

TASTE THE NEW MINDSET

HOW CAN CULTURAL EVENTS HELP TO SHAPE SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES OF TOMORROW?

DO WE SEE SIGNS INDICATING A NEW MINDSET? MEET SOME OF THE CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS OF THE URBAN SCENE OF COPENHAGEN.

BY MADELEINE KATE MCGOWAN,
FICTION PIMPS/ HOUSE OF FUTURES

It is in the way he places himself in the room, it is in the way the roads are drawn. It is in the way the lights are located, it is in the way the coffee is served. It is in the tiniest detail and in the grandest pattern – our mindset, that inner place we spring from, the color which shapes our world.

A mindset, also known as a paradigm, a set of assumptions, methods or systems held by one person or a group of people which is so established that it creates a powerful incentive to continue to implement or accept prior actions, choices or methods. So sometimes we have to stop for a moment, look at ourselves in the world, and look at the world working on us. What is our mindset? How does our mindset manifest itself in our everyday lives? To actually start transforming this world into a sustainable world of tomorrow, we need to truly understand the mindset we are a part of and thereby start re-articulating it into the mindset of the new. The mindset we work from can be difficult to be conscious of, as it often consists of qualities that we take for granted and uphold as the only way of being and acting in the world. At every stage of life, the collective mindset unfolds itself every day, as a grand pattern, it is sown and blooms in each of us. So how do we go about this? How do we start shaping, acting and recognizing this new mindset?

REACHING OUT

During the In100Y-seminars, it became clear that there was a strong

sense of need for a shift of mindset in the world. But as easy as it is to articulate a need for a shift, it is just as difficult to articulate the specific qualities of the new mindset. We took the first steps on the journey of 'In100 Years', but the journey has only just begun. As a part of the journey onward, I felt inspired to start asking questions, researching and motivating one of my local communities, the music and cultural scene of Copenhagen, to reflect upon the new mindset. Just as we in House of Futures designed the In100Y-seminars to be intertwined with the arts, I find it interesting to cast light on how cultural events can help to shape the sustainable societies of tomorrow. I started calling people who seemed to me to be some of the key shapers, players and visionaries of the urban scene, all representing different ways of shaping the city through culture. The main questions in my heart and on my mind were: Do we see signs indicating a new mindset? How will musicians, venues, artists and creatives manifest the new mindset? How is this mindset facilitated and how is it maintained? I wasn't really expecting any clear answers, only pointers towards the shadows of what is to come. And at the same time, hoping to move the reflections from 'In100Years' onto the streets of my city.

THE CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS

Through the chilly but sunny streets, I found my way to home-cooked Indian food, milk in a glass and strong incense at Esben Weile Kjær's secret hiding place on Nørrebro. To me, Esben represents a new generation

of spirited youth with a strong light to manifest, so I was eager to let him share his thoughts. As we dived into the reflections about a new mindset, he underlined that:

“Over the last couple of years, I've picked up a stronger sense and need in my environment, for a deeper reflection about the way we deal with cultural events in general. I believe that we, as cultural entrepreneurs, have a huge responsibility, because we are shapers of other peoples' future movements. We must be visionaries on behalf of the city we are a part of. In the past, it wasn't cool to be a visionary with an attitude. People were sort of 'Could you cool it down a bit', but I think its changing now. We must dare to do things that seem impossible, and I think reflection on a deeper level should replace consumer culture.”

At the beginning of 2012, Esben released a text on the blog 'I Do Art', which inspired many people to start polishing their sense of where they were going: “I hope that all entrepreneurs, large as well as small and across boundaries, will be capable of elevating themselves above the at times assertive urban environment, and view cultural events and the world in general in a larger perspective. Where do we want to go? And how do we get there? Not only as single individuals or organizations but also as a unified movement.”

As a part of the new mindset, Esben acknowledges the importance of the courage to take social responsibility: “When you are an entrepreneur creating cultural events, you are also a creator of social communities, which



PHOTO: MATIAS JENSEN

Esben Weile Kjær, Founder of Mejlgade for Mangfoldighed. 'At a very young age I chose to take responsibility and by doing so, created the city of my dreams through cultural events. I choose to believe instead of fearing. I believe in DIY and learning by doing with all of my heart!', says Esben.



PHOTO: SØREN W. OSCOOD

Carla Camilla Hjort, CEO Art Rebels. "I've always been a dreamer and I've been blessed with the ability to turn my dreams into reality. I overcome fears and challenge myself every day. The unknown inspires me. The known comforts me. Every day is a new beginning full of potential and possibilities. When I stay present I see these!" says Carla.

come to have their own sets of moral codes. If you create events where the whole focus is on drinking and senseless techno, then that will manifest in the movements in the community you create. Instead, we need to raise the level of reflection and start experimenting with new event designs. When you have reached a point where you have a strong influence and voice, then it's extremely important that you are conscious of the place you act from in the world. If you are not conscious of this, then what you activate has no clear direction and you have no control over the outcome."

Carla Camilla Hjort, CEO at Art Rebels, agrees: "If we can get more and more artists to take a position and use the abilities that they have to communicate and get people to reflect and interact, then it will legitimize culture in relation to the mindshift and the responsibility that culture ought to take. The pace today and consumer culture means that art and cultural events have become more and more superficial."

QUALITIES OF THE NEW MINDSET

On a street corner in the old French quarter of the city, over a coffee and several cigarettes, I ask Carla, which qualities she holds important as part of the new mindset. 'It is important that we start to truly acknowledge spirituality in our approach to business. We are all intertwined, so even though I believe in the power of the individual, I am conscious at the same that we are a part of each other and the fact that we constantly affect one another. This is important to acknowledge. We are so used to experiencing ourselves as separate from everything else, because we know our bodies are separate entities, but truly we are all just a part of this mass of energy – one big bowl of energy soup.'

When I push her to be even more specific, she points me down a new alley: "Empathy. Willpower. You could

also say your inner warrior. The ability to live in an era of extreme change requires your inner warrior, and it requires you to take full responsibility for your life. In today's society there's a pill for every ill, but we need to put this mentality behind us and take full responsibility for ourselves and each other. We don't have the clarity to take responsibility for others before we do it for ourselves."

Carla is very focused on how to get cultural creatives to think in sustainable business. "I know how challenging it is. To me, sustainability is about creating products and services, which make sense for value in the world, at the same time as generating an economy that you can live off. You just have to use your capital to do good in the world! I believe that capitalism and particularly in the creative branches and environments, is seen as something ugly and frightening – as something that we need to get as far away as possible from. This mentality has meant that creatives are generally really bad businessmen, and I think there needs to be quantum leap in this thought process. One should not be worried about selling out or being the bad guy just because one starts to earn money – as long as one does not accumulate money, but passes it on, so that it can continue to create value in the world."

"There is a tendency for us to identify with what we are, what we do, who we are married to, who our family is etc. This is dangerous, because you cannot always make decisions based on our own inner truth. Instead, we need to accept that even if you lose everything, you will still be a happy and satisfied human being because you are alive. All too often, we gather in groups that we feel share our values or tastes, but it is conceivable that we may be able to group ourselves more in relation to some new rituals. Cultural events can support a mindshift if we think the interdisciplinary in. Putting people

with different qualities and competencies together makes a difference in relation to innovative concept development. Taking people who do not obviously match each other and gathering them into concept development groups will, I believe, become more and more relevant."

Jakob Fuglsang from CO2 E-Race and The Danish Cultural Institute – and also a participant of the In100Y-seminars – is sure about the need for a mind shift. He describes the specific qualities of the new mindset as follows: "Essentially, it is about awareness and believing that you create your own reality. This reality we are in, we have chosen what we are experiencing, so if we choose to have a mindshift we will have it, if we choose to have a positive mind-shift we will have that. All the projections we are seeing are disasters. If we start projecting the positive, then the world will be positive, and if we show solutions there will be solutions. It's a shift of believing that this is possible, we have to move away from believing that we can't make a difference. Individuals have a hard time making the shift, because people need positive messages and positive leaders. Right now what we are being told is that there is no future, everything is going down, so we need new and positive visions."

Madeleine Kate McGowan is a performance artist, musician and partner in Fiction Pimps and House of Futures. She also has a BA in visual communication. Contact her at madeleinekate@houseoffutures.dk