



GOD GOES DEEP

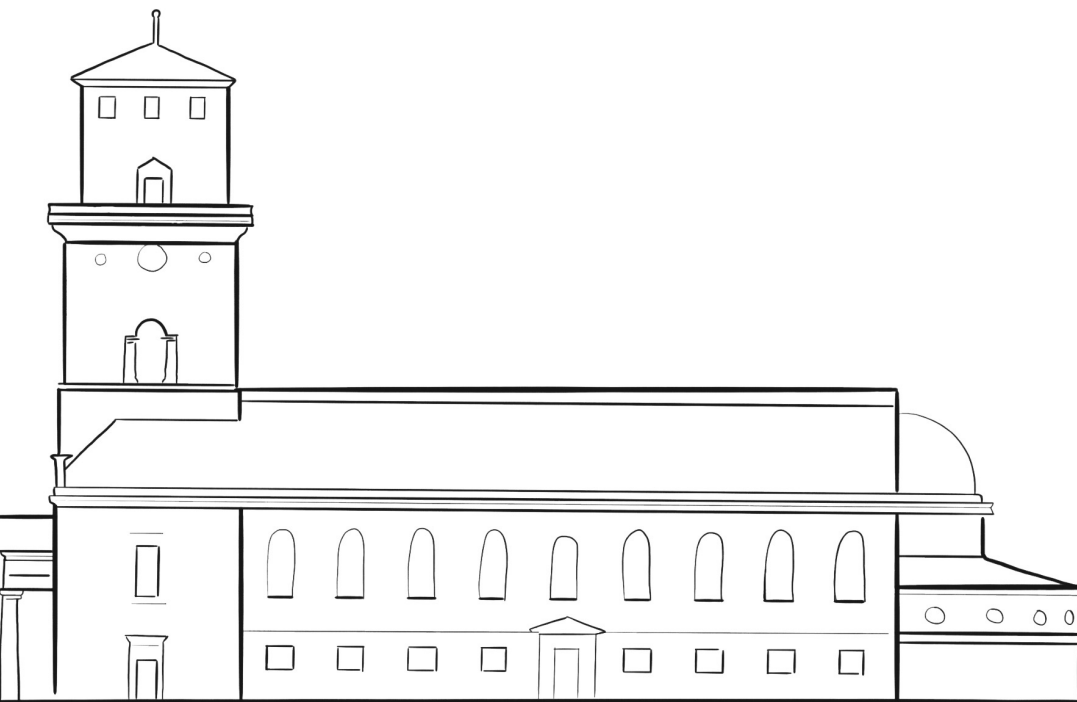
How ambient music communicates the message of the Church

Miriam Sode • Julia Hartmann • Amal Abdallah • Maria Larsen

7. January 2019 • Project K1 • Roskilde University

Supervisor: Mikkel Bille

Characters: 89.630



Abstract

God Goes Deep is an ambient event hosted by the night church, which is a part of the Copenhagen Cathedral in Denmark. This article examines how the orchestrators of God Goes Deep use staged atmospheres to create a new church experience. Through ongoing visits and interviews with both orchestrators and visitors at God Goes Deep, we sought to understand the different experiences and perception of the event. This investigation led to the following conclusion: In order to accommodate societal changes, the church adopts new experimental ways of proclaiming Christianity. God Goes Deep is opening the church to different interpretations and practices that create a new atmospheric and multi-sensory experience. This experience consists of ideas of calmness, peacefulness and meditation. Hereby, the church discovers a different way of serving the needs of the people.

Introduction

In 2016, over four million Danes declared themselves of the Christian faith, yet only 5% had an active practice in the church (Kristeligt Dagblad, 2018). The gap between these numbers can be understood through the history of the Lutheran Church in Denmark. Denmark has had an established state-supported church for 500 years (Bach-Nielsen, 2012; Christoffersen & Vindingt, 2012). This means that the church does not need to be financially independent, as it is financed through church members' tax (Christoffersen & Vindingt, 2012). Consequently, there is an ambiguous relationship between Church and state which has led to many debates on the Church's influence on Danish society. Despite the uncertainty of the relationship between Church and state, it remains a symbol in the public sphere. However, many churches have empty benches during the Sunday services, leading to some churches being repurposed or sold. Some of the active churches have initiated night church services in an attempt to be more accessible and relevant to the public, shifting the church from a religious space, to a cultural one. This reflects a tendency amongst Christians in Denmark, described as Cultural Christians: "Kulturkristne" (Allingham, 2006). This notion describes how people perceive themselves as being Christians yet are not actively practising their religion in their everyday life. They only visit the church during feasts, weddings, funerals or baptism, but align their beliefs with the Christian values. Their belief is more cultural than practical.

Vor Frue Kirke, Church of Our Lady in English, is one of the churches that are intentionally changing their approach (Kirken i København, 2014). Vor Frue is an important historical and cultural institution placed in the centre of Copenhagen. The church has hosted several royal events, such as weddings and coronations of members of the Danish monarchy. Therefore, the church is not in danger of being closed.

However, Vor Frue initiated an ambient soundscape event, named God Goes Deep, as the night priest identified a felt need from the community. To understand what is meant by the need of community it is important to know that embedded in the notion of the Danish Folkekirke is the idea of the Church being the house of the people. Since the Church is owned by the state and not by a private institution it is considered to be a part of the public culture and by this also understood as a cultural house. Vor Frue's night priest explains how this relates to the purpose of the Church as being a place where individuals are not measured and compared to material standards, but as persons of intrinsic value. Thereby, she argues for the need of a cultural church: "Different approaches help people nurture their belief and make it flourish, and that is by putting emphasis on certain things, and then you have to consider approaching different kinds of people" (Appendix A.1, 6). Therefore, seven years ago, the church partnered with an ambient music DJ to create an event called God Goes Deep (Kirken i København, 2014). The event takes place on Friday nights from eight to midnight and is advertised as a cultural night open to all. It uses music, light, and sounds, which altogether produce an ambient space. The purpose of God Goes Deep is to offer an alternative, more meditative way to spend a Friday night, but also to challenge traditional and formal religious practices, and adapt to the cultural-religious tendency amongst Danish Christians (Kirken i København, 2014).

This article is a case study of God Goes deep. We examine how the event generates alternative experiences, that contribute to the re-contextualisation of the Church. Furthermore, we ask the following questions: How are the experiences of atmosphere reflecting the purpose of the Church? How does the staged atmosphere during God Goes Deep create meditative experiences? In answering these questions, we do not seek to understand if a certain type of atmosphere was created throughout God Goes deep, but rather, what the experiences of atmosphere meant for the participants.

We also aim at understanding the orchestration of God Goes Deep layered with the architecture in Vor Frue, as well as the connections between space and practice, and how it contributes to staging atmospheres.

When examining the experience of atmosphere, our arguments are embedded in theories of Böhme (1993), Pink (2014), and Bille, Bjerregaard and Sørensen (2015) stating how atmosphere is created in the relation between people and the environment. The way the participants are situated at God Goes Deep actively contributes to the atmospheric experience. Their active participation in the event co-produces the atmosphere, together with the church building and the ambient music. Pink also states that atmosphere is understood "differently by different people" (2014, 354) due to each individual's multi-sensory experience. Therefore, we had to understand the experience of atmosphere empirically, so, we situated ourselves within God Goes Deep through participant observation. The intention behind God Goes Deep is to link people together through a meditative atmosphere staged with elements such as light or music. We examine the visitor's experiences, as a mean to understand how it may differ from the intention behind the staging. The theoretical contribution allows us to understand how the orchestrators of God Goes Deep stage an atmospheric experience of meditation and reflection. This insight causes us to conclude that by opening up the church space to creative expressions, God Goes Deep produces an alternative multi-sensory experience that contributes to re-contextualising of the Church.

In order to understand the experiences of atmosphere, we examined people's practices in-situ and conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with visitors. We also conducted five in-depth interviews. We interviewed Vor Frue's night priest, Signe Berg, Palma who is the co-founder and head of music of God Goes Deep, Kevin who is a DJ that played at God Goes Deep and two participants, Marlene and Theo.

Our research took place between the months of September and December which limited our access to the event, as only four God Goes Deep events were scheduled. This had an impact on how many semi-structured interviews we could conduct. There were similar events in other churches around Copenhagen, however, we chose to specifically focus on Vor Frue and God Goes Deep, as it is an ongoing event that has seven years of experience. The study was conducted in English, but only two of the informants in our research were English natives, which had an impact on capturing the nuances of the experiences. Two of the long interviews were conducted in Danish and translated by the authors since the interviewees perceived English as a constraint for their ability to communicate their reflections.

The first part of the paper will focus on what characterises Vor Frue and the atmosphere of God Goes Deep's as well as the background and vision of the events. Secondly, we will present the theoretical basis for our approach to atmosphere. Finally, we will look at the experiences of atmosphere during God Goes Deep, and bring better understanding as to the relationship between these experiences and the church's position in the broader social community. Throughout, we make the distinction between the organisers, being the night priest and Palma, the co-founder of God Goes Deep, and the orchestrators, being the DJ and Palma as she is also the curator of the event. Also, we will distinguish between participants and visitors. 'Participants' are considered as the people who are actively or consistently participating in God Goes Deep, whereas 'visitors' covers the participants but also the people who are visiting for a shorter period, as for example tourists.

Vor Frue and God Goes Deep

Vor Frue Kirke is situated in a historical area of the Copenhagen City Centre, just across from the old library of Copenhagen University and near Copenhagen's old Latin Quarter. It is a popular tourist attraction, with around 500.000 visitors a year (Domkirken, 2018). The church hosts traditional sermons on Sundays, weddings and funerals. Since the beginning of the thirteenth century, there has been a church where Vor Frue is located. The church room in Vor Frue is designed to serve as a meeting place between people (Torgaard, 2018).

The architecture of Vor Frue

Churches have specific design choices representing religious ideologies and symbols, as well as history. As an example, the architectural use of domes and high ceiling implies a relationship with the cosmic. Even though all the Danish parish churches do not look the same, they are built upon the same idea and have the same core design elements. To understand the context of our case study, we are looking at the specific design elements that contribute to the ambience of Vor Frue, and their symbolic role in the church (see figure 1).

1. The porch (the green area) is the first room you enter. The porch is a room shielded from the rest. Historically, the purpose was to leave the weapons before entering the church. It symbolises a disarming and serves as a place

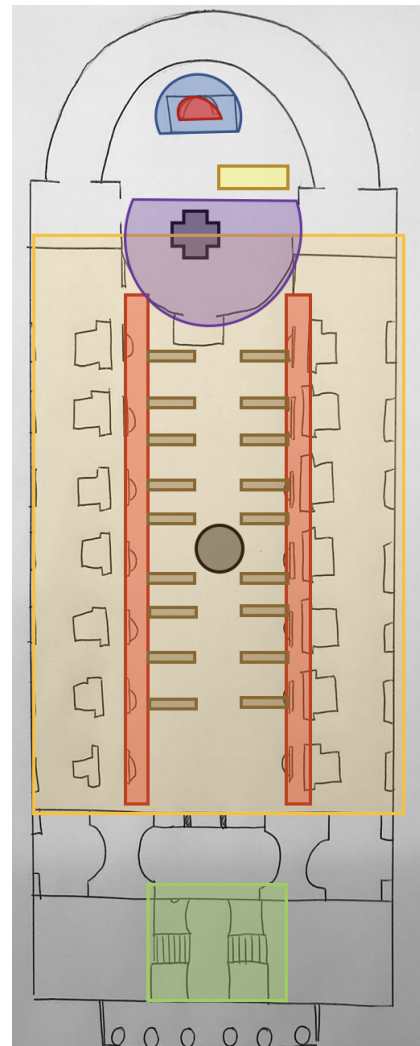


Figure 1

to leave all that does not belong in the presence of God (Ank & Knox-Seith, 2018). During God Goes Deep it is where the volunteers are located and welcoming visitors. It also serves as a place of boundaries and entails signs noting “no alcohol”.

2. **The nave** (the orange area) is the second room you enter. The nave is the biggest room in the church, with benches placed along the sides. The name “nave” has a symbolic meaning and is interpreted as the journey of life which moves towards a specific goal (Ank & Knox-Seith, 2018). This is where God Goes Deep takes place. The benches at the aisle are also used during the event.
3. **Light-a-candle** (the black areas) is a place created to prayers and devotion. These are seen as an attempt to accommodate another more contemplative tradition and creates room for silent meditation, sorrow and prayer. The need for lighting a candle is often due to bigger crises or disasters (Ank & Knox-Seith, 2018). In Vor Frue, there is two light a candle-elements, one halfway down the aisle, and another in the altar space. They are both being used by participants during God Goes Deep.
4. **The Altar crane** (the purple area) is the place where the congregation is kneeling when they are having the supper. This part is designed in a semicircle that is a part of an invisible circle, representing where people and angels from heaven are sitting together. This symbolises that the supper is not just now, but reaches in the eternity (Ank & Knox-Seith, 2018). In Vor Frue the altar and the knee trap is connected and it is inside here that people are lying in bean bags and meditating.
5. **The altar** (the blue area) is often smaller than the rest of the church. The altar is placed farthest away from the congregation and is seen as the holiest place in the church (Ank & Knox-Seith, 2018). In Vor Frue the altar is a part of the altar crane, and it is where the DJ is situated during God Goes Deep. The closer to the altar the more you experience and become a part of God Goes Deep.

6. **The ornaments** (the red area) The figures of the Apostle and the Jesus statue by the altar are being actively used in the organisation of God Goes Deep. Relating to their historical meaning, the figures serve as a visual purpose. The Jesus statue is the centre of the altar. By being illuminated in yellow during the event, the power of the statue's size is intensified.

The design, symbolic meaning and history, of these elements contribute to the church's particular ambience through their repetition and layout. However, atmosphere is particular to each context. During traditional events such as weddings or funerals, the combination of the elements and practice contribute to the ambience of the church. Similarly, using the church elements as a part of God Goes Deep builds upon the traditional space.

Night church

God Goes Deep is an ongoing event hosted by the night church in Vor Frue in Copenhagen. The night church is a concept that acts as a supplement to the ordinary work of Vor Frue, which entails "many different kinds of expressions and church life" (Natkirken, 2018, our translation). It takes place three to four times a week and uses the church as a space for cultural events. The night church works with a verbal and visual proclamation in alternative ways that differ from the traditional sermon. Verbal and visual proclamation entails teachings of Christianity through either spoken words or ambient and visual experiences that communicate religious and Christian ideas. The night church offers a Taize choir, a movie club, chill-out nights and guided-body meditations (Appendix A.1, 6). Also, the church is still open to ordinary religious experiences such as lighting a candle or saying a prayer.

The key in these alternative events is tolerance and openness, which follows the motto of the night church: "All things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial" and "All things are lawful, but not all edify" (Natkirken, 2018; BibleHub, 2018). The citation suggests a selective process indicating that while the night church is about experimental and varying events, it is still being aware of the specific Christian church setting.

Vor Frue is located in an area of Copenhagen that contains many bars and has an active nightlife. Since the doors of Vor Frue are open during God Goes Deep, the church has to prevail inappropriate behaviour from curious drunk people in the area. In the entrance of Vor Frue, there is a sign noting "No Alcohol - This is a church - please show respect!" (See figure 5). This is one example of how the church preserves the values and dictates a certain appropriate behaviour. Another important aspect of the church's work is that it reaches out to the surrounding society. The night church has been involved in partnerships with Roskilde Festival and Strøm as well as hosting events with the Danish comedian Jonathan Spang and the South African human rights activist Desmond Tutu. The night church also proclaims that they aim at expanding God Goes Deep to other destinations, in other countries (God Goes Deep, 2018).

God Goes Deep

God Goes Deep emerged from an old concept of the night church called God is a DJ, but later received a new name (Appendix A.1, 8). God Goes Deep is currently running on its seventh year. The event was founded by the DJ Palma Seitzmayer, who now curates the event, and the night church priest Christian Monrad. God Goes Deep includes local acts and international artists. Each event runs for four hours and around fifteen Fridays each season. The event is non-profit, free of charge, and hosted by

volunteers. The DJs playing at the event receive a small fee, depending on the number of cultural grants that God Goes Deep receives (Appendix A.2).

God Goes Deep has hosted different choirs and many different residential and international DJs, acts as mainstream as Trentemøller has played here. The ambition behind God Goes Deep was to create “an oasis that with sound, light and community can liberate us from the everyday and its troubles” (Natkirken, 2018, our translation). The event aims at fulfilling this through the use of “ambient soundscapes” (God Goes Deep, 2018). Ambient soundscapes cover the intention of creating an atmospheric experience inside the church. Ambient music differs from other electronic music by capturing and actively using the environmental setting in creating soundscapes. In 1978, the British musician Brian Eno who is considered one of the pioneers of ambient music defines it as “an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence: a tint. [...] a small but versatile catalogue of environmental music suited to a wide variety of moods and atmospheres” (Eno, 1978, 1) and furthermore: “Ambient Music is intended to induce calm and a space to think” (Eno, 1978, 1). In this definition, ambient music is related to a feeling of calmness, meditation and spirituality, which does not differ from an ordinary church experience during sermons.

The organisers of God Goes Deep are deliberate in their use of the space. When you walk into Vor Frue on a God Goes Deep Friday night, the space is filled with coloured light, red or purple depending on the night, in a way that tones down the grandeur of the ceiling height and the statues of the saints. There are candle lights placed alongside the arches defining the space, and adding to the comfortable, but separate from everyday life, ambience (see figure 2). These elements of light change the relationship between human and space, and while the church symbols are still visible, the unexpected colours and highlights transform the experience of space. At the other side of the entrance, down the long aisle formed by the benches, is the circular altar crane.

This is separated from the rest of the room by the knee trap, where a DJ table is set, surrounded by mattresses and bean bags. There is also a light-a-candle station in that space with a cross and an angel, where visitors often light their own candles. The altar crane has a more intimate feel compared to the experience of seating on the benches. It is the epicentre of the room from which sound, light, and ambience emanate. The ambient music encompasses the visitors in this intimate feel as it permeates the building. Overall, the ambience gives the impression of a cohesive collaboration between the elements of the church and of God Goes Deep. The layering of symbols work together to create an ambience that can only work in this particular space, and therefore sets it apart from other similar initiatives.

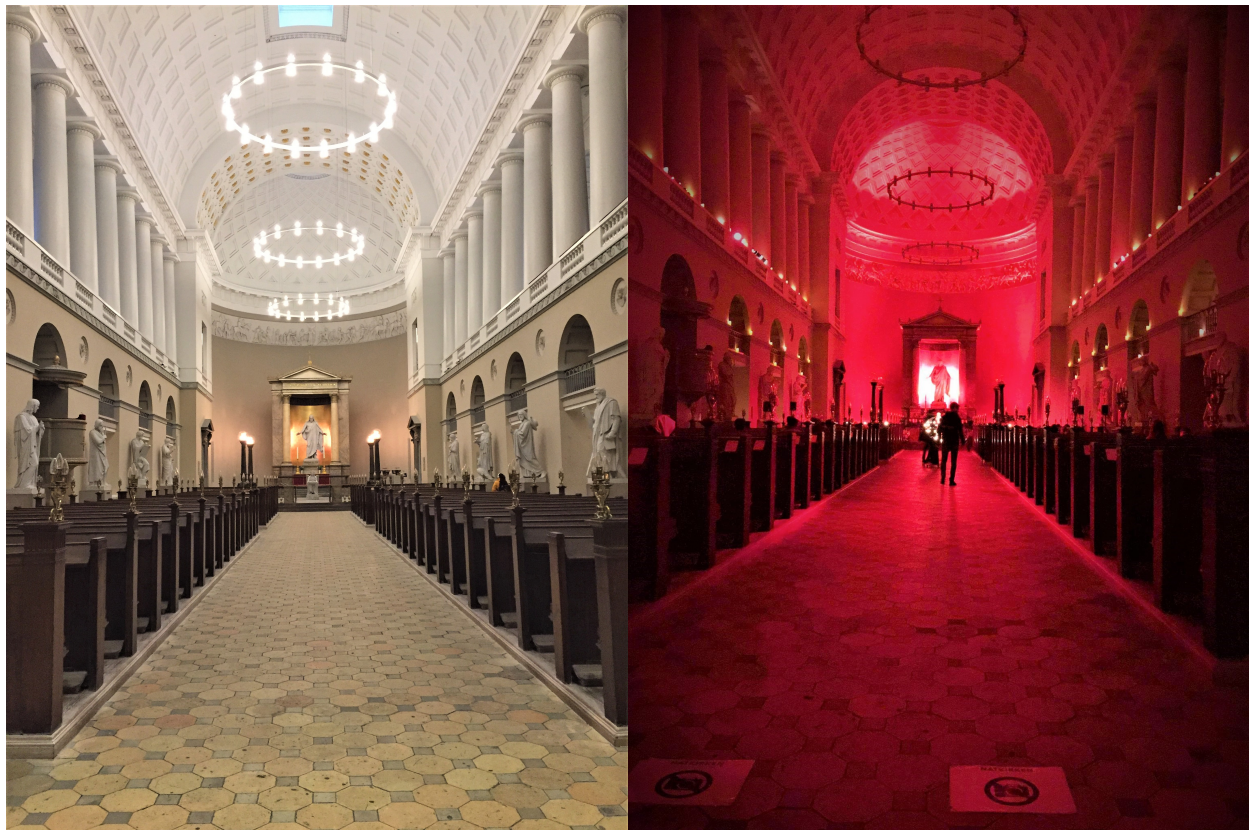


Figure 2

The Concept of Atmosphere

This article examines a contextualised experience of a place; the experience of the church's atmosphere during God Goes Deep. What is implied by experience in the research, is the sensory, and the emotional feel of a space. The experience of space entails an interplay between people and the material environment. Therefore, we ask the questions of how God Goes Deep is experienced and what feelings it provokes. Gernot Böhme's theory of atmosphere functions as the main theoretical framework in this investigation. As Böhme argues, the feelings arising in specific spatial contexts are constitutive elements of an atmosphere. Böhme's theory will be used in connection with Sarah Pink's ideas of sensory ethnography and the concept of staged atmosphere by Bille et al. (2015). Pink focuses on the multi-sensory dimension in an experience. This is relevant because examining how we experience atmosphere through our senses provides insights into the particularities of the experience. Since the research is examining an orchestrated event, we need to understand how the arrangement of the material environment intends to generate a certain atmosphere. This is especially relevant as we perceive atmosphere as a vague, and intangible phenomena. Bille et al. (2015) shed light on this as they discuss the concept of staged atmosphere and its implications.

To describe the concept of atmosphere from an analytic perspective, we apply the ideas of the staging of atmosphere by Bille et al. (2015). Bille et al. observe that atmosphere as a concept is vaguely defined. In the context of everyday life atmosphere is sometimes perceived as “‘ambience’, sense of place or ‘feel’ of the room”, whereas in the academic context it has been conceptualised as “Stimmung, ‘mood’ or attunement” (2015, 32). These are ways of describing atmospheres as something that hovers in the air or the space, and therefore it is experienced rather than observed as a material phenomenon.

This implies that atmosphere cannot be comprehended as independent of the people who feel it. In our research, the atmosphere is not only constituted by the church's space itself but emerge through the practices and activation of senses that are applied through the orchestration of God Goes Deep. Therefore, it is argued that atmosphere emerges through relational processes between people and their surroundings, or the subject and the object. These processes invite people to interact with the surroundings through the emotions, and the senses. In that case, atmosphere is theorised as the experience of the in-betweenness (Bille et al., 2015, 32).

Böhme is one of the scholars whose theory provides significant knowledge into "the intermediary status of atmospheres between subject and object" (1993, 114). According to Böhme, atmospheres possess qualities that are particular to a certain space or situation. These qualities are evoked by things, people or the combination thereof. They do not simply emerge by the presence of people and things, but rather, it is how they make their presence perceptible that enhances the atmosphere (Böhme, 1993, 121-122). This definition implicates a co-dependence of people and the environmental components in the creation and the experience of atmosphere. Because of the intangible nature of atmosphere, it cannot be determined whether atmosphere should be perceived as something that emanates from objects or environments or whether atmospheres are "located as a psychological state of mind" (Böhme, 1993 in Bille & Sørensen 2017, 15). Nonetheless, Böhme doesn't reject the significance of the subjective qualities of things and people in the creation of atmospheres, but he argues that it is simply about how something goes forth from itself. Things enforce their presence by mutually extending their material qualities onto their surroundings (Böhme, 1993, 121). Atmospheres are therefore established as denoting a common reality in which, people engage with the core qualities of things by being aware of their own

spatial sense (Böhme, 1993, 120). This implies that the sensory and emotional state of people is significant in the experience of an atmosphere.

Staging of atmosphere

Sarah Pink's multi-sensory approach to understanding atmospheres draws on Böhme's theory. Firstly, by suggesting that atmosphere exists in the everyday environment. Secondly, by stressing the combination of people, things and processes in engendering a range of different feelings, significant to different spaces (Pink et al., 2014). However, Pink stresses the role of the subject in generating the atmosphere, whereas Böhme's theory is more concerned with the co-presence of the subject and the object. Pink writes that atmosphere is "something that we live through, as much as being something that we make" (Pink et al., 2014, 354). What is implied is that the subject is an active agent, that can also make an atmosphere. Therefore, atmospheres can also be staged (Bille et al., 2015). It is argued that people use their emplaced knowledge to build certain spatial environments. This partly frames the sensory and emotional experiences that occur within it, thereby generating atmosphere (Pink, 2007). In our research, the orchestrators of God Goes Deep express how they perceive the connection between what they intend the event to be, and how they pursue to create it by using lights and sounds. The question then arises, how an atmosphere can be staged or produced with the intention of affecting people moods or emotional states if it is intangible and ambiguous.

Since atmosphere cannot be observed as a material occurrence, Pink et al. (2014) identifies it by focusing on how people feel through, and within an atmosphere. She maintains that research should not focus on whether there is an atmosphere, but should rather examine what it means for a certain group of people (Pink et al., 2014, 353). These individual experiences are explored through a sensory engagement with the environment. This implies identifying feelings, emotions and processes that are involved in the meaning-making of the experienced atmosphere.

Although the focus on sensory experiences of staged atmosphere suggests subjectivity, Bille et al. (2015) point out that there is a related social dimension to it as well:

“Atmospheres change as the body moves through space and is exposed to changing sensory stimuli, and so too does the biological composition of our bodies change as we are exposed to different atmospheres. Architecture is so influential on the mode of movement that social exclusion and inclusion becomes orchestrated through atmospheres, and hence becomes a way of allowing ideals of social norms to come into being” (Bille et al., 2015, 36).

Bille et al. (2015) argue that the attunement to a room’s atmosphere is accompanied by social meanings, which implies a social exclusion or inclusion. This suggests that environments are staged in a certain way to include certain people, and thereby enforcing the idea of community. In our research, we apply this argument to the analysis of how *God Goes Deep* has been staged to appeal to certain meanings of space. The event also entails the emplacement of people in the same spatial environment which creates a common reality. Therefore, we examine the experienced atmosphere as co-produced by the individuals and the staged environment.

The Experiences of God Goes Deep

Openness

A recurrent theme observable in the data is how God Goes Deep contributes to a new relationship between the church and the people as the church offers an alternative way of using and being in its space. This relationship is built around ideas about cultural inclusion, promotion of creative performance, and respect, which all converge into one main value: openness.

To understand how openness is perceived by the public, it is important to underline that the relationship between the people and the Church is nuanced, and therefore operating on different levels, and across different parties. Firstly, the constitutive parties should be identified. These are the church as a building, the Church as an institution, the organisers, the orchestrators, and finally participants and visitors. Secondly, it should be examined how the constitutive parties relate to each other and how that produces a sense of openness to a new way of going to church. Therefore, we analyse how people's relations, practices and the orchestration of God Goes Deep, is accompanied by certain meanings. In other words, we need to understand the relationship between the material elements: the church and its artefacts, and the immaterial elements: meanings and qualities, that are associated with the space.

It is a holy place

The church as a material construct, or as a room, is still perceived in a traditional way. Ideas of the church as a calm, holy and spiritual place, resonate among the orchestrators and the visitors. In describing his experience during God Goes Deep, a visitor mentions that: "the church has always been like a calm place to me. So in that sense, that added to the whole kind of evening circle, like sitting down reflecting

atmosphere, meditate, just let your thoughts run loose” (Appendix B.4, 58). These ideas induce a certain behavioural conduct among the church’s visitors regardless of their belief, or the purpose of their visit. The room demands some sort of respect and a certain behaviour because of its religious, architectural and historical importance in Denmark. This behaviour is embedded in the social norms that are connected to the church. For instance, Palma, the co-founder, explains that she still considers the church as the house of God, and therefore “What you should more focus on is that we are inside a historical building so it enhances the same kind of respect as if all the three of us went to Glyptoteket now. We still go into a certain mode and space and behave better. Civilised” (Appendix A.2, 20).

The DJ Kevin expresses respect for the room by stressing the significance of the church’s architectural structure in creating acoustics that enhances the ambient experience. At the same time, he is also aware of the immaterial qualities of it, the spiritually or religiously inspired views and meaning that contribute to the ambient experience. This can be observed in the following statement:

“It really felt like a trip a little bit, the acoustic is really good in the church and it is built to have the organ pipe or people chanting, so the sound goes really smooth and fills all the space and then, of course, the ambience in the church itself. I don’t know maybe I am more sensitive but I think in a church one can always feel it is a holy place. Even though we are maybe no longer praising the one God but it is a place of spirituality” (Appendix A. 3, 31).

What can be inferred from the statement is that respect resides in the idea of the material and immaterial richness of the church. Therefore, what it comprises is

considered as sufficient enough to stage an atmosphere. Palma expresses a similar sentiment in a response to a question concerning the orchestration of God Goes Deep: “I very very very much respect the room as it is, because it stands so pure and so beautiful” (Appendix A.2, 22). When she is asked about how she relates to the room itself she answers: “Yeah, you can enhance the beauty of it. You can enhance the peace or warmth. The colour red brings in a unity feeling. You feel safe” (Appendix A.2, 22). Her response indicates that it is a matter of reinforcing and bringing forth certain qualities of the room to stage the event. It is about working with the room and not against it. When viewed from Böhme’s (1993) perspective, it is about how things make themselves perceptible in the space, or how they make their presence powerful.

Yet, this does not imply a need for differentiation among the room’s components, but it is rather about how the elements work together to reinforce the power of each other’s presence and create an atmosphere. Bille et al. write: “In order to get to grips with atmospheres, we have to engage more actively

and analytically with architecture, colours, lighting, humidity, sound, odour, the texture of things and their mutual juxtaposition” (2015, 36). Böhme’s and Bille et al.’s ideas support Palma’s observation about the significance of the light, which in the context of God Goes Deep is employed to generate a sense of peace and warmth. Also, the Jesus statue located in the altar crane of Vor Frue (see figure 3), adds something to the experience of the light, the sound and the presence of people, which mutually create the experience of an atmosphere.

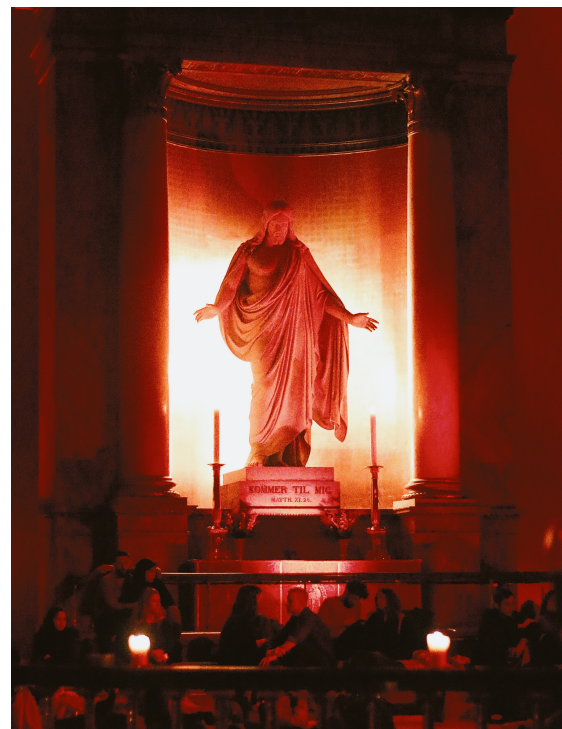


Figure 3

Life is give and take

For both Kevin and Palma, respect is not only considered as a value that is embedded in social norms and behavioural conduct, but it is also viewed as a way of reciprocating the church's openness. The openness is manifested in the opportunity to use the church as a space for creative performance, while the only thing that the church asks in return is the respect for the room. Palma's following statement illustrates that:

"As you can hear the room demands something from you. But it doesn't matter, because that is how life is: give and take. It demands something from you but it definitely gives you something back, even more. The only thing it demands from you is to behave yourself" (Appendix A.2, 15).

Kevin realises that the openness has given him the opportunity to experiment musically and to do his "own little research" (Appendix A.3, 32). This openness to creativity and experimentation builds from the willingness of the church to open its doors to different people and expressions. This gives Kevin a feeling of being rewarded as he observes that the people's presence reflects a positive response. It can be detected in his description of the atmosphere that he wanted to create, where he concludes: "That is what I actually wanted to trigger in people, and it made me really happy that people stayed and that they came along with me on this journey" (Appendix A.3, 33). The notion of openness does also extend to participants' view of the church as an open and inclusive space. They become aware of other potential ways of being in that room, independent of their belief. A participant describes how God Goes Deep enabled him to connect with the church beyond religious ties: "I connect with the church as a building with something new. I would not have otherwise connected with the church. It is about relaxing and reflecting upon myself without considering religion" (Appendix B.4, 59). Like the DJs, the participants indicate that respect for the room, and other visitors, is the only thing that is expected from them.

People recognise that the church has the capacity to interweave the religious values of inclusiveness and respect in an alternative experience like God Goes Deep.

Multi-sensory Experience

This section entails an investigation of how the orchestrators of God Goes Deep use different elements to stage an atmosphere during the event. We examine how this atmosphere is created in an interplay between different senses, building on the argument of Sarah Pink. In the context of God Goes Deep, we see that the participants at the event draw especially on the atmospheric elements of light and sound and that these elements create a distinct atmospheric experience.

The atmosphere of God Goes Deep is staged through multiple elements. First of all, the building itself is defined by its architecture: the high ceilings, the dome, the vaulted ceilings, and the statues. These design elements work to represent the history and meaning of the Church and communicate an implicit behavioural expectation. These are taught through social practices: to enter and respect the room and what it stands for, by showing moderation. God Goes Deep does not try to challenge this feeling of respect, on the contrary, they use the existing elements of the church and build on the ambience. When analysing the orchestration of the event and how it is experienced by visitors we lean on Sarah Pink's multi-sensory theory. By this, we mean considering all of the main senses: smell, taste, sound, vision, and emotions to understand how they relate to each other and thereby form the visitor's experience. It should be noted that while our own field notes mention smells, the sensation of being hot or cold and the feeling of sitting on marble and benches, the data from the interviews was mainly referencing to sight, sound, and inner feelings.

You play something you sense could fit this space

Because God Goes Deep is presented on the website as a soundscape, sound is an important sensory element of the event, but the architecture of Vor Frue also makes it

one of the more difficult elements to stage. Since the size of the room and the materials from which it is made were not designed for modern speakers and sound systems, it disturbs the acoustics:

”The church is not built to have too much base, because the room really brings the [sound] waves like waves, and the base is so heavy it would just vibrate too much. [Sound waves] are slow so when the last wave is still [travelling to] the wall, the first one comes back and they come together when you don’t want them to come together [...] and it can give you a really uncomfortable feeling” (Appendix A.3, 38)

At its worst, the use of music is extremely unpleasant for visitors. At its best, when it is thought through and makes use of the room’s acoustics, music can enhance an atmosphere: “I did not really know how the sound would give an ambience to the space, because I had no experience to compare. But you play something you sense could fit this space” (Appendix A.3, 31). Therefore, the organisers of the event are intentional about using DJs who are aware of their use of sound and have an idea on how to work with the room, rather than despite the room. As Palma argues, the soundscape should trigger a positive feeling that encourages individual reflection (Appendix A.2). During the course of our research, the DJs used the acoustics of the church to their advantage. As a result, it did not only engage participants’ auditory senses but also their emotions. Many mentioned the sound coming from the ground, the vibrations, like waves through the earth, making it not just an auditory experience, but also a corporeal one (Appendix A; B). To physically sense the materiality of music through vibration adds further aspects to the experience of music which in Pink’s (2007) term would be interpreted as multi-sensoriality of sound. Overall, the music plays a big part in the atmosphere created by God Goes Deep and it is one of the main reasons why people come to the event “music touches us, [...] you are actually getting healed, something is being put

into place, either in your body or your mind and then they work together” (Appendix A.2, 21). As Palma explains, the music is partly creating an atmosphere that reflects an emotional experience (Pink, 2007). The aspect of healing will be further examined later on in this article.

The atmosphere of warm colours is more peaceful

One other element that plays an important role in the organisation of God Goes Deep, is light. The night priest mentions that from Vor Frue’s perspective, Friday nights are about visual proclamation: “It was very much about using colours, smells, practices, rituals during the service” (Appendix A.1, 2). The colours, lighting and use of candles are therefore a deliberate element of organisation, to present the message of the Church under a different light. It is unclear from our empirical data whether the choice of the colour red had further meaning, but it definitely has a sensory effect on participants:

“Light strongly affects the people. [...] there is a huge difference in the behaviour of people if you have more warm light or more cold light, so I think if they lit the church a dark blue, like a cold colour, people would react differently than when they are confronted with warm colours like yellow, or orange, or red. The atmosphere of warm colours is more peaceful than the one with the dark or cold light” (Appendix A.3, 37).

As Kevin explains, the use of coloured light affects people’s experience of the room. As mentioned previously, God Goes Deep’s intention is to create a positive and peaceful atmosphere, which the use of red light contributes to. However, more than that the red lighting creates an atmosphere of safety and support:

“I think [blue] gets a bit infinite, and I think the brain is overwhelmed, or maybe we just can’t handle infinite space. It can trigger stress to be in this depth of the space. [...] Maybe with the blue, the shades and dark blue

would become one and then you really have this feeling of infinite space, haven't you? And with the red you still have a frame, [...] where you can move inside, and maybe it gives security to people to have a frame, it gives you a little bit of safety [...], and from there you can totally let go of yourself and relax" (Appendix A.3, 38)

Kevin explains that by still being able to see the structure and not experience the infinity of the ceiling, it creates a sense of safety.

Furthermore, the light is used to enhance design elements specific to the church, for example, there is a yellow spotlight illuminating the Jesus figure in the altar, and the candles spread around the columns highlight the depth of the room. The staging of the lighting during God Goes Deep further reinforces the intentions behind the event, and just like the sound, the lighting does not override the room but rather works with what is already there. It thereby creates a new perspective on the church by adding onto the already existing space, creating a space-specific emotional experience (Pink et al., 2014, 354).

The event has been described as being unique by some of the participants, even compared to other soundscape experiences in churches around Copenhagen, due to the architecture of Vor Frue itself: "There is a relaxing atmosphere in that church, it is different from similar events" (Appendix B.5, 60). The tradition of Cultural Christianity means that most Danes have a certain respect and understanding of the meaning of Church.

Furthermore, the significant position of Vor Frue, as well as its grand architecture, affect people's behaviour and adds a reverence that makes the atmosphere of God Goes Deep distinctive, "transcendent, peaceful, united, and respectful" (Appendix A.3, 37). The people behind God Goes Deep are not adding many elements to create an experience, because they are aware of the weight of the architecture and history of the

building, and use it to create atmosphere. The material elements of the room work with the less tangible elements, such as light and sound to create an atmosphere, and in that way, the architecture of Vor Frue is central to the staging of an ambience out of the ordinary (Bille et al., 2015). The uniqueness of God Goes Deep comes from the new and alternative way of experiencing the church, while the staging reinforces the purpose of the church as a space to find peace (Bille et al., 2015). The event is staged in a way that enhances the room and carefully highlights senses, to create a link between the ambience of the church and a new creative atmosphere.

A pause from everyday, busy life

This theme will cover the various aspects of introspection that appear in our empirical data. Throughout our empirical work, we discovered one greater theme concerning the aspects of meditation. This appears in different nuances as notions of presence, self-awareness, relaxation while some simply just say meditation. This chapter will uncover the different experiences of meditation as they are both present in the staging of atmosphere and the participants' experiences of God Goes Deep.

When orchestrating the event, the organisers work with staging an atmosphere that applies certain meaning to the space. They modify the church so it becomes embedded with a distinct meaning that creates an experience of meditation. This meaning is communicated through the use of music and light in combination with the church's material and immaterial elements. Together, they all create an ambience in the room. As individuals engage with the space, they project an atmosphere that can create shared experiences of introspection among the orchestrators and participants.

The concept of freedom is expressed in various ways, talking of “free level” or “free space”, (Appendix A; B). These notions describe how God Goes Deep creates a free space, detached from norms of socialisation or expectations of social performance. The night priest describes this phenomenon:

“For me, it entails freedom from human relations, in the sense that one is not compelled to socialise or perform socially. You can just be there by yourself or as a couple, in silence This is almost the only rule; that you are not allowed to talk. So here people feel free from human relations or social performance“ (Appendix A.1, 4).

She describes how the space does not require that people engage in any social interaction. Consequently, this creates a feeling of freedom by allowing people to just be (see figure 4). Furthermore, she explains that people are not allowed to talk, which is the only rule that is explicitly enforced. This indicates that this event has fewer limitations in comparison to other church events. God Goes Deep only requires that you are present. Palma expresses the same notion of a space free of limitations when

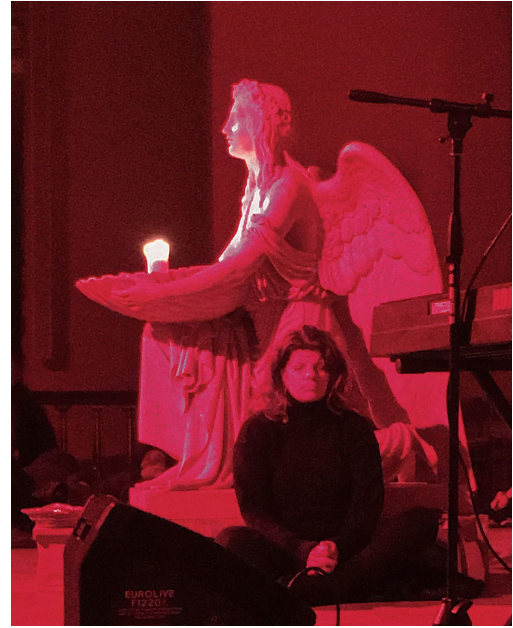


Figure 4

she describes what she intends to create with God Goes Deep: “It is key for me that you come in and nothing is demanded from you [...] You can stay there five minutes, four hours, I don’t care. It is designed to be a free place” (Appendix A.2, 14). She describes how she intended to create a free place by not demanding people to actively participate. Amongst the visitors, Marlene, who has participated in God Goes Deep several times also expresses a similar feeling of freedom: “I breathe... I close my eyes, and I can just be... there is no one else, and I don’t have to do anything else. I just have to sit down, because I can’t do anything” (Appendix B.1, 45). The concept of not doing anything other than being present in the room paves the way for reflection and awareness.

Several informants mention the concept of just being present in the room. We observed the same action when visiting God Goes Deep. Many participants, especially inside the altar crane, had their eyes closed or were laying still, while others whispered quietly to their friends. Some were taking their shoes and jackets off and seemed to be settling in to stay for a long period of time. These action further implies a feeling of safety as you would have in a private space. This procedure of arriving into the atmosphere in the

space is something Kevin describes: “you also need this time to arrive...you arrive, you can calm down...” (Appendix A.3, 35). Marlene shares this experience of entering a safe and calm atmosphere. She describes that she ones brought a date to God Goes Deep:

“It was crazy because I was chatty and very lalalala, and jumping around, and then we entered the church to God Goes Deep and we sat there, and after we left he told me ... we were there for approximately ten minutes, and he told me that I changed once we entered the church, and I was like Okay?! How? And then he told me, you were almost like another person, you were calm, there was something too calm about you” (Appendix B.1, 45).

It is through the bodily experience of the space that Marlene relates to a feeling of calmness and peacefulness which leads her to take a breath, thereby the combination of the material elements create a multi-sensory experience (Pink, 2014). Exhaling can furthermore be linked to the term of letting go. Palma describes God Goes Deep as “a pause from our everyday, busy life” (Appendix A.2, 24). Marlene also states that she feels as if she is in a bubble where the outside world becomes unimportant and where time passes by unnoticed (Appendix B.1, 43). Creating a place of presence and freedom where nothing is demanded, allows for self-awareness. The night priest describes this awareness:

“In some way or the other people responded to it. They leaned backwards or they were surprised by their own reaction to it. It is like when there are things that they are unhappy about or feelings that they have repressed suddenly came back, wuuush, overturned. It is like when you go to bed

and suddenly you start thinking. Some things start to make sense because you are not doing much at that moment” (Appendix A.1, 5).

This awareness builds a level of reflection which is present when both the curator and the DJ talk about their intentions behind God Goes Deep. Palma describes how the event is “educating” as it encourages people to be present, and how you would “feel like an idiot if [you were] sitting [there] on [your] mobile” (Appendix A.2, 15). Similarly, Kevin explains that awareness creates a level of curiosity:

“I believe that as many times as people [have] a feeling of awareness, and synapses for awareness are created, the more and more this happens. I believe that the actual awareness of being can evolve [...] I don’t like the word forcing actually but, maybe sometimes it is good to be, it is also good that people get confronted with something they maybe think is weird, or maybe something that is not common. And I think that through that people judge less [...] just to create this atmosphere of “oooh” what is this noise or taste?” (Appendix A.3, 34).

By creating this atmosphere of reflection people begin to let their guards down and become open for new experiences. Marlene describes that her senses become activated and she herself becomes more sensitive: “I sense a lot of things when I am there, because it is calm, the room. I become more sensitive towards everything” (Appendix B.1, 46).

The night priest uses the notion of a snail shell to describe this concept: “It evokes some kind of trust that gives you the courage to emerge from the snail shell and let the feelers come out” (Appendix A.1, 5). God Goes Deep creates an event where a variety of senses are activated, allowing participants to have an awareness that creates room for sensory experiences (Pink, 2007). The staged atmosphere of God Goes Deep

strengthen the feeling of safety, comfort, and freedom to be, that are already there. At the same time, it provides a physical room as well as a mental space to breath.

The antidepressant medicine

The expansion of the use of senses can be linked to the idea of meditation, which is a concept that is often mentioned throughout the empirical data. There are various definitions of meditation that all involve the state of reflection. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines meditation as an act: “to engage in contemplation or reflection” and “to engage in mental exercise (such as concentration on one's breathing or repetition of a mantra) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). These defining elements are reflected in our empirical findings. The night priest explains how she perceives the relationship between the ideas of awareness and meditation:

“We call it the attention exercise, to enhance your attention and to train it. It becomes very much a sensory experience when there is complete silence while you are sitting in a huge space. You begin to notice tiny details. In that way, it becomes like meditation. Firstly, to be present and to become aware of yourself and the others who are there. But without being engaged in social interaction. It is very much about being aware of what is present” (Appendix A.1, 4).

Several informants relate this meditative experience to the experience of unwinding by the physical action of breathing and exhaling, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Many of the participants use it as a termination of their week: “It is a good way to find peace at the end of the week. I use it if I am going out to a party or something. Then I go for an hour or something in here and unwind” (Appendix B.3, 55). The aspect of unwinding is related to the experience of immersion and processing: “I come here and

think about what I have experienced. I process my week. I get at a slower pace. Everything goes very fast but in here you can unwind and relax” (Appendix B.3, 54). Although unwinding and relaxation are considered as part of the meditative process, it can be observed that for some of the participants, relaxation and meditation are also experienced as separate processes. The observations illustrate that there are participants who head for the altar under the Jesus statue and either lay down or assume the meditation posture. Many of those participants stay for a long time or the whole evening which implies a greater sense of immersion in the atmosphere that enables them to reach a meditative state (Appendix B). On the other hand, there are visitors who sit on the benches and chairs, or who keep standing on their feet for some minutes just to observe and absorb the relaxing energy before they leave (Appendix B. 2, 52-53). Though most interviewees used meditation and relaxation interchangeably, we note that the purpose of meditation is to enhance spiritual awareness, while relaxation aims to release tension. Both aspects may be experienced during God Goes Deep, however, meditation is a more conscious action.

Many of the informants also describe how they receive something during God Goes Deep. Palma describes how she gets a reminder of how beautiful life is, she explains how this enhances gratitude:

“You get to stay humble but also that you are [humble] at the same time. [...] I will be sitting and I will be like, ahh. I am so grateful that it happens, I am so grateful that I am alive. That is what I meant about the kind reminder because we need that time and the space. We need room, funny enough. I don’t know why, but most of us need room and time to activate our feeling of gratefulness” (Appendix A.2, 28).

A participant in God Goes Deep shares the experience of a positive influence on the mind: “I can use the church to have peace in my mind, and get fuelled for the future, I

use it as antidepressant medicine, and the music has in a period kept me alive under my depression” (Appendix B.5, 60). The participant explains how this space that allows for reflection and meditation, can become almost as a therapeutic experience that gives her peace of mind. This highlights how God Goes Deep is not just an event for musical entertainment, but one that responds to a need for space, physically and mentally. Some informants explain how the experience of being immersed in the atmosphere allows them to reach a level of reflection which enhances feelings of gratitude. They reach a different state of mind, making God Goes Deep’s effect akin to an antidepressant medicine, that relieves the pressure and stress of everyday life, be it temporarily. According to Böhme, the relaxing and meditative atmosphere is understood as the result of the relationship between the environmental qualities, and the human state (1994, 114). The church’s material elements and the incorporated effects are staged to generate the calm and relaxing qualities, and the way participants relate to these qualities gives rise to an atmosphere. Consequently, the church in its staged materiality and immateriality contrasts the stressful everyday environment.

Get in trans

The informants describe different abstract experiences that arise from the meditative space. Kevin uses the term “out of space” (Appendix A.3, 35), while a participant describes it as “a trans” (Appendix B.2, 52). Some also mention how the time frame dissolves when they are at God Goes Deep, creating an experience beyond time and place. Kevin related this experience to something spiritual and transcendent:

“What makes it spiritual I think is just the architecture of the church itself that has something transcendent. Still today it is some of the biggest open spaces that we have, it’s really open above you, there is not a ceiling after two meters [...]. I think this can be helpful to become spiritual, having a

frame in this infinity, but then still enough space to breathe, to mentally breathe” (Appendix A.3, 39).

He explains how the architecture, history and ambience create an experience of something spiritual. Something that he describes as the energy or the aura of the place:

“It is also the place of birth and death, or it used to be, so I think it is really charged with all these stories and also all the people who came to the church, maybe they asked for help or were in sorrow or were saying thank you for life, or thank you for something. So all of this energy is kept in the space, and it gives the aura of the object” (Appendix A.3, 39-40).

The relation between the notion of spirituality and energy is also emphasised by Marlene: “I think that there is energy in it [...] it is maybe the spiritual in it, I mean, that there is some special energy in the church” (Appendix B.1, 48-49). For some, this energy entails a sense of creativity: “I sometimes use it as a creative process because I get so inspired. I get so many new ideas and ideas of things I want to do” (Appendix B.3, 55).

This creative process is linked to meditation which enhances the process of reflection and provides inspiration. The appeal to the emotions creates an extraordinary experience of a certain energy that the informants describe using different terms. Words like aura, spirituality, or out-of-space experience explain the outcome of the meditative space that is created through the atmospheric experience during God Goes Deep. Thereby, we argue that the staging of atmosphere can create an experience outside of the norm. Indeed, it challenges our expectations of what a room, such as the one in Vor Frue, can produce in term of atmosphere and sensory experience (Bille et al., 2015).

Music can put you in a state of mind

In her article 'Music as atmosphere', Friedlind Riedel speaks of the relation of music, atmosphere and worship. She examines how music becomes an embodied atmospheric experience that can persuade people and evoke spiritual becomings (Riedel, 2015, 97). Music works as atmosphere through a sensory provocation: "Thus music, sounds and silences bring all those who are present into a single encompassing situation through vibration" (Riedel, 2015, 97). By adding this notion to music during God Goes Deep the atmospheric quality of the ambient music becomes present. This also allows us to understand people's experiences of how the music evokes certain feelings or senses and has the capability of reaching out (Riedel, 2015, 101). Kevin talks about how this atmospheric experience becomes part of the musical expressions during his session at God Goes Deep: "it was really the first time that I felt that I could express myself through music" (Appendix A.3, 33). He elaborates on this expression as he states:

"My concept was to recreate a moment of my life. How one hour in my life can feel like [...] a moment in my life might be more like what is happening inside my head, sometimes it is maybe just drops of rain, and the next second it is maybe like a synthesiser that goes like "brrrrrrrr" that becomes louder and the next second it is wood sticks on metal, or wood sticks on wood and it can even be disharmonic" (Appendix A.3, 33).

Kevin describes this experience as being aware of his own presence in this room while trying to express that through the music.

The participants at God Goes Deep recognise this musical experience and many of them express how the music evokes a special feeling:

"I get relaxed, meditative, and listening to nice singing and soothing music, mixed together from different genres, and get connected in harmony [...]. I

get relaxed, have a peaceful and meditative feeling, sometimes I have tears because of the emotional singing and music” (Appendix B.5, 60).

One of the participants who has a long history of listening to ambient music explained the qualities of the music: “It creates soundscapes. Your mind creates an internal movie. It is a pictorial sensation. It is an atmospheric experience. You sort of dig into different emotions depending on the music” (Appendix B.3, 55). Marlene also refers to this aspect: “I am aware that something special happens to me in that room with that music” (Appendix B.1, 45). She explains how the music becomes a bodily experience: “I think for me it is the touch on reality. I mean my whole body relaxes. [...] It is like a breathing space and with nice, amazing music” (Appendix B.1, 45). Palma encloses this by saying: “I always find it very interesting how music can put you in that state of mind” (Appendix A.2, 16). The informants explain how the music enhances the emotional experience of the atmosphere, creating a guided bodily experience of meditation and relaxation.

Belonging to a community

This section examines the different aspects of community as they emerge through our empirical work. This community is a non-practical or social community that instead builds upon a shared experience, thereby, it becomes emotional. The informants have different ways of describing this community as a sense of belonging while some use the notion of spiritual community.

Through our empirical research, the theme of community has been recurrent in the informants' discourse. Community is a broad term which has been argued over by many disciplines and can, therefore, be complicated to define. Yet, references from participants to a unity and collectivity that goes beyond a shared interest of the music have led us to create a theme around community. This speaks to how the staging of atmosphere can unite people as they share the same social experience (Bille et al., 2015). As a mean to analyse community in the context of God Goes Deep, we are leaning on McMillan and Chavis (1986) theory on a psychological sense of community which refers to an individual's feelings about belonging to a group, which in our case is an event, and how strongly they feel attached to it. This definition of community is a psychological sense because it is solely experienced within the individual's mind, as opposed to a community based on social and active participation. McMillan and Chavis also argue that through a shared psychological sense of community, individuals and communities can reach their full creative potential. Four elements define the psychological sense of community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986):

1. Membership, established through personal investment, a common sense of belonging and identification, and boundaries.
2. Influence, which needs to be dialectic, meaning it goes to and from the community and the individual.

3. The fulfilment of needs through the exchange of tangible and intangible assets between members.
4. A shared emotional connection created by experiences that form a shared history and/or identity.

These elements are all apparent in both experts and participants interviews conducted throughout our research. Also, the staging of the event caters for a sense of community that is not based on active social practices, but rather an individual experience.

A sense of belonging

Membership in this context is created through individuals psychological feelings of belonging to or identifying with the meaning of the event or the space (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). One aspect that was recurrent through the interviews was that God Goes Deep creates an atmosphere where all people can come together: “This is where the magic comes in, that you have all these people, all ages, all genders, all religions, all sexual orientations. You know there is. It is simply open to all” (Appendix A.2, 15). As Kevin also expresses: “no matter what your class or what your background is, everyone is sitting on a wood bench” (Appendix A.3, 39). This diversity is also something a participant appreciates: “I like the idea that there are so many different people inside the church. It is not only young people, elderly, or one type of people. This is what I think is so fantastic about it, that there is a good mixture” (Appendix B.1, 47). The fact that participants and orchestrators alike identify God Goes Deep as a place open to all refers to the emotional safety that is created, as well as the representation informants associate with the Church. Sentences like “the house of the people”, “the original idea of the Church”, “the Church is what you make it, I like that they are opening it to the common citizen”, show us that the openness is enhanced by the ideas of the Church, such as respects and inclusiveness, which contribute to that emotional safety. Safety is felt as participants have a “notion that they are not alone” (Appendix A; Appendix B).

Furthermore, a sense of belonging and identification comes from participants' common love for either ambient music or the space that it creates for relaxation and meditation. This is confirmed by Palma, the co-creator of the event who says "What you want is to create a sense of belonging, a sense of belonging to a community" (Appendix A.2, 14). The love of music is a common denominator for participants who come especially for the music and the quality of the sound that is created by the acoustic space. As one of the participants says, "it is very much about feeling collective around the music" (Appendix B.3, 54). The knowledge that others come to listen to and appreciate the same music as you, and doing it together, even without interaction, creates a bond and a basis for membership. Bille et al. (2015) explain that the shared experience of an atmosphere can provoke and enhance a sense of inclusiveness. Therefore, we argue that by being in this space together and by making a deliberate choice to spend a Friday night in Vor Frue, for the enjoyment of ambient music, participants construct an emotional feeling of connectivity.

Finally, an important aspect of membership is boundaries, which are explicitly expressed by the organisers. When entering Vor Frue, there are signs indicating that you are not allowed to drink alcohol, talk, or take pictures (see figure 5). These boundaries build a structure that allows individuals to adhere to them or not. They are forced to make a conscious choice whether to be



Figure 5

participants or not and therefore to be a member or an outsider. The organisers of God Goes Deep show restraint and moderation when it comes to setting boundaries around the event. Not only is there not many clearly stated rules, the way in

which they are communicated is very discreet and minimal, allowing a greater scope of people to feel a sense of membership. One individual said “I don’t have to follow any rules. Well, the rules of the place [...] but there was no pressure” (Appendix B.4, 57). Furthermore, the implicit boundaries of respecting the experience of other participants allow for individual ownership.

You are contributing, just by being there

Reciprocal influence is an essential element of the sense of community. The people who belong to the community need to feel like they impact it as much as those who are the front runners or leaders. In the context of God Goes Deep, the person who is leading is the DJs, as they are the ones setting the tone for the evening. As one of our informant’s said, “you sort of dig into different emotions depending on the music” (Appendix B.3, 55), therefore the DJs influence the visitors’ experiences. The DJ we interviewed had a clear idea about what he wanted to “trigger in people” when choosing the music (Appendix A.3, 33). However, he also points out that the audience had an effect on him as an artist. Whether it comes from the meditation aspect or the shared emotional connection, the participants’ intensity affected the artist. Some of the participants situate themselves inside the circle close to the altar and to the DJ table. Palma explains how this affects the DJ:

“Even though you are just sitting there, you are still a part of the whole, you are contributing, just by being there or being quiet or just by enjoying. That gives a buzz out the room. Let’s say I looked over at you and you were really, really enjoying it. I [as a DJ] would pick up [on it] and I would spike from your expression. Because I can quickly tell, you are feeling it, whether if you were really frustrated and irritated I could tell that too” (Appendix A.2, 27).

The dialectic influence of the participants and DJs goes further as we also have to consider how the church setting influences the event. Through God Goes Deep, some of the participants' experience of the church has changed:

"I think it has changed my opinion a little, in the sense that it is actually ok to go to church and make more use of it. Because of what it does to me! So I could use it. It might occur to me to go there even though nothing might be happening, just to be there and breathe and then leave" (Appendix B.1, 50)

According to another participant: "[God Goes Deep] made my relationship to the Church much more relaxing and much more down to earth and much more beautiful" (Appendix A.2, 20). By opening up the space and allowing for this new atmospheric experience participants feel attached to the event. They feel included since they are able to contribute to the experience just by being present. According to Böhme (1993), presence alone is powerful, yet what makes it powerful is that the participants establish their presence in the environment in a certain way. In that sense, they extend certain qualities to the atmosphere. During God Goes Deep, this occurs through bodily expressions, such as sitting positions, or the intimacy between couples and people. In that way, they mutually influence each others' behaviour and experiences, thereby people are collectively adding meanings to the atmosphere and the feeling of it. These are meanings that revolve around relaxing and meditation. This experience changes the participant's perception of the Church since it caters to some of their needs in a different way than usual. The fulfilment of needs will be examined in the section below.

They were seeking a space for meditation

God Goes Deep has succeeded in fulfilling the needs of a meditative space, or a space without demands of social interaction or social performance. There seems to be a

desire for what God Goes Deep creates, as Palma says: “I see the need because people are writing me like desperate: where is God Goes Deep?” (Appendix A.2, 18). She explains how in the periods where God Goes Deep is not hosting events regularly, people are missing something that fulfils their needs for a meditative space.

The need for an event like God Goes Deep was confirmed by the night priest who says the event was created from the initiative of the people, rather than by the church: “I realised that they were seeking a space for meditation. I have not really been reflecting on meditation or to be silent in a big place. I never thought about that. But what happened was more or less like the work of grassroots movement” (Appendix A.1, 4). The feedback the night priest received on cultural events, indicated an appreciation for a certain type of atmosphere, though informants could not easily describe it. Bille et al., (2005) argues that often the experience of atmosphere is difficult to articulate, however, this does not make it less valid. This reinforces the significance of the atmosphere.

Theo, who participated in God Goes Deep explains how the room fulfils a need that no other space provides:

“Because it gave me the room to just be, and it gave me the room to just let my thoughts run loose, worry about this and that, reflect upon that, you know. Just give myself the room to think and be, that I wouldn’t have otherwise. Like I would do when I go to bed, and all the sudden my thoughts... this was actually a place where I could consciously do that and give myself the room to do it” (Appendix B.4, 58).

The night priest explains how she experiences the same aspect: “It has been the people, who would express gratitude for being allowed to sit in the church by themselves and be elevated by the space and the atmosphere with the dim lighting” (Appendix A.1, 4). This fulfilment of needs and how the church adheres to the

desire that the participants have tie into the concept of the Church being a cultural space or as Palma expresses: “the house of the people” (Appendix A.2, 20). Thereby, the church creates a sense of community by acknowledging the needs and creating a space that fulfils these needs in a unique sense and with an open mindset that seeks not to exclude but instead include.

Spiritual community

The shared emotional connection is not just about the common experience of participants, it is also about the quality of the event and personal satisfaction. The experience is not only about listening to music together or experiencing the ambience, it is also about a spiritual community that ties people together through an introspective connectedness. Kevin explains: “I think this energy of when people are actually calm with you in one room, it can become really transcendent, because we just are” (Appendix A.3, 36). The setting of the church adds to this as “these buildings were built to come together” (Appendix A.3, 39). In this way, it is not about social interaction rather, it is about experiencing things together, and building community through an experience rather than social factors like age, religion, gender, politics, or culture. Furthermore, the quality of the ambience staged by God Goes Deep adds to the depth of the experience for the participants:

“I think the lights and the sound were very important for me to go into meditation, to reflect upon myself. [...] like the calmness, also seeing the world through this spiritual thing. But the music and the light led me to kind of be able to let go of the God part and reflect upon myself” (Appendix B.4, 59).

The combination of the quality and the experience build a shared emotional connection that entails a social power beyond discourses only (Bille et al., 2015, 36). Palma

explains how she perceives the interconnectedness of the individual experiences: “Because you sit there as a community, having an experience together. You have this experience individually but in such a safe space because you are part of something. Everybody is on the same page” (Appendix A.2, 15). By sharing the experience in a safe space, people are letting go of their shield which allows them to feel a connected by being vulnerable and emotional together. This allows the participants to reflect upon themselves and reach this level of spiritual or meditative state through a shared emotional experience. All these elements, membership, influence, fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection build an individual psychological sense of community or connectedness.

It simply is the way the Church is

Staged Atmosphere

Through the analysis of our empirical data, we showed that God Goes Deep stages an atmosphere to create a distinctive meditative experience. However, we must continue to ask how God Goes Deep generates alternative experiences that contribute to the re-contextualisation of the Church, and how it is experienced by participants and visitors alike. To answer this, we refer to Bille et al.'s (2015) theory on the staging of atmosphere that states that the experience of atmosphere is a subjective experience. Indeed, the subject is a co-creator of the atmosphere through his/her sensory experience and interaction with the staged elements. As the data has shown us, the orchestrators of God Goes Deep are intentionally using the senses of sight and sound to stage a specific response in visitors. However, the agency and individuality of each subject, as well as the differences in background and context, can not guarantee that all visitors experience the event in the way it was intended. This gap between the intention of the God Goes Deep orchestrators and the visitors is something we expected as we started our research. However, we did not have an idea of how the different experiences would be expressed or felt. We will discuss how the experience of God Goes Deep creates new practices that are co-producing the inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, we will discuss how the church renegotiates its societal position by creating new and alternative events.

New Practices



Figure 6

God Goes Deep is a new way of staging the Sunday sermon, with the same purpose. This creates a new set of practices in the church. During the event, we observed a few people walking down the aisle barefoot, laying on the benches and bean bags, showing public displays of affection by kissing and cuddling, and falling asleep (see figure 6). God Goes Deep has created an environment where these practices are permitted as a result of the staged atmosphere. They are not in contrast to the practices of the traditional church but build on the notion of respect. By this, we mean a respect towards the Church as an institution and the experience of others in that space. This respect

contributes to the safety that allows for new practices, making this a circular process. The sense of safety changes individuals' relationship with the church to a more familiar space. They are making themselves at home by taking off their shoes and jackets. This blurs the line of the Church as a public space. Through these actions, participants are showing that they are no longer just visitors but physically manifesting the sense of belonging to the event. We argue that through their responses, the people contribute to the development of a new experience. This can also be considered as a co-creation. Building on Böhme (1993) and Bille et al. (2015) the aspect of co-creation can be related to the idea of the subject's interaction with the environment. In the context of God Goes deep, people's interpretation of the environment and the atmosphere induces different ideas of being and behaving in the church's room. This confirms a co-creation of new church-related practices.

Boundaries

The staging of God Goes Deep creates an experience that many visitors come to see, yet not all are participants. The distinction between the two groups' experiences, indicates a gap caused by the staging of atmosphere. As Bille et al. (2015) argue, the gap is a natural aspect in the experience of atmosphere, which is socially inclusive or exclusive. The analysis illustrates that there are participants who keep returning to the event to re-experience the atmosphere. Yet, there are also visitors who do not connect with the atmosphere and therefore leave after a few minutes of being there. A French man in his 20's illustrates how atmosphere can be experienced, differently. He explains how he perceived the event as Satanic: "Because of the red light and the [architecture], it felt like a cult. It was weird to have meditation and a philosophical message in here" (Appendix, B.2, 52). He further expressed that he had reservations towards the Church and its purpose. As we did not pursue the conversation further, we cannot assume that his experience of atmosphere was directly linked to his understanding of

the Church. However, Pink et al. (2014) argue that an individual's experience of atmosphere is influenced by their context, and background, as they are a lens from which they perceive sensory experiences. Therefore, an individual's relationship with the Church and religion will influence their perception of God Goes Deep. In some visitors' cases, the sense of inclusion can be felt as manipulation, as the church appeals to the people through a sensory experience to communicate their message. Therefore, despite God Goes Deep's intention of generating a meditative atmosphere, there are some disparities in the way people receive it. This ambiguity implies a gap between the organisers' intention and some of the visitors' responses. This gap is enhanced through the participant's practices as they differ from the practices visitors may expect in a church. Therefore, visitors may not know how to engage with these new practices, which could lead to exclusion. Even though there is a gap in how people perceive the intention of God Goes Deep, it is not necessarily a negative aspect. While some visitors never engage with the meditative experience, others return precisely for it. Therefore, we argue that visitors are experiencing multiple atmospheres simultaneously, some experience a meditative atmosphere, others one of relaxation, and for some it is simply a tourist attraction. Bille & Sørensen (2017) support this claim when talking of atmosphere as a subjective experience. As a consequence, individual's will attach different meanings to the Church, and events like God Goes Deep. Therefore, the Church needs to be versatile in the way they communicate their message.

Renegotiation of position

The church's effort to diversify itself ties into a larger societal discussion of its position in the public sphere. Over the last decade, the Church has increased their focus on the declining numbers of active Church practitioners. Furthermore, the concept of Cultural Christians emerged implying a new way of using churches as a more culturally embedded practice, often in connection to feasts or holidays. As a consequence,

concepts like God Goes Deep are created with the purpose of working experimentally with the proclamations of Christianity. The question then arises if the church manages to stay true to the original purpose of the Church, or if the church becomes an amusement park in trying to keep up with the changing practices. This notion of amusement parks relates to the idea of entertainment for profit, which the church must not adopt if it wishes to remain a public institution. As the priest expresses, God Goes Deep is not created as a gimmick in order to attract people to the church “It is simply the way the Church is” (Appendix A.1, 13). Through this event, the church is not trying to fill benches but it is trying to reaffirm its values of openness and creativity by integrating new and creative means of communication. Through our research, we visited other church-buildings that worked with staging alternative events. This implies that there are nuances in working experimentally within churches and that it needs to be carefully balanced. Furthermore, the original congregational work also has to be nursed. The night church at Vor Frue serves as a surplus to the original traditional church that host sermons, wedding, baptisms etc. This allows the night church to focus on the creative part of the proclamation without having to worry about maintaining the congregational work. This suggests a restraint relationship between the night church and the traditional church that is built on mutual respect. Therefore, the effects applied in the staging of events like God Goes Deep do not defy the purpose of the Church.

From our analysis, we learned that this creative proclamation generates a meditative space that allows for reflection and immersion amongst the participants. We argue that the staged atmosphere of God Goes Deep communicates new “ideals of how a place, event or practice should or could feel.” (Bille et al., 2015, 36). Therefore, the staging of atmosphere facilitates an additional meaning to the church space. We propose that the church is re-establishing new ways of serving the needs of the people. This aspect is something that the night priest acknowledges. As mentioned, the night church originally

orchestrated an event that was not intended as meditation yet, the people interpreted it as a meditative experience, which directed the night church's attention to aspects that were not visible to them before. Eventually, this made them develop the idea of God Goes deep (Appendix A.1, 8). By allowing the people to co-create the event they generate an enhanced feeling of belonging to this event's community. This process is not about changing values or purposes of the Church, but adapting to the surrounding society, and changes in people's everyday life. Vor Frue acknowledges that the Church is not an intransigent institution. This is a two-fold process: firstly the Church being willing to evolve, and secondly, the people being flexible enough to change their expectations of the Church as a space that is centred around Christianity and detached from society and culture. The night priest explains this process:

“It is because the way we live our lives means that we are always moving ahead. I don't necessarily mean growth. But it is about development, change and movement. It is just the way we live our lives. Just think of that we are ageing, that there is a constant development within the organism, in the DNA” (Appendix A.1, 11).

By being aware of the changing position of the Church, Vor Frue is actively re-negotiating its position by re-interpreting what religion can offer to today's society. By creating a space where people can experience peacefulness and calmness on their own terms, the church is re-contextualising its purpose. Vor Frue is thereby balancing its position and opening the church as a culture house that offers reflection, meditation and spirituality through an atmospheric experience. It is the balance between the traditional and alternative ways of communicating the church's message, that enables Vor Frue to endure.

Conclusion

This article examined how God Goes Deep generates alternative experiences that contribute to the re-contextualisation of the Church. We conclude, that by opening up the church space to creative expressions, God Goes Deep produce an alternative multi-sensory experience.

The church is being adaptive to societal changes. By staging new types of events and adding on to the existing ambience of the church, the orchestrators of God Goes Deep include different practices and create a new experience. The orchestrators are using light and sound to generate a unique ambient experience while still reinforcing the original purpose of the church, as a place of calmness and safety. The staging of God Goes Deep applies alternative meanings to the space, ones of freedom where the demands of social performance are limited. Furthermore, it allows participants to be immersed and have feelings of peacefulness and self-awareness through meditation or relaxation. By being present in the church together, the participants and orchestrators have a shared experience. This shared experience entails feelings of spiritual community, of togetherness and connectivity.

The staging of this experience also creates a gap since not all visitors have the need for this specific community. As much as God Goes Deep becomes an inclusive space, it also generates an exclusion. The individual experiences of the event are enhanced by people's practices within the space. The participants are co-creating the experience through their behaviour which becomes exclusive. This gap is a natural occurrence since the orchestrators cannot fulfil everyone's needs. The process of adaptation demonstrates the church's effort to include the public and to accommodate societal

changes. With God Goes Deep the church is renegotiating their societal position and re-interpreting the Christian proclamation by creating a new church experience.

References

- Bach-Nielsen, C. 2012, The Role of the Lutheran Church in Denmark, *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, 25(2), pp. 293–310.
- Biblehub.com - 1 Corinthians 10:23. [online] Available: https://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/10-23.htm [Accessed 10 Nov. 2018]
- Bille, M, Bjerregaard, P, & Sørensen T.F. 2015, “Staging Atmospheres: Materiality, culture, and the texture of the in-between”, Elsevier Ltd., pp.31-38.
- Bille, M., Sørensen T.F. 2017, “In Visible Presence: The Role of Light in Shaping Religious Atmospheres”, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-27.
- Böhme, G. 1993, “Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics”, *Thesis Eleven*, 36 (1), pp. 113-126.
- Denstoredanske.dk - skib. [online] Available: http://denstoredanske.dk/Symbolleksikon/Redskaber_og_genstande/skib [Accessed 6 Nov. 2018].
- Domkirken.dk - Domkirken. [online] Available: <https://www.domkirken.dk/om-kirken>. [Accessed 1 Nov. 2018].
- Eno, B. 1978, *Music for Airports / Ambient 1*. Polydor Records
- Erik Frank, L. 2014, Fortryllende fredage i Vor Frue. [online] Available: <https://kirkenikbh.dk/nyheder/fortryllende-fredage-i-vor-frue> [Accessed 6 Nov. 2018]

- Riedel, F. 2015, Music as atmosphere. Lines of becoming in congregational worship. *Lebenswelt. Aesthetics and philosophy of experience*, (6), pp. 80-111. [online] Available: <https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/Lebenswelt/article/view/4913> [Accessed 6 Nov. 2018]
- Godgoesdeep.com - God Goes Deep. [online] Available: <http://godgoesdeep.com/> [Accessed 1 Nov. 2018]
- Kristendom.dk. Guide: Gå på opdagelse i kirkens rum. [online] Available: <https://www.kristendom.dk/guide-til-folkekirken/guide-p%C3%A5-vandring-gennem-kirkerummet> [Accessed 6 Nov. 2018]
- Kristeligt-Dagblad.dk - medlemstal. [online] Available: https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/historier/medlemstal#side_15 [Accessed 6 Nov. 2018]
- McMillan, D.W & Chavis, D.M 1986, Sense of community: A definition and theory. *J. Community Psychol.*, 14, pp. 6-23. doi:10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:1<6::AID-JCOP2290140103>3.0.CO;2-I
- Merriam-Webster.dk - Meditate. [Online] Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meditate> [Accessed 12 Dec. 2018]
- Natkirken.dk - Natkirken. [online] Available at: <http://www.natkirken.dk/>. [Accessed 1 Nov. 2018]
- Pink, S. 2007, Sensing Cittàslow: Slow Living and the Constitution of the Sensory City. *The Senses and Society*, 2(1), pp. 59–77.

Pink, S. 2014, Researching in Atmosphere: Video and the 'Feel' of the Mundane. Sage Publications, 14(5), pp. 351-369.

Religion.dk - Hvad er en kulturkristen?. [online] Available: <https://www.religion.dk/viden/hvad-er-en-kulturkristen> [Accessed 6 Nov. 2018]

Valdemar Vinding, N. and Christoffersen, L. Danish Regulation of religion, state of affairs and qualitative reflections. [pdf] Copenhagen, Denmark: Centre for European Islamic Thought, Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen. Available: https://teol.ku.dk/ceit/religare/Danish_Report_Final_2012.pdf [Accessed 10 Nov. 2018]

Wikipedia.dk - List of churches in Copenhagen. [online] Available: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_churches_in_Copenhagen. [Accessed 11 Nov. 2018]