

CLONE WARS (4.1.1.)

Atlas: Frans Jacobi
Buddha: Budhaditya Chattopadhyay
Helena Christensen: Viola Dröse

The artist/researcher: Amira Jasmina Shalaby Jensen
Hopenhagen, Vattenfall, Climate-Action-Blog & Evo Morales: Claus Handberg
The Media: Vilhelm C Iversen

The large hall of the City Hall of Copenhagen, a carpet in bright green colors on which rests various packages, 20 cans of coca-cola, two large loud-speakers on wheels and some sound-equipment. An audience sitting in a circle. A discussion afterwards.

Soundtrack (live!) by: Budhaditya Chattopadhyay

We are in the enormous entrance-hall of Copenhagen City Hall. Out at one end of the space two rows of chairs are placed in 'horse-shoe'-formation. Close by a strange looking assemblage of cardboard-boxes, Coca-Cola cans and sound-equipment is spread out on a green carpet; an island. Two men and a woman (Atlas, Buddha and Helena Christensen) wearing green t-shirts with the text HOPENHAGEN, are sitting on this island, waiting,.

A woman, the artist/researcher, is waiting in front of the formation of chairs. The audience walks in, find their places. When everyone are sitting down, she finds her scrip-cards and turns to the audience.

The artist/researcher:

Dear audience, welcome to this performance. My name is Frans Jacobi – I am the artist/researcher, but tonight I am also your tour-guide. I will ask you to follow me, as we move out onto the floor in a little while.

In a moment, our three friends over there will embark on a metaphorical journey, croosing this enormous space. Meanwhile I will try to give you an insight into the background of their symbolic quest. They will be trying to...well, what they will attempt here tonight, is no less than to try saving the world.

But first, let me introduce you to our three activists:

The artist/researcher urges the audience to follow her. She guides them over to the carpet-island, where the three activists are waiting.

This is Atlas, the greek Atlas, who where condemned to carry the earth and the heavens for fighting against

Zeus. In this connection his plight is of course symbolic; he represents us all, citizens of the earth, forced as we are, to take upon us the quest of carrying our dear planet on our shoulders.

Atlas is accompanied by Helena Christensen, the famous model, who – after finishing her career as a top model – turned her skills towards adventurous do-good-ing.

The third member of the brave crew is Buddha, the indian prince, who renounced wealth and family to become an ascetic and thereby became the founder of buddhism. Here, tonight, Buddha will be contemplating the state of the earth in sound.

As you have probably already noticed they are carrying t-shirts from HOPENHAGEN, and this is exactly what this performance is about. As a kind of symbolic re-enactment; our three friends will perform an allegorical journey through this vast space. To see if they can revive HOPENHAGEN and all the hope for a better future that was contained in this concept.

Now Atlas rises and grasps one end of the carpet. With huge effort he drags the island a few meters. Then he unpacks a card-board box, taking out a small plastic pump and a green rubber balloon. He leaves the emballage on the floor and starts pumping air into the balloon. The noise from the pump fills the space. The artist/researcher is forced to move the audience away from the island as she takes up her introduction again. Simultaneously Helena Christensen starts an improvised dance.

The artist/researcher:

As some you might remember HOPENHAGEN was a huge public campaign, branding Copenhagen as a new center of hope, during the global climate summit, COP15, back in december 2009. In those weeks HOPENHAGEN was everywhere, in advertising, on busses, on billboards, on the internet and with a massive presence here outside on the City Square.

The stakes for COP15 were high, extremely high. The summit gathered all the top rank, major players of global politics; everyone came to Copenhagen to solve the climate crisis and make the future better for everyone. Obama was here, the chinese president was here, even Hugo Chavez was here, everyone hoping to close a deal for a better future.

Back at the island the green balloon has now become quite large, larger than Atlas himself. He disconnects the balloon from the air-pump, seals it with gaffa-tape and leaves behind the pump on the floor. He drags the carpet another few meters. Buddha turns on his equipment and resonance fills the space, faint echoes of sounds from far away. Atlas straps the balloon to his shoulders and, carrying this green globe, drags the carpets with Buddha another few meters out into space. Helena is now far out on the floor, improvising simple movements; her body reflects the calm waves of sound emitting from the island. The artist/researcher moves her group of attentive listening people further away.

The artist/researcher:

COP15 was organised by the United Nations as their bi-annual Climate Change Conference number 15. HOPENHAGEN was a campaign generated by the International Advertising Association representing the global advertising industry in support of the United Nations and COP15. HOPENHAGEN was adopted by the city-council of Copenhagen as their way of marking the climate conference and a new possible role of Copenhagen as a progressive climate city.

As it is still claimed on the web-site of HOPENHAGEN:

The artist/researcher calls out for HOPENHAGEN.

HOPENHAGEN:

Hopenhagen is a movement, a moment and a chance at a new beginning. The hope that in Copenhagen this December – during the United Nations Climate Change Conference – we can build a better future for our planet and a more sustainable way of life. It is the hope that we can create a global community that will lead our leaders into making the right decisions. The promise that by solving our environmental crisis, we can solve our economic crisis at the same time. Hopenhagen is change – and that change will be powered by all of us.¹

Atlas drags the island even further and a kind of meditative rhythm is evolving between the three activists: Sound, dance and dragging.

The artist/researcher:

These super positive and energetic intentions were communicated with all state-of-the-art designers tools; billboards, nice handwritten slogans, vivid green colors, T-shirts, large-scale photos of beautiful landscapes, smiling positive middle-class youth from exotic countries announcing their hopes for the future, hope and

friendliness on all kinds of social platforms, on the internet, facebook, twitter, blogs and endless, global sharing. Everything done with that special advertizing flair for up-beat, smooth and healthy effectivity that harms no-one and criticizes no-one.

HOPENHAGEN was created by some of the largest advertising companies in the world: Ogilvy, OgilvyEarth, OgilvyPR, Ketchum, Colle+McVoy, T-sign, Mannov, Zazengo, TakePart, GroupM and Havas.

HOPENHAGEN was supported by a range of multi-national business corporations: Coca-Cola, Sap, Siemens, BMW Group, The Climate Group, DuPont, Gap Inc., Hub Culture, Method and Vattenfall.

Each of these corporations made an effort to present their versions of environmental ambitions on the Hopenhagen web-site. Lets take Vattenfall as an example:

The artist/researcher gives the word to Vatenfall.

VATTENFALL:

Vattenfall wants to be part of the solution. We take the climate challenge seriously, investing massively in our own power-plants and production-facilities to make them CO2-neutral. Vattenfall also engages in the international climate-debate. Vattenfall hopes to bring the climate to the agenda of the COP15 Summit in Copenhagen as well as in other foras. By supporting Hopenhagen, Vatenfall is part of evoking how important it is that everyone takes actively part in the re-directing the developemetr of the climate. By 2030, at the latest, the Vatenfall production of power and heating in the entire Nordic region will be CO2-neutral. Its an ambitious goal, craving investments of billions in biomass-facilities, windpower, wave-power and CO2-storage in the underground.²

The artist/researcher:

Yes, it is quite optimistic, but apart from the joyous tone, the other astonishing thing in the HOPENHAGEN campaign is the use of the word 'movement'. What the advertizing companies behind the International Advertising Association, were trying to do with HOPENHAGEN was to create a new global movement; a people's grassroots movement:

HOPENHAGEN:

Our mission is to connect every person, every city, and every nation to Copenhagen. To give everyone

hope, and a platform from which to act. To create a grassroots movement that's powerful enough to influence change. Change will not happen unless the people demand it. That's why Hopenhagen exists – to give you a rallying cry and the tools to demand a positive outcome in Copenhagen. This needs to be a people's movement, with enough people involved that our leaders can't ignore it.

The artist/researcher:

Yes, that's is actually what HOPENHAGEN was: A global grassroots movement designed by some of the worlds leading advertizing agencies. A designed movement.

I call this cloning.

Now Helena Christensen picks up a stack of green A4-paper, imitating pamphlets, and as part of her bodily improvisations, starts distributing them in space and on the floor. Atlas is still dragging the island slowly across the floor, inbetween unpacking new packages. He unfolds a green banner and ties it to the chairs, erecting it over the island.

The artist/researcher:

In another performance I have shown how the chinese students of the 1989 Tiananmien Square riots cloned the slogans, dates and aesthetics of the communist regime to critisize the communist regime. By performing this cloning of political language the students managed to engage up to a million chinese people in peacefull protest that lasted for several weeks, apparently confusing the regime into letting the protest grow and grow.

Here in HOPENHAGEN the cloning is similar, but invented. Here it is the political power in charge that clones the forms and language of the protest, activist culture.

HOPENHAGEN had all the usual features of contemporary activism: the internet communities, the global info-sharing, the DIY workshops, the creative visual energy, the micro-city that works an illustrative model of the ideal future – established right here outside in the City Square.

An uncanny alliance of public institutions, the global advertising industry and a range of multinational business conglomerates tries to engage a world wide movement into supporting their leaders in doing the right thing. As is claimed on the the website:

Hopenhagen starts proclaiming:

HOPENHAGEN:

The hope that we can create a global community that will lead our leaders into making the right decisions.

The artist/researcher:

Lets take that one again, in all its friendliness it is quite thought provoking:

HOPENHAGEN:

The hope that we can create a global community that will lead our leaders into making the right decisions.

The artist/researcher:

There is no question of replacing the leaders. The same leaders and mega corporations that has lead the world into this disatrous situation are here believed to be able to change their decisions. Without criticizing anyone HOPENHAGEN support our leaders, in the hope that they will be able to change their worldview and attitude themselves. In a sense HOPENHAGEN is beautiful in all its naive hopefulness. Wonderful Hopenhagen.

One problem is of course the quite obvious green-washing of the supporting corporations: Through the endorsement by the public institutions – in example the UN and the City Council of Copenhagen – the supporting corporations are cast as 'clean' and 'idealistic', they become businesses working for the common good.

My own little experience with Vattenfall can work as an illustration:

Climate-Action-Blog steps forward and talks:

Climate-Action-Blog:

Yesterday on the news I saw a story about the swedish corporation Vatenfall and their involvement in the german coal-industry. How they where demolishing whole villages and huge areas of land to install large scale coal-mining facilities; facilities that keeps the global warming going on a gigantic scale. In the same sequence of news there was a presentation of a huge air-ballon installed on the City Square in Copenhagen as a symbol for the new global spirit of changing our attitude. On the balloon will be projected pictures of activists from all over the world, agitating for change. This balloon is the main symbol for HOPENHAGEN as they

call this campaign that is really dominating the streets Copenhagen these days.

As I passed The City Square today and saw the balloon-globe, I also saw the signs of the two main sponsors: Siemens and Vatenfall. The idea that this whole climate-conference is only a cover-up from the global corporations to continue their devastating activities immediately came to mind. To have Vatenfall as a main sponsor certainly puts the agenda of HOPENHAGEN into doubt.

The artist/researcher:

Well, apart from this quite obvious green-washing of the supporting corporations the really scary thing is the cloning: To use the language of democracy and critical public opinion in an inverted manner. The cloning confuses the positions of the players in the power game.

If you, for instance, took part in the gigantic popular demonstration on december 12th, walking out to the Bella Center, where COP15 was held, to support a positive climate agenda, you couldn't help wonder how many of the around 100.000 participants that were paid by Coca Cola, MNW or Vatenfall.

Atlas and the island has now reached the middle of the huge hall, leaving behind a track of emballage, empty Coca Cola cans and other rubbish.

The artist/researcher:

If we see through all the middleclass optimism and smooth design, HOPENHAGEN resembles the demonstrations and campaigns organised by diverse dictators around the world. In North Korea, Iran or Syria for instance. To divert the public attention from real protests the regime organises huge campaigns of pro-regime demonstrations. Public acts of support for the powers to be, public praise to the ability of our leaders to make the right decisions.

It seems no coincidence that one the main producers of HOPENHAGEN shares name with a figure in George Orwells dystopian science-fiction novel 1984, Comrade Ogilvy.

Atlas now unpacks 3 tubes with green neon-light and connects them to a mesh of entangled electric cables being dragged after the island. The scenery takes on a strange synthetic greenness.

The artist/researcher:

What to think of all this? Was it all in vain? Was HOPENHAGEN only a scam? Was HOPENHAGEN in fact preventing capitalism from change instead of promoting change?

Of course COP15 failed. Not only in a small way – COP15 failed big time. On a global scale. The idea that capitalism could turn green and that we all, as consumers, could change anything, simply by consuming differently – of course this idea was naive – and it failed.

The idea that that Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the former danish prime minister, could head a meeting changing anything was absurd. The images of Løkke in the role of chairman, acting like a complete idiot, should not have surprised anyone. The current debate on the Copenhagen 'betalingsring' shows all too well how impossible it is for this system to change anything in the direction towards a healthier, green economy.

What to do then? Should we just give up? Accept climate change as irreversible? The three years gone since COP15 hasn't been too optimistic.

As our 3 friends over there struggles forward I would like to end my presentation here by pointing to two different solutions, both frighteningly radical.

As one of the speakers in the official part of Cop15, Bolivian President Evo Morales was crystal clear in placing the responsibility for the climate crisis:

Evo Morales:

The real cause of climate change is the capitalist system. If we want to save the earth then we must end that economic model. Capitalism wants to address climate change with carbon markets. We denounce those markets and the countries which promote them. It's time to stop making money from the disgrace that they have perpetrated.³

The artist/researcher:

Morales argues for local democratic revolutions and the re-introduction of socialism as the tool to confront the current spiralling towards disaster of global capitalism.

In a similar vein the slovenian philospher Slavoj Zizek has flirted with the idea of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' as one way of overcoming the apparent incapacity of the liberal capitalist democracy to handle the climate crisis in any way whatsoever. I will not go

into that idea here, but instead combine it with an idea by the Italian thinker Paolo Virno: 'The communism of capitalism'. Virno argues that inherent in the development of post-industrial capitalism, a range of elements from communism is injected into capitalism, by for instance the Nordic well-fare states, to soften a brutal, hard-line liberalism.

Atlas has now unpacked a huge light-projector and erects it just behind the island. As he turns it on, the island looks like a film-set, casting everything in a stark white light.

The artist/researcher:

So let's try – in the spirit of our absurd quest for a hopeful change here – to apply these ideas to the problems we are discussing here today. If HOPENHAGEN is defined by the inverted cloning of democratic opposition, then it can be seen as the new 'dictatorship-of-the-proletariat-of-capitalism'.

Dictatorship-of-the-proletariat-of-capitalism?

Maybe it is here, we can glimpse a possible way out. If we can't give up our role as consumers – and there is apparently no sight of this – and if our capacities as critical participants in contemporary democracy is completely inflated, somebody else has to take responsibility.

HOPENHAGEN made a huge effort at mainstreaming all our differences, smoothing out our critique and making us all look in the same direction. If this kind of soft dictatorship is necessary to engage us all – the whole mega mass of global consumers – in the climate questions, to give us all hope and to give us power enough to influence change, then why not give it a try?

Hmmm...how far have they reached, while I have been standing here talking? Will they make it?

Atlas, Helena and Buddha are still travelling across the floor, now entering the last third of the floor. Helena is now moving around the island and in the crass light of the projector a strange dramatic atmosphere is created among the debris of the green pamphlets, the empty cola cans and all the littered emballage.

As the island comes to a halt, this atmosphere intensifies. The audience now stand in a large circle looking at the scenario, the sound resonances calm down now and Atlas and Helena finds a slow groove of small

*movements and everything seems to settle. A long
contemplative moment evolves. Then it stops. The journey
is over.*

THE END

Notes:

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/user/hopenhagen>, included here as Appendix 4.1.5.4.

² www.hopenhagen.org

³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/dec/16/evo-morales-hugo-chavez>