

“The Greening of Copenhagen”

Project for MACA course 3 autumn 2009

The applied project for the autumn 2009 dealt with the Copenhagen global climate change meeting in December. There are so many stakeholders in a mega-event like this. Everybody wants to participate in one way or another, not only politicians and administrators, but NGO's of different kinds, protest movements, corporations, institutions, brand-builders and marketing specialists. The build-up during November and the actual December events presented an unique opportunity to do applied cultural analysis of a hot topic.

The aim of the project was to explore not only by green politics but green branding of all kinds of activities and products: green living, green design, green fashion, green architecture. All of a sudden everything needs a green dimension, and this means that questions about environmental issues are culturalized. There are questions of norms and morals, of right and wrong, bad and good, but also strong emotional inputs from passion to guilt and irritation.

From a MACA perspective it is interesting to analyze how this global interest takes different cultural shapes and forms. How are green icons, symbols and narratives created and communicated, how are green or climate-smart lifestyles presented and promoted? Green is also a contested colour, there are different kinds of competing shades: dark green as rural nostalgia, “bright green” as smart high tech solutions, green as sustainable living or eco-friendly production, green as CO2-saving strategies...

In short, this is a political and cultural arena where a lot of tensions and paradoxes of modern living are acted out. There are striking gaps between rhetoric of green and the actual green practices. It is easy to show a benevolent attitude to green politics, but harder to implement them. Many environmental campaigns fail because they are packaged the wrong way, there is also *green fatigue*, when people feel that there is an overload of too many green musts and shoulds... All these tensions provide a rich field for applied cultural analysis and innovative thinking.