



CITY, COUNTRY

Bordeaux, France

DAILY CAPACITY

5000

SITE

Darwin Ecosystem, a rehabilitated wasteland of former military barracks

CAMPING

No

NUMBER OF DAYS

3

ESTABLISHED IN

2015

GENRE

From Electronic to Hip Hop and World music; conferences, theatre, dance, poetry, exhibitions, street-art, urban sports

CHALLENGE & SOLUTION

Reducing residual waste by strictly separating material flows



To understand Climax Festival, you have to understand where it takes place. Darwin Ecosystem is an example of a successful urban transformation. The former wasteland of the abandoned Niel military barracks has now become a centre for entrepreneurs focused on social and environmental issues and for culture.

When the military moved out in 2005, the barracks were destined to be demolished and graffiti artists became attracted to the site. A few years later, Climax Festival's founder, Philippe Barre, purchased a part of the land to establish the Darwin Ecosystem. In the meantime, Darwin has turned into an eco-responsible business incubator as well as a centre for culture including a shared work space, a skate park, space for street art, urban agriculture, shops, a winery and a

restaurant with 100% organic and 70% local food.

"The whole objective is to demonstrate that we can implement new models that bring both economical value, but also value for the people and for the planet," explains Barre. "Darwin demonstrates that the ecological and societal transition of a city is achievable and desirable."

Darwin houses many cultural events that try to connect people with environmental and social issues and give them an idea of how to take action themselves. One of the major events is Climax Festival. Each edition focuses on a specific issue such as ocean pollution or biodiversity loss, which forms the lifeline of the programme. The diverse music and artistic programme is underpinned by panels with activists and scientists. "We are convinced that art is an efficient medium to connect individuals with global issues," Barre says.



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WHERE CULTURE, SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL BUSINESSES COLLIDE





REDUCING RESIDUAL WASTE AND RECYCLING CIGARETTE BUTTS

“Do more and better with less” is the philosophy of Darwin Ecosystem. “Climax Festival is different from other festivals in the sense that it’s not just a once-a-year event, but the momentum of an ecosystem of players engaged all year long in sustainable practices. Thus, minimising the environmental impact of the festival has been taken into consideration since day 1. The whole team working on the festival is involved in finding solutions to our sustainability challenges, from coordination to production,” says Nathalie Bois, General Coordinator of the festival.

Naturally, this also goes for waste. The festival has already introduced a series of measures to reduce it, but there is room for improvement, says Bois. “Cigarette butts are still our number one enemy,” she states, because they are both difficult to collect and to recycle. Other aspects are out of the direct control of the festival, for example the packaging of required products and materials. Motivating suppliers to optimise their packaging is a significant challenge when it comes to materials and waste.

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Photo by
Benjamin
Pavone

STRICT WASTE SEPARATION & COOPERATING WITH SPECIALISED COMPANIES

Climax Festival has created 10+ categories for waste segregation during the festival, for example, plastic, organic, paper, glass, electronics, chemicals and cooking oils. They partner with several waste management companies to ensure the proper treatment of the different material streams.

The festival has the advantage of taking place in a location that runs year-round. “We have a long-term partnership with a waste recycler, and all the bins that we use on the festival we use every day in Darwin. So, the waste management process is already organised and the team knows what to do,” Bois says. Thus, 87% of the waste created during the previous edition could be recycled.

Further, 1.5 kilogrammes of cigarette butts were collected. The goal for 2022 was to find a company which can recycle them. At the time of writing, the festival was negotiating with a company in close vicinity to Bordeaux which can turn recycled butts into plastic boards.

The second step, Bois says, is to change the behaviour of festival goers, so that they don't just carelessly throw their cigarette butts onto the ground. To find out how to best achieve this, the Climax team has been testing different

solutions like portable ashtrays during other Darwin events leading up to the festival. “It's hard to find the right balance between being too pushy and creating a good mood, while trying to make people behave respectfully even when partying,” the General Coordinator says.

What's more, the scenography at Climax is made with upcycled wood from construction sites and with the help of the start-ups in Darwin. All tableware is 100% biodegradable. The drinking cups are reusable, but Bois acknowledges that due to a lack of a better alternative, they are still made of plastic. The festival provides a free 'water bar', eliminating the need for bottled water. They have a no-flyer policy and no paper tickets, encouraging festival goers to use the digital format.

In Darwin, dry toilets and urinals are used during major events like Climax. Solid and liquid waste are separated and turned into compost and fertiliser, respectively. “For this year's event, our partner estimates we will save 100,000 litres of water, create 3600 kilogrammes of compost, and collect 2400 litres of urine to be transformed into bio-fertiliser,” Bois says.

THE SOLUTION



CHANGING PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR

Working with suppliers to optimise their product packaging will continue to be of importance to Climax. "Our main challenge is about accompanying behavioural change, from our suppliers and festival goers to artists and their teams," Bois says.



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