Artistic and cultural practices in urban spaces: Law, justice, contestation

Matilda Arvidsson, Lund University
Peter Bengtsen
Art and cultural practices in urban spaces: Law, justice, contestation
Matilda Arvidsson, Faculty of Law, & Peter Bengtsen Art History and Visual Studies, Lund University

For the 2013 Critical Legal Conference, we sent out a call for papers which dealt with different perspectives on artistic and cultural practices in the transitional and contested territory of urban public space. With nearly 50 abstracts received from all over the world, the response to our call was overwhelming. Ethnographers, sociologists, art historians, architects, artists, and cultural entrepreneurs wanted to engage with law. Interestingly, judging from the abstracts, legal scholars seemed less concerned with engaging in a discussion of artistic expressions, as few responded to the call. Departing from this experience we seek to approach the urban space, art and cultural practices as these bring out questions of law, justice and contestation.

We will thus begin our presentation at the Law and Art workshop in Copenhagen by reflecting on some of the experiences and ideas derived from our stream at the Critical Legal Conference. We will briefly discuss some of the papers which were submitted to our stream in order to elucidate on the variety of topics which fall under the very broad notion of art and cultural practice in urban space. Subsequently, we will propose that the idea (and ideal) of spatial justice may be an interesting way of thinking artistic and cultural practices together with law justice and contestation together in urban spaces. We will present a number of concrete examples of artistic expressions in public space which can be related to the idea(l) of spatial justice and which also actualise different juridical considerations in relation to the space which they inhabit.