on the other hand, could be more readily understood, categorized and then assented too or, more often, dismissed.

Comparing the number of signatures obtained, relative to approaches, indicates that the creative method of petitioning is more effective than the conventional one. The similarity in absolute numbers of signatures and the disparity in the number of approaches, may also signify the advantages of a creative approach, as it may suggest the quality of engagement with the creative interaction is longer and deeper than more conventional means. And in the activist business of trying to reach hearts and minds, deeper engagement is advantageous.

Table 2. Signatures Collected

<b>Petitioner</b>	<b>Farting Cow</b> Signatures/Total Approaches	<b>Traditional Facer</b> Signatures/Total Approaches
1	10/35 = 28.6%	7/40 = 17.5%
2	9/40 = 22.5%	14/90 = 15.5%
3	7/52 = 13.5%	10/76 = 13.2%

4	15/18 = 83.3%	11/42 = 26.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	41/145 = 28.3%	42/248 = 16.9%

#### 4.1.3. Stimulating Interest

On the last day of our experiment we compared the speed in which the volunteers were able to hand out flyers to people walking or bicycling across Dronning Louises bro. Stationed in two teams, approximately 25 meters to each side of the banner and sound system, each of four volunteers were supplied with a pre-counted number of flyers and told to distribute them to whomever was receptive to taking one. If a volunteer ran out of flyers, they were immediately re-supplied with another pre-counted pack by a runner. This continued until 160 flyers were distributed. For the conventional session, the more traditional banner was unfurled, the facers were dressed in street clothes, and handed out rather drab, fact-filled, flyers (see photo G, Appendix 2). For the creative session, the more colorful banner was used, the farting sound system cranked up, a minefield of cow dung -- each dollop decorated with a miniature protest sign -- was laid out across the walkway and the volunteers, now dressed in cow costumes, were asked to distribute a colorful, provocatively entitled flyer to interested parties (see photos F and H, Appendix 2).

Again, it seems as if a creative approach was more effective in accomplishing this standard activist activity of flyering. The conventional facers distributed their flyers in 27 minutes. The creative facers handed out the same number in 19 minutes -- even with (or, perhaps, because of) the intervention of the police half way through (see photo I, Appendix 2).

*Expressed in percentages, the creative approach resulted in the distribution of the same amount of flyers as the conventional approach in approximately 30% less time.*

An impressive difference. *However*, because of the failure of a GoPro camera we had positioned in the middle of the bridge to record people crossing, we were unable to count the total number of people walking or biking across the bridge during the respective time periods when our volunteers were handing out flyers. While unlikely, it is entirely possible, that less people crossed while our conventional facers were in action and a surge of people accounted for the increased speed in which the creative cows were able to hand out the same number of flyers. As such, however, these numbers remain merely suggestive, not conclusive.

Table 3. Flyer Distribution

Flyer	Number Distributed	Start Time	End Time	Time Elapsed	Percent Difference
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Conventional	160	15:07	15:34	27	
Creative	160	15:50	16:09	19	29.6% less

4.1.4. Making an Impression

In addition to observing what there was to observe and counting what there was to be counted, we conducted spot interviews, of 1-3 minute duration, with people who had taken an interest -- positive or negative -- in the interventions by stopping and listening, signing a petition, or taking a flyer. Volunteer interviewers, armed with tape recorders, stopped people approximately 10-20 meters away from the action and asked a short series of questions regarding why they had stopped, what they thought and/or felt about the action, and whether they were likely to take any further action as a result. A total of 108 interviews were conducted, 49 with people after witnessing the conventional action, and 59 with people after the creative one (several interviews included more than one person, bringing the total number of people interviewed to 115). A more extensive qualitative analysis of these interviews follows this section, but while we are still within the realm of numbers, we thought it instructive to code and count the frequency of certain keywords that were used repeatedly by respondents to describe the interventions.

Table 4. Common Words and Phrases

Words and phrases used by respondents to describe the various interventions (in translation from the Danish):

<u>CONVENTIONAL</u>	Day 1 SPEECH	Day 2 PETITION	Day 3 PAMPHLET
<b>NEGATIVE</b>	Unnoticeable x 2. Not surprising x 2 Moralizing. Lecturing. Invading.	Annoying x 10 (from very fucking annoying to a little annoying). Bad reputation.	Annoying x 8 (from fucking annoying to just annoying). Hate facers. Persecuting. Exploiting. Scientology-like. Intrusive.

<b>POSITIVE</b>	Okay. Serious.	Fine/okay x 6. Cool x 2. Really good approach. Very friendly.	Nice x 3. Positive x 2. Interesting. Fine/okay. Cool. A little funny. Informative. Good initiative. Great idea.
<b>NEUTRAL or DOUBLE EDGED</b>	A little ambivalent.	Harmless. <i>Hyggeligt.</i> A bit strange. Just a job.	Normal. Just there. All right. I don't mind.

<b><u>CREATIVE</u></b>	<b>Day 1 RAP</b>	<b>Day 2 COWS</b>	<b>Day 3 SHIT</b>
<b>NEGATIVE</b>	Did not feel much x 2. Unserious x 2. A little silly x 2. Unimportant. Embarrassing. A scam.	It does not touch me.	A little annoying x 2.

<p><b>POSITIVE</b></p>	<p>Funny x 7.  Different x 4.  Wildly interesting x 3.  Very good x 2.  Poetic x 2.  Meaningful x 2.  Skills/well done x 2.  Inspiring x 2.  New way to convey a message.  Fine.  Fights for it.  Surprising.  Food for thought.  Capturing.  Wise.  Empathetic.  Vivid.  Sensuous.  Inclusive.  Positive.  Entertaining.  Strong.  Sympathetic.  Non-aggressive.  Brave.  Cool.  Good idea.  Nice.</p>	<p>Funny x 12 (very to quite).  Captivating x 4.  Different x 3.  Cool x 2.  Fine x 2.  Curious x 2.  Effective x 2.  Catchy.  Happy.  Great.  It works.  Very passionate.  Very serious.  More activist.  Clear.  Cute.  Interesting.  Smart.  Surprising.  Hard to avoid.  Meaningful.  Fights for it.</p>	<p>Funny x 9.  Cool x 4.  Captivating x 3.  Curious x 2.  Good approach x 2.  Know more x 2.  Interesting.  Makes you wonder.  Attracts attention.  Eye catching.  Very different.  Lovely.  Works.  Pretty extreme.  Respect.  Creates urgency  Fine.  Very exciting.</p>
<p><b>NEUTRAL or DOUBLE EDGED</b></p>	<p>A little ironic.  A little disturbing.  A little depressing.</p>	<p>Do not mind.  Provoking.  Okay.  A little scary.  Absurd.  Shocking.  Tired of facers (“no matter who it is”).</p>	<p>Uncomprehending.  Disturbing.  Okay.</p>

The first thing one notices is the frequency of “positive” words, such as: “funny,” “captivating,” “interesting,” “cool,” and “different” used to describe the creative interventions. As well as the frequency of “negative” words that the conventional intervention evoked: “unnoticeable,” “not surprising,” and “annoying.” (The latter word was used a total of 18 times, from “a little annoying” to “very fucking annoying.”) Conversely, when conventional interventions were described positively, the terms used were relatively tepid: “Fine/okay,” “Nice” and “Positive.” Likewise, in the few instances when the creative action was described negatively, these words and phrases used were also relatively weak: “did not feel much,” “a little annoying,” “unserious,” and “a little silly.” While we discuss the issue of “double edged,” or responses that might have a positive or negative connotation -- or both -- in more detail in the next section, it is worth noting here the type of responses that fall into this category. The responses to conventional interventions were ones reflecting the routine nature of the intervention, terms like “harmless,” “hyggeligt” [cozy], “normal,” “I don’t mind,” and “just a job”. The double-edge of the creative actions, however, suggested something out of the ordinary, if perhaps too much so: “shocking,” “provoking,” “disturbing,” and “uncomprehending.”

*In sum, the descriptive words and phrases used, as well as the frequency of their use, suggest that the conventional actions were experienced as routine at best and annoying at worst. The creative interventions, on the other hand, were seen as out of the ordinary, and captured the attention of people through humor or surprise.*

#### 4.1.5. Preaching to the Choir

In analyzing responses to the spot interviews we also observed another curious pattern. We noticed that respondents on the bridge who identified themselves as being vegetarians or having worked as facers - both whom we assume to be sympathetic to our methods and/or our cause - were more likely to voice their support for the conventional actions than they were for the creative actions. This is contrary to the generally more favorable response that people overall had to the creative interventions vs. the more conventional ones.

Table 5. Confirmation

Conventional (Day 1, 2, 3, Total)				
Facers		1	5	6
Vegetarians	1	7	10	18
Creative (Day 1, 2, 3, Total)				
Facers		2		2
Vegetarians	3	5	2	10

The pattern is suggestive. It implies that the conventional format may be better at reaching those who already identify and agree with the activist and the cause, i.e. “preaching to the choir.” It seems that confirmation bias thrives better in conventional formats. The creative format, on the other hand, is likely to engage a larger and more diverse population, including many meat eaters, because it is not asking for an immediate response of ideological agreement or employment identification, but is initially looking to engender curiosity, amusement, excitement, or even confusion before looking for agreement. Creative activism thus seems more apt to work across the “spectrum of allies.” The potential to create change is greater when moving those who are in doubt rather than just confirming and conforming already held beliefs. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that activists don’t just change people’s minds, they can also remind and reassure people they are in the right path. This “preaching to the choir” -- as organized religion bears evidence -- is a necessary part of the maintenance of ideas and actions, and their survival over the long term.

*Looking over our quantitative data as a whole, for nearly every measure we employed: observations of interest, number of signatures gained on a petition, the quantity and speed of flyers handed out, and the frequency of words used by passersby to describe their reactions, the creative approach proved more successful than the conventional one in attaining the desired objectives. The one -- qualified -- exception seems to be that the conventional methods resonated more favorably with “the choir” of passersby who were already sympathetic to the cause or the method.*

## **4.2. Qualitative Analysis**

As substantial as these numbers are, far more interesting was the qualitative data, as it is here we can observe what people *think* and *feel* about the relative interventions.

The following analysis is based on observation reports, interviews with people on the bridge, and a follow-up survey, qualifying what the quantitative data seems to suggest through pattern analysis and representative quotes. Unlike the quantitative analysis above, this analysis is not divided up by days, since we are primarily interested in people’s responses regarding “creative” vs “conventional” activist strategies, regardless of the specific tactics they witnessed. Through a collective, triangulated, coding process whereby each PI and an assigned graduate research assistant went through the data looking for similarities, diversions, and patterns, we have structured the analysis in cross-cutting themes.

### *4.2.1. Conventional Activists are Perceived as Annoying*

As the data above shows, the term “Annoying” has been used 18 times to describe the conventional activities, where as it was only used 2 times to describe the creative ones. Why is this the case? What people had to say about their experiences with “facers” provides some answers.

#### 4.2.1.1. Don't like Facers

Bloody annoying! Right from the time I was young - many years ago - there were all the Mooneys and Scientology and that kind of stuff on Strøget. It was bloody annoying too! You've spent your time and good heart - but at the end of the day, many of them just want your money. Bloody annoying!! (Interview #73, day 3, conventional)

While this person is obviously passionate about their dislike for facers, others we interviewed also found them “annoying” (the most frequently used term) and took pains to avoid them, like this person who told us that,

I have occasionally walked a big circle around them to avoid the risk of being chased down the street. (Interview #87, day 3, conventional)

And as one of our observers noted:

People avoid the facers as soon as they see their clipboard. (observation report, day 2, conventional)

The antipathy to facers ranges from merely feeling uncomfortable around them to passionate dislike. But it seems that even for the latter, an element of humorous despair creeps into some of our respondents reactions:

I hate facers!

One person tells us, and then laughs out loud, saying,

I always avoid them by asking the strangest questions. (Interview #85, day 3, conventional)

It seems here the hatred has turned into an ironic and cynical laugh, shared with us because it is assumed that we *all* agree that facers are a pain.

But what lies behind this dislike?

#### 4.2.1.2. Facers Are Too Common

Many people we talked to seem to experience an overload of facers on the streets. Like this respondent, for example:

There are just so many of them here. So I just think when you live here, it's everyday. Every time you go up and down the street. But it's also when you go here every day and you are asked every time. It's a bit too much. (Interview #53, day 2, conventional)

The conventional facer becomes part of the noise and hassle of modern life. Most citizens crossing the bridge in the afternoon have places to go and deadlines to meet, and so their time and attention is limited:

I think that's a great message. [But] Generally speaking, it's really annoying. Most of all, because I would like to support a lot of cases, I also have other things I need [to do] during my day. (Interview #47, day 2, conventional)

The facer represents yet another demanding appeal of the busy day and “a bit too much” can both be understood as being too common (vis a vis too many facers) and being too aggressive (vis a vis demanding too much of people). Let us now look at various forms of the latter.

#### 4.2.1.3. Facers Are Too Pushy

Based on our interviews, we identified three distinct types of confrontational facers: the proselytizer, the bully, and the salesperson.

The proselytizer uses shame and guilt to convert the public. As one person we interviewed said:

I feel that it's a bit condemning. I would like to make a decision myself. They may come up with facts, but we will have to decide ourselves if we eat too much or too little beef. (Interview #8, day 1, conventional)

People confronted by the proselytizer can feel forced into making decisions:

If someone wants to talk to me, I'm fine with just listening. I have also experienced being stopped where the basic feeling has been bad. It may just be because I have had a bad day myself, but where it feels just as if it is meant to create guilt or bad conscience if I did not accept their contact or what they want me to do. (Interview #38, day 2, conventional)

In brief, people do not like being told what to do, or berated for doing what they already do.. Instead, they want to feel good about alternative ways of living. They want to be inspired to make a change.

The physical confrontation of a facer approaching to lecture them, ask for a signature, or hand out a flyer also makes some people feel like they are being bullied into giving their support. This is also how one of our respondents recalls our conventional facers when surveyed two weeks later:

I remember it as somewhat disrespectful [grænseoverskridende] as facing often is, because there seems to be a demand that you should support the cause, financially, and thus you can not just have a conversation to gain knowledge. (Survey #5, day 1, conventional)

Our observers on the bridge noted the same reluctance to engage in anticipation of being asked to commit to something, describing how a woman asks:

I am not going to sign anything, right? (Observation, day 3, conventional)

Even when people admire the commitment, as the following quote seems to suggest, they find the conventional form intrusive.

It's not something personal, but sometimes I feel a bit interrupted and that might be a little annoying. But overall, I think it's good that they want to go out and spend time advertising whatever they are representing. (Interview #87, day 3, conventional)

In other words: facers are, by definition, in your face.

Finally, a number of those we interviewed also felt that those doing the conventional actions were trying to manipulate them, and that they are often “tricked” into buying whatever these people are “selling.” For example, the person who equates facers with Moonies and Scientologists quoted above who concluded that “At the end of the day, many of them just want your money.” People can feel like traditional facers are trying to sell them something when they are actually trying to convince them of something:

When they are not selling stuff I'm fine with it. (Interview #53, day 2, conventional)

Another, younger, respondent, when asked a follow-up question about the salesman-like approach, explained that,

Well, we are used to PR. (Interview #79, day 3, conventional)

The younger, so-called “selfie generation” is familiar with self promotion, influencers, and other forms of modern PR and understand the mechanisms at play -- and are quick to judge the commercialization of everyday life and politics in particular.

#### 4.2.1.4. I Do Not Like Facers, But...

In general, people are critical of facers for the reasons given above. However, as hinted at above in several of the responses, this dislike is mitigated if one is supportive of the cause. For example:

Usually I find them very annoying. No, I mean it depends. I don't mind if it's for a good cause. I guess it depends on the cause. (Interview #40, day 2, conventional)

I did it [signed the petition] because I agree with the message. I am an environmental engineer so you have my support...It depends on what the intent is. They just wanted a signature. Normally I do not like facers. (Interview #39, day 2 conventional)

I don't take the flyers every time. It is important what the case is about... It really depends on how much I personally care about the issue. (Interview #80, day 3, conventional)

Some people we interviewed also identified with facers. One respondent felt sympathy for them for the difficult job they had to do:

It's not always that you're that happy with them, but they are also just people doing their job. (Interview #82, day 3, conventional)

Another person advanced a more cynical position:

They just do what they are told, so they are like the rest of us (Interview #86, day 3, conventional)

In some instances, there was a feeling of empathy resulting from direct experience. Several people stopped by our facers had themselves worked as facers, and we later managed to interview them. One told us that,

I am fine with facers, but I'm also working as a facer myself, so I'm a little more indulgent. (Interview #41, day 2, conventional)

It should be noted, however, that even this facer was only just "fine" with them. Another former facer was more emphatic in his reaction:

I have respect for them doing this, because I know how much they are rejected (Interview #87, day 3, conventional)

These more "positive" reactions to conventional facers also seemed contingent upon the performance of the individual facer. Just as some found facers manipulative and pushy, others based their impressions on whether they felt the facer really cared about the cause. For example, one person we interviewed said that,

I can feel that she is serious about it. I think many facers only do it because it is their job. It depends a lot on who is stopping you. (Interview #48, day 2, conventional)

Sincerity, thus, becomes especially important for the conventional facer and thus a performative part of conventional practice. As one person commented, when asked what she felt about (the thoroughly staged performance of) our own faux-facer,

It's nice that people are passionate (Interview #50, day 2, conventional).

#### 4.2.1.5. There Must Be Something Better

Not only were many of those interviewed about the conventional intervention critical of the format, some also had suggestions for improvement, using words like "inspire" or "cooler" which point to the creative spectrum. For example,

In general, I think people are tired of people telling them what to do. They should rather inspire people. It is very difficult to influence people. (Interview #2, day 1, conventional)

Or another:

It's annoying I think. One should do it in a cooler way. (Interview #52, day 2, conventional)

These respondents seem to be telling conventional activists that they are glad that they are trying to do something good for a worthy cause, but that they are just not very good at it.

#### *4.2.2. Creative Activism can be Surprising and Fun*

##### 4.2.2.1. Novelty

What respondents were missing from the conventional facers, they seemed to find in the creative interventions. One aspect mentioned, many times, by respondents who had witnessed the creative interventions was the sheer novelty of the engagement. As one person stated simply:

It is a new way to get out with a message, (Interview #13, day 1, creative)

Part of why facers were seen as annoying is that they are predictable. That also explains why the novelty of the creative expression itself is seen as a positive. A respondent told us:

It's not exactly what you expect when you sit here. I feel that it was like this instead of an ad on Facebook or a bus advertisement. It's a little different way to get an old message out. (Interview #18, day 1, creative)

And from a different person on the same day:

I actually think that the action is interesting. Because the content I've been through many times, but the form of action - I became wildly inspired. Both of what you told me and the rap form. I was inspired by making this kind of messaging such a public place. I think it's really interesting. (Interview #27, day 1, creative)

The takeaway here is that even though the content of the activist message may be known to many people -- or at least they think they know it -- the format of the messaging itself can inspire them to take a second look at that content.

The novelty factor of the creative interventions also makes it more difficult for people to just ignore the activists. As one person put it bluntly:

It was also a bit difficult to avoid. (Interview #69, day 2, creative)

Instead of demanding attention like conventional facers, the creative interventions sparks curiosity. Whereas people have developed techniques to circumvent the conventional facers - as with many other familiar, and undesired, aspects of urban life - this becomes more difficult because the creative interventions are new, and thus unfamiliar. Because people don't have

their responses pre-determined they give the creative activist interventions an attention they might otherwise not. As one person responded:

Normally I pass by, but this was a little fun. It was a lot of fun. It's a bit different (Interview #72, day 2, creative)

Paradoxically, when activists do not live up to people's expectations, the less likely they are to disappoint them. Instead of being associated with the guilt and manipulation of traditional facers, who people feel are wasting their time, the creative activists offered up something surprising, and when people are surprised they are more open to new ideas and actions.

You did not get much information. In fact, I did not really know what I signed before I just did it, and then I read that it was about a climate tax on beef. We were quick to sign. I do not know if it was the shock (laughs)." (Interview #70, day 2, creative)

This quote seems to suggest that the respondent signed the petition because of the spectacle, and not because of the facts. In Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine* (2008) she shows how powerful elites take advantage of how shocks can paralyze people. This allows them to rush through dubious reforms. In our experiments we can see that shocks produced from below can jolt people to pay attention and even take action. As such our findings suggest the possibility of a *reverse shock doctrine*. The respondent even signed without realizing what it was. Certainly, considerations about what constitutes an ethical spectacle in creative activism are relevant and necessary (Duncombe, 2007), though the self-conscious, knowing laugh of the person suggests to us that her interest was more piqued than paralyzed.

#### 4.2.2.2. Productive Confusion

Conventional activism usually tries to minimize confusion. Here is a dialogue from the third day of the experiment, however, which illustrates how confusion in some cases actually can trigger political engagement. The respondent is trying to make sense of the conventional flyer he is handed, and asks about what causes pollution:

Respondent: "What's the biggest ... What's the [reading the flyer] "cause of pollution on the planet". I could imagine ... [being skeptical when he's reading] Okay ... Is it not construction? Is it not the transport? Is it not...? I just got to know what it really means ..."

Interviewer: "It's methane gas."

Respondent: "Okay, methane gas. Are you saying it's farts from cows? So that's the greenhouse effect? What about fish?"

Interviewer: "I do not know if fish fart a lot, but it does not pollute in the same way."  
(Interview #90, day 3, conventional)

In this instance the initial confusion as to what causes pollution led to an exchange both informative (if not entirely accurate: methane gas is 30 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> but less prevalent) and funny ("do fish fart?"). The same respondent also told us that,

I will talk to my girlfriend about it when I get home, I have already decided. I eat a lot more fish than I did for example a year ago. It's really for health reasons, but this is just water under the mill to continue in that direction. (Interview #90, day 3, conventional).

Creative approaches, when done well, are able to consciously leverage what, in this instance, was accidental confusion. An interview with a mother crossing the bridge with her daughter demonstrate the power of prompting the passerby to ask "What is this?":

Respondent: "[I stopped] Because I wanted to see what this was about. My first thought was that it is nice to see cow shit in the city because she [her daughter] must learn about it and experience it. My second thought was "what is this!?"

Interviewer: "So you became curious?"

Respondent: "Yes, that's why I took it [the flyer]. (Interview #101, day 3, creative)

What we call "productive confusion" seems to be key to understanding part of the effectiveness of creative activism. As this person explains her willingness to stop and take a flyer.

Because it's fun and quite extreme, so I simply had to find out what it was about. I needed an explanation of what I saw. (Interview #103, day 3, creative)

The Enlightenment Man may need to understand, but she needs a spectacle to make her curious enough to want to understand.

#### 4.2.2.3. Spectacle of Authority

Our observers noted that the appearance of the police, called in to investigate the piles of cow dung on day three, seemed to make people more interested in what was going on (see photo 1 in Appendix 2). Activists throughout history have been aware of the pros and cons of the presence of the authority, and it has always been a complicated game of cat and mouse and reverse management strategies. The US Civil Rights movements conscious (and creative) use of "Bull" Connor as the face of official White violence during the desegregation protests in Birmingham Alabama, is only the most famous of these examples (McAdam, 1999).

In our case, the presence of the police changed the mood of the political action from a well understood experience of facer confrontation and passerby avoidance into an exciting, if slightly confusing, spectacle to be enjoyed. As one respondent commented:

I think it looked exciting. I noticed the police car. (Interview #108, day 3, creative)

But it was not only the police who functioned as a spectacle of authority. So did the members of the research team who were dressed in white lab coats. In fact, when pursuing the passersby trying to get an interview with them after they had stopped to watch the rap, signed a petition, or taken a flyer, we were often successful because people were interested in who we were and why we were wearing the coats. When told that they were part of a scientific experiment, most people were intrigued, and perhaps a bit relieved as the strange spectacle they had just witnessed had a rational explanation.

#### 4.2.2.4. Funny

“Funny” was the most commonly used word to describe the creative interventions on the bridge (see Table 4 above) Observation notes from the team, are also full of examples of how humor seemed to communicate where words could not:

Kids exploring the fart machine.

People laughing with cows and then stopping to sign a petition with no words said.

People refusing, or arguing why they won't, until they start laughing and then take a flyer. (Observations, days 1-3, creative)

By laughing together we communicate a shared understanding. By creating a non-transactional moment, the humor this way allows for an actual transaction of political messaging. The laugh creates a fleeting, but in the moment very real, sense of community. As one observer noted,

A girl tells her friend: “This is fucking hilarious.” The friend replies “Yes, this is really fucking funny this is.” (Observation, day 3, creative)

It is as if these two girls are admitting to themselves they are actually entertained by these very different kind of political actors, and that politics can actually, against all expectations, be funny. Most people's default position regarding political engagement is scepticism. In Denmark the trust in politicians has gone from 70% in 2007 to 35% in 2019 (Harrebye, 2019). With a little bit of humor, however, a space of political interaction can be opened up.

If one of the things that turns people off from conventional activists is their moralizing -- “you should do this” with an accusatory pointing finger -- then making politics fun takes a different approach. As one respondent explained it,

It's good to make it a fun thing instead of telling people “don't eat meat”. People are gonna be upset. It's very personal. I thought it was nice because it was fun.” (Interview #35, day 1, creative)

Getting people to laugh at what is serious can be seriously effective.

The risk of activism being too much of “a fun thing,” of course, is that your politics are not taken seriously. A person we interviewed who had witnessed both the speech and the rap the first day of our experiment, made exactly that critique, when he explained that,

I prefer the speech, which is more serious than a rap, which can become a bit circus-like [gøglet]. There is more focus on the fun than focusing on the political message.  
(Interview #5, day 1, conventional and creative)

Creativity may attract and maintain attention better, but because it is not an integral part of the normal democratic repertoire of politics as a “serious business” it can be a struggle to convince some people that its content, despite its form, is to be taken seriously. But our interviews suggest this wasn’t the case for most people. Many people we talked to were drawn in by the “fun” of the creative interventions and then, as an extension of that, opened up to the substantial issue. For example, a person who heard the rapper said,

I think it was fun. I think it created a lot of attention. In a different way than if he had just stood there and talked. It makes you stop and listen, as opposed to had it been you saying “Can I just talk to you?” (Interview #21, day 1, creative)

On the second day, when farting cows were asking for signatures, a person remarked that,

We noticed the cow costume and noticed that he had funny headgear on. So we were really glad he came over here because we really like funny headgear. And in addition, we also think it's important to think about the environment. (Interview #58, day 2, creative).

The person notices the cows...and then appreciates the cause. As another respondent, this one from Day 3, adds:

I think it's fun and catchy and I'd like to look a little more at it. I'm into this issue of global warming and in part about methane gasses. (Interview #99, day 3, creative)

If the novelty and surprising element of creative activism get the attention and interest, it is the humor that seems to assure people that the political intervention is nothing to be afraid of, and maybe even be fun to be a part of.

#### *4.2.3. The Double Edge of Creativity*

##### *4.2.3.1 Too Creative?*

An interesting observation was made during the second day of the experiment by several of our volunteers. During the creative intervention, those petitioners whose -- human -- faces were

concealed under full cow-head masks were getting less signatures than the petitioners who, because of the heat, had pushed their masks up to their foreheads and wore their masks as makeshift hats. The team reflected on this particular observation in our evaluation after the intervention. One person pointed out that the human connection was limited when wearing a full mask. Another thought that some people seemed to get scared of the cow masks, and recalled one person interviewed as saying:

I got a little scared when I saw the mask. (Interview #70, day 2, creative)

It was as if the mask was a disguise a bank robber might wear, or something out of a horror film. This led to a discussion about the tension between being funny and creepy.

As we found out the next day, this difference could mean the support of the people or someone calling the cops. On the third day of the experiment a man walked by, absolutely bewildered by what he saw. In our minds we were staging a funny, entertaining, and creative action about a governmental initiative to stem climate change. In his mind we were, “crazy professors throwing shit all over the bridge” (according to what the police later told us). He refused to engage with any of us as we explained what we were doing, stalked off, and called the police. Fortunately for us, the police, after and listening to our explanation and checking our permission from the police department and the municipality to carry out the experiment, accepted our interpretation of the event.

The point here is that creative activism can and often does have a double-edge. The very thing that attracts some people can repel others. A tactic that creates productive confusion if pushed too far can result in a lack of comprehension or miscomprehension. What is refreshingly fun about creative activism, can also make it appear frivolous. Like other forms of creativity, in particular arts of the avant-garde, creative activism walks the line between interest and outrage, legibility and illegibility, sense and nonsense.

#### 4.2.3.2. Making Sense: Content and Form

In order for creativity to work as a form of activism, it needs to make sense. This was recognized by one of the respondents who observed that,

If [the intervention] was not relevant to the subject, it would have been completely idiotic. Then I would not have had respect for it at all. But one can say that it is related to it so it's fine. (Interview #103, day 3, creative)

The point here is that content and form need to resonate if the creative elements of activism are to be productive. Some people we talked to felt that our action failed this test, like this person who told us that,

It works - [But] I do not understand why you're doing it, but maybe it doesn't matter as long as you catch people's attention. [But] There is no relation between this (action) and

meat consumption. I understand the problem of meat consumption, but I can not see the connection at all -- not before you said it. (Interview #95, day 3, creative)

For this witness of the cow-dung action the action “works” in that it captured attention, but it failed to make the next step: make the connection to the issue at hand. Most of the people we talked to, however, were able to make some sort of sense of it,

I think it's fun. It's eye-catching. You actually learn that farts pollute a lot, especially from cows, so I quickly became aware of what it really was about. I understood that quite quickly. (Interview #104, day 3 creative)

Or from another respondent, on the same day:

It's a nice way to do it. It exemplifies what the problem is about. (Interview #105, day 3, creative)

Designing a creative tactic so that form of action resonates with the content of the message, allows the audience to “sense” what the issue is and whether to support it. Here is a respondent from day two explaining to us why they took a flyer:

Respondent: (laughs) ... I did because I could sense what it was about. So I think it seems like a good case.

Interviewer: Did the cow costume help to point out what the action was about?

Respondent: Yes, and it was also a little fun. (Interview #71, day 2, creative)

#### 4.2.3.3. Democratic Ritual

There is always some element of theatre in public politics; this is true for activism too. As with all communities and within all traditions, democracy has its own rituals. We cheer, we boo, we sign, we shake our heads, we march, we sing, and we hold up signs to show the world who we are and what we believe. When standing on a soapbox, petitioning, or handing out flyers the same rules of thumb apply. You have to have some element of ritual that frames the event in a familiar manner. You have to play a part that allows for the theatre to unfold in a meaningful way. This is part of the “normal” political process in a liberal democracy.

Some of the respondents interviewed used the word “normal” in a positive sense, as a way of expressing acceptance of the intervention. But when a respondent, having just witnessed the speech, tells us,

I don't have an opinion [about the action], it just seems normal to me. (Interview #77, day 3, conventional)

it seems to indicate that “normal” has a negative connotation: something that does not really move her in either way, something not worthy of an opinion.

What conventional facers have going for them is the stamp of approval from democratic tradition. What they have going against them is the endless repetition of tradition which seems to blind us and numb us to the political intention behind the conventional democratic expression and the content of the message being conveyed. As one person we interviewed said,

In Denmark we have free speech to say what we want. I think someone often says something on Queen Louise's Bridge. I do not know how often I really notice it.  
(Interview #1, day 1, conventional)

In this case what is normal goes unnoticed; in other instances what was normal and accepted -- a conventional facer handing out flyers -- was, once again, perceived as annoying.

Flyers I think are fine. I think that someone like you is annoying and people who want signatures - such as Amnesty or such. But in principle. (Interview #75, day 3, conventional).

That is to say: the liberal democratic principles of free speech and press are good, but the everyday public practice of them can be annoying.

To borrow a concept from Brian McLaren (2004), what is called for is “generous orthodoxy”. The effective activist needs to respect orthodoxy in order to appeal to a wider audience comfortable with certain civic practices. On the other hand, they need to be generous and allow for new formats that may have a more affective impact on the audience. In this case, activism is part of the orthodoxy of civic of civic life in Denmark. In fact, most people seem to respect that the volunteers are attempting to make a difference. Yet many people also find the conventional ways in which activism is practiced annoying, and therefore a “generosity” toward new techniques would be welcomed.

#### 4.2.3.4. A Different Type of Sensemaking

As positive as many people were to the novelty, surprise and fun of creative forms of activism, especially in comparison to the more negative feelings people held toward conventional techniques, there was also an undercurrent of *ambivalence* in the reactions of a number of people toward the creative means we used. A snippet from an interview with two people who have just navigated the cow dung minefield illustrates the double-edge of creative activism:

Respondent 1: I thought it was a little weird, so I thought what is this about?

Interviewer: So you got curious?

Respondent 1: Yes, I think that's because it's very different from what you usually see, you know, that there's cow-shit all over the place. I think that was a little annoying.

Respondent 2: That is of course something that people notice. I think, on the other hand, that the problem may be that for some people it may just be annoying. For them it will only annoy them and disturb them - instead of making them curious. But at the same time, I think it's a good idea because you remember it a little better - because you notice it. (Interview #100, day 3, creative)

Here, attention, curiosity, and being memorable -- all positives in the world of activism -- are mixed with annoyance and disturbance. What will be remembered: that meat production leads to methane gas and climate change and this the need for a meat tax? Or the annoyance: "that there's cow-shit all over the place"? Another respondent, interviewed the previous day, articulated a similar seeming paradoxically point of view when they told us that,

It was so absurd. So that was quite effective. (Interview #70, day 2, creative)

How is it possible for something to be absurd, yet also be effective? Or annoying, and also "a good idea"? Rational sensemaking is straightforward. Logic is the name of that game. But we know from psychology, the arts, religion, and advertisement that another type of sensemaking is just as powerful when conveying a message. For the message to have an impact it does not need to make sense in any clear cut way. Indeed, it is the dissonance *between* ideas or emotions which often leads to profound and moving experiences, moving people from the normal to the extraordinary.

#### 4.2.4. *Effect and Affect*

Liberal democratic politics, as it has been idealized, is a rational process. From its mythic birth in European coffee houses in the 17th Century, modern democracy is something engaged in by reasonable men having rational discussions with full access to factual information. Politics as it is practiced, as any politician or activist can tell you however, is an affair of the heart as much as the head. As Marshall Ganz has argued (2011), people don't just soberly decide to change their mind and act accordingly, they are moved to do so by emotionally powerful stimuli, be it love, hate, fear, hope, or compassion. This is not to say there is no place in activist politics for facts and logic, only that emotions are there too. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio goes as far as to posit that emotions are a precondition for rational thought and action. As he writes:

...certain aspects of the process of emotion and feeling are indispensable for rationality. At their best, feelings point us in the proper direction, take us to the appropriate place in a decision-making space, where we might put instruments of logic to good use (Damasio 1994, xvii)

In other words, we *feel* our way towards the ideas we accept or reject, before we reason them through.

One person, just recently confronted by our conventional facer asking for their signature, told us that,

there are so many articles about this you know - so it's just hard to know what is true and what is not. (Interview #46, day 2, conventional)

This is a common sentiment today. In an era of information surplus and a multiplicity of viewpoints and outlets, all claiming to have “the truth,” one can't always tell which “facts” are true or not. And so one *feels* their way toward the truth. Yet, more traditional forms of activism tend to disregard the affective qualities of interactions with the public, relying instead upon an idealized understanding of a rational democratic public sphere. One person, when asked what they felt about the conventional public speech, stated bluntly that,

I do not know if I feel anything about it (Interview #1, day 1, conventional)

#### 4.2.4.1. Creative Form: Rap

While the respondent above was unsure if they felt anything about the conventional activist tactic of a political speech delivered on a soapbox, a number of people we talked to who had witnessed the creative interventions talked openly about the feelings it evoked. For example, another passersby exposed to the same facts as the soapbox speech, now composed into a personal story in the form of a rap, reported a very different experience:

[The rap] affects me in many more senses. If I just read something or see people who just say no. I think this is inclusive, and the form makes me smile. (Interview #27, day 1, creative)

Still another person picked up on the affective intentions of the artist, and how the rapper was using feelings to get his audience thinking:

It was a bit poetic. There was a bit of irony in his rap. So I felt like he wanted us to reflect. It made me think.... Sometimes when I feel like people are telling me what to do I feel like: “don't tell me what to do.” But this was different. (Interview #17, day 1, creative)

In addition to praising the entertainment value of a person rapping instead of giving a political speech, another respondent remarked on the efficacy of the affective delivery:

I just think it worked very well. First of all, I think it was good entertainment - it was really well made! I think that some demonstrations may seem a bit aggressive. I think this worked in a much more humane way. There was a nice vibe about it -- despite the serious message -- that made the man seem sympathetic (Interview #30, day 1, creative)

The “affective” words used here are suggestive. Traditional activism, for this person, is not devoid of feeling, but the feeling is negative: “aggressive.” The creative form, on the other hand feels “humane” and, as such, encourages the audience to understand and relate to what the activist is feeling, that is: a “sympathetic” response.

Sometimes what was felt could not even be articulated. *Affect*, after all, is the feeling we feel before we know what it is we’ve felt. It is the sense one has before it is made sensible by naming, defining, and assigning it to a recognizable emotion (Massumi, 1995). One witness to the rap, not quite able to articulate what that feeling was, but having felt it nonetheless, commented:

At least, it did something. (Interview #17, day 1, creative)

There is always a danger, however, of the artistic form and affective response eclipsing the effective transfer of information. For some, it was the creative form of rap that was what was understood, and appreciated, and not necessarily the content of the rapper’s message. Here is an extreme case:

Respondent: I don’t understand Danish...I have no idea what is going on.

Interviewer: Did you like the rap?

Respondent: Yeah, because it was pretty good. I like the way he started. Beatboxing and things. (Interview #12, day 1, creative)

Even those who could understand the language, and appreciated the message, sometimes seemed to suggest that the content was submerged beneath the form. To extend the quote from the person we began this section with:

[The rap] affects me in many more senses. If I just read something or see people who just say no -- I think this is inclusive, and the form makes me smile. *I think this goes for other messages as well. The formats of messages are interesting. This is the form you have made. Actually, I think the [message about the] meat comes second - but as a form, it has a different meaning.* (Interview #27, day 1, creative)

These later reflections raises a larger question. While it is likely using creative forms generate attention and interest in political content, is there a point when the artistic affect generated begins to sing louder than the intended political effect?

#### 4.2.4.2. Pure Sense: Cow Shit

Of all the aspects of the interventions: the sound of a rapper rapping, the auditory assault of cows farting, and the visual spectacle of facers dressed up in cow costumes, nothing was more oriented to the senses than the piles of cow dung that passersby had to navigate while cows

handed them flyers. More than any other feature, it was the shit that people were fascinated with. From our observers' notes that day:

Kid asks his mother "Why is there shit here?"

Guy looks at the shit, smiling "I really wanna know what this is about".

Annoyed guy, NOT wanting to know more.

People laugh quite a lot, people in general think shit is funny.

People smiling, but also a bit disgusted.

Looking down confused - saying yes to a flyer at the end of the bridge.

Young boys saying "Ugh!" [and] smiling.

"Argh. C'mon. This is enough!" woman says to her friend.

Guy stops for 5-10 seconds, staring at the first shit.

Young guy looking at the shit, answers to the cow that he is not interested.

Dog sniffing the shit, owner looks away.

(Observations, day 3, creative)

The shit was so surprising in the context of Dronning Louises bro and flyering for a cause, that several couple of people we interviewed had a hard time believing it was real:

It's fun. It attracts more attention from people. But it doesn't stink, so I am not sure it is real shit. (Interview, day 3, creative)

and:

Respondent: I just hope that it's not real shit!

Interviewer: It's really shit. We've been out and found it in the field.

Respondent: What if you step in it or something!?! (Interview #97, day 3, creative)

People are surprised by the use of real shit as part of an activist tactic, and that surprise can lead to interest. But the observations also suggest that this interest is not always entirely positive. While some people laugh at the shit, others are disgusted. The sensory surprise tactic (with the shit, in this case) can work two ways: a source of amusement and receptiveness, or disgust and rejection. Again, this is the double edge of creative activism. The disbelieving reaction of some -- "I am not sure it is real shit" -- may suggest that there is another limit to surprising tactics like these. Surprising attracts attention, but too surprising can lead to skepticism which, if transferred to the message itself, might be counter productive (although we found no evidence of this transference in our case). Furthermore, if the same surprise tactic

were to be employed in other parts of the world the level of negative disgust might likely be much higher, and the receptivity much lower. But disgust and skepticism need not always lead to rejection, it also can lead to an interest in the issue -- as suggested by the increased receptivity of passersby to take flyers during the creative intervention as opposed to the conventional one.

#### *4.2.5. Push and Pull*

The negative feelings towards conventional facers that many of the people we talked to felt had to do with their “pushy” attitudes. They were “over the line,” “manipulating,” “telling them what to think,” and just trying to “sell” them something. Our interviews and observations suggest that the rapper, the cows, and even the shit, were having a different affect and effect on people. Instead of being pushed to take an interest, the creative interventions seemed to pull people in -- even if through curious disgust. Some people we talked to made the comparison between conventional and creative approaches explicit. For example:

We were already sitting here. And then we saw people who walked around in cow costumes. For example compared to people wearing “Folkekirkens Nødhjælp” bags (a faith based NGO), I rather wanted to talk to the guy in the costume than the person from Folkekirkens Nødhjælp so we asked him, “Hello, what are you doing?” .... Because they were different, I became curious. That’s why I asked him what he was doing. (Interview #56, day 2, creative)

Or another, from the next day:

I got a little curious about what this was about. It looked interesting. I think that’s a good way -- it creates a lot of attention! You are getting used to be stopped by people on the streets who want to talk to you about some subject. I think it’s a good thing to do something a bit different. You can not walk by without wondering what is happening... So this [the flyer] is clearly something I want to go home and talk to him about. (Interview #96, day 3, creative)

As this following exchange demonstrates, even our “competitors” on the bridge, facers promoting other causes, commented upon the positive affect and effect of attracting people’s attention rather than forcing it upon them.

Interviewer: You are facer. Why did you stop?

Respondent: Because I was interested in seeing what it was. I saw the cow-costumes and it caught my interest. I think it’s a smart way. People at least know what it’s about when they look. It draws your attention. (Interview #65, day 2, creative)

More conventional, rationalist, approaches tend to lend themselves to push strategies: confronting strangers, clipboard at the ready, flyer in hand, and “talking points” ready. Our study seems to suggest that it is easier to engage people when “it draws your attention,” pulling them in by generating some sort of feeling, be it amusement, novelty, curiosity, confusion, or even disgust. But pulling people in to look, listen, watch, or smell is one thing, getting them to remember your message, reflect on it, and maybe even take action -- the ultimate goals of any activist intervention for social change -- is something different. These longer range effects and affects of activist intervention are what we turn to now.

## **5. LONGER TERM IMPACT**

While it is important to attract attention in the moment, and hold people’s interest long enough to get them to listen to a snippet of information, sign a petition or take a flyer, the objectives of activist intervention aim further: changing hearts, minds, and behaviors over the long term. As much as we are interested in the immediate responses we could observe and explore through spot interviews at the time, we were also curious as to the lingering affect and effect of these interventions.

To obtain data on longer term impact we designed a short follow-up survey that asked the following questions:

1. What do you remember from the action you saw that day?
2. If you remember, please let us know what the political message was?
3. Have you thought of the incident since and, if yes, how?
4. Have you done anything related to the matter since (e.g. changed your habits, talked to a friend about the subject, or something else)?

Two weeks after the experiment was over, we sent these questions, via email or SMS to all the people we had initially interviewed who were willing to give us their contact information -- a total of 99 of the 115 people we interviewed (in 108 interviews). If we did not get an immediate response, we wrote back three days later. If we still did not get a response, we wrote back again one last time three days after that. In the end, nearly a third of the people we reached out to responded to our survey. Of the 99 people we contacted, 29 people got back to us with responses. Since we had tagged contact information by day and the action, we were able to match specific responses to specific interventions. 12 had witnessed the conventional actions and 12 had seen the creative one. We discounted the remaining number because they had witnessed both creative and conventional interventions and we could not differentiate responses, and 1 other because they were involved in the experiment.

What follows is an analysis of their responses, organized by the question posed. We begin our analysis by coding and quantifying their answers to what and how much they remembered, what their retrospective opinions were about the experience looking back at it, and how they might

have taken action since. We then delve into the words used by the respondents to get a more qualitative picture of the longer term impact of both creative and conventional activist tactics.

## 5.1 Event Recall

*Q: What do you remember from the action you saw that day?*

As per our hypothesis, a significant majority (9 to 3) of people who witnessed the creative interventions were able to provide detailed descriptions of the action itself after two weeks time. Whereas the number of those who witnessed the conventional actions were evenly split, with 6 respondents having only vague recollections and 5 recalling the event with some detail.

Not surprisingly, what was remembered most vividly was the scatological spectacle of the creative intervention:

I remember the shit on the streets and the loud farting noises, and that the action was about paying attention to all the greenhouse gases emitted in the production of meat. I also remember the signs in the stool: "This shit is a problem," I think it said." (Survey #28, day 3, creative)

Another person responded:

I remember there was a lot of cow shit around Queen Louise's bridge and some signs that said it was bad. Then, afterwards, I realized that the project actually was about the kind of action itself. (Survey #25, day 3, creative)

Not only did this person remember the shit and the signs, but also recalled that it was a research experiment. A third, remembered less about the shit and the farts and more about the people staging the experiment and their funny antics:

I remember it all, and especially the young enthusiasts who stood and fooled around on the street. (Survey #27, day 3, creative)

One reading of these responses is that what spectators remember is only the spectacle, and the staging of the spectacle. A closer look, however, reveals a more nuanced picture of what is recalled and why. The first person quoted accurately remembered the issue of greenhouse gasses produced in meat production and the second, while vividly recalling the cowshit and the signs at the time, had a realization of its scientific purposes later. While nothing the third respondent said implies that he or she remembered anything other than the tomfoolery of "young enthusiasts," their answer to the next question on the survey regarding the political message was spot on:

eat less beef to reduce air pollution

because, as they also wrote,

the campaign flyer is still on my desk. (Survey #27, day 3, creative)

If one were to draw a lesson here it might be this: the creative spectacle is memorable, the fool is unforgettable, but it is the combination of the spectacle with the information (best illustrated by the miniature political protest sign sticking up in the shit) that facilitates the memory of political issues. It is this recall of political messaging that our second question probed.

## 5.2 Message Memory

*Q: If you remember, please let us know what the political message was?*

In addition to what might make a lasting, visceral impression, we were interested in how each style of intervention impacted what information people recalled about the issue being advocated for. We coded their responses as “clear and accurate” if they remembered that the action was about meat consumption, its link to greenhouse gasses and/or climate change, *and* a call for a tax on meat. “Incomplete” if they could only recall one or two of the three elements of the message. “Inaccurate” if they misconstrued the message entirely.

Counter to our original hypothesis that conventional activist interventions might result in higher and more accurate knowledge retention, we found that amongst those who witnessed the conventional action the number of “incomplete” or “inaccurate” responses were much higher than those who could accurately recall the political message (10 to 1). Surprisingly, amongst those who witnessed the creative intervention, the people who had a “clear and accurate” recollection were evenly split with those who did not (6 to 6). Data thus seems to suggest that the expressive activist format does not necessarily exclude people from getting the political message. It is not a question of form over function but form *and* function.

For example, here are some responses from people who witnessed the creative actions:

The political message was something about eating less beef - I think - to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Something about tax on beef. (Survey #12, day 2, creative)

Largely accurate responses like this (mistaking CO<sub>2</sub> for Methane was common, we found) comprised half of the responses of those who had seen the creative actions, while only one of the conventional. Still, nearly half of the creative responses were only partially accurate. Like this one:

There were farting-noises and people in cow-costumes. To get signatures for a proposal for more tax on meat, because cows fart a lot....cows actually emit so much CO<sub>2</sub> through their farts. (Survey #13, day 2, creative)

In the latter example, the respondent seems mainly to remember the fun stuff that affected them, but at least remembers two-thirds of the message. This wasn't always the case. Sometimes what was remembered clearly was the action -- particularly when it was creative -- while the recollection of the message was even less complete:

What I remember from that day is people who showed up in cow-costumes and noises from loudspeakers (the visual part is the most eye-catching) and it caught my attention. I am not sure about the political part. I see a lot of posters which advertise for milk and veal and cows and so on: "Remember to drink milk - it comes from happy cows!". The milk is just as bad as the beef. (Survey #11, day 2, creative)

Here the person vividly remembers the costumes and noises, but is "not sure about the political part," only that it has something to do with meat (and dairy) consumption. More often, people would remember two of the three key elements of our message, but neglect to mention the tax on beef.

The meat production causes a lot of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions - especially cows. (Survey #1, day 1, conventional)

Eat less meat for environmental reasons. (Survey #15, day 3, conventional)

The message was that we should eat less red meat for the sake of the environment (Survey #23, day 3, creative)

Again, these incomplete responses made up the vast majority of responses to the conventional action (9 of 11) as well as nearly half of those recalling the creative action (5 of 12).

Others, albeit an extreme minority in both cases (1 conventional, 1 creative) just got the message plain wrong when remembering the actions, usually mixing it up with a plea for animal rights. For example:

The message was [not] to interfere with the life of the animals and become a vegetarian and stuff...of course I feel pity for the animals. (Survey #20, day 3, conventional)

I don't quite remember, but I think it was something about animal rights. On the other hand, I remember that it was staged. (Survey #10, day 2, creative)

This last remark deserves more attention. What is remembered is the "staged" aspect of the intervention, and what is recalled is likely the cow costumes the petitioners were wearing that day. But the meaning attached to those costumes is misremembered as "something about animal rights" and the petition they were asked to sign about a meat tax to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is forgotten.

In sum, the majority of people had an incomplete recollection of the issues presented in the interventions, and a small minority misremembered the message entirely. What is interesting,

and surprising, was the variance in those who remembered the issues accurately. Of those who had witnessed the creative action, nearly could recall all three of the key aspects of the message, whereas only 1 person who had seen, or heard, the conventional action could do the same.

### 5.3 Glving it Thought

*Q: Have you thought of the incident since and, if yes, how?*

Information needs to be thought about and reflected upon in order for it to move from something simply read in flyer handed out by a facer to becoming part of how one thinks and feels about an issue. When it came to thinking about the action in the intervening weeks, again the creative approach seems to have more impact than the conventional one. Of those who witnessed the creative intervention, a majority (7 of 12) *had* given the incident considerable thought in the intervening time. 2 had only vague ideas, and 3 had not given the intervention any thought at all. When it came to those who were exposed to the conventional intervention, the pattern reversed itself. A majority (6 of 11) of those who witnessed the conventional event *had not* given it any thought, while 3 had rather vague thoughts, and only 2 had thought about the action with any clarity.

Not surprisingly, it was the creative spectacle that people remembered the most, both the element of “fun” and it being “strange.”

I have thought of the incident. I think it was a fun way to illuminate the subject and to draw attention to the problem. (Survey #28, day 3, creative)

I've thought about it because I thought it was a fun idea with cow shit.... I have thought more about how much meat I eat and now try to cut down a little on my consumption. (Survey #23, day 3, creative)

And...

Yes, I have [thought about it] because everything was quite strange. (Survey #13, day 2, creative)

One person mused about why she stopped to sign a petition -- something she perceives negatively as getting “caught” -- and whether it was the cow costumes that made the difference this time by catching her attention and pulling her in:

I've also thought about what made me stop - I usually avoid facers on the street. I do not know if I got caught, or if it was the cow costumes that caught my attention.“ (Survey #9, day 2, creative)

Amongst the minority of people who had given the conventional action any thought in the intervening weeks, the thoughts often had to do with the message itself, as well as how it was conveyed. One person was just pleased that there were people out there spreading the news:

Yes, I am happy that people take time to convey such an important message. (Survey #4, day 1, conventional)

Unfortunately, the “important message” they remembered, as they report elsewhere in their response, was only “eat less meat” and nothing about the meat tax, greenhouse gasses, or climate change. Others who responded used the opportunity to critique the conventional action, either in content:

I have [given it further thought], and I was bothered that you would suggest that beef should be taxed while at the same time recommend that I stop eating it. Get your message straight. (Survey #21, day 3, conventional)

Or form:

Seems your message was good but the way it was performed made it a bit unclear. It could be done better : ) (Survey #3, day 1, conventional)

Another person who had witnessed the conventional action was not so polite as to leave us a smiley emoticon, summing up their opinion on the intervention and our academic inquiry with another type of graphic response:



(Survey #7, day 2, conventional)

It is not only that more people had given thought to the creative action in the intervening weeks than they had the conventional ones, but the quality of those thoughts (and images) are telling.

It seems that when the conventional interventions were remembered with any clarity, it is because they irked people. Whereas, the words used to describe recollections of the creative events mirrored those used in the spot interviews, emphasizing the novel and surprising aspects.

Thinking about an activist intervention, whether creative or not, is one thing, but the goal of activism is to move people to action. And this is what our next survey question attempted to tease out.

#### **5.4 Follow Up Action**

*Q: Have you done anything related to the matter since (e.g. changed your habits, talked to a friend about the subject or something else)?*

One of the ways people are influenced is through the opinions of those who matter most to you (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) This is why getting people to share information and opinions with friends, family, and colleagues is so important for advocacy work. Here is a respondent making this point during the actions on the bridge.

I'm already doing it. It is a trend, especially among the young people, that we should eat less meat. I think we are more influenced by our friends and acquaintances. So I'm starting to change my habits. (Interview #10, day 1, creative)

When we stopped people on the bridge to interview them, several people said that they planned on sharing what they had learned or experienced with others:

I think I will mention it to the friend that I am meeting now. (Interview #69, day 2, creative)

Or even more determined:

I will talk to my girlfriend about it when I get home -- I have already decided that. (Interview #90, day 3, conventional).

But to say that you will take such actions on the spur of the moment is one thing, to follow through is another. To determine if people who had experienced the interventions were "influencing" their friends and acquaintances in the weeks following, we asked them what issue-related actions they had taken since witnessing the interventions on the bridge.

The replies to our survey seem to suggest that the people witnessing the conventional intervention are less likely to take action than those who have participated in a creative one. 10 of the 12 reported having not done anything related to the matter since and only one person definitively reported doing something new:

I talked to my friends I was with on the bridge about the subject (Survey #8, day 2, conventional)

It is unclear from the response, however, whether this happened at the time of the action, or in the weeks following. Two others who had witnessed the conventional action had more qualified responses, one conflates thought with action:

I did not eat meat already, but I have certainly thought more about it than what I used to. (Survey #4, day 2, conventional)

And another implying that there may be a long term impact on behavior:

I am aware of the environmental aspect and in the long term I will change my habits. (Survey #15, day 3, conventional)

Amongst those who witnessed the creative action, 5 of the 12 respondents who answered the question reported doing something *new* in response to the intervention. The majority of these new “doings” involved talking to someone about the issue, the intervention, or both. For example:

I talked to my friend about it right after the incident (Survey #9, day 2, creative)

I have told family members about the campaign I saw on the street as well as the information I have read. (Survey #27, day 3, creative)

Not immediately about the actual situation on the bridge, but I have talked about the issues that were made aware of. (Survey #28, day 3, creative)

One person who had witnessed the creative intervention even responded that they had changed their eating behavior.

I have thought more about how much meat I eat and now try to cut down a little on my consumption. (Survey #23, day 3, creative)

Of the remaining 7 “creative” respondents, 6 were doing something issue-related before the intervention, and 1 took no resulting action.

It is important to remember that these accounts of actions taken as a result of the interventions are, like all the responses here, self-reported. We have no way of knowing if someone really did talk to their family about the issue, or whether they cut down on the amount of meat they ate, or even if they really did nothing as they reported. Furthermore, we can not deduce that those who have taken any action have done so exclusively based on our intervention. What we can say with confidence is that those who witnessed the creative intervention were much more apt to

report some sort of active response, as opposed to those who witnessed the conventional version.

Taken as a whole, the responses we received from our follow-up survey seem to suggest that the more creative interventions result in better recall of both the interventions and the issues. The creative approach to activism is also likely to stimulate more reflective thought and follow-up action than the conventional counterpart. However, it is important to remember that while the response rate on the survey as a percentage was quite high for this sort of research instrument -- nearly one-third of those contacted responded -- the total numbers were low: only 24 valid responses. As such, any conclusions drawn must remain suggestive. Nonetheless, what these surveys do suggest is that creative forms of activism, by being highly affective, are quite effective in being memorable and actionable. This is not unimportant if one wants political messaging to stick and the political imagination to be stimulated over time, both of which are necessary if information is to manifest itself into actions to bring about, and then sustain, change in the long run.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

We began this project with a simple theory of change: we believe that social change happens when people are “moved” to make change. The missing element of much conventional activism is the affective charge necessary to move people emotionally so they desire to move politically. This is where the art of activism comes in. Employing creative techniques that draw upon the arts for inspiration, artistic activists, through their interventions, use affect in order to have an effect on what people feel, think and do. This theory of change suggested a series of hypotheses to us, and we designed a social experiment to test their validity. By way of conclusion, it is now time to return to those hypotheses.

### **6.1. As they are more affective, creative interventions are going to be more effective than conventional ones in delivering short term, instrumental, activist objectives.**

Our study seems to suggest this hypothesis to be true. This is not all that surprising, as effective activists, for causes both good and bad, have for millennia told stories, staged spectacles, sung songs and mobilized the emotions to bring about social change. The original contribution here is to prove it -- and to qualify why, when, and how affective activist interventions are more effective than conventional ones.

When it comes to instrumental activist objectives, such as holding attention, getting signatures, and handing out flyers, the quantitative data strongly suggests that more creative, novel, and provocative spectacles perform better than the known rituals. In addition, our qualitative data -- the spot interviews on the bridge and the follow up survey responses -- demonstrate that respondents made more favorable associations with the creative actions than with the conventional interventions. Words like “funny,” “different,” “surprising,” and “captivating” were

used to describe the former, whereas words like “annoying,” “lecturing,” “predictable,” and “unnoticeable” were frequently used to describe the latter. Thus, ordinary facers and their traditional approach seem to carry heavy negative connotations whereas more creative approaches unsettle expectations and creates openings for more positive and receptive engagement with the activists and their cause.

The conventional actions did seem, however, to be better at attracting the already converted: people who were vegetarians and had themselves worked as facers. It is important to remind oneself that activism is and should not only be about changing the hearts and minds of those who disagree, or moving the numb and apathetic to action. Activism is, and should also be, about reassuring and encouraging those who already believe and participate, but who might have doubts or lost incentive. Conventional action in this context thus can advantageously be used to provide support and ammunition to those who are already out fighting the good fight. The “democratic ritual” element that conventional activism exploits, thus, helps activists preach to the choir.

In the end, however, social change primarily happens by persuading people to change their ideas and actions, moving people from the backseat to the driver's seat, and reaching those who would otherwise avoid any sort of political engagement. In this way it seems as if the creative approach, with its higher rate of attraction and more positive connotations is the more effective method.

Our research also suggests that people liked to be drawn into the interaction rather than feeling like they are being pushed into having particular opinions or taking certain actions. In this way, the “fun” elements of creative interventions seem to be particularly effective to attract people. The element of surprise, or what we’ve called “productive confusion,” also seems to open up what people often feel is a closed political conversation where there is right and wrong, friend and foe, good and bad. The push strategy of conventional activism does not work as well as the creative pull.

Confusion, of course, does not always lead to curiosity. If something is too confusing, or too surprising, or too novel, it is likely to remain unintelligible, as there are just not enough cues for someone to make sense of what they have experienced. Just as the weakness of the conventional is that it can be ignored or dismissed as merely predictable, there is also a tipping point in which the creative becomes just the weird, and is misunderstood or not understood at all.

The effective creative activist must, to some extent, employ the democratic rituals that people are familiar with to be taken politically seriously, while also challenging those same traditions in order to attract attention and curiosity. Creative activism works best when it is funny, but not ridiculous, when people are surprised, but not frightened, and when their confusion leads to curiosity, and not befuddlement, about the meaning and message being conveyed. This is the “double edge” of creative activism, and finding this balance is the art of activism.

## **6.2 Insofar as it is memorable and “moves” people to action, creative activism will also result in longer-term impact.**

The Holy Grail of social change activism is to move people to action. It is one thing to know or believe that social change must occur, it is another to act upon that knowledge and those beliefs. This is why testing this hypothesis is so critical to the importance of this study. The data we have indicates that more people who witnessed the creative actions were moved to some sort of action than those who engaged in the conventional ones. At the most rudimentary level, the creative approach resulted in more people stopping and listening, signing petitions, and taking flyers on the day of the actions.

But we were also interested in longer term impact: which style of intervention would result in subsequent action. Our follow-up surveys suggest that more people, proportionately, who saw, heard (and smelled) the creative actions were moved to some sort of action than those who witness the conventional ones. Albeit, this activity was self-reported and, the majority of those “actions” reported tended to be communicative -- talking to friends and families -- rather than changes in behavior or political activity. Still, the data we have does seem to suggest a correlation between those people who engaged in some way with the creative intervention were more apt to be “moved” to later action related to the cause.

## **6.3. Creative forms of activism may attract attention, but will not convey information as well as traditional forms of activism. Conversely, traditional forms may not attract as much attention as creative forms, but will be able to deliver information accurately and effectively.**

The basis for this hypothesis was a long held belief, rooted in generations of Western philosophy and religion, that thought and emotion are somehow at odds with one another. As such, these two aspects of the human condition are an either or proposition: Either one thinks *or* one feels, but never the twain shall meet. Although the evidence we have is limited, it seems to suggest, in this instance, that this is not the case. People who were present for the creative actions were not only more attracted to the intervention, had better associations with the activism, and tended more to corollary action as a result, *but also* recalled the issues being presented with more accuracy than those who had witnessed the conventional actions.

In hindsight, we should not be too surprised, as cognitive scientists have been pointing out the interconnection between emotions and ideas for the past two decades (Damasio, 1994; Lakoff, 1996; Westen, 2007), nevertheless, it was still a surprise to have this hypothesis disproved.

## **6.4. Effectiveness of creative activism *can* be tested, measured, and compared.**

Determining the impact of a certain activist tactic or strategy in bringing about social change, or even changes in individual opinion, feeling and behavior, is a Herculean task, seemingly better left to the realm of mythology than inquiries of researchers. There are simply too many variables to claim with any real validity that X caused Y to happen. The affective element which creativity adds makes the task even more difficult. Furthermore, creative activism inherits the resistance to empirical measurement and discussions of impact that is the romantic legacy of the arts and arts related studies.

Yet without empirical research into the demonstrable impact of activism, including those creative forms influenced by the arts, there is little hope for understanding and thus improving the efficacy of the practice and increasing the likelihood of democratic social change from below. For without empirical facts we are left with only myth.

The Copenhagen Experiment was itself an experiment to see if we could create a research project that might generate data that could “prove” the impact of creative activist interventions vs more conventional ones. To do this we had to limit the size and scope of what we were studying. We purposely chose to look at things we could “measure” both quantitatively and qualitatively: observations of attention, numbers of signatures received and flyers handed out, word use by respondents, self-reported opinions, memories, and actions. We also, again intentionally, decided to concentrate on shorter term, instrumental, and conventional activist objectives rather than longer term shifts in consciousness and imagination.

Delimitations noted, we believe the data and analysis presented in this report do, definitively, prove it is possible to test and measure the effectiveness of different forms of activism, creative activism included. While the data must be considered with the reservations we have noted, it also speaks clearly and strongly. Again and again, in nearly every quantitative and qualitative measure we employed, we were able to generate compelling data that not only allowed us to compare conventional and creative forms of activism, but to also conclude that the latter was more effective, in part because it was more affective, in capturing people’s attention, gaining their agreement, stimulating their recall, and even generating supportive action. For these very reasons we encourage activists, artists, organizers, foundations, political organizations, and academics to consider how our conclusions might influence their future endeavors in both the study and practice of activism.

## **6.5 Future Plans**

As groundbreaking as this present study is, it has its limitations. The Copenhagen Experiment, was, after all, staged in Copenhagen, a social-democratic European city with a largely homogeneous population. The experiment was planned with the city, its demographics, and political culture in mind, and while we believe that its results are generalizable, in order to prove so it will be necessary to replicate the experiments in different contexts: with other populations, in different countries, in suburban and rural areas, and under different political systems.

There is also a more serious limitation with The Copenhagen Experiment: it studies how *artistic tactics* can meet conventional *activist objectives*. Again, we focussed on very concrete and measurable indicators such as attention, information, retention, reflection, knowledge sharing, and subsequent actions taken. What we did not test and measure is the political efficacy and afficacy of what art does best: provide new perspectives to view the world as it is and stimulate the human imagination to envision new possibilities of worlds to come.

We therefore plan to follow up and further develop our design. This will include staging an experiment in different demographic, geographic and political contexts, testing other types of artistic activism better attuned to stimulating the power of imagination, and applying a wider definition of artistic activism than the rather instrumental one focused on in this study.

## **APPENDIX**

### **1. Acknowledgements**

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Finally, we would like to heartily thank the people of Copenhagen for taking part in this experiment.

### **2. Photos**



A. Speech, with people riding by



B. Rapping, with the cow posse



C. Cow petitioner



D. Mega-Fart Sound System



E. Interviewers, in lab coats (and shorts)



F. Flyers (front)



G. Flyers (back)



H. Cow dung with protest sign



I. Police interrogate cow (note dung mound in foreground)

### 3. Speech Text/Rap Lyrics

*Speech:*

Kære Københavner!

I er mange der idag er ude og nyde det gode vejr. Solens stråler brænder stærkt for tiden, og det er tydeligt her på broen at mange af jer sætter pris på det Næh Spørgsmålet er nok nærmere om i er klar over den pris planeten er i gang med at betale for disse klimaforandringer der foregår overalt i verden. For Vores CO<sub>2</sub> aftryk er tårnhøjt, og kloden kan slet ikke følge med.

I 2015 indgik verdens lande en aftale for at sænke CO<sub>2</sub> forbruget, en aftale som Donald Trump i 2017 valgte at melde forbrugsmastodonten USA udaf.

Vi blev alle forargede over hans ligegyldighed, og havde nu endnu en god grund til at pege fingre af ham. Så der stod vi, pegende 1 finger mod vest, mens de resterende 4 fingre pegede direkte tilbage på vores eget hykleri.

For vi skal alle være med til at sænke CO<sub>2</sub> aftrykket, ikke blot se patetiske og handlingslammede til, imens vi trøstespiser den barske sandhed væk.

Den sandhed som jeg taler om idag er et af vor tids største problemer, nemlig den vestlige verdens massive overforbrug af Oksekød.

Hver enkelt dansker spiser årligt 52 kg Oksekød, det er altså 1 kg saftige bøffer, steg og shawarma hver eneste uge.

Det er alt alt for meget. Det efterlader køkkenbordet med blodrøde tal.

Hver eneste kilo oksekød har det samme CO<sub>2</sub> aftryk, som at tage bilen 155 Km, hvilket svarer til at køre herfra og til Odense.

Den store belastning af miljøet kommer fordi det er så energi ineffektivt at opdrætte klovdyr. Der skal 8 gange så meget energi til at fremstille et kg okse, som der skal til for at fremstille samme mængde Kylling eller fisk, 5 gange så meget som at producere et kg flæskesteg.

Det er altså bedre for miljøet at du spiser kylling hver eneste dag, end at du lever som flexitar og bare spiser bøffer en gang imellem.

Det handler idag ikke bare om at spise mindre kød, men også om at vælge kød med lavere miljøomkostninger.

Omkostninger som vi allesammen betaler for.

For noget lugter råddent i det moderne samfund, og selvom vi idag kan nyde en klar og skyfri himmel, så kan vores næse alligevel godt fornemme stanken på afstand.

Det er lugten af Metangas, eller på godt gammel dansk koprutter, som er igang med at ætse sig vej gennem ozonlaget.

Så dette er et opråb fra en kødspiser til en hel kædelskende nation.  
Lad os sammen gøre en indsats for at sænke vort oksekødsforbrug, det vil være en  
kærkommen og nødvendig gestus til vores medmennesker og de kommende generationer der  
skal betale for vores valg. Det vil DE sætte pris på!

Tak for jeres tid

*Rap:*

Mine damer og herre, den her tale er til jer  
Tag det som en undskyldning til alle og enhver  
At anerkende sine fejltrin er altid så svært  
Så lad mig starte der, for Jeg beklager desværre  
For polerne smelter og kloden den kæmper  
Med drivhuseffekt og for store procenter CO<sub>2</sub> kvotienter  
Alle Følgevirkninger af at være beboet af mennesker  
Vores unaturlige livsstil har naturligvis konsekvenser  
Og det absurd når man tænker på de utrolige mængder  
Kul ilte der ender op i ozonlaget igen og  
Det burde vi ændre, os forbrugseksistenser  
Men ligenu nyder vi bare at solen den skinner

Ahhhh - Så er jeg klar til at undskylde igen for

Jeg har klocket i det, og det er os alle der får lov at bøde  
min kæmpe brøler efterlader mig i åndenød  
For min hjerne siger nej, men min mund siger fuck miljøet  
Hver eneste gang jeg bider i et saftigt stykke oksekød

Mmmmm Solide mængder proteiner ender  
Mellem mine tænder hvor de mætter min Guilty pleasure  
Det er aldrig nemt at forlade det vi Virkelig elsker  
Men jeg har nu engang indset at mit forbrug har Konsekvenser

For co2en vi ligger i at producere mere beef  
Er en ineffektiv industri og det vil sige  
Den bruger 8 gange så meget energi som fiskeri  
5 gange så meget som hvis det var en svinesti  
Det er noget svineri, der udleder masser methan  
Fordi køernes prutter forurener ekstremt  
Ozonlaget kan blive smadret totalt, katastrofalt  
Det ik falsk reklame der går væk hvis du ser en anden kanal  
Der kommer alligevel intet revolutionerende på tv Lorry

Og Det her er alvorligt, vi propper os med bøf , 52 kg årligt  
Det sætte aftryk som 155 kilometer i bil  
Deprimerende Real, det svarer lidt til  
At kører herfra til Odense i en Peugeot 409  
Det kræver alt for meget energi, ligesom din facebook profil  
nu hvor vi har vores dokumentation  
Forhindres kollision med Rekonstrueret kommunikation  
Koldsveden kan kun kureres kvæ en ny konstruktion  
Som Kræver en kolossal kovending ellers kommer konfrontationen

Undskyld ko  
Jeg må finde andet at spise nu  
Jeg håber på at du kan forstå  
At dig og mig og det her, det kan ik gå x2

Undskyld, for jeg er ik L.o.c eller til melodi grand prix  
Medlem af Green peace eller af grøn energi  
Men jeg ved at hvis vi hellere vil tag end at gi  
Ender vi i et oversvømmet vinterhi, cest la vie

Men enhver forandring starter med et lille skridt  
En bevægelse, der sagtens kan rykke os milevidt  
os allesammen, for naturen kender ik til dit og mit  
Og på klimakontoen der er ingenting kvit og frit

Så den her er til dig! Ja dig, Der ikke er paleofanatisk speltmor  
Der ik selv strikker dit tøj udaf stofrester du genbruger  
Jeg kunne ligesågodt tale til mig selv ligesom ekkoer  
For du og jeg er genboer, almindelige mennesker på denne jord

Sammen med dig! Ja dig, med din kommunegrønne kompostspand  
Der spiser flexitarisk og lever af kærlighed og postevand  
Der tager ansvar og ik lader andre tage faldet som en stuntmand  
Og ik tænker på Gandalf når jeg snakker om en troldmand

Det bare os, lige her på dronning Louises bro  
Og jeg er glad fordi vi ku indgå i denne ensidige dialog  
For sammen har vi magten, der er stadig lidt tid endnu  
Til at hjælpe klimaet til at gro ved at spise bare lidt mindre ko

Og synge  
Undskyld ko  
Jeg må finde andet at spise nu

Jeg håber på at du kan forstå  
At dig og mig og det her, det kan ik gå

#### 4. Spot Interview Scripts

##### *Day 1 (Speech/Rap)*

- 1) Kan du fortælle hvad aktionen handlede om?
  - 2) Hvad føler du om sådan en slags aktion?
  - 3) Hvor sandsynligt er det, at du tager handling efter denne aktion? a) ændrer vaner. b) diskuterer sagen med en ven? c) engagerer dig i sagen?
- 
- 1) Can you tell me what the action was about?
  - 2) What do you feel about such a kind of action?
  - 3) How likely is it that you take action after this action? (a. changes habits, b. discuss with a friend, c. engage in the cause)

##### *Day 2 (Petition)*

- 1) Hvorfor valgt du at stoppe og give din underskrift?
  - 2) Hvad synes du om facere?
  - 3) Hvor sandsynligt er det, at du tager handling efter denne aktion? a) ændrer vaner. b) diskuterer sagen med en ven? c) engagerer dig i sagen?
- 
- 1) Why did you stop to sign the petition?
  - 2) What do you think/feel of facers/cows?
  - 3) How likely is it you will take action? (a. changes habits, b. discuss with a friend, c. engage in the cause)

##### *Day 3 (Flyer)*

- 1) Hvorfor tog du en flyer?
  - 2) Hvad synes du om de her folk der deler flyers ud?
  - 3) Hvor sandsynligt er det, at du tager handling efter denne aktion? a) ændrer vaner. b) diskuterer sagen med en ven? c) engagerer dig i sagen?
- 
- 1) Why did you take a flyer?
  - 2) What do you think about people who hand out flyers?

3) How likely is it you will take action on this? (a. changes habits, b. discuss with a friend, c. engage in the cause)

Note: Spot interview questions were altered slightly day by day to reflect the type of intervention.

### **5. Follow Up Survey Questions**

1. Hvad husker du fra den aktion du oplevede den dag?
2. Hvis du husker det så fortæl os gerne hvad det politiske budskabet var?
3. Har du tænkt på hændelsen sidenhen, og hvis ja hvordan?
4. Har du gjort noget relateret til sagen sidenhen (fx ændret dine vaner, talt med en ven om emnet eller andet)?

1. What do you remember from the action you saw that day?
2. If you remember, please let us know what the political message was?
3. Have you thought of the incident since and if yes how?
4. Have you done anything related to the matter since (eg changed your habits, talked to a friend about the subject or something else)?

### **6. Speech/Rap Observation Sheet**

Observer Name \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Experiment # \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Attention person stops and takes notice	Interest get closer / smile / nod / point/ talk to friends about	Uninterest look bored or confused	Anger look upset or mad	Interact laugh/clap/call out	Participate ask question/join in discussion (note what people say/ask)	Document take photo/video
1st Performance Or 1st 10 Minutes							
2nd Performance Or 2nd 10 Minutes							
3rd Performance Or 3rd 10 Minutes							
4th Performance Or 4th 10 Minutes							
5th Performance Or 5th 10 Minutes							
6th Performance Or 6th 10 Minutes							

## 7. Petition Response Letter from Danish Government Minister



Silas Harrebye & Stephen Duncombe  
The Copenhagen Experiment

**Ministeren**

**Dato**  
25. februar 2019

**J nr.** 2019 - 280

### Underskriftsindsamling om klimaafgift på oksekød

Kære Silas Harrebye og Stephen Duncan

Tak for jeres henvendelse og de vedlagte underskrifter.

Regeringen er helt enig i, at det er vigtigt at få nedbragt vore drivhusgasemissioner markant. I juni 2018 tilsluttede alle partier i Folketinget sig regeringens forslag om, at EU og Danmark senest i 2050 skal nå netto-nul udledninger. Det er et meget ambitiøst mål, som også vil kræve reduktioner af udledningerne fra landbruget. Med afsæt heri har regeringen med sit klima- og luftudspil igangsat en række initiativer, der kan medvirke til en omstilling af landbruget i en endnu mere klimavenlig retning. Vi har blandt andet afsat midler til at gøre landets biogasanlæg mere effektive til gavn for klima og miljø.

Det er dog ikke regeringens politik at indføre en afgift på oksekød i Danmark. En eventuel mindre afsætning af oksekød i Danmark som følge af en afgift vil formentlig blot medføre øget afsætning uden for Danmark og evt. øget grænsehandel. Desuden risikerer en afgift at skabe folkelig modstand mod klimaindsatsen.

Regeringen ønsker i stedet at nedbringe landbrugets udledninger gennem udvikling af ny viden. Derfor er der indkaldt ansøgninger til en ny forskningspulje på 90 mio. kr. Herigennem skal vi finde fremtidens løsninger, så landbruget kan producere stadig mere klimavenlige fødevarer med færre udledninger.

Vi har også netop indgået et partnerskab med landbrugserhvervet, hvor vi sammen skal kigge på mulighederne for at gøre landbruget endnu mere klimavenligt. Det venter jeg mig meget af.

Senest har Danmarks Naturfredningsforening og Landbrug og Fødevarer fremsat et fælles forslag om udtag af lavbundsjord, som kan nedbringe landbrugets udledninger af drivhusgasser og nitrat betydeligt samt skabe nye naturområder.

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Side 1/2



Energi-,  
Forsynings- og  
Klimaministeriet

Det er glædeligt, at Landbrug og Fødevarer og Danmarks Naturfredningsforening er gået sammen om et fælles bud på nogle af de store udfordringer, der knytter sig til anvendelsen af det åbne land.

Ideerne rimer i høj grad på de initiativer regeringen allerede har igangsat i regi af Naturpakken og Tørkepakken. Regeringen har sammen med Socialdemokratiet og Dansk Folkeparti afsat 150 mio. kr. i Tørkepakken til jordfordeling.

Tak for jeres interesse og engagement i denne vigtige dagsorden.

Med venlig hilsen

Lars Chr. Lilleholt

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