

Photo by Faramarz Gosheh



## CITY, COUNTRY

Gothenburg, Sweden

## DAILY CAPACITY

35,000

## SITE

Slotsskogen, a park in the heart of the city

## CAMPING

No

## NUMBER OF DAYS

3

## ESTABLISHED IN

2007

## GENRE

Indie Rock, Hip Hop and Electronic

## CHALLENGE & SOLUTION

Reducing their CO<sub>2</sub> footprint by going 100% vegetarian



## THE PLACE TO BE DURING THE SWEDISH SUMMER

Photo (below) by Hilda Arneback

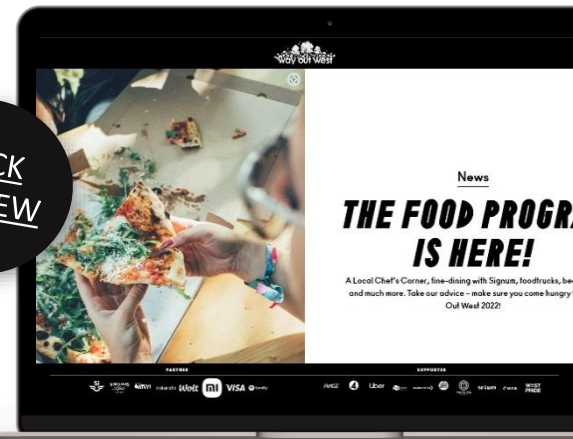
The city of Gothenburg has always valued live music. About 15 years ago, when the local government asked the promotion agency Luger if it was willing to help establish a music festival right in the city centre, the agency didn't think twice. "Back then, it had come to a point where the festival scene in Sweden needed to evolve," says Fredrik "Matazz" Holmstedt, production manager for Way Out West, who has worked for Luger and Live Nation since 2005. So, as a reaction to the old-school camping festivals, Luger created a trendy, urban festival, "hipster, but in a modern way", Holmstedt calls it. No camping, no need for a car.

The site, Slottsskogen, is the leafy and lush heart of Gothenburg. From the park, much of the city is within walking distance. This

comes in handy when, after the festival site has closed at midnight, the party continues in the city's venues as part of the club concept Stay out West. Since 2011, Way Out West Film, the third largest film festival in Sweden, has been another vital part of Way Out West (WoW).

Besides live music, Gothenburg has a strong focus on sustainability. Consequently, creating an eco-certified festival was one of the first demands the authorities made to Luger. In 2013, Way out West became the first music festival in the world to have ISO 20121 certification. This indicates sustainability on three different levels: environmental, economic and social.

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# REDUCING CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS CAUSED BY FOOD AND DRINKS

After its creation in 2007, Way out West quickly gained traction across many platforms. “The festival was trendy and it was very important for people to be there,” Holmstedt says. The team quickly realised that, with their reputation, they had an opportunity to help form people’s opinions and promote values like sustainability and equality. “And, you know, we’re anarchists, old punk rockers, we always question society. All of a sudden people listened to us and actually understood what we were trying to say.”

The team found that food is an important factor when making a festival more sustainable and connecting people to the topic on a casual basis. In 2010, WoW cooperated with the Business School of the University of Gothenburg to investigate the effect the festival has on tourism and the city’s image. Part of this investigation was a CO<sub>2</sub> analysis. The result: 62% of the festival’s CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were caused by its menu. “When we saw how much of the resources we used went into food, we made a bold decision to go all vegetarian in 2012,” Holmstedt recalls.

In 2012, the scientists repeated the study and found that the menu was now responsible for

only 30% of the festival’s emissions. Moreover, although the festival had added another day in 2012, the overall CO<sub>2</sub> footprint was remarkably 40% lower than it had been in 2010. The results were published in the paper ["When a Music Festival Goes Veggie"](#).

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THE CHALLENGE



# GOING VEGETARIAN AND LABELLING THE CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS OF ALL DISHES

Way out West announced their decision to go meat- and fish-free only one day before the festival in 2012. In a time when vegetarianism was rather unheard of in Sweden, they faced backlash. “Everyone thought that this was just a PR trick to get attention. Some parts of the media tried to point us out as the bad guys,” says Holmstedt. On the first day of the 2012 event, a local newspaper even handed out free hotdogs in front of the park’s gates, “so people wouldn’t starve.”

“But the general opinion very quickly made the newspaper look like the bad guy after the people realised that we weren’t telling them what to eat.” According to Holmstedt, the nearest steakhouse is only a 15-minute walk away. “We were just setting an example by correcting something that we realised was wrong in our resource use. It’s not about what you eat; it’s about us producing a festival.” Meanwhile, 70% of a dish must be plant-based, but the festival is reluctant to go 100% plant-based, because not a lot of crops can be grown in Scandinavia, making it difficult to procure foodstuff locally.

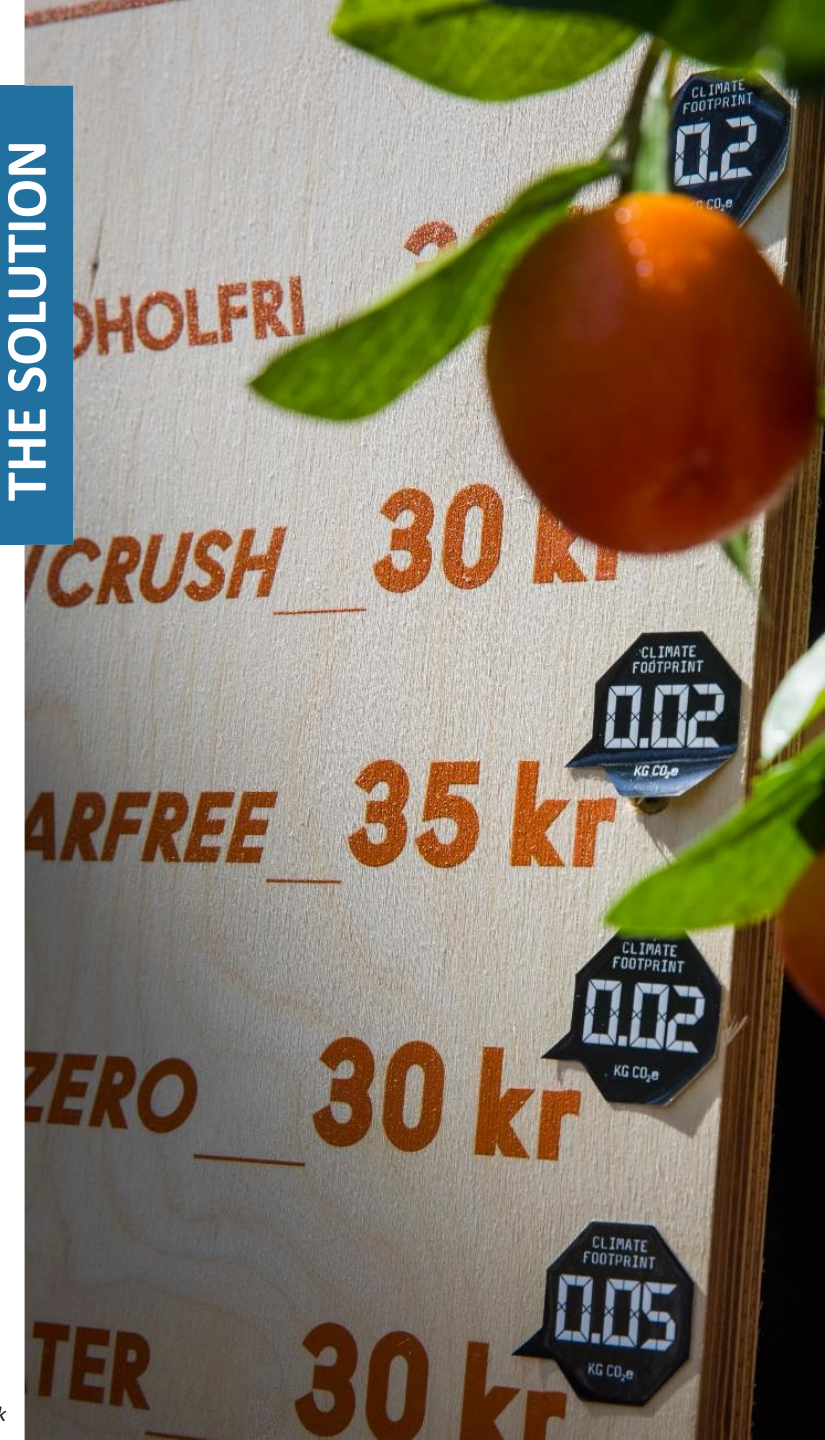
Dissecting the numbers reveals that drinks (42 tonnes) are actually responsible for more emissions than food (25 tonnes). Thus, WoW keeps developing their drinks menu with their partner brewery Spendrups. In 2013, they introduced organic beer to the festival. Two years later, they started offering a non-alcoholic bar with the same stock that regular bars have. “This showed very

clearly that their main focus was not just to sell beer. They want to offer a good experience and be associated with something positive. And that’s a very strong argument in all our partnerships. We ask them to see the big picture instead of the little bubble that most people are in.”

The 2019 edition was the first to be completely “climate transparent,” as the festival calls it. This means the climate footprint for food, drink, transport, accommodation and all energy, down to portaloos usage and mobile charging stations, is reported. Two companies helped gather the data, with one of them focusing only on food and drinks. Every dish was analysed and received its own CO<sub>2</sub> footprint label. “Instead of just the price influencing what people chose, you also had a sustainable aspect in it,” Holmstedt says. The inspiration for this label came from the Swedish food company Oatly, which petitions for CO<sub>2</sub> labels on all groceries and is another of WoW’s partners.

The festival follows Sweden’s WWF “One Planet Plate” concept. This recommends that in order to stay within the limit of a maximum 1.5°C global warming, a meal should not generate more than half a kilogramme of CO<sub>2</sub>e. In 2019, the carbon footprint of an average meal at WoW was 0.38 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e, and the majority of food stalls received a “One Planet Plate” sticker for staying below 0.5 kg. In the WoW app, visitors can filter the dishes according to categories such as “vegetarian” and “vegan,” making it easy for them to make sustainable choices.

## THE SOLUTION



## WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO CREATE LONG-LASTING EFFECTS

Holmstedt is convinced that working with partners to improve their regular business, even beyond the festival, is the best way to make waves. For example, after the Swedish fast food chain MAX Burgers had sold their vegetarian burgers for the first time at WoW, sales of their veggie options in their regular restaurants skyrocketed to about 50%, Holmstedt tells us.

“We want people to take what they’ve learnt at our event into their everyday life. So, it’s very important to code your message correctly. Don’t be vague and don’t leave anything open to interpretation.” This seems to work for WoW; 15% of the festival’s visitors say they eat more veggie food after they’ve been to Way Out West. The production manager is convinced that “as long as the audience demands better alternatives, there will be better alternatives. It’s up to the attendees to put some pressure on

the events and say: ‘I’d rather pay more for a better product if it comes down to sustainability.’”

Not much food goes to waste at WoW: only 3% of the 83 tonnes of total waste is compost. This is because the festival prefers that vendors run out of food on the last night and explain to the visitors that this is “for the big picture”. Vendors also have to ensure that they can return their leftover foodstuff to the shops where they bought it.

Data is the best foundation to improve sustainability: “With a starting point you can only make it better, but you need to know where you are,” Holmstedt says. However, festivals shouldn’t rush it. “We need to allow time to collect the data. It can’t be done overnight. You can’t improve overnight. We are on a long journey.”



## WHAT’S NEXT?

The biggest challenge for Way out West remains changing people’s mentality and expectations; not by force, but by communication. “Just looking at the world, where it’s now, it’s going straight to hell,” Holmstedt says. “So, whatever we can do for future generations to fix the things that have gone wrong, that’s what we need to do. And we need to do it together.”