Roskilde Business College

Paper on Sustainability and Event Management
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1. Sustainability as the new approach to events and innovation

The global development has set new standards for what qualifies as fair and constructive events. The citizens of Europe are critically gazing on the consumption of resources in everyday life. The economic crisis and the general awareness of the environment and consumption are also evident when it comes to events.

When an organizer wants to market events to a wider audience, the overall message will be central in itself, but an underlying agenda will be the critical societal decision as to whether the resources used for the event can be estimated to be used in a sensible and environmentally responsible way. (Rasmussen, 2010, p28)

Events reflect the attitudes of a society, and at the same time they are terrific opportunities to be role models for the participants and their attitudes towards society and life in general. To give an example Roskilde Festival (RF) is a role model annually for 30,000 volunteers working there. Participating in the festival, the volunteers are learning to understand how and under which conditions a future work might be carried out (Hanke, 2010, p151).

At the same time, an event is also a model for acceptable behaviour. For instance Roskilde Festival has promoted sustainability over the last 3-4 years, and becomes in this respect a model to be followed by the 130,000 people who participate in the festival every year.
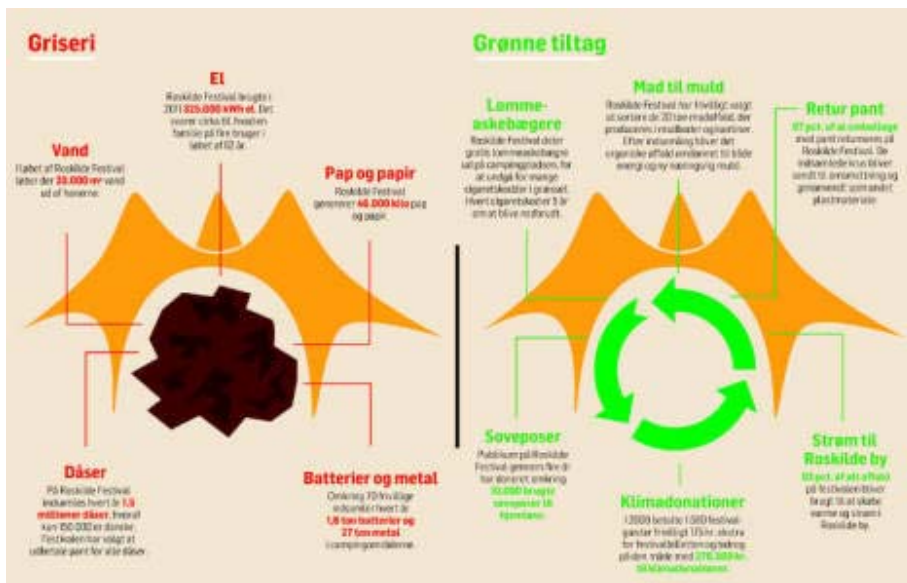

Figure 1: From mess towards green initiatives - Roskilde Festival is less polluting than a city of similar size. (Source: www.politiken.dk, June 2012)

An event can be defined in many ways, but to us, an event is planned and implemented for the audience to either be present at the event or to gain new insights and experiences through participation (Nielsen, 2008, p33) .

Experiences are thus a pivotal point in organizing events. It is therefore important that the experiences are designed in a way that encourages participants to be an active part in the event while at the same time offering

them the opportunity to learn and to be creative. For an event to become a good event, it has to give us some knowledge and experiences we would never have thought about, if we had not attended (Jantzen, 2008, p27). Hence, you as the organizer must be able to master the design of experiences in order to achieve the goals of the event.

When designing an event, we also have to design a business model. The term 'business model' applies even if the event is based on a non-profit approach. In this sense there is no difference between strategy thinking in private, public or non-profit organizations (Kaplan, 2004, p7).

Since 2004, Roskilde Business College (RBC) has been offering courses, which develop the students' skills and expertise in mastering the creation and management of events. Our experiences stems from programs at Bachelor's level, which focuses on the Leisure Management and Marketing Management. The description of participation and creativeness above corresponds with our experiences, and the modular design of the module Sustainability and Event Management is therefore based on Best Practices.

During three years RBC and RF have worked together to create a course for the volunteer leaders in Project Management in Practice. A total of 75 volunteer leaders have attended the courses, giving a credit of 10 ECTS in 1st semester Bachelor's level.

The experiences of these courses have contributed to the development of a model for the management of volunteers, which is also used for self-management and management of people managing themselves. The challenge is that, when you try to manage volunteers, you can only use positive sanctions, since the negative, such as reducing the "salary", being transferred or fired have no effect, as volunteers are not hired in a normal sense. The trick is to find the balance between administrative management and communicative leadership. The model is included in the textbook on the subject Management in Practice (Skriver, 2013 p132).

2. Important elements of the new approach

The pivotal points of Event Management are innovation and an insight into Design og Experiences in order to create the right value proposition for the target group. The process of Value Creation requires a systematic approach to creating value through a distinct mix of elements catering to the needs of a customer segment (Osterwalder, 2013).
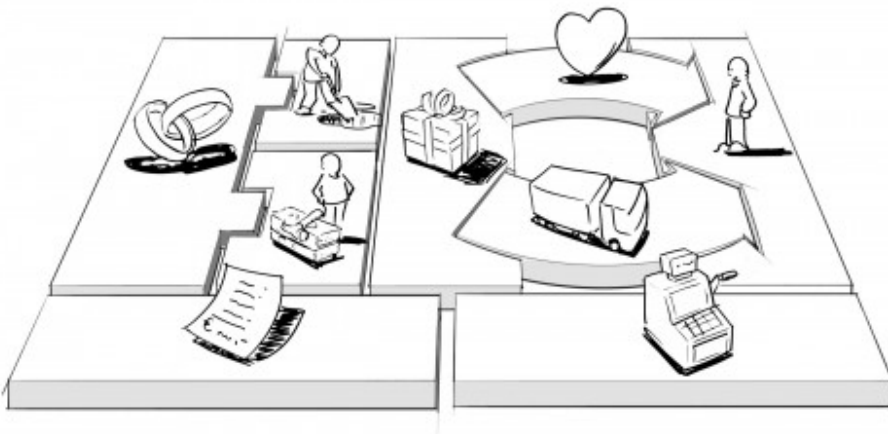

Figure 2: Business Model Canvas – Value Proposition is the present in the middle (Osterwalder, 2013)

A so-called Business Model Canvas forms the base of an innovative process in which all participants in the development can follow the flow, running from the Key Partners, Key Resources and Key Activities to the left, into the Value Proposition in the middle, and then further on to the Customer Relations and Distribution Channels until it reaches the Customer Segment far right. Such a Canvas opens for participants' involvement and the Co-Creation of the event's Value Proposition.

The mindset of sustainability can be seen as a corresponding flow of activities from left to right in the Business Model Canvas. In this paper, we consider sustainability as part of the basis of Key Resources and Key Activities to be considered in the creation of a Value Proposition.

In any event, there is a purpose and some experiences that the participants are supposed to take part in. The focal point is thus comparable to a Value Proposition in the Business Model. We might say, that we consider this in the same way as an activity that aims to make a profit. Creating a Business Model for an event is therefore very central to defining which messages about purpose and experiences from which the event and can be marketed.

We will in the following sections look at the elements in building an event: Sustainability, Business Model Innovation, Self-leadership and marketing via the Event DNA.

2.1 Sustainability

Global climate change has become a reality and made it imperative for environmental sustainability to be placed firmly on the international agenda. It is therefore important for events, marketed in the public space, to appear with environmental consciousness in the minds of the participants.

If an organizer wishes to market events to a wider audience, the message of the event will be central in itself, but an underlying agenda will be the critical societal decision as to whether the resources used for the event can be estimated to be used in a sensible and environmentally sound way (Rasmussen, 2010, p28), as we have said earlier. The question is how to judge what an environmentally sound manner could be?

To answer this question we must first define the term 'environmentally sound manner' ie. sustainability. We can either look at sustainability as being something in which the conservation of natural resources, reneweable and non-renewable resouces alike, is emphasised, or in an economic scope where man made resources play a significant role in being sustainable.
Sustainability and the use of resources can thus be seen as being either weakly or strongly sustainable.

A weak sustainability allows trade-offs between the natural and the man-made capital. Thus, the use of non-renewable resources or destruction of renewable resources reduces the amount of natural resources. To the extent, that this can be offset with man-made resources, it will be compatible with weak sustainability. (Petersen, 2011, P122)

The strong sustainability however, requires that the amount of natural capital cannot decline over time, thus being a much more restrictive approach. For example, in the case of deforestation, it is possible to replant trees and thus maintain the balance, apart from the fact it can be difficult to recreate the same biodiversity. In this example we see how difficult it is to separate the natural capital from the man made, as they mutually support each other. Both logging and reforestation is dependent on both types of capital. Seen in this light, it becomes difficult to maintain the distinction between the weak and strong sustainability (Petersen, 2011, P124).

This distinction between weak and strong sustainability is based on the fact that nature has value in relation to satisfying human needs, but actually the real value could be the fact, that we appreciate places, landscapes and objects as historical instances, that have a broader meaning in human life. This means that although increased logging and subsequent reforestation actually would create a larger overall natural and anthropogenic capital, we destroy things and places that in other ways are more valuable to us. (Petersen, 2011, p130)

Sustainability is thus not a definite concept that just simply can be involved in designing an event. There are many factors to take into consideration when looking at the stakeholders surrounding the creation of an event. It will be important to get answers to how each of the stakeholder groups such as authorities, investors, partners, helpers and participants (customers) look at the concept of sustainability. It is not certain, that following the weak sustainability – always is the best solution – although it often is the quickest solution!

2.2 Business Model Innovation

At the beginning of this chapter we highlighted the need for the use of a Business Model Canvas consisting of 9 Building Blocks as a way to guide you through the various topics. There are many approaches to the design of a Business Model. We have chosen this approach because it is well structured and well defined, and relates to the work flow in the creation of an event.

We have defined the creation of a Business Model in Event Management to be an innovative process with the purpose to create the right Value Proposition for the target group. This is the Value Creation creating the values and experiences of an event that customers or participants are expecting.

Often participants do not know exactly what experience they want, and this requires a systematic approach to value creation. The systematic approach can help to design the framework and values within which participants can be active and create their own good experiences and surprises, which they afterwards highly appreciate (Jantzen, 2008, p27).

This paper focuses on sustainability as an important part of this Value Creation, and as we have seen above, it is important to clarify with its surroundings how sustainability is understood, and how it can be interpreted in the upcoming event.
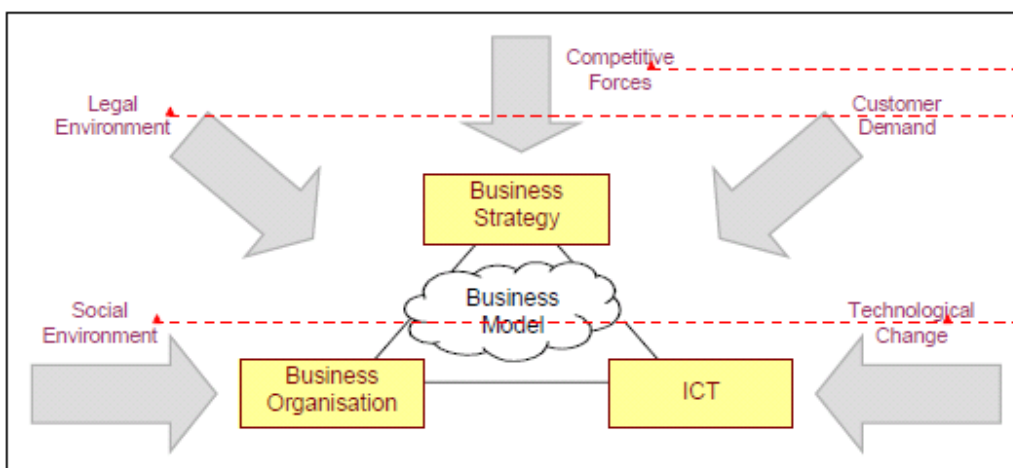

Figure 3: The surroundings when creating a Business Model
(Osterwalder, 2005, p15)

This figure shows, that the different areas in the environment may have diverging views on sustainability. The value created in a future event must therefore be able to provide the foundation to underpin all areas. We can consider the Legal and Technological Environments as relatively "hard" and inflexible in their approach, while Social, Competitive and Customer Environments can be relatively "soft" and flexible. This means that in the creation of value in connection with the event these areas can be difficult to explore and exploit.

Event Managers very often choose firstly to create the concept of the Business Triangle, consisting of Business Strategy, Business Organisation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Based on this triangle you can secondly launch a value creation in the Business Modelling Proces in cooperation with the surroundings.

You can choose to use a form of co-creation, where stakeholders from local communities are invited along with representatives from the participating group or groups, to be involved in an innovative process. A Business Model becomes a business plan that has been systematically designed and can design and implement strategy, organization and systems in relation to the constant pressures arising from the environment (Osterwalder, 2005, p14).

The innovative process that precedes the creation of a Value Proposition can be initiated from the environments thus forming itself on the basis of the identification of the expectations and demands, or from within the Business Triangle, where organization, strategy and ICT is seen as the focal point, based on which you as event manager can create the best possible value proposition for the participants in the upcoming event.

It is impossible to determine from which of the 9 building blocks the innovative process starts. It can be innovation in the Value Proposition, operating model or business system architecture (Lindgardt, 2009, p6). Innovation can also be based on customer needs and requirements or in the key processes and resources we have available. Finally, the innovation may start with pressure from the environment, such as a competing event forcing us to think in new ways.

Regardless of how the process is approached, it is difficult to hit exactly the right Value Proposition in the first attempt. Especially as a newly established event, you are likely to have to revise its Business Model up to four times before customers are satisfied and the event is proceeding as planned. To be an Event Manager you have to focus just as much on learning and adjusting as to implementing the actual event (Johnson, 2008, p10).

2.3 Self leadership

As an Event Manager is not possible to be a manager or a leader towards all parties involved. Often an event has a lot of volunteers included in the organization and they can be defined as being difficult to command and to control. This is based on the fact, that they do not like to be managed when they voluntarily make themselves available for the organization of an event.

Therefore we need to look into how to be able to manage self-management, which is based on the fact that the manager can provide a certain administrative framework, and within this framework the management of self-management takes place through communication with the volunteers that have to be able to manage themselves. (Sorensen, 2005)

Self-management of your own decisions is in itself a very fluid concept. This does not in itself tell us anything about how responsible you are or how big your decision area is in reality. Hence there is a need for a model that can handle varying degrees of self-management. The model in Figure 4 is a result of the training for volunteer leaders in RF during three winters, where the challenges of managing the 30,000 volunteers during the festival have been intensively discussed.

Management of Self-Management		
	Administrative management (External management)	**Communicative management (Internal management)**
Individual interests	Administrative conflict management (Management of inputs) • Terms of volunteers • Written report • Salaries, benefits etc..	Communicative conflict management (Self-management) • Dialogue-based communication • Coaching • Self-evaluation • Self-development • Self-management
Collective interests	Administrative consensus management (Control of output) • Goals - and framework • Contract • Benchmarking	Communicative conflict management (Value-Based Management) • Storytelling • Mentoring • Joint meetings and seminars

Figure 4: Tools for management of varying degrees of self-management.
Source: Adapted from Danelund, 2005.

Let us look at the two vertical axes in figure 4. The administrative management can also be described as external management, meaning that the frames are set from outside regarding the performance, determining the resources of decentralized budgets and contracts. Administrative tools used to manage individual interests include various

forms of written materials and contracts. Even so a conversation about the frames and goals can help clarifying the inputs and the purpose and control of the outputs.

The communicative management axis can be described as internal management, which means that it is necessary for each volunteer to be able to manage and control themselves - "from the inside" – meaning, that they have to be able to manage without a manager to tell them what to do. The collective value management is primarily to ensure that all employees act on the same values when they make their own interpretations of the situation.

When it comes to management of self-management, it's the top right of figure 4, that is interesting to us. The field is crossed by individual interests and communicative management and thus the term self-management fits well into the picture. As we see in the figure, the idea is that each employee must be able to relate to himself and his own work through self-assessment and also provide self-development.

This internal management of self-governance can only be achieved through the use of a form of communication, where you as a leader recognizes that it is the employee that needs to be able to interpret the messages received from the outside and to be able to act upon it.

This, of course, does not validate the exclusion of the other three fields in figure 4. We cannot turn our backs on the administrative performance goals and rules. Nor can we ignore the event's values, and the value management that takes place. As an event manager you have to maintain a bird's eye view and continually make choices about how to act in each circumstance. The weighing of how much you, in a given situation, must apply from each of the four fields, depends on the your own assessment of how to react in the situation.

That said, a leader would put more emphasis on the communicative management column, when dealing with self-management. In short: "The more self-management you want in your organization, the more communicative management you should use." How to align it relatively to each employee or department depends on a decision taken by the administrative management. In this situation the event manager will have to decide how he is going to manage. Alternatively, the decision can be made by communicative management, where employees are involved in the decision.

2.4 The Event DNA

In connection with event management and executing events, it may be necessary with some tools and guidelines, which will help give the event a distinctive focus and adding an experiential value. According to the above description of the Business Model we call it a Value Proposition.

In recent years, the focus of many industries largely revolved around the experience economy and the creation of events. Activities and events are strongly bound together, and while knowing how the experience economy, as a tool, can contribute in several industries, it is also important to understand how an event can be constructed and understood.

To give a theoretical understanding of how events can be visualized and processed, we have chosen to build on the Danish communications adviser Christian Have, who has developed a model called 'The Event DNA'. This model deals with elements that can determine whether an event will be successful in its communication.

The expression DNA covers how all living organisms genetically are constructed, and in line with this Christian Have emphasizes how an event should also be dissected to identify the individual elements that are present in each event. (Have, p43)

When an event is born, it is based on certain ideas and assumptions, and the event's genome is therefore to some extent given from the start. This does not mean that an event should be seen as a stationary product, but rather as an organism that grows and evolves throughout its life, and as an interaction between the ideas and assumptions that might be around the event. This description goes along very well with the Business Model.

An event is characterized by being, an individual or periodically recurring event, limited in time and space, which is scheduled for the presence or participation of an audience. (Have, p43)

The Event DNA Model proposes nine different elements that the creator ought to take into consideration.

The Event DNA - profile should aim to be:
1st Unique
2nd Historical
3rd Unpredictable
4th Predictable
5th Star Quality
6th Involve the audience
7th Story Telling
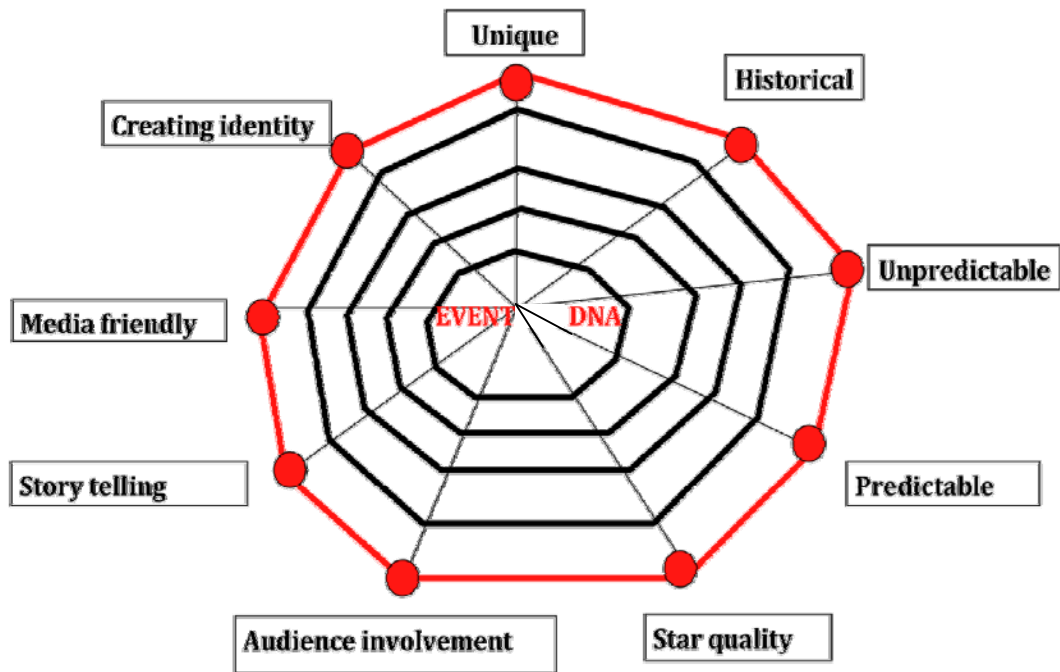8th Media Friendly
9th Identity

Figure 5: The Event DNA Radar

The nine elements exist in an infinity of combinations, which partly are depending on the contents of DNA-elements of the individual event, and the strength of each of the elements.

The point of the strength is, that each of the nine elements is rated on a scale of 1-5. Scale 1 equals "not at all", 3 is equal to "an average degree" and finally 5 equals "very much". (Have, p71). In this way, Christian Have creates a measurable model that provides an overview of successful the communication of the event will be.

In the *event-barometer* point system it is pointed out, that in order to create a high-pressure event, the total score must be between 35 to 45 points. This event will be the optimal utilization of the nine elements, and will therefore create the ideal visibility.

Figure 6: Example of a High- Pressure Event

After giving your event this X-ray analysis, it is clear where the event's strengths and weaknesses are. In this way, the communicator of an event can quickly create an overview of whether the event can create enough visibility to become a success or the radar elements of the Event DNA needs to be improved.

At the same time it is called event DNA - this indicates that there is something solid and continuous in the event's planning. We cannot change the basics, but by locating weaknesses, we can try to shape the outcome in the planning.

It should be emphasized that the event-barometer is based on the contemporary planning and the DNA image will constantly change as networks around the event are being established - it will be part of the action plan to provide analysis of the event's DNA with regular intervals, and to follow and adjust its development.

The method can be used in culture and arts events in a museum context, urban space applications, mobile user experiences, etc., in reality it is only your imagination that sets the limit.

But are these elements representative for how all events should be measured and structured? Christian Haves angle is solely in terms of visibility, and in this context the specified elements is applied. But what happens if it is not only visibility that counts? Would there be other characteristics that must be present in order to create a "good" event in another sense than visibility?

Is it possible to imagine that the DNA strands that according to Have is creating the event, can be supplemented by any other genome - other DNA strands - as a way not only to give visibility to the event, but also to ensure a good event seen in other perspectives. Is visibility equal to success or is being visible only a part of the road to success?

In a culture where everyone is fighting for a place to promote and communicate their own projects, there will be a higher need than before, to focus on the identity you want to create. (Have, p163)

It is therefore important that the event can promote the feeling of the relationship and intimacy - the event must be personally committed to the costumer and allow the costumer to develop a personal obligation in relation to the event. Therefore, promoting an event on an experience dimension and the creation of identities has become an even more important dimension.

What happens if the creator or communicator of an event measures the event-barometer from other elements, or adds elements to the existing model, or replaces any of the nine existing with new ones?

Is it possible to set up a framework that says that there should be nine strands of DNA, BUT that the creator of the event itself must choose which ones?

Are certain elements fixed in order to obtain visibility? Would it be sufficient to use the elements audience involvement, uniqueness, media friendly, and the creation of identity from Haves model, and then define the remaining five elements according to the specific event? Selecting these four elements from Have will ensure the visibility of the event and by adding up to nine, it will still be possible to use the scale of whether the event manages to score enough to be a "high-pressure event".

Elements providing a better understanding of how the construction of a specific event might be for example: CSR, sustainability, information, emotions, learning, escapist, aesthetic, guidance, recognition, surprise, or a completely different element.

3. How to get the new thinking started?

The introduction of sustainability in event management introduces a design constraint when designing an experience for an event. At the same time, this design constraint can be seen as a framework that provides challenges in order to find new ways to give the corresponding new and unique experiences.

The key point for the module 'Sustainability and Event Management' is to see experience design based on sustainability and to create a value proposition that is attractive to the customer segment.

The idea behind the Business Model Canvas is based on Co-Creation. One approach to co-create a business model behind an event is to invite participants and other stakeholders to the project team (Note that the term Business Model applies even when designing a non-profit event). However, the event can also be planned in such a way that participants will co-create their own experience when they attend the event. As we have previously mentioned, the best experiences come from when the participants are actively involved (Jantzen, 2008, p27).

A prerequisite to allow co-creation is a thorough process of innovation, experience design and the creation of a sustainable business model. The first 3 modules in Figure 3 are thus essential to launch the process.

To us the sustainability mindset is also required in terms of marketing the event. This is especially true when it comes to regional stakeholders who we want to support the upcoming event. This sounds easy but requires, as we see it, a proactive alignment of expectations between the different parties involved. This balancing should take place continuously in the process and should be systematic so that the individual elements of the proactive evaluation can be maintained from one time to the next.

Considering the succes Roskilde Festival has had by involving local and regional stakeholders, you could make the argument for RF to be:

'a grassroots movement that has grown and matured enough to create a balance between regional attachment, international branding, camping, charity and rock music. The basic values are so strong that it is possible to recruit thousands of volunteers for the large common project every year'

3.1 Example of Sustainability in Event Management

This example stems from the Roskilde Festival's magazine called A City, 2012:

'At Roskilde Festival we inform our audience of the consequences of their behaviour and encourage them to act in environmentally-friendly ways. For example, many of them bike to the festival instead of taking the car. And when they see a car on the festival site, it is powered by electricity. During the festival, they generate their own electricity and live in carbon neutral areas.

They eat vegetarian food with biodegradable cutlery. And not least, they recycle everything that can be recycled. In 2011, 1,000,000 styrofoam cups were recycled. This is equivalent to the insulation used in a 3-bedroom detached family house.

We have created an enthusiastic audience aware of sustainability issues who are willing to try green possibilities that can be transformed to their lives outside the festival. This fervour must be utilized. Roskilde Festival is a laboratory for new green thinking. The festival audience started out as curious participants and have become active co-creators who take still greater part in the development of environmental innovation.

We are an eight-day long interactive festival experience and Roskilde Festival's brand helps turn caring for the environment into something positive and festive. The key to real change in regards to the climate, the environment and sustainability lies, in other words, with the interaction between Roskilde Festival and its audience in the thousands, we need to reach them in the right way if we want truly change attitudes and actions.' (Roskilde Festival, 2012)

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