



Arts Festivals Summit 2024 Usedom

Festivals and environmental sustainability workshop:

"The Green Euro: Net Zero, Cash Positive"

14 May 2024, 10.30 AM - 12.00 PM, Kaiserhof Hotel, Heringsdorf

Facilitated by: This session is facilitated by Peter Florence and Tamar Brüggemann, the initiators from the European Festivals Forest.

Contributors: Shahidul Alam, Photographer, writer and human rights activist; Alys Jones, BBC Proms; Matteo Penazzi, Lugo Music Festival; Mikko Laamanen, Research Professor on Technology and Sustainability at Oslo Metropolitan University.

Introduction

This workshop highlighted a number of ways in which festivals can be made greener and earn money. Peter Florence introduced the workshop, explaining that very simple climate actions, within everyone's reach, can help to make festivals greener, be cash positive and bring money. The workshop started with presentations of some festivals and was followed by a brainstorm, similar to the session of last year at the Arts Festivals Summit Peralada / Girona that proved to be useful as many participants picked up some of the other ideas, implemented them, and enjoyed them. There are many practices that work and have economic benefits.

Part 1: presentations of festivals

Tamar Brüggemann - Wonderfeel (Netherlands)

- BMW sponsored the festival and landed 5 electric cars to transport the artists from the station to the venue. It was easy to persuade BMW because they wanted to show their cars to the audience. BMW also gave a green battery, which is found in their electric cars, to run one of the festival's stages on it.
- Wonderfeel offers only vegetarian catering backstage and for the audience. This decision helped the caterers to have less cost for meat and extra income from the food they sell.
- Wonderfeel tested a compost as the festival was using plates, forks, knives, etc. that are biodegradable and could be thrown with food leftovers. Overnight, a supplier was transforming the waste into compost, and the day after the festival sold the compost to the audience to use in their garden. This action was supposed to cost about €2.000 euros but in fact, it costed nothing

as people were buying their own waste. It was an excellent way of raising people's awareness on the issue of waste, and circular economy.

Shahidul Alam - Photographer, writer and human rights activist (Bangladesh)

- Shahidul questioned the definition of sustainability itself. The financial aspect should not be the only criteria of sustainability. The question is more about the vision and if the vision is sustainable or not. Sometimes, in the process of staying alive, some organisations move away from this vision which can have a long-term damaging result.
- He encouraged festivals to question themselves if they are inclusive enough and that everyone is able to attend their events. Shahidul shared the example of one of his first exhibitions. He invited all his friends to come and see it: corporate clients, people in the art world but also concierges and caretakers in the companies to whom he gave VIP cards. None of the latter went because they were not sure they would have been let in by the guard. The gallery didn't have any rule of preventing working class people from entering but it's more about pre-conceptions that people can have and the physical barrier of the gallery itself. A solution is to re-shape the structure and to take the gallery to the people, to present artworks outside from the usual places, creating mobile exhibitions on vans that went to school play fields, sports fields, boats across the river... This initiative created high visibility that art galleries never had because of the elite government spaces in which they are based. His exhibition had great exposure and convinced the media to get on board, as well as other artists which allowed him to track sponsorship, and use the same component for other events of commissions like for UNICEF.

Alys Jones - BBC Proms (UK)

BBC Proms has a large production team because they have TV and radio broadcasting on top of the main running of the concert during the festival. BBC Proms has tried to encourage the change of behaviour and encourage their staff to adapt slightly ways of doing things and measure them as moving on forward. Alys shared some examples:

- Stop providing plastic water bottles and encourage the staff to bring their own and fill it up.
- The meat free catering is something the festival is introducing and trying to roll out more widely. It helps with the negotiation on catering costs and it's greener. They have veggie Mondays now and will try to extend it to Tuesdays.
- Not printing paperwork anymore which allows them to save money.
- Encourage people to take public transport or use bicycles.

BBC Proms faced some resistance from staff who didn't understand these changes so the festival brought all the initiatives together in a green memo sent to everyone explaining why things had changed.

Matteo Penazzi - Lugo Music Festival (Italy)

- Lugo Music Festival is a festival presenting many different activities over 2 months. Matteo has created a map for all the events happening, integrating natural heritage and cultural heritage to be discovered in the region. The map navigates the audience through a whole story with trees being at the centre and sharing their history and particularities that could have to do with nature, history, legends. The map exists in Italian and English so that tourists can take advantage of it and have fun. People can do many things with this map. You can invite people to ride a bike on a Sunday morning and have a picnic. You can invite schools to share it with families and invite

them to this quarry. The trees are by their route to school and back home. It's a good way to attract people who like sports. It's also a project for people between 0 to 100 years old.

See the map here: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1_zp-Dbqxyf_otQtXl3_KdH8Y0zRdGXg&ll=44.46658099950765%2C11.896492561099983&z=11

- The map gave Matteo the chance to include this project in the conversation with his actual and potential sponsors. He mentioned that it's not just about how much money you can raise with the map but that it helps building a community that identifies with the map and the festival. It brings interesting conversations and sponsors like the idea. This year, he managed to attract 3 more sponsors and all the others who used to sponsor only 2 events are willing to give more.

Mikko Laamanen - Research Professor on Technology and Sustainability at Oslo Metropolitan University (Finland)

- Mikko agreed on the need to get ahead of regulations and put in place incentives to implement a sustainable development strategy. In many cases, the incentives either don't exist or go in the opposite direction. He has worked with the theatres and companies that are the most established in Finland and have the most resources. When they receive state funding, they are not obliged to draw up a sustainability report, which is paradoxical because they are the ones doing the most in terms of sustainability.
- Business arts intersection: it's about having an idea, a vision, the connection between your sponsors, your audience and yourself. When defining your sustainability strategy, your image and goals, you should also think about who are your sponsors and have a strategic selection of sponsors. There's a reputational risk and image alignment that needs to be taken into consideration. This also has to do with how your audiences define you. For example, having a British Petroleum as sponsor, it's not going to be a good match for your brand image. It's worth to define yourself, to think about what is your sustainability angle and also understand what the audience is looking at.
- Pricing model for audience: Sustainability pricing can support the ones in need. He developed a ticket price strategy with an opera. Price increases don't really matter for the very wealthy sections of the public. They do matter for the ones buying the cheaper ticket categories, so you can justify slightly cheaper tickets for social sustainability reasons. It would be interesting to test a similar strategy in the framework of festivals.
- Impact of digitalisation: The audience might use their phones for their digital tickets but many people print out the tickets. The question here is not only about how much money you'll save but how much of the sustainability impact you pass on to the consumer. Each action has an impact and sustainability issues are not simple. We sometimes think we do better, but then it might trickle down somewhere. We need to have a more global view.

Peter Florence - European Festivals Forest (UK)

- In a rural setting, you can use boreholes and put a tap to collect water. Hay Festival was selling every year around 2.000 water bottles that were beautifully branded, responsibly made, and generated a net profit of about €15.000.
- Audiences are activists and civilised enough to come to a festival. They care about cultural exchanges and 85-90% of them will say that environmental sustainability is important for them. The more expensive it is to buy oil and gas, the more important, viable and cheap it is to switch to renewable energy sources. Every energy supplier that sells solar or wind power or any other renewable energy will have a cost of ownership for each customer. If they earn €1.000, €2.000 or €3.000 a year, they're quite happy to spend between €30 and €50 to attract new customers. It's

easy to change suppliers today (telephones, energy suppliers, banks). Your audience database is gold for firms selling renewable electricity provision. Hay Festival made €50.000 a year from a company called Good Energy.

- If you encourage your audience to come by bike, you can sell them a festival branded luminescent bag, instead of a baseball cap. It will make them think about your festival every time they use their bikes and it's also free advertisement for your festival throughout the year.
- What people value the most is not the programme but rather the festival experience, for the arts, for the audience atmosphere. People love festivals because they're sharing it with others, they come to enjoy a social experience and have fun. The greatest marketing tool a festival has is the people who have already come, who love the festival and who want to share it with their friends and family. Peter advises not to spend too much time looking for new audiences that you don't know. Instead, look for new audiences that you don't have and that the people who come to your concert know well. Human capital is sustainable. You need to attract 30% of new audiences every year, and you can get 70% of your audience to do it for you.
- Connect to your trees: Hay wanted its audience to take something back home that wasn't a plastic gadget, a T-shirt... The festival worked with Woodland Trust to give them 20.000 trees, which people then took home to plant in their gardens and parks all around Britain. They then created a map of people sending photographs of their trees. These maps are easy to do these days with a GPS, and it exists as a continual advertising campaign for people following the trees.
- The European Forest Festivals was created as a mitigation action to reduce carbon emissions. Peter recommended to ask your audience to add one euro whenever they can because together through the festival it's possible to raise thousands of euros. It's also a strong argument for people to say what they do on the sustainability level. A festival has incredible visibility that most organisations don't have. Investing environmental compliance budget or sustainability communications budget in a festival is a good business.

Peter invited participants to split into groups to discuss and share practical cash positive green things they've done.

Report on discussions

- Festivals organisations like the one in Malta running 11 festivals, can recycle resources within these festivals.
- Communicating on social networks to give visibility to your actions of collaboration between volunteers, services specialising in recycling and sponsors interested in recycling. There's a fascinating example of a BMW battery, and its additionality to a petroleum-based generator. The amount saved by not using traditional oil and using the battery was still considerable.
- Having tickets with attached seats that could be taken by festival-goers to their gardens.
- Reusing venues, materials such as printed vinyl, posters and pieces that have to be installed once every five years instead of every year.
- Festivals have a strong voice and visibility: their advocacy element should not be underestimated. Festivals can be loud, whether it's environmental measures or tourism objectives, the most important environmental action being to stop the war.
- Price and printing of tickets: festivals are moving their sustainability responsibility to the consumer when it comes to printing tickets and programmes. This allows to save money, but is it really being sustainable? The price of tickets can include a sustainability aspect to compensate upstream for what happens downstream, for example to produce the paper on which you print the tickets. Another idea is to have a link with a social project. Part of the ticket price is donated

to a good cause. It's a transfer of image from one to the other. The important thing is to know your audience and whether they print their tickets or use digital tickets. In the latter, it's good to be aware of the environmental impact of having to recharge phones, the footprint of sending digital documents, emails and everything else.

- What value do the artists want to have? It might mean thinking about the sustainability of the festival, positioning it so that it becomes attractive to certain types of artists, depending on their preferences.
- A festival suggested planting trees, but a big part of the problem is getting people to plant these trees. Festivals could work with a volunteer group, which could then have some impact. It's important to know how to manage this kind of thing because if it's not done well, the trees can die.
- Investing in waste: Festivals are interested in these composting machines. It's not a common practice. It would be useful to know where these machines can be found, their price, etc.
- Using collective strength: Festivals have joined forces to persuade public authorities to provide free public transport for all festival ticket holders.
- Flying overseas: Festivals makers need to attend some international events but also invite artists that need to fly in. Festivals can think about a system of limitation. E.g. having a limited amount of flights depending on the size of the country and its position; try do decrease the number of artists coming with long flights.
- Replace gifts like flowers or wine after the concert by giving a tree to the artists to plant them on their behalf.

Picture:

