Tackling climate change with open public data at **TECHFESTIVAL 2019**

15. September 2019

This past week Danish Design Centre was fortunate to get the opportunity to contribute to this year's Techfestival in Copenhagen; a highly emerging international technology gathering of roughly 15.000+ critical thinkers and doers from the technology space and adjacent fields.

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Our contribution was to lead an all-day design-driven

session with 80 people to explore public data using a design sprint-approach. An activity which was subsequently covered in a large article in national newspaper Berlingske. Specifically we had been asked to develop and lead one of the festival's 'summits' (= full day workshops) which is a series of events addressing pressing topics in technology. Concretely we were asked to head a summit to explore the potential of public data - under the title Public Data Summit - which we decided to do by zooming in on one of its most pressing use cases of public data: To explore the potential of using it to tackle climate change.

In order to sharpen this specific focus we furthermore got the opportunity to bring on board one of the biggest experts in the field of 'impact tech' (and one of my long-time international collaborators), Benjamin Tincq, as co-host. Moreover we secured a stellar speaker line-up that included Martin von Haller Grønbæk from Bird & Bird, Kiann Stenkjær Hein from PUBLIC.io, Camilla Rygaard-Hjalsted from Digital Hub Denmark and Anne Højer Simonsen from Danish Meteorological Institute - as well as founders from some of the leading startups in the field: Tomer Shalit from ClimateView, Jeppe Bech Madsen from LassoX and Olivier Corradi from Tomorrow.

Full house – and design-driven approach
This theme was extremely popular and the event was sold out way in advance (80 participants). It brought together data strategists, practitioners, entrepreneurs, decision makers and visionaries from both the supply and demand side of data. To make the most of our time together, the session was put together to be a design-driven, hands-on deep dive in which we set out to ideate new ideas, design new experiments and plot new visions for leveraging our public data into concrete climate-friendly business solutions. Solutions that could potentially spread globally and scale swiftly, and which would hold the potential to make a dramatic difference in saving our planet.

Public data and the climate
So what is public data and why is it a key component in tackling climate change?

Public data is data produced by society and held by the

government about everything from mobility, environment, public spending, consumption and much more. It represents a huge resource for further re-utilization: By giving citizens, companies and other organisations access and allowing any use, for instance, to develop new public services and new products, it is estimated that a country like Denmark could achieve an increase in BNP of 34 billion DKK per annum (March 2019, Public Accounts Committee/Rigsrevisionen) – the EU and the rest of the world, even more than that.

But more importantly, public data might be one of the main keys to tackle climate change. As one of the key pillars in what is often referred to as "impact tech", ie. the systematic use of technology to boost sustainable business for the greater good of society. Public data gives us new opportunities to develop solutions which are not only creating economic growth, but doing so in a radically new way that is both environmentally and socially sustainable. Data in general – and public data in particular – sits at the very centre of this new, impact-driven vision for developing business.

The outcome included ideas for experiments in behavioral nudging through CO2-consumption apps, new transparent city planning tools, retail product labeling systems and even a plan for changing climate discourse worldwide through massive lobbying in order to instigate massive change.

Press coverage and other writings
As mentioned above, national newspaper Berlingske covered the summit and made a large article under the title 'Data om danskerne er 34 milliarder værd: Sådan høster man pengene'. Another one of my good acquaintances and experts from the international data field, Ton Zijlstra, also took part in the event and did a nice write-up on his blog.