

GO Group workshop in Roskilde



**Future-Fit Festivals at
11th international GO Group workshop**
3F Training event E 4.1 | April 7th & 8th, 2025

Roskilde Festival Højskole
Basgangen 20, 4000 Roskilde (DK) Barcelona
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11th international GO Group workshop
Roskilde Festival Højskole, Basgangen 20, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark
Monday – Tuesday, April 7-8, 2025
Report written by Katharina Weber
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Introduction: GO Group and Roskilde Festival Højskole

In this report, you will find a summary of each session of the 11th GO Group workshop on sustainable festival production in Roskilde, Denmark. Even if you couldn't be there, feel free to read the report to find ideas to make your festival more sustainable. Please refer to the table of contents to see which topics were covered. Roskilde Festival Group greatly supported YOUROPE in organizing this workshop, which welcomed 46 participants from 14 countries at Roskilde Festival Højskole in Roskilde's Musicon District.

Did you know that YOUROPE originally planned to take the GO Group workshop to Roskilde five years ago? Well, you all know what happened in 2020 instead. Not surprisingly, it made YOUROPE's General Secretary Holger Jan Schmidt quite happy that the GO Group finally managed to come to Roskilde for the 11th edition of the workshop in 2025.

Ironically, it was the first GO Group workshop without its co-founder. While Holger said that GO Group is certainly his baby, he had to stay home to take care of his actual baby – his lovely, newborn daughter. Still, he didn't miss the opportunity to address the participants virtually in a video call. "I only had amazing days when I was at Roskilde and hope you will have amazing days, too," he said.

For those who didn't know what GO Group is all about, he gave a little introduction. "GO Group always consists of the people coming together for the workshops. We call it the 'weird green family,'" Holger explained. GO Group was involved in EU-funded projects like [Future Festival Tools](#) (green learning resources for event professionals), [Everywh₂ere](#) (hydrogen generators), and [Green Europe Experience](#) (circular food and scenography).

GO Group has been part of YOUROPE's network project 3F – Future-Fit Festivals that covers and co-funds all of YOUROPE's activities. As part of 3F, GO Group helped develop the [European Green Festival Roadmap 2030](#), a detailed guide for festivals on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts.



*Musicon District is Roskilde's creative center.
Photo by Katharina Weber*



Saying hello from Germany: GO Group co-founder Holger Jan Schmidt. Photo by Katharina Weber

The workshop's venue, Roskilde Festival Højskole (RFHS), wasn't far from Roskilde Festival's headquarters as well as the site where every June the fourth largest city in Denmark, Roskilde Festival, comes to life. Hans Christian Nielsen is the principal of RFHS and used to work as Head of HR at Roskilde Festival (RF) before. He told the participants that the school was able to open in 2019 also thanks to a donation of 35 million

Danish crowns (€4.7 million) by RF – the biggest single donation the festival has ever given.

The folk high school and the festival are closely connected. According to the principal, folk high schools originated in the 1830s to help establish the young democracy in Denmark. They gave poor and uneducated peasants simple access to education and a place where they could learn to read and write and how to influence politics.



The workshop participants in front of the venue, Roskilde Festival Højskole. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Today, the task of these schools is different. RFHS, e.g., offers four main subjects: music, light & sound engineering, art, and leadership. The difference to normal schools is that students live at the school, typically for half a year. They don't have exams but a final project: run a campsite at Roskilde Festival with 5000 guests, a stage, a bar, sustainable rules, and so on. "It's a great way for them to try all that they have learned in practice," Hans Christian said. According to him, many continue working either at RF or at other festivals after their studies.

The area that the Højskole and RF's headquarters are located in is called Musicon. Formerly the site of a concrete factory, the municipality has turned it into a center for arts and transformation (discover more in the [section on Musicon](#)). "Now we produce joy and creativity instead of concrete," Hans Christian said.



Roskilde Festival Højskole's principal, Hans Christian Nielsen. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Roskilde Festival supported the GO Group workshop as part of their project "[Music and Music Festivals as Change Drivers](#)." "We believe that we all have a responsibility to inspire each other to act," Emma Sjørvad, Project Manager at Roskilde Festival, said. Together with Linnéa Svensson, who also led through the workshop as a moderator, she had curated the workshop's program. "Just choosing to be here and connecting is a really important step to learn from each other," Linnéa said, setting the tone for the workshop that turned out to be all about sharing knowledge and experiences.

- ➔ The 12th GO Group workshop won't happen until spring 2026, but there is one more great learning opportunity for event professionals organized by YOUROPE this year: the 6th European Festival Conference in Évora, Portugal, November 18-21. YOUROPE hosts this traveling conference format dedicated entirely to festivals in another location every two years. [More info & registration](#)

Keynote: Music and Festivals as Change Drivers



Roskilde Festival Group's CEO, Signe Lopdrup (left), and Emma Sjørvad, who helped curate the workshop's program. Photo by Linnéa Svensson

Signe Lopdrup has been the CEO of Roskilde Festival Group (RFG) since 2016. Being at the helm of one of the most innovative non-profit major events in Europe for almost a decade, she has never stopped pushing for change and a better future. RFG sees it as their responsibility to create change across all their activities, she said. And they know they can't do it alone. "It's more important than ever that we meet to share our experiences," Signe emphasized in her keynote.

RF had started with a small group of people who wanted to change the world in 1971, she told the audience. "We created a strong community, which has since evolved into something extraordinary – Roskilde Festival." Today, the festival has 130,000 participants and regularly become Denmark's fourth largest city. "RF is a year-round movement that manifests in many forms," Signe added. The festival is also a fundraising event for children and young people.

Such a size also means responsibility, so they actively use their influence to contribute to a more sustainable world in everything they do, with culture and arts as cornerstones of their work. Arts and culture have an enormous potential to engage and reach people and can act as a catalyst for change, Signe said.

In uncertain times like these, safety becomes more pressing, she continued saying. There is a rise of unpredictability and a changing world order. The climate and biodiversity crises are accelerating, and we are not doing enough to counter them. Young people have mental crises and find it difficult to imagine a better future. There is a clear lack of diversity and representation in our industry, and not everyone has the same opportunities. Change may not be simple or easy, Signe found, but the easy choice would be to do nothing at all – and that would be fatal.

"What is our relevance in the future as festivals? How can we become agents of change?" she wondered. RF's solutions focus on three aspects: imagining a better future (or **utopia**), **partnerships for change**, and drawing **inspiration for radical transformation from other industries**.

Utopia: Our ability to imagine a better world is fundamentally challenged, Signe said, but if we cannot imagine it, we cannot create it. RF creates a community with arts and culture at the center, a modern interpretation of utopia, with both abstractions and tangible ideas. It gives potential utopias form and language. Festivals have a unique platform to cultivate utopias and imagine better futures, Signe stressed, because they have space to test innovative ideas and new solutions.

Partnerships for change: “We cannot do it alone. Change beyond the festival needs co-creation and collaboration,” the CEO said. Each party contributes their experience and perspective for a bigger whole. “We engage in partnerships across various fields to foster meaningful change.”

Insights from other industries: “We are not the only ones who must reflect on our role in the world,” Signe said. For example, the construction and architecture industries can’t go on like this forever – they need to start using recycled materials and minimize their impact. Similarly, the festival industry must reconsider its core and whether fundamental changes are needed.

RF is preparing new headquarters in Musicon district by trying to transform a former industrial building into a community center. “We hope to demonstrate that things can be done differently.”

“Festivals are unique spaces and communities,” Signe emphasized once more. Regardless of their size, they foster community and art, which appeal to our emotions. “This is where festivals could play a crucial role,” because strong communities are fundamental to creating lasting change. Action is necessary to address today’s crises, but we must first *feel* the urgency to really understand it.

Flokkr & Circular Labs: Experimenting at Roskilde Festival

You might have heard about the idea that festivals are great places to experiment and test new solutions – but how does that look in reality? Roskilde Festival (RF) offers space on their festival site for young changemakers and start-ups who have come up with solutions and are looking for an opportunity to test them. But the festival not only gives them space, but also helps them develop their projects, for example in their Flokkr Lab and Circular Lab. Sille Stenkvis (Project Manager, Roskilde Festival) and Sanne Stephansen (Head of Sustainability, Roskilde Festival) gave the participants more details.



*Sille Stenkvis introducing two labs of Roskilde Festival.
Photo by Katharina Weber*

Flokkr Lab

This lab is named after RF’s Flokkr stage that has existed on the campsite since 2016, Sille explained. The name itself refers to the old Norse word for community house – and this is also reflected in the stage’s design. As it’s getting harder for the ageing festival team to find out what young people want, they invite them to actively participate in Flokkr to bring in their ideas. RF gives them tools to work in the artsy Flokkr area as well as tools to network. Flokkr uses arts and activism as a starting point for engaging formats that “engage senses, knowledge and emotion at the same time,” Sille said.

RF cooperates with different partner organizations which choose six to ten young volunteers between 14 and 30 years old to become part of the lab. The young participants must develop a project which will be implemented at RF. The festival team and young volunteers meet eight times during the year for open work nights (including dinner) to work on the projects together. The last meeting is at RF, where the volunteers realize their projects. (For more details on Flokk's structure, please refer to the [next section](#).)

During the lab, they are taught how to organize, how to make a budget, how to make the festival safer for themselves and other festival participants, and much more. Before the final run at RF, they test their projects at other platforms first and then evaluate together with the festival team what they could improve.

Over the years, the team has tried to find the ideal timeframe, duration and starting point for the lab. Now they have landed on starting at the end of September and ending during the festival days, which gives the young people enough time to develop their projects. RF evaluates each meeting together with the participants and also leads evaluation interviews with the management teams of the organizations involved.

As Sille told the participants, Flokk Lab is now in its fourth year and the RF team has learned a lot about the optimal conditions. "It was a mutual learning process," she said. Much but not all of the content developed in the Flokk Lab takes place on the Flokk Stage. Examples of projects are workshops, a pride parade, and art projects that travel through the festival site and engage the festival visitors.

➔ Find more info and a video about the **Flokk Stage** in this [case study from the FUSION project](#) on young social innovation at festivals.

Circular Lab

In 2019, Roskilde Festival developed a plan to become a circular festival as part of the pan-European [Green Deal Circular Festivals](#) initiative, Sanne explained. They knew they needed more solutions to implement at the festival site, but at the same time wanted to create inspiration for cities that are



Roskilde Festival 2022: a young changemaker presenting waterproof clothing made of left-behind tents inside the Circular Lab. Photo: Holger Jan Schmidt

tackling waste and single-use items as well. So, they created the Circular Lab to invite young people between 16 and 30 to bring their sustainable solutions and products and present them in a public area at the festival.

They got into a partnership with a Danish organization and then expected the applications to come rolling in, “but it was more complicated than that,” Sanne admitted. How can you enable effective testing at the festival site? How can the young entrepreneurs collect data to find out whether their solution is better than existing solutions?



Serveware made from organic left-overs, presented at Circular Lab 2022. Photo by Holger Jan Schmidt

“We have been working on that for the last five years. What we have learned is that the lab is a way of bringing the future closer.” The lab makes it possible to develop the solutions further by using the temporary site of the festival to test them. The outcomes of the lab method are very unpredictable, but according to the Sanne, “it’s part of the risk to not know what will come out on the other side,” so they only invite partners who are aware of the risk.

The Circular Lab has seen people testing, for example, wooden, modular construction elements, confetti made out of dried flowers, serveware made from orange peels, and waterproof clothing made out of upcycled, left-over tents.

➔ Read more about the **Circular Lab** in this [FUSION case study](#).

Both labs now look quite different than in the beginning, Sanne and Sille said. Initially, the Circular Lab was supposed to foster cooperations between the participants, but RF found that it’s difficult to connect them in the few days of the festival, so the lab now focuses on the showcase aspect.

Sille also found that the participants’ wide range of ages means that they have quite different levels of experience. “Take the time to get to know them. Don’t create a teacher-student relationship but become coworkers. Hear them and adapt to their needs. And share knowledge,” she recommended.



From left to right: Sille Stenkvis, Sanne Stephansen and Emma Sjørvaad. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Something that Sanne and Sille learned in the labs is that terminology matters. For example, the term “activist” is not something that all activists identify with because it has negative connotations. RF now uses the word “changemakers” instead. Similarly, “entrepreneur” and “innovation” can be hollow

terms, Sanne said. They prefer to talk to their participants about trying to make a change instead of being entrepreneurs.

This year will be the last year with the current funding for the Circular Lab, so it's time for the final evaluation, Sanne said. They plan to follow up with some focus groups from interviews they did last year to find out whether something they experienced at the lab has changed the way they do things. "That's very difficult to measure," Sanne said. They will try to follow up with the first businesses that participated in the Circular Lab and publish a report at the end of the year. It will be in Danish, but Sanne hoped to be able to publish an English summary as well.

How to Include Young Voices: Lessons from Flokkr Lab



Laura Mols Rasmussen and Sille Stenkvisst asking the participants to tell a lie – for a good reason. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

A workshop on how to include young voices in your festival started with an interesting exercise: Sille Stenkvisst and Laura Mols Rasmussen from Roskilde Festival's Flokkr Lab asked the participants to tell a lie to each other. Why? To imagine a different reality, which can be a challenge for some people. Because, to use the words of author Bell Hooks, "what we cannot imagine cannot come into being," they said. So, if you can't imagine a different reality, you can't create it. This is also the goal of Flokkr: to help visitors imagine a better future by encouraging young people to participate more in today's global movement for sustainability.

The **methodology** at the heart of the program is using arts and activism to engage people's senses, knowledge, and emotions all at the same time. At the moment, Flokkr cooperates with five partner organizations, according to Sille, among them the Danish Youth Red Cross and [SAGA](#), a party-independent democratic youth organization. Since its inception in 2022, Flokkr has evolved quite a bit,

but the key elements remain the same: it's a learning program for young people based on partnerships to help them facilitate program content for the festival.

In so-called **learning labs**, evenings of sharing knowledge and learning, participants are taught how to use arts and activism to create a whole project. The participants are selected by the partner organizations, six to ten each per organization. Flokkr Lab started in 2022 with three learning labs and four partner organizations, now it has grown to eight labs and five partners. Back then, the first round of labs started in March, but the feedback was that this didn't leave enough time to fully develop the projects, Sille reported. Even though RF pushed the start date back over the next years, the criticism remained the same. So, in the current version, the labs start in September and end with the grand finale at the festival itself at the beginning of July. "It took three years to find the right model. It's difficult to create a creative space while also hitting deadlines," Sille said.

The labs cover **five phases of project development**, Laura explained: idea, concept development, finalizing the vision, delivery/realization, and ending of the project. The team always does a deep evaluation at the end to become better next year.

In the current edition, they started the labs with a kick starter at the Roskilde Festival Højskole in September. For lab #2, they met again a month later to further develop the project ideas. RF needs to explain to their young participants why it is necessary to start this early, although the festival is still months away – because the program is announced in January.



Great ideas require great discussions! Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Lab #3 is about the conceptualization of the project ideas; lab #4 deals with the production planning; lab #5 means testing the projects at the international arts center Copenhagen Contemporary; lab #6 deals with how to execute and host at the festival; and the last two labs happen on site during the festival days: the first to make sure that the participants arrive well, and the second to deliver the actual content and evaluate.

According to Laura, the **key challenges** are to balance creativity with the outcome as well as audience awareness. Not all audience members want to talk about the deep topics of this world, so you need to develop something that is engaging. All changemakers are volunteers, which is another challenge, because sometimes it can be hard to hold onto them, especially when the project starts in fall.

Some **tendencies** Sille and Laura have picked up on:

- 1) **Not everyone identifies with the concept of "activist"**, Laura said. There is a tendency to address the challenges we face with hopefulness and positivity (that means not throwing paint at artworks), e.g., by seeing the beauty in nature rather than checking how we can utilize it.

- 2) **Bodily and sensory formats lead to people taking action.** According to Laura, understanding something with your mind and feeling it with your body are two very different things – and the latter is way more effective in triggering change in people.
- 3) **Creating a community for young people** who care about a cause is something very **vulnerable**. It can be hard to find such communities, so the young participants appreciate having a format like Flokk. Sille added that in Flokk, young people meet other young people that are fighting for agendas other than theirs, so it's not an echo chamber.

In an exercise, Laura and Sille asked the workshop's participants to think of a question that music and/or music festivals are the answer to. These are some of their answers:

- Which place can you go to when you want freedom, a community, to hear your favorite kind of music, and meet people with the same interests in an inclusive area?
- How can I escape from reality?
- Where is the place where you can be together?
- Where can you escape your daily routine?



*Laura Mols Rasmussen.
Photo by Katharina Weber*

As Sille explained, it's important to train how to ask good questions. Because if you don't know the Why, then why should anyone follow you?

At the end, Sille presented **four key learnings of Flokk Lab**:

- 1) **It makes us more likely to take action if we feel something**, regardless of knowing something – “this is a key learning and an answer to why we should be working across disciplines of arts and activism,” Sille said. This is how we engage people who are not already engaged.
- 2) **Dare to challenge the familiar.** When we step outside our comfort zones, it is when we open up for new learnings. Open up and be aware of how you sense things – don't be scared.
- 3) **Don't gate-keep!** “Our experience is: the more knowledge you share, the more knowledge you get,” Sille said.
- 4) **Use understanding and mutual learning as a foundation for a community of action.** Try to understand people's backgrounds. Knowledge can come in many forms, not only as academic knowledge. “Take your time and get ready to learn stuff yourself,” Sille concluded.

Sustainability in International Touring & Stage Production

This GO Group workshop brought together four experts to share their experiences with international touring and stage production in a panel discussion: Lars Liliengren (Head of Production, Roskilde Festival), Magnus Olsson (Commercial Director, Rush Entertainment), Bryonie Mathews (Live Events Manager, Hope Solutions), and Katrin Wipper (CEO, The Changency). GO Group workshop host Linnéa Svensson moderated this session and interviewed the speakers.

As Head of Production, Lars Liliengren oversees the stages and supplies coming into the festival and leads the 13 teams running the stages – around 2000 volunteers each year. This has been his job at RF



From left to right: Katrin Wipper, Magnus Olsson, Bryonie Mathews, and Lars Liliengren. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

for ten years, he said. Before that, he worked in touring and production for a major record label, Copenhagen Records, before it was bought by Universal in 2011.

At Rush Entertainment – a promoting company for concerts, club nights and festivals – Magnus Olsson works closely with other promoters, for the Swedish festival Rosendal Garden Parly and in international booking. Katrin works with bands and events to make them more sustainable at the German consultancy The Changency, and Bryonie helps produce tailored sustainability strategies at Hope Solutions (for more info on Katrin and Bryonie, please refer to the sections on [The Changency](#) and [Hope Solutions](#)).

How is a technical set-up created? How has the equipment artists bring on tour developed?

In Lars' experience, there is a gap between headliners and the rest of the bill in terms of the amount of stuff they bring. He sees a tendency that headliner concerts turn into shows with a strict choreography that require bringing loads of equipment. Somewhere, the dialogue between promoters and artist agencies about what to bring has gone missing, according to Lars.

"We have artists with a lot of trucks that will never be emptied at the festival because we simply cannot accommodate them," he added. "It's fine that you do your show and have your ideas, and we want to make the artist shine. But when you did a tour production back when I was still in the touring business, I always looked at the smallest venue and used that as a measurement."

What are the key steps where sustainability can be taken into account?

Lars explained that RF sends the specs for what they can offer and accommodate, which is determined by the structure of the main stage, called Orange Stage. The possibilities are limited because of the canopy above the Orange Stage. When a deal is closed, they advance and try to make ends meet, but he criticized that "there is never a dialogue about what could be sourced locally." Lars has observed a tendency that bringing their own stuff creates a safe space for the artists and teams, although much

of the equipment could be sourced locally, potentially leading to fewer trucks and fewer carbon emissions. Bands can already rent a backline from the festival, if they can't bring their own.

When it comes to types of equipment, the biggest issues are not things like consoles, Lars said, but rather the build-up around them – heavy goods like lights and risers. He wished that artist would look more into fabrics and inflatables to create a unique show. “There is a tendency to bring in more of these, which is a good way to go.”

Where do you see the most progress in stage production sustainability?

“The products that we use on stage, light and sound,” Lars replied. Unfortunately, though, they have multiplied by 10 or 15 times, so instead of 40, we now have 400 fixtures. So, any power savings through LEDs evaporated because we have more of them.

Are bands traveling with more or fewer people?

Lars and Magnus agreed that the amount of people traveling with artists is definitely increasing.

Is there any progress in sustainability in international touring? Does sustainability come up in artist agreements?

“Yes and no,” Magnus answered. They had Massive Attack at Rosendal Garden Party, and the band is known to put lots of effort into sustainability. They used Sweden as a hub for their shows in all of Scandinavia to reduce their travel emissions, Magnus told the audience. Although bands like Massive Attack and Coldplay are paving the way, on average, he doesn't see much progress. When negotiating with artists and agents, it's mostly about money. “What's the rate? Can they get a better fee in Paris than in Oslo?” If yes, the artist will likely choose Paris, according to Magnus.

How tricky is it to fit into the routing of tours if you're an independent festival like Roskilde?



Katrin criticizing territorial protection as an unsustainable practice. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Sitting in the audience, RF's Head of Music, Thomas Sønderby Jepsen, answered this question. He said that the market is getting more and more competitive, but he also sees a responsibility for RF not to back down on their sustainability demands, even if they really want an artist to play at their festival. Either way, the prices for artists are rising.

When Katrin was still working as a booking agent, the routing was the first thing to influence, she said. She always tried to create a sensible route, making sure the artists would get enough rest. The biggest problem for her was exclusivity – if a band can't play in certain countries or areas because there is some kind of territorial protection, it forces them to fly somewhere farer away.

As Thomas explained, RF is now much more open to bands playing at other festivals, particularly Danish artists because they have such a small domestic area. They also don't mind their artists playing in Sweden and Germany and have a territorial protection of 150 kilometers. According to Katrin, it is usually 250 kilometers in Germany.

Do you work with other festivals to create a bundle offer for artists?

According to Thomas, RF teams up with other independent festivals to have a better position when negotiating with big agencies like FKP Scorpio and Live Nation, e.g. in the UK. “There is some good dialogue there,” he said. It also makes it easier for the agents to navigate the tour. Magnus said that the two festivals they at Rosendal Garden Party used to collaborate with for artists don’t take place anymore. They have started reaching out to other festivals, but to make it work they must have a similar profile and region.

Linnéa, who was part of Rosendal’s sustainability team, knew that the festival had also decided to book fewer bands to not overbook the program and save on emissions. They had been able to save 85% of artist travel emissions by planning bands more thoroughly and arranging connections for them. As Thomas explained, this would be much more difficult for RF, which features 185 to 200 artists from 40 to 45 different countries each year.

Barbora Bodnárová from Pohoda Festival in Slovakia chimed in to add her experiences from Eastern Europe. The three-day festival usually features more than 120 bands from 30 countries, but they asked the booking team to lower the number to save money. There are no major festivals in their vicinity, so they coordinate with Spanish Mad Cool Festival a bit because it at least takes place on the same weekend. “In our experience, the agents are more concerned with mental health and don’t want multiple concerts in one weekend,” she said. They really must put in an effort to make artists come to Slovakia. It might be more attractive for bands to stay in one area and get money from one big festival and skip Slovakia rather than playing multiple, spread-out shows.

Do we as festival involve artists enough in sustainability planning?

According to Bryonie, it really depends on the artist and how they want to work. Coldplay, e.g., has created their own green rider and brings it to every venue they play at. It includes “must have” and “great to have” requirements. Hope Solution’s founder, Luke Howell, is part of the artist management team, and much comes directly from working with the artist, their management, and the production and creative teams around them.

Lars and Katrin agreed that **touring needs to become greener, but it also needs to become smarter**. Katrin suggested determining a number for sustainability in the budget and putting a price on the carbon emissions you emit, so you can see what it would cost to cut them. This would be like a carbon tax that we can adopt from other industries where it already exists. “At some point we will be held responsible for the trash we put into the air,” Katrin said, so it’s actually forthcoming to act now.

Smarter touring can also be as simple as cutting some things, Katrin said. Massive Attack, e.g., reduced the number of trucks they tour with. “It’s smart and sustainable,” she said. 20 years ago, Radiohead were the first band to implement LEDs because their lighting tech was interested in the technology – and today it has become the standard. “Sometimes there’s a very short turnaround for new tech to be introduced. We live in very interesting times in that regard,” Katrin said.



Bryonie quoting Coldplay as a band greatly involved in sustainability planning. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Do you think the downsizing attitude is implemented enough?

At Rosendal Garden Party, the team discussed downsizing the stage with the headliners, even after the artists had sent in their technical riders, Magnus said. In the end, the festival was in fact able to downsize. “There are ways, and artists are open, but we need to have a dialogue,” he stressed. However, Barbora from Pohoda Festival felt like there is a power imbalance for them in Eastern Europe. They are worried to ask for more when they are already in an inferior position.

How did the cooperation with Håkan Hellström and Fridays for Future (FFF) at Rosendal Garden Party come about?



Magnus Olsson talking about a performance of Swedish megastar Håkan Hellström. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Håkan Hellström is a major artist in Sweden, selling huge numbers of tickets. He has been an independent artist and unpolitical his whole career, Magnus told the audience.

Andreas Magnusson from Green Live, who was one of the workshop participants and coincidentally had been involved in the project with Håkan Hellström, could tell the participants more. Just after the COVID restrictions had been lifted and shortly before the Swedish elections, Fridays for Future Sweden wanted to move climate protection on the national agenda again.

The goal was to have FFF activists deliver a message on Håkan Hellström’s stage. The artist agreed but his condition was that the activists needed to sing. They started writing a speech but realized that they would address an audience that wasn’t overly activist. So, they came up with the idea to use Håkan Hellström’s lyrics to promote what they wanted to say. “It was a very poetic speech,” Andreas said. Translated, the title was “Together in darkness.”

Håkan Hellström addresses his audience, saying that he didn’t know enough about the topic and then asked the audience to listen to the experts from FFF. To engage the community, the fans could read the speech aloud together with the activists. Magnus added that the artist had never collaborated with a brand before, so that made it even more powerful.

Andreas wasn’t too sure about the impact the project has had on the audience and whether it has engaged them long-term, but it helped to bring sustainability back into the public discourse – and it sparked a debate about how to better utilize platforms to catch fans in the moment, which turned into a whole new project on fan engagement.

Do you interact with the audience?

For artists like Coldplay, the answer is a resounding yes, according to Bryonie. At the concerts, the screens show content of different organizations Coldplay support, explaining what they do and why they matter. These organizations also receive donations from the band. Additionally, the concerts feature stationary ‘energy’ bikes and kinetic dance floors, which power the C-stage (the smallest of the stages the band performs on). Two sides of the audience compete against each other in charging the

stage with their dancing and biking, and the leaderboards are shown on big, circular screens at the side of the stage, motivating the fans to move and thus charge it.

Each audience member receives a reusable LED wristband at the entrance to create light images during the show. They are asked to return it afterwards, and the leaderboards also show how many people have done so. “The tour gets really good return rates,” Bryonie said.



The panellists and host Linnéa Svensson (right). Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Do you give advantages to artists that advocate for sustainability?

At Roskilde Festival, [NATURE was featured as an artist on the bill and on stage](#) for the first time in 2024, Thomas told the audience. The performances featured other artists like [Aurora](#) and were organized together with [Sounds Right](#), a global initiative that allows NATURE to generate royalties from its music.

Key word “systemic change”: how do we promote a new normal?

“It’s important that we don’t always push people. We need to give them a chance to onboard on their own terms,” Lars said. He recommended using all platforms you have – even artist catering counts. RF doesn’t serve red meat, only poultry and fish (but very little, according to Lars). “Give them a chance to onboard in a speed that doesn’t push them away.” Linnéa added that it’s important to understand what works in your country. Sweden, for example, has a much bigger vegetarian culture than Denmark.

When you design stages, move towards more (upcycled) fabrics, Lars said. On some RF stages, the scenography is created with leftovers from a curtain factory. The often colorful and bright curtains were meant for hotels, so they must add a product to make them inflammable. This product is made of salt and urine in a factory only 30 kilometers from Roskilde (and it doesn’t smell).

Bryonie said you first must get the right attitude for systemic change. You need to understand that it’s not going to happen overnight. Give yourself a bit of grace, but do not *not* do anything at all just because you can’t do it all at once. Just start – ideally with measuring and making a plan.

Magnus wanted to see more development in the electrification of stage elements. It’s nice to see Massive Attack and Coldplay making the change, but there needs to be more development on the

commercial side to make the solutions more accessible for medium players. At the moment, the cost is still too high.

Katrin suggested to move away “from thinking in silos,” i.e. only about your own event. Think about who you need to bring in and be cooperative!

Case Study: How Alive Festival Activates the Local Area

It’s a tradition for GO Group workshops to present good-practice examples from European festivals that can serve as an inspiration for other festivals. One such example is Alive Festival, which is in the Thy region in the North of Denmark. Festival Director Iben Stubgaard, who is responsible for volunteers, finance, HR, fundraising and basically has a hand in everything, gave the participants some insight into the festival.



*Iben Stubgaard is the head of the volunteer-driven Alive Festival.
Photo by Caroline Nellemann*

It is run by the non-profit association Thy Alive, takes place in July, and has around 4000 guests each year. “**Volunteering** is quite a big part of the festival,” Iben said. It is run by 80 year-round volunteers, four employees and eight board members as well as 500 volunteers during the festival. The volunteers work in 13 divisions and plan everything from music, arts, and food/bars to the festival site. They don’t have to work a specific number of hours, which Alive might change one day, but “right now people like the freedom of working as much or as little as they want.”

Thy is also called “cold Hawaii” because it’s a popular surf spot. “Alive Festival was born out of a **love for Thy** and the local community,” Iben explained. The community is always on their mind when planning things and a big part of the story telling. “If you didn’t know Thy before you attended, you will definitely know Thy after,” she said.

Many guests come from the bigger cities in Denmark like Copenhagen and Aarhus, so the festival connects the urban communities with the local, rural communities, which strengthens **diversity**. “Thy is rather conservative, but even if we don’t agree on everything, we can still have fun together at the festival,” Iben said.

Drinks are sourced locally from the national park that festival visitors can explore; there, they can also collect berries to add to their drinks; the beer comes from the local brewery and the food is supplied by local farms that festival goers can visit. The festival wants to create **unique cultural experiences** and give their visitors experiences they weren’t expecting to expand people’s horizons. “When art surprises, expectations and horizons are broadened and that is when culture thrives,” Iben said.

What makes Alive Festival special is an **equal focus on music, arts and excursions**. Alive Festival wants to get people out and experience Thy in different ways, instead of just being hungover at the campsite, so they always organize excursions. This year, for example, there will be a trip to the local brewery in Bryghus – which will also present it to the locals in a new way – and a trip to a whisky farm which is sustainable and circular.

A local bus company takes people from and to the festival site, where they experience the concerts. These **excursions are included in the festival ticket**, and every visitor can participate. There is also some extra program with limited capacity that you need to sign up and pay for, e.g. surfing workshops. The workshop program includes quite different topics that are challenging either for the urban or the local communities, for instance, how to gut a fish or how to love yourself. “We have a very curious audience, so almost everything is filled up.”

Alive also serves as a **testing platform for local businesses**. Because of its small size, it’s easy for them to work with local actors, for example for their food supply. It was a challenge at first to find a vendor for plant-based food, so they had resort to someone come from Copenhagen and Aarhus – but then, two years ago, a plant-based restaurant opened nearby. Iben hopes that maybe because people tried plant-based food at the festival, there is now demand for it in the region, too.

➔ Check out [Iben’s presentation](#) for more details.

Case Study: Tailored Reduction Strategies by Hope Solutions



Bryonie Mathews knows all about the live events that Hope Solutions supports. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

As a festival, you don’t necessarily need to have all the expertise when it comes to greening your event – sometimes it makes more sense to get help from external experts. One such expert organization is Hope Solutions from the UK. They work with clients on temporary productions and help larger organizations fulfill sustainability requirements. The certified B Corp was founded by Luke Howell, who over the years has assembled a whole team of experts on climate science and the entertainment industry. One of them is Live Events Manager Bryonie Mathews, who presented some good-practice examples from her work in live events and international touring, where she has worked on projects with the likes of Coldplay, Glastonbury Festival and others.

While hundreds of unprecedented weather events and thousands of people displaced by climate change make it necessary for us to have difficult conversations about climate protection, **barriers to change** exist in the live events industry according to Bryonie:

- 1) Budget – often there is no dedicated sustainability budget and funding is difficult
- 2) Engagement – some people really want to get involved, others don't want to take risks
- 3) Uncertainty – people sometimes don't feel confident enough to talk about the topic, or don't want any headlines even if they have done something right, so they don't do anything for fear of doing the wrong thing
- 4) Availability – infrastructure limits (e.g. national); no availability of sustainable production materials in certain locations and markets

However, there are enough good reasons to get involved by decarbonizing and reducing your environmental impact. You **empower the people** you bring with you on your journey, e.g., your audience and team. "Usually, people love being part of something that pushed the boundaries a bit," Bryonie said. Or you want to deliver **proof of concept**, proving that something can be done. Coldplay, e.g., is testing the grounds because they have the means and want to pave the way for others to follow and convince people who are still in doubt to do it, too. And lastly, **research**: add to the initial research and help scale it across Europe, because it's valuable to understand impacts, where emissions come from, and how to reduce them.

In everything they do, Hope Solutions follows a data-driven approach. "We measure absolutely everything," Bryonie said. They start by **scoping the impact** of the event or production, map the ecosystem of the tour or production, and look at what their client has direct control over and what they can further influence. Then they **measure their client's impact** with comprehensive, **data-driven strategies** to identify any hotspots, things they can address immediately, and other aspects that need more time. They also help **implement the solutions** thanks to a wide network of partners. Lastly, they **evaluate and remeasure**, so their clients can continue to develop.

Hope Solutions always tries to adapt the solutions to the respective event, Bryonie told the participants. They also consider non-carbon related impacts like aluminum vs. plastic for packaging. Fan travel is measured as well and they have communication campaigns addressing this, but for the initial reduction of impacts it is easier to tackle areas that are under the client's direct influence.

Coldplay's "Music of the Spheres Tour"

In 2019, Coldplay's lead singer, Chris Martin, announced that they wouldn't tour again until they could do so environmentally beneficially. This is when Luke Howell and Hope Solutions were brought on board, Bryonie said. Hope Solutions did an impact assessment of the previous tour to identify hotspots and establish a baseline to compare to. This resulted in a pledge in 2021 to reduce direct carbon emissions by 50%. "Last June they achieved 59%, which is really amazing," Bryonie said.

The most unique thing about the tour, according to Bryonie, was the first touring battery system ever that was specifically designed for it. Power had been identified as a sizable source of emissions, so they started working with the management and the power team, brought in experts including [ZAP Concepts](#), who designed the battery system, and partnered with BMW to reuse second-life car batteries. The battery system can be charged by the grid and any renewable energy source such as solar power.

Getting third-party validation to give their results more credibility was important, so the team shared the emissions data with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Environmental Solutions Initiative. After verifying the methodology and checking the data, they concluded: "This latest analysis of Coldplay's impact on the environment from touring is again setting a new standard for the entire music industry. The data and the methods of analysis support the conclusion that substantial progress has been made to reduce emissions in touring" (John E. Fernandez, MIT).



Picture of an aerial shot of Roskilde Festival 2023 hanging in Roskilde Festival Højskole. Photo by Katharina Weber

The best thing: Coldplay wants their work to be open source, so others can use their approach. They have already supported various events with this technology, Bryonie said. The second generation of battery systems that has been developed as a result of the tour is supposed to be optimized and smaller to make it even more easy to be utilized.

Some other effects of the tour: seven million trees planted, with more to come – one for every ticket sold; two Ocean Clean Up and river interceptors funded; 70% of waste diverted from landfill and incineration; and the material for latest album was made from recycled PET plastic collected from a river in South America.

However, there is still room for improvement. For example, the band still needs to travel and sometimes that means flying, which produces unavoidable emissions. Equipment still needs to be transported, but the band uses biofuels together with their logistics partner, DHL. The way to go, according to Bryonie: constantly collect data and reassess to keep refining and reducing impacts.

Glastonbury Festival

Hope Solutions has been working with Glastonbury Festival supporting them with their ongoing sustainability programme. This includes supporting on a strategic level and on audience facing green initiatives. The latter includes messages reaching the audience to encourage them to take tents home and separate waste.

Glastonbury is powered 100% by fossil fuel-free sources. They have worked with energy experts to create one of the most efficient energy temporary power systems for an event of its size. They have solar arrays on the on-site barns and experimented with a wind turbine last year. They try to get even more power from the grid, Bryonie said, but this takes time setting up.

Furthermore, the festival has banned plastic bottles since 2019. The festival runs a sustainable travel initiative, resulting in 55,000 attendants using low-carbon travel like coaches. Electric vehicles are used for artist transport.

Case Study: Tackling Ticketing & Fan Travel with The Changency

The German consultancy [The Changency](#) has worked with major German bands like Sseed, Die Ärzte and Die Toten Hosen, Germany's Federal Association of the Concert and Event Industry (BDKV), football club St. Pauli, Reeperbahn Festival, and more. CEO Katrin Wipper and her colleague Sarah Lungen co-founded The Changency in 2021 to have a means to combine science and creative communication to bring more sustainability to the events sector. In Roskilde, Katrin presented several examples that successfully implemented this approach in **ticketing** as well as **fan travel**.

Dividing her presentation into The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, in allusion to the 1966 Western of the same name, she started with The Bad, also known as "background, numbers and details." According to the 2020 The Show Must Go On Report, **fan travel** causes 80% of a festival's carbon footprint on average. The Changency found similar numbers in their carbon footprint analysis of the five-concert residency of Sseed at Wulheide, Berlin, where audience travel took up a share of almost 88%.

The consultancy was also part of an analysis of **Adele's recent ten-show residency in Munich**, where an arena covering 75,000 square meters of soil and including the world's largest outdoor LED panel was built specifically for her. The shows attracted approximately 740,000 visitors. The problem: many of them came from abroad, even as far as the Philippines. 24% of the audience arrived in Munich by plane, which caused 77.2% of fan travel emissions. On the other hand, the almost 40% of fans who decided to come by public transport caused only 3% of the emissions. A survey conducted on site revealed that 92% of the respondents had travelled to Munich specifically to see Adele.

A closer look at the ticketing infrastructure of Massive Attack and Taylor Swift also revealed some interesting facts. In 2024, **Massive Attack** played a show in their hometown **Bristol**. For two weeks,



Katrin Wipper presenting the fan travel emissions of Adele's Munich residency. Photo by Caroline Nellesmann

only fans from Bristol and surroundings were allowed to purchase tickets. The effect: local fans were rewarded, and the fan travel emissions were lowered because more people came from the vicinity.

Taylor Swift's two shows at Paris' La Defense Arena were less great when it comes to CO₂ emissions. 25% of the visitors (40,000 people) had flown in from the USA. According to some fans on the internet, buying a ticket for Paris, flying to Europe, and spending a week there was cheaper than buying a ticket for a US show for the ridiculously inflated prices that are common on the secondary ticketing market there.



*Katrin delivering more bad news about the fan travel emissions of Taylor Swift's Paris concerts.
Photo by Katharina Weber*

For The Good part, Katrin talked about the **Ticket to Ride** project in cooperation with the German band AnnenMayKantereit. The Chagency covered 10 out of 13 shows during their 2023 summer tour with 215,000 fans, partnering with [Crowd Impact](#), who provided their survey tool/CO₂ calculator. The goals were to influence fan travel emissions, collect data, generate good practices, derive insights for the event industry, and develop arguments for policy-making. To achieve this, the project had four pillars:

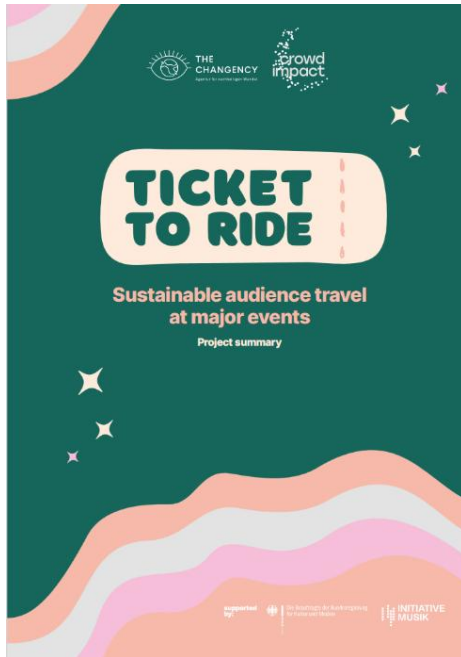
- a communication/action campaign before and during the show,
- data collection at the shows,
- a roundtable to spread knowledge and reach beyond the music industry
- and a summary published as a report online for free.

Of course, some things didn't work out as planned. For example, the funding by Initiative Musik came in late, after the tour had already started – that's why only 10 out of 13 shows were covered and there was no project kickoff.

The measures involved in the project:

- **Integrated public transport ticket:** five shows had a free ticket for public transport integrated in the concert ticket. For the Vienna show, it could be booked in addition.
- **Bike parking** at four shows. Hamburg and Cologne had permanent bike parking at the venues. In Dresden, they added 6000 free, secure bike parking spots and 450 in Hanover.
- **Carpooling promotion** by creating messenger chat groups to coordinate rides.

To **communicate the measures**, the band posted on their social media, sent out a newsletter, promoted them on LED screens on site, on the websites of the venues, and on a dedicated project website. But the most effective measure which reached the most people was an email sent out to all 215,000 ticket holders by the ticket provider three days before each concert. Katrin assumed that most people read it to make sure there was nothing wrong with their ticket. "It is a massive and great lever. Use it," she recommended.



Click on the cover to get to the report.

The team also offered **incentives and raffles**. For example, 2000 apples with a special imprint were handed out to people coming by bike in Dresden (and yes, people were allowed to take them into the venue).

On site, 38 **volunteers from Fridays for Future** surveyed almost 5000 people, which represents 2.3% of the visitors and thus is statistically significant, according to Katrin. They were offered a spot on the guest list in return. The survey covered questions like “how did you get here?”, “where did you travel from?”, “what type of car have you used?”, “did you know that public transport is included in the ticket?”, etc. The data uncovered, for example, that those who had heard about the sustainability measures chose public transport 20% more often.

Another impressive number revealed by the survey: if you combine every journey taken by every fan to get to the concerts, they would have circled the world 1200 times. “And

this is just one tour by one band in Germany with ten shows. And their fans have travelled 1200 times around the world, just to see them,” Katrin said.

Some anomalies in the data:

- The two shows in Berlin were the ones with the most fans using **public transport** (62% each), although the public transport ticket was not included in the concert ticket. Katrin assumed that this was due to a mix of several factors: not a lot of people own cars in Berlin, parking is scarce, and people are used to using public transport.
- On the other hand, Losheim had the highest number of visitors using a **car** (96%). No wonder, the venue was far away from everything, and the local buses didn’t even run after the show. So, the solution was to target carpooling to raise the **car occupancy rate** – which stands out in the data with 3.5 people per vehicle. The only higher rate was reached in Hanover (3.9), where 60% came by car. The project team had created Signal and Telegram chat groups, and asked people to organize carpooling there. “A method without a lot of cost and effort which worked,” Katrin concluded.
- **Impact of regionality:** Dresden had the biggest catchment area, Zurich the smallest. A possible explanation is that Zurich, being located in Switzerland, had a higher threshold to come for German fans (different country, different currency). Dresden featured two shows together with the German band Kraftklub. They were not sold out, so a lot of people might have decided to come spontaneously and from farther away.

Karin’s **key takeaways**:

- 1) Touring is better than residencies.
- 2) “Ticketing is a huge lever, so use it!”
- 3) Infrastructure is essential.
- 4) You need to make eco-friendly travel as easy as possible for the audience.
- 5) Communication is key and not very costly.

6) Regionality is an underestimated lever.

- ➔ Find the [“Ticket to Ride” report](#) here. Available for free in English and German.
- ➔ Read [Katrin’s presentation](#) for more info.

WoW & Provinssi: Input from a Festival Production Perspective

In two very short case studies, Provinssi and Way out West (WoW) festivals shared their sustainability initiatives from a production perspective.

Peppi Arrimo is the Head of Production at Provinssi (FI), a freelance production stage manager at other festivals like Sziget (HU), and a former artist producer. Provinssi is a 30,000-capacity, mixed-genre, three-day festival founded in 1979, taking place in Seinäjoki in the middle of the Finnish forest on the last weekend of June.

They have a **sustainability rider**, which covers not just ecological but also social sustainability. It was last updated this year. “The rider is shared with all artists that will perform at Provinssi,” Peppi said. The document shares what the festival does about sustainability and also some tips for the artist to be more sustainable.

Some **highlights from the sustainability rider**:

- If you want to travel to Seinäjoki and avoid going through Russia, you must take a plane or boat to reach Finland. Once they have arrived in one of the bigger cities, the festival encourages visitors and artists to take the **train** to Seinäjoki. From Helsinki, e.g., this takes three hours and is faster than going by car. When they talk to the artists, they first offer the train and help them get tickets. Peppi told the audience that many artists created reels on social media talking about their train travels to Provinssi.
- The festival **doesn’t offer red meat** in the artist catering, unless artists explicitly demand it. Most food on offer is vegan or vegetarian.
- They have had a “**no confetti policy**” for about five years. They often hear: “but the confetti is a great part of a show – how much does it cost to clean up?” The cleaning fee they have calculated is about €50,000, which quickly puts an end to the questions. Pyro is allowed.

Updates for 2025:

- A **battery tech pilot** to power stages, although their grid system is quite good. About three generators at the stages will be replaced.
- More and more accessible **water stations** backstage.



*Provinssi Festival.
Photo by Anssi Leppänen*

- The **main stage** is more than 20 years old and not in the best state anymore. Their stage provider will replace some aluminum beams with steel so the stage can carry more lights. Provinssi will use the left-over aluminum to build new **relay towers**.

➔ Check out [Peppi's presentation](#) here.

Way out West (WoW) is a popular city festival in Gothenburg on Sweden's west coast. "Sustainability has been the backbone of the festival since we started in 2007," WoW Project Manager Kimmie Winroth said. The festival has been vegetarian for all participants for 15 years. They run cheap festival trains, so that less than 1% of visitors fly to the festival. They replace artist slots with sustainability topics, and organize the conference Green Topia, the Swedish live industry's annual meeting place for climate action, together with Live Green. They are constantly looking for new partnerships and ways to lower emissions.



Way out West. Photo by Elias Assar Gustafsson

WoW becomes one of the 20 largest cities in Sweden every year, meaning there are many possibilities that come with hosting the festival, Kimmie said. For example, **driving behavioral change** in your visitors. WoW conducted a study together with a university and found out that visitors changed to a more vegetarian diet because they were exposed to vegetarian food at WoW. "It's important to carry this with you. It creates a playground where you can test things on a communal level," Kimmie said.

Festivals can serve as a **testing ground for new initiatives**. It might not be in every municipality's or companies' nature to push boundaries, but it is in every festivals' DNA, Kimmie found. Similarly, festivals can also be a **starting point to test new, circular solutions** that can, once they have proven themselves in the temporary festival environment, later also be applied at a larger scale.

However, there are just as many challenges as opportunities, Kimmie found. "You want to make a big change but there are so many obstacles." For example, **circular models are not widely available** in the festival industry yet. This means sustainable solutions are often more expensive or resource-intensive – which they can't be if we want to apply them across the whole industry and achieve a more sustainable future.

Sustainable choices strain your budget. "You want to make great changes, but you also have to survive. And it's a harsh climate right now for festivals," Kimmie said. You must carefully consider how much money to put into each project.

Plus, **attitudes towards sustainability can be problematic**. WoW surveyed their Gen Z audience and found out that they don't like to talk about sustainability. They want everything to be sustainable, but

they don't want the challenge in their faces. "But that's not how this works," Kimmie criticized. She feels like more people are starting to eat meat and fly again. Sometimes you feel helpless and like you cannot make a difference when the big players don't start taking responsibility.

➔ Find [Kimmie's presentation](#) here.

Ask the Scientists: Analyzing Changes in Festival Goers' Behaviors

You might have a feeling that festivals play a special role in creating change, but it's always nice when this feeling can actually be confirmed scientifically. Professor Ian Woodward and Mai Louati from the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) investigate festivals, more particularly, festival visitors and their behavior, in their research. During the workshop, they explained their methodology that hypothetically could be applied at every festival.

Ian, who got his PhD in Australia, has been a full-time teacher and researcher at SDU for ten years. Five years ago, he was working on a big project with music festivals – then COVID hit. He wrote several books about music, the music market, the resurgence of vinyl and cosmopolitanism. Mai, a market anthropologist by training, is a research assistant and full-time teacher, giving courses on globalization and anthropology. She has always enjoyed festivals and found most interesting how people come together there regardless of age, gender, and other factors. They have worked, e.g., with Distortion and Karrusel festivals.



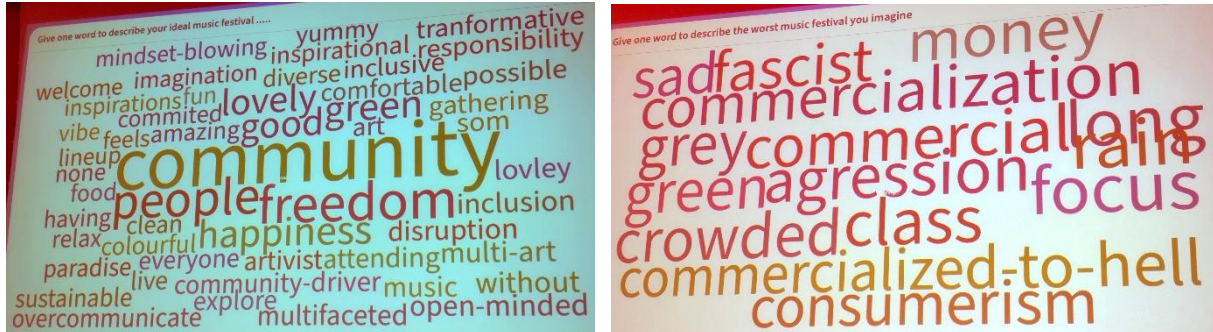
*Ian Woodward and Mai Louati.
Photo by Katharina Weber*

Warm-up: Revealing the Workshop Participants' Attitudes

Ian and Mai asked the participants to join in a little quiz about their opinions regarding festivals. They had to agree or disagree with statements like: "The only value for festivals is party." At Distortion, the only value used to be party, Ian said. They even call him the "Party Professor", but even they had to change since COVID, he found. The workshop participants also didn't share this view: 40% of them disagreed, 37% even strongly disagreed.

There was more agreement on statements like "music festivals should change with the times" (60% agree, 29% strongly agree), "clever infrastructure and behavior nudging are more powerful than direct messages" (60% agree, 31% strongly agree), "art & atmosphere speak just as loud as pop music in the festival context" (46% strongly agree, 40% agree), and "festivals can change behaviors outside of the festival context" (49% strongly agree, 46% agree). The last statement has been proven through research already. Scientists found, e.g., that people ate vegetarian more often after they had visited the 100% vegetarian Way out West Festival in Sweden.

Participants also created two word clouds, one for their ideal festival and one for the worst parts of festivals. While the first cloud was dominated by words like “community,” “people,” “freedom,” “happiness,” “lovely,” and “good,” the worst aspects cloud showed terms like “commercial” and “commercialization,” “consumerism,” “long,” “fascist,” and “sad.”



Word clouds: good vs. bad aspects of festivals. Photos by Katharina Weber

Festival Theory

After this introduction, Ian and Mai got into the theoretical base that academic research on festivals has laid so far. According to Ian, lots of thinking about festivals is informed by 20th century anthropology. It gave us the language and theoretical framework to talk about festivals – being together, excess, rituals, etc. It explains why festivals are great places to foster change – they are inspiring places where collective energy is heightened – but it also fails to capture other meanings and functions of festivals.

More recently, festivals have been regarded as spaces of lifestyle, combining economy and culture – festivals as spaces where culture is consumed. Now, Ian said, we are talking about “post-traditional festivals” – festivals that go beyond the basic anthropological concepts by playing a role in mediating social values and issues.

Civil sphere politics and moral responsibility are not as prominent anymore in recent academic theories on festivals. Although Ian and a colleague published a paper just last year titled: “Civil Sphere Values and Moral Responsibility in Cultural Production: The Curation of Music Festivals Today” (read it [here](#)).

Their Research Approach: Qualitative & Longitudinal

Next, Mai and Ian explained the approach they used when they examined festival goers’ views on change and their perceptions of Roskilde Festival’s role in shaping change. They follow a qualitative method that helps them describe a phenomenon in all its contradictions and depth, Mai explained. The challenges they faced were:

- How do we establish a *foundational understanding* of festivalgoers’ attitudes toward change?
- What *counts as change*? How can it be *measured*, and over what *timeline*?

Terms like “diversity,” “change,” and “inclusivity” are often used without a clear definition, Mai said, so how do festival goers define and understand change? The scientists also had to consider who to involve in the research (volunteers, guests, artists?). Another challenge was to find ways to effectively

capture shifts in attitudes and behaviors. Plus, they wanted to identify the role that Roskilde and other festivals play as catalysts for change.

They divided their research into three phases, starting with the **pre-festival research (phase 1)**. The target was to establish a baseline to understand festival goers' attitudes towards change and how they perceive RF. This required a longitudinal approach, that means a study following the same participants over time.

Methods to collect data were focus groups, individual interviews, having the research participants write autoethnographic diaries, and visual methods like pictures, collages, newspaper clippings etc.



A drawing of Ian working in the field. "Pretty accurate," according to him.

In **phase 2, during Roskilde Festival**, the scientists interacted with the festival goers on site. Festivals are temporary but influential spaces, potentially making them testing grounds for shifting norms and values. The researchers' goal was to get an idea of what is going on during the festival, how the festival promotes change, and how the attendees co-create it with the festival.

Methods were, again, autoethnographic diaries (or voice memos, if writing was too impractical for the festival goers), visual methods, and interviews, but also participant observation and embodied ethnography (i.e. the researcher is accompanying and doing things together with the participants).



Time to discuss the potential of festivals to create change! Photo by Katharina Weber

Phase 3, post-festival, continued the analysis back in real life. The scientists looked at what appears to have changed compared to the beginning of their research and whether these changes stick when people return to their everyday life. They also evaluate which methods were most effective in capturing change.

Methods are, once again, autoethnographic diaries kept by the participants, visual methods ("show me something at RF that made you feel/think/act differently") and focus groups, but also in-depth interviews. They reviewed the data together with the participants to co-interpret meaning.

In summary, here are the **methodological takeaways**:

- It's a **longitudinal approach** that follows participants before, during and after the festival.

- It analyzes the **context of attendance**: understanding why and how attendees engage.
- It asks about **festival memories** in follow-ups up to 12 months after the festival: which parts of the festival stick?
- **Perception of change**: there is a focus on values and practices.
- Music vs. **other communicative elements**: the approach explores both musical and “extra-musical” impacts.
- **Broader cultural engagements**: the approach also considers the potential influence of other cultural elements like books, galleries, and other festivals and concerts. It considers people as culture consumers more broadly – the festival is not the only thing influencing them.

After an entertaining round of Kahoot, an online quiz format that requires giving answers both correctly and quickly, Ian gave out one of his books to the lucky winner.

➔ Read [Ian and Mai's presentation](#) for more info.

“But what can I do?” Inspiration from the Construction Industry

To draw some inspiration from other industries, as Roskilde Festival Group CEO, Signe Lopdrup, had encouraged in her keynote, RF had invited Oskar Dahlin to speak at the workshop. Oskar is a 27-year-old construction worker involved in Apprentices for Sustainability (Lærlinge for Bæredygtighed). He has a background in activism, among other things being involved in Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse (DGUB), one of the biggest climate action groups in Scandinavia. He co-wrote a book called “A Building Industry Worth Preserving” (translated).

In his presentation titled “When an industry has to change,” Oskar focused on the question how we can demand political change in our fields and how we can use our everyday jobs to make the change we want to see in the world.

According to him, Apprentices for Sustainability had drawn inspiration from the “**green bans movement**” that shook the Australian construction industry in the 1970s. Construction workers and unions banded together to prevent the tearing down of historical buildings and green spaces. A “fun tactic,” as Oskar called it, they used was calling for wage negotiations just when trucks with wet concrete arrived at their protest sites to destroy green areas. Wet concrete has a very short lifespan, and this postponed the destruction of the sites many times.

Although the workers didn’t succeed in saving all the places they had set out to, “green bans had a significant impact on environmental legislation, town planning and public attitudes. At both state and federal level, governments initiated or improved legislation to ensure more socially responsive and ecologically responsible planning and development” ([Source](#)). It is said to have spared Australian cities from much cultural and environmental destruction.

Yet, the building industry still has a massive impact on the environment. In Denmark, **the construction industry is responsible for 30% of overall CO₂ emissions** and 40% of the garbage produced, according to Oskar. 1200 family homes are torn down every year although they are fine – simply because they are “out of style,” as Oskar said. “If we were all building like the Danish, we would require four planets,” he added.

Connected to this environmental problem are other problems like the **overworking and mistreatment** of construction workers, especially those of gender and ethnic minorities, as well as dangerous worksites. Additionally, **low-quality homes** are being built that contain lots of plastic, which often creates mold and reduces their life-span – and it causes asthma and other respiratory diseases in children. “We treat each other poorly and accelerate climate change,” Oskar concluded.

Apprentices for Sustainability’s goals are thus clear: **transform the building industry** and transform the Danish vocational education system to teach a better industry. How? “That is an extremely difficult question, and the answers are constantly evolving,”

Oskar said. While the answer is different depending on whether you’re a politician or a company, the answer for individual employees might start here: **“Quite often the first step is to talk to someone.”** If you do, you might find someone that feels the same way. Together, you can form a group and make smarter demands, start a trend not to work for carbon emitting companies, or start an awareness campaign. It can also be healthy for people to share and blow off some steam.

If you wanted to achieve a carbon-positive festival industry, what is the most radical thing a festival could do? In their book, the conclusion of their manifesto is this: to move forward as the construction industry they need to **put a stop to building new buildings**. Oskar is aware that this is a radical demand, because economic growth is connected to building. “I don’t think it’s realistic at all. We’re not two years away from a build stop, not even ten years,” but it’s important to make as radical demands as possible because it forces us to think of a completely new model of doing things.

Parts of this demand are, for example, to change vocational schools and create a new type of craftsperson. “When you cut down the building stop into sectors, you can see a way forward. You can achieve a little” – but if you make the demands too small, you don’t see where you could go.

After the release of the manifesto, a new initiative in Denmark has formed called the **“building stop movement”** (translated), which resembles what Oskar talked about. It is made up of, e.g., architects, engineers, and ordinary citizens. According to him, they have now established a formalized setting where they use their shared base of power to push corporations and politicians for change.

In summary: “If we want to make radical political changes as ordinary people, the first thing to do is talk to your family, friends, coworkers, football club, band members, to find like-minded people,” Oskar said. We don’t need to have a complete strategy ready – often you figure it out along the way. “It’s extremely important to **be radical in our imagination**, so we don’t limit ourselves and are able to see all of the paths that we could choose.”



*Oskar Dahlin explaining the "green ban movement."
Photo by Caroline Nellemann*

What remains? Takeaways from the 11th GO Group Workshop



Sharing is caring, also at GO Group workshops. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Before everyone went their separate ways, workshop host Linnéa Svensson asked the participants to reflect on what they had learned in the two days of the workshop and share it with the round. Here are some key takeaways that can also be useful for our readers:

- If you want to learn more about sustainable event production, but you don't have a lot of time and no budget to spend on your education, check out the **free resources of [Future Festival Tools](#)**. The EU-funded project offers a self-assessment tool, a good-practice guide with lots of inspirational festivals, and an entire e-learning course on six areas of sustainable festival production!
- The inspiration of **utopia**: you can't achieve a better future if you can't imagine it (see section on [Signe Lopdrup's keynote](#)).
- **Don't gate-keep** (intentionally or unintentionally) and **share your knowledge**! If we want to achieve a sustainable festival sector, we need to bring everyone on board. All the necessary information is out there but people don't know where to find it. We are in a position to share it and should do so. The workshop had participants from both independent festivals and corporate-owned festivals (Live Nation, Eventim and Superstruct), who all talked about their struggles and successes openly and honestly.
- **Reaching out** to other organizations is important! Share your experiences openly and find ways to push for change together. Use the power of networks like YOUROPE to have better bargaining power.
- **Nudging** your participants by communicating in a certain way is more effective than giving them lots of rules on what and what not to do.
- Flokk Lab: **You are more likely to take action when you feel something**. Use this approach if you want to change the behavior of your visitors even after the festival (see [section on Flokk Lab](#)).
- Don't forget why you organize your festival. If you don't understand your motives, why should others follow you?

- Yes, sustainability is hard and expensive but we're doing this because we must, not because we want to.
- **Fan travel:** The example of AnnenMayKantereit's tour showed up low-hanging fruit and smart ways to reduce fan travel emissions (see [section on The Changency](#)).
- Invite **activists** to help you **collect data** in return for a spot on the guest list (see [section on The Changency](#)).
- Having a **ticket pre-sale for people from your region** reduces travel emissions and rewards local fans (see [section on The Changency](#)).
- Coldplay's tour is a great example of how to work effectively with **energy** (see [section on Hope Solutions](#)).
- You can use your festival to **give back to your community**, e.g., your local community (see [section on Alive Festival](#)).
- As one participant put it, "the world is a dumpster fire," but GO Group workshops always give them **hope** to carry on, because they connect you to people who fight the same fight as you.
- Don't forget to **communicate** your sustainability measures to your **employees and colleagues**, too, not just your visitors. They need to be on board if you want your organization to change.
- Bring your colleagues from **marketing** to workshops like these, so they can understand sustainability and communicate it better.
- Don't forget about the **importance of storytelling**.
- **Stay open to new solutions** that you wouldn't have thought of on your own, even if they seem difficult to implement at your festival.
- It's important to **invest in young people** – they are our future. At our festivals as the next generation of visitors, but also in society.

Fun Stuff: Two Dinners and Two Guided Tours



When trying to change to future, it's important to find allies, so the GO Group workshop always leaves time and space for networking and collective plotting. On the eve of the workshop, whoever had already made it to Roskilde met for a casual get-together at Restaurant Marcella. The menu offered Italian cuisine with a twist, for example pizza that had a pumpkin instead of tomato base.

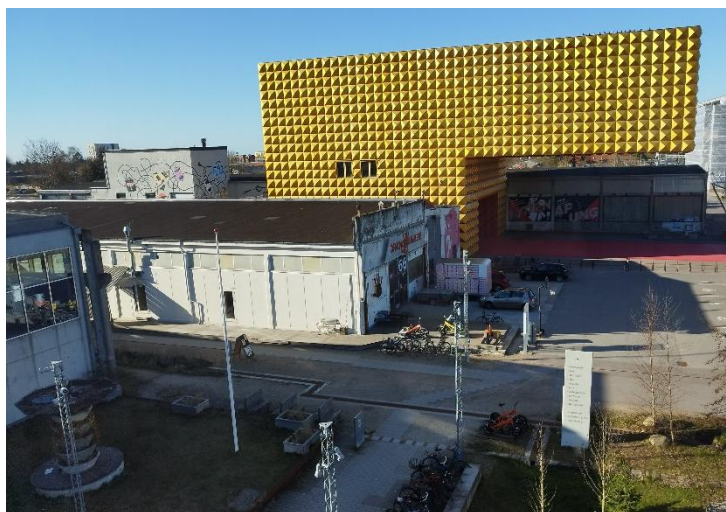
On the first workshop night, it is tradition for YOUROPE to

*Dinners at Musicon Mikrobryggeri (left; below) and at Restaurant Marcella (above).
Photos by Linnéa Svensson & Katharina Weber*

sponsor the dinner that always takes place in a location recommended by the hosting organization. This year, the participants didn't have to walk far. The dinner was served at Musicon's very own micro-brewery (Mikrobryggeri), which of course served several craft beers (among other things). A buffet was prepared by the local sustainable caterer [MadMedMening](#) (Food with Purpose). In line with keeping impacts low, all dishes were either vegetarian or vegan.

Guided Tour: Roskilde's Musicon District

The municipality of Roskilde has managed to turn a former industrial district that was centered around a concrete factory into a hub for creativity, music, arts and small businesses. Among other things, the so-called Musicon district is home to Roskilde Festival's headquarters. The festival's special advisor and former Head of Division, Area Resources and Guests & Safety as well as Head of production, Henrik Bondo Nielsen, introduced the workshop participants to the history of the area – and took them on a guided tour.



Ragnarock Museum (in gold), Orange Makers, and the Roskilde Festival Højskole. Photo by Katharina Weber

Two aerial shots from today and from 1998, when the concrete factory was still running, show the stark transformation of the district. The area around Roskilde is rich in natural resources such as gravel, and the factory was built right on top of a gravel deposit. According to Henrik, some campgrounds of RF will become gravel pits in the future – but that is a headache for another time.

After the depletion of the gravel pit, it turned into a landfill and eventually, the surface was covered with concrete. "That's how it was done then," Henrik said about the unsustainable method.



Tour guide Henrik Bondo Nielsen. Photo by Katharina Weber

RF wanted to do something interesting with this area. The municipality agreed with the idea and bought it. The reconstruction has taken place over the last 20 years. Today, there are still buildings in Musicon but also green areas. Henrik told the audience that the name was supposed to be "Musicon Valley" – alluding to the famous Californian Silicon Valley – but the municipality decided to shorten it to "Musicon."

The eyecatcher of the area is the Ragnarock Museum (a pun on Ragnarök, the end-time scenario from Norse mythology), dedicated to Danish Rock and Pop music, with its unique L shape and façade covered in golden studs. Next to it, you can find Orange Makers, an open arts and crafts place driven by volunteers. You can become a member by paying a small fee and do all kinds of crafts in

different facilities in there. Hal 9, the former concrete factory, is supposed to become RF's new headquarters (refer to the [section on Hal 9](#) for more details). Another hall is home to a huge skatepark.



Professionals at work. Photo by Caroline Nellemann

Many buildings are containers, "because it's not meant to be permanent," Henrik explained. Several containers house different companies like a microbrewery and a coffee roastery, which imports their own organic coffee beans. They receive their beans from fair farms and will produce all coffee for Roskilde next year. They have about five tons of beans to roast until the festival, Henrik knew.

Rooms are available for rehearsals for local bands. A former laboratory building was turned into the home of a dancing company with a small stage. The GO Group workshop's venue, the Roskilde Festival Højskole, is also located in Musicon, together with several dormitories, some as containers, some as permanent

buildings. It was possible to buy some smaller parcels of land within Musicon to build your own house there. According to Henrik, they were all bought by architects.

Musicon wants to get rid of most cars, Henrik said, but it hasn't been successful. "You can't drive in Musicon without a special reason – but apparently there are a lot of special reasons," he added.

Garbage is stored in small huts made of 100% recycled materials. No gutters exist in Musicon. Instead, there is a canal system leading to a green area. There, the collected rainwater creates a waterfall and ends in a basin, where it can slowly seep into the ground (the rainwater is not mixed with grey or black water). When the artificial riverbed is dry, it's used for skateboarding.

Guided Tour: Hal 9 – Roskilde Festival's Future Headquarters



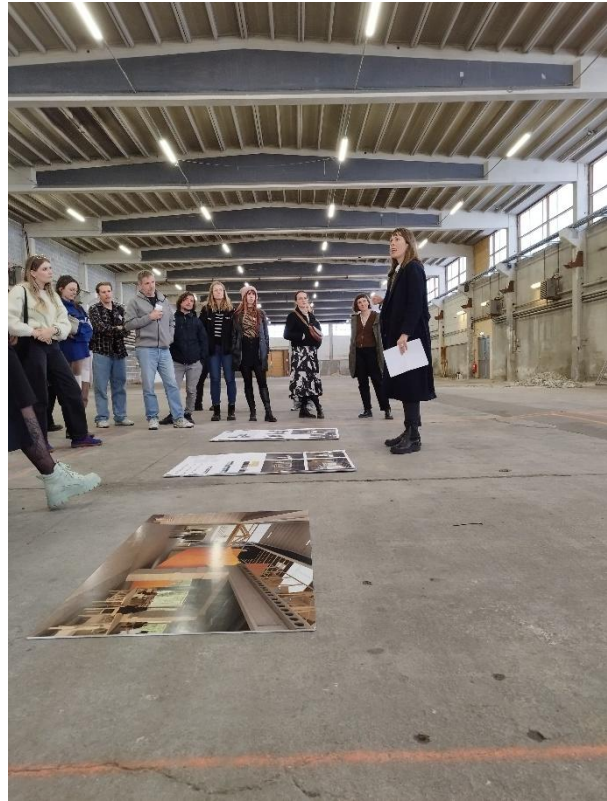
Hal 9. Photo by Linnéa Svensson

Roskilde Festival always tries to push the envelope when it comes to innovative solutions, on and off the festival site. Current plans for outside the festival include building new headquarters in the Musicon district, close to the current headquarters. The difference: the new HQs are supposed to be located in a former concrete factory. During the workshop, Trine Suhr (Project Manager, Roskilde Festival) showed the participants the state of former factory, now called Hal 9 (hall 9).

The municipality had bought the building and other surrounding buildings in 2003 and then turned the former industrial area into a hub for arts and creativity (more on that in the [section on Musicon](#)). At the moment, the hall is completely empty – and very cold, even in the summer –, so the festival team will have to make some big changes.

The plan is to separate the hall into three areas with three different functions: a performance hall, offices with a café area, and a construction space for art productions, turning the building into a cultural powerhouse. All required materials are supposed to be sourced from the hall itself or other upcycled materials. RF will first look at the available materials and then figure out what they are able to build with them – rather than the usual model of creating a design and then procuring the materials.

This also means that the costs will only become clear afterwards – a challenge which RF has not solved yet, but is confident to solve, according to Trine. There are only very few reference projects in Denmark, so their advisers will have to decide whether they can actually use recycled concrete as planned. “We have not chosen the easiest way or the cheapest way,” Trine said. But they are happy to share any mistakes that might be made so others can learn from them.



Until the vision shown in the images on the floor becomes a reality, there's still a lot of work to do, Trine Suhr (right) is telling the participants. Photo by Katharina Weber