

A photograph of a wooden deck with a bicycle and a colorful mural.

# AFFECTIVE URBANISM: THE POLITICS OF AFFECT IN RECENT URBAN DESIGN

Visual presentation:  
**Affective urbanism.** The politics of affect in recent urban design

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# AFFECTIVE URBANISM: THE POLITICS OF AFFECT IN RECENT URBAN DESIGN

1. Affective urbanism: what is an affect, why is it relevant for understanding the city?
2. Highline, Carlsberg, the bench
3. Politics of affect and modes of production

# METHODOLOGY

## Approach: Radical empiricism (Deleuze)

Affects are difficult to capture through interviews or a predesign for studying events.

The empirical investigation in these cases are thus carried out as participant observation using visual methods to capture events as occurring affects and bodily mediated information.

These ‘captures’ are *partial* and in some cases incidental.

Research paradigm: heuristics, streetwise

# METHODOLOGY

**Modes of presenting:**  
By affective, visual means



## Deleuze on Spinoza:

"By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained..."  
" (Spinoza III def. 3, Deleuze 1988: 49)

"a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality (...) one is kinetic and the other, dynamic." Deleuze 1988:123)

Affects are *pre-cognitive* (Thrift 2004, 2008). They take place as socio-spatial processes rather than *cognitive* processes in a perceiving, cognitive subject.

Ethics? signatures? ownership?

## AFFECTS IN ETHICS



# AFFECTS IN AESTHETICS

## Affects as contagious and productive processes:

**"affects are like viruses that hop – by some medium: air, water, exchanges of bodily fluids – between people, thereby infecting them.**

People, in this view, are infected through proximity to a source and by the vectors of the disease."

(Pile 2009: 16)

**"Affect is the change, or variation, that occurs when bodies collide, or come into contact. As a body, affect is the knowable product of an encounter, specific in its ethical and lived dimensions."** (Parr: 11)



## Spatial production

“Cities may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect. Particular affects such as anger, fear, happiness and joy are continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can neither take place either at a grand scale or simply as a part of continuing everyday life.”

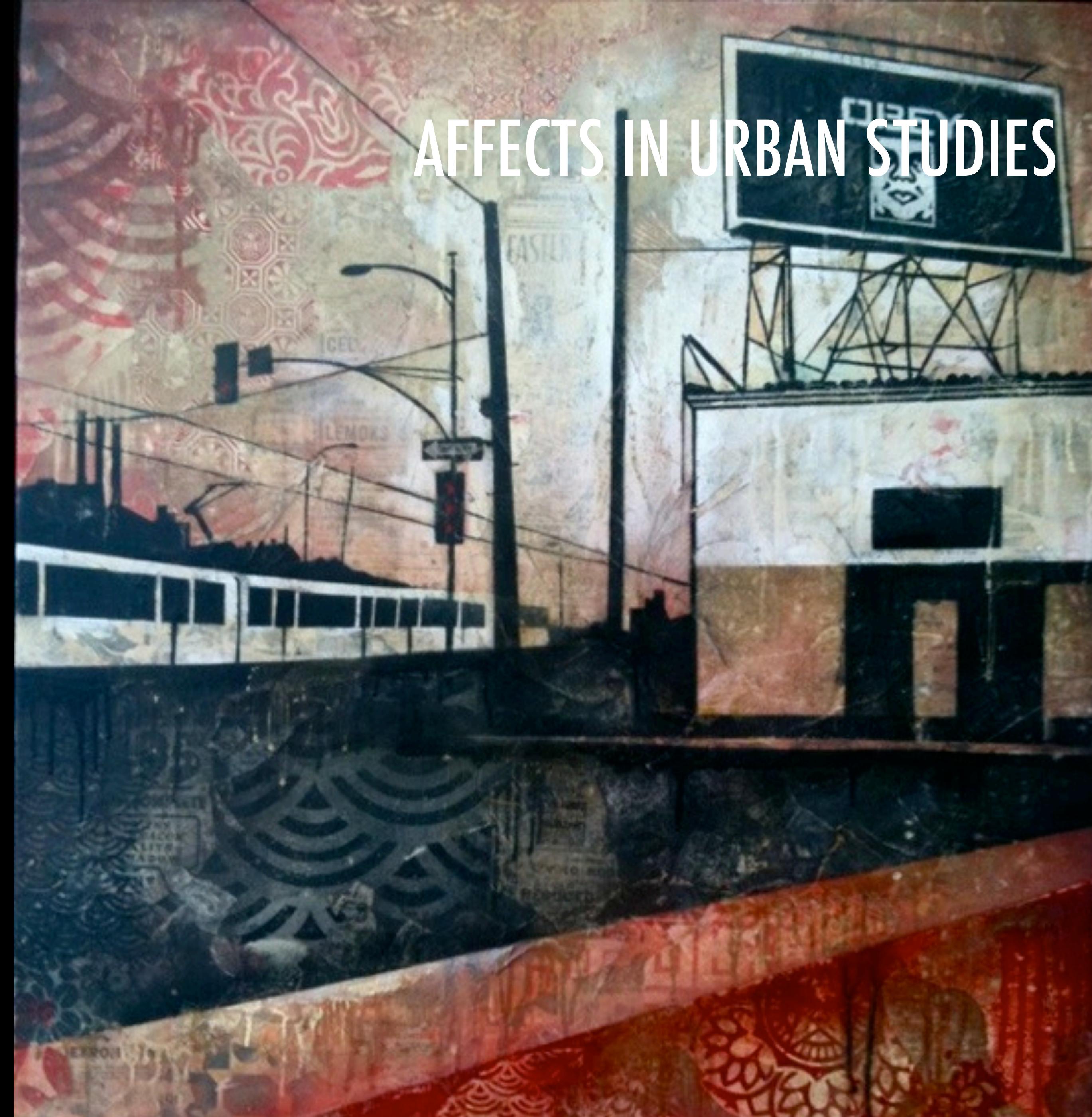
(Thrift 2004: 57)

=>

## Urban space

“as a kind of force-field of passions that associate and pulse bodies in particular ways.” (Amin & Thrift 2002:84)

# AFFECTS IN URBAN STUDIES



# PERFORMATIVE AETHETICS IN URBAN SPACE

## THE HIGHLINE



# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE

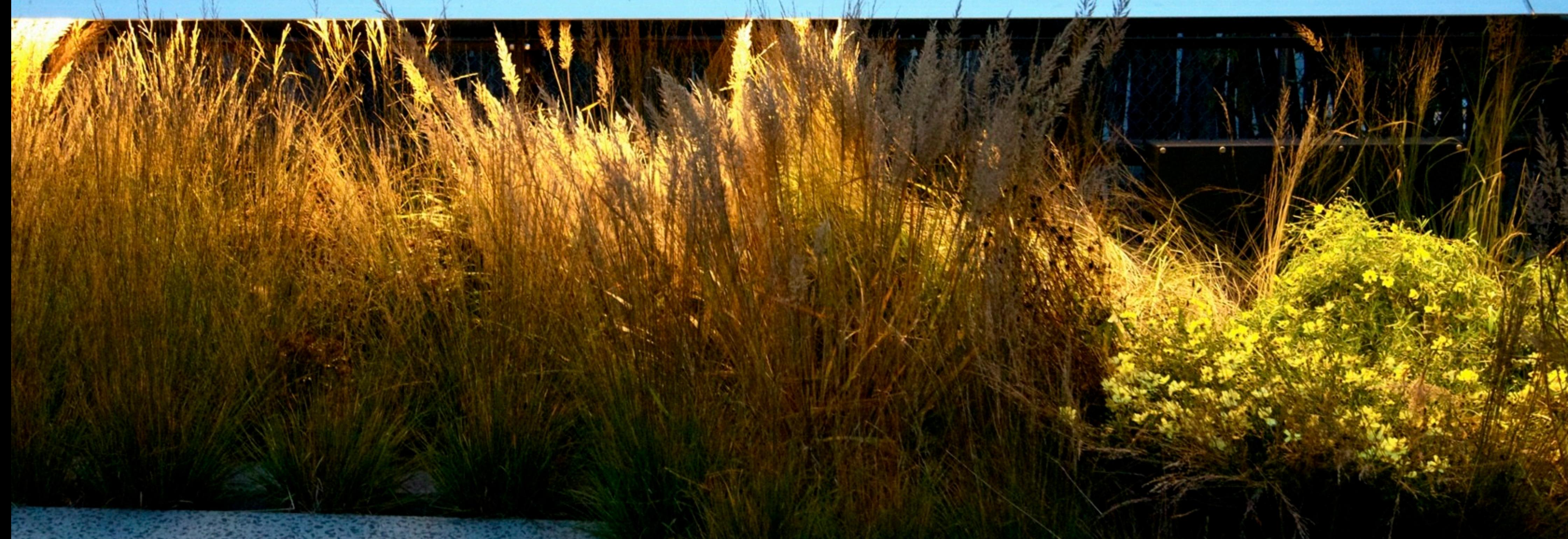


# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE





# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE





# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE



# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE

Amphitheatre... staging of urban event

# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE



The production of desires and dreams in an everyday setting

# AFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE

...by means of performance art





Not the material design as such but its capacity to affect.  
To reframe the city from the functionality in every day life to a city as a maelstöem of affects.



Affective aesthetics (with interests) are all over: people create the paths for urban development, by means of art, performances, landscape design, light and sound effects

# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG



Material design



Immaterial event design

AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG





# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG



# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG



# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG



A photograph of a large outdoor concert or festival at night. The scene is dominated by a bright blue light from a stage structure in the background, casting a glow over the entire area. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of many people's heads are visible, looking towards the stage. The overall atmosphere is energetic and festive.

# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG

Evental aesthetics

# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG



A photograph of a man smiling while riding a bus. He is wearing a light-colored shirt and a tie. The bus window shows a distorted, blurred view of a city street with buildings and other people. The word "DISTORTION" is printed in large white capital letters in the top right corner.

DISTORTION

Spatial distortion of the every day



*Temporary installations*

A wide-angle photograph of a large industrial or construction site. Numerous white and beige ropes are suspended from the ceiling by red clips, creating a dense, hanging texture. A person in dark clothing is walking through the ropes, their silhouette partially obscured by the light filtering through the hanging mass. The floor is concrete, and the background shows more industrial structures and equipment.

# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG

*Production of engagement with the site, bodily affects..*





# AFFECTIVE URBANISM ON CARLBERG

*Designers and collaborators: (Carlsberg, Kulturfabrikken, UIWE, Copenhagen Municipality, engaging people)*



Co-production of designs





The lack of social engagement  
=> shifts into installation art, a representational  
sculpture on the square



Urban assemblages (Socio-material)













A photograph of a person walking through a large-scale art installation or construction site. The scene is dominated by numerous white and grey cables or wires hanging from above, some ending in small red weights. The ground is a paved area with white and grey markings. In the background, there are industrial structures and equipment.

POLITICS OF AFFECT

Democracy  
Public space  
Dialogue  
Community  
Communication  
Public administration  
and planning  
Society

?

POLITICS OF AFFECT



# POLITICS OF AFFECT



# POLITICS OF AFFECT

Signature?

# POLITICS OF AFFECT

What if...? Elbæk proposes another scheme...

*Another scheme?*



**Minister of culture Uffe Elbæk before he was elected:**

"Uden en stærk kultur- og kunstscene er Danmark et identitetsmæssigt fattigt land. Kultur og kunst er det, der engagerer os og giver os lyst til at gøre en forskel, men også det, der får os til at stille de kritiske spørgsmål og vende tingene på hovedet. **Kunst og kultur er provokation, skønhed, debat og nytænkning.**

Derfor skal kulturpolitiken øverst på skemaet. Den skal ikke blot inspirere men udfordre alt fra erhvervspolitik, byudvikling og uddannelsespolitik til socialpolitik, miljøpolitik og forsvarspolitik – ja hele den måde, vi tænker og forstår samfund på."

# POLITICS OF AFFECT



Examples of interventions on private corporate property

People participating in events and engaging in the temporary installations are co-producing affects.

A biomediated mode of production and communication as affects are *bodily felt* ...

# POLITICS OF AFFECT

Who dunnit?

# AFFECTIVE URBANISM: MODES OF PRODUCTION

Affective urbanism - other means of production (Boltanski and Chiapello)

Affective urbanism are not only be means to an end but proposes new performative modes of production.

Copenhagen: In between two different modes of production (the functional city, the performative city)

## **Carlsberg, the Elbæk-campaign:**

Welfare state ideology and rhetorics, Welfare technologies?

“The good city, life before buildings - the good life, another scheme.

=> Normative transformative dimension

# AFFECTS IN URBAN STUDIES

## Spatial production

**“Cities may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect.** Particular affects such as anger, fear, happiness and joy are continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can neither take place either at a grand scale or simply as a part of continuing everyday life.”

(Thrift 2004: 57)

=>

## Urban space

**“as a kind of force-field of passions that associate and pulse bodies in particular ways.”** (Amin & Thrift 2002:84)



merge politics and aesthetics,  
means and ends.

The notion of public space is no  
longer adequate =

Rethink it as **performative urban  
space**

"**as a kind of force-field of  
passions** that associate and pulse  
bodies in particular ways." (Amin  
& Thrift 2002:84)

Signatures negotiating space

Can regard the carlsberg in the  
same manner as the Elbæk-bench?

They may be a strong signature  
indicating Carlsberg as the main  
signature, but what are the  
interventions within it - *a  
collaborative work of art?*





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