

FUSION

FESTIVALS AS SOCIAL INNOVATION INCUBATORS



SOCIAL INNOVATION AT FESTIVALS

A COLLECTION OF 15 INSPIRING INITIATIVES FROM ACROSS EUROPEAN FESTIVALS

Photo by Nicolai Hegelund Vilhelmsen

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**In this guide, you'll
learn about 15
social initiatives
from European
festivals and how
they were
implemented on
festival grounds.**

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CONTENT: [BACKSLASH](#) & FORENINGEN [ROSKILDE FESTIVAL](#)

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SUPERBLOOM FESTIVAL BY NADJA AUMÜLLER

FOREWORD

BY HOLGER JAN SCHMIDT: GENERAL SECRETARY OF YOUROPE – THE EUROPEAN FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION AND AMBASSADOR OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT TAKE A STAND.

FESTIVALS ARE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUTH

The story of FUSION began in 2019 when I attended a conference as an ambassador for “Take A Stand”, probably the most important social awareness initiative in the European live music and festival scene initiated by YOUROPE – The European Festival Association. It was about “The Role of Youth Work in Supporting European Cohesion” and brought together young people, youth workers, and experts from the field, initiated by three national Erasmus+ agencies.

At first, I felt out of place, like an alien, but in the end, it proved to be a perfect match. Our popular music festivals – regardless of whether they are major or minor grassroots events – reach millions of young people every year; young people who identify with what we do and who are the core of the unique magic of the festivals. It does not take much to realise how valuable festivals are as a platform for young people. They are places for international gatherings, self-fulfilment, and the development of lifestyle and personality. Festivals are often places where emerging artists first gain prominence, young volunteers and team members develop essential personal skills and so many of those involved gain valuable experiences that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. But this special connection also offers two things to us, festival people.

OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Opportunity: when festivals see their young audiences as more than customers and consumers, namely as participants, co-creators, and maybe even change makers, there is an enormous potential for new, positive projects.

Responsibility: let's assume that thousands of young people are gathered in front of your stages and on your communication platforms. Doesn't that imply the obligation to value and promote this asset? Offering them more than the standard party programme will not cost the festival much and will tie the young audience even more closely to the festival while giving something back to society that will raise the festival's reputation.

The FUSION project has identified some brilliant existing examples showing how it can be done and developed tools that will help facilitate and encourage young people to bring their innovation power to festivals as well as festivals to benefit from them. I am sure this is the future. Because the future, just like any festival, is impossible without youth.

POHODA FESTIVAL BY HOLGER JAN SCHMIDT





ROSkilde FESTIVAL BY JOHANNE TEGLGÅRD OLSEN

THE POWER OF FESTIVALS: TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE

We are amidst a very urgent, real global crisis. Human rights are under pressure. The climate crisis is devastating. People are driven to flee by war. Inequalities and injustice are accelerating locally and globally.

More than ever, we all need to stand closer together, face ourselves and each other and find some solutions. Solutions that go beyond ourselves and cross borders.

The FUSION project seeks to unleash the unique power of festivals to inspire and mobilise young people to be architects of their own lives and actively engage in transforming the world for the better. In other words, FUSION explores festivals as platforms for social innovation – a source of inspiration to the wide range of opportunities for accelerating youth-focused social innovation. This guide presents examples of social innovation across European festivals and provides know-how and insights.

Festivals are some of society's most potent and credible connectors to young people. We hope that even more festivals together with NGOs and youth educators will unleash their social innovation potential and embrace their role as non-formal youth educators. As festivals, the key towards a more just and sustainable future is at our fingertips.

Do you take on the challenge?

WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

Social innovation is, by definition, an engaging, connecting, and empowering activity and “the practice of using creativity to develop solutions which improve the well-being of people and society”.

From the perspective of this guide, social innovation is process rather than product oriented. A process that, over time, creates an impact beyond concrete action through systemic changes. Changes for the better.

“ (Social Innovation is...) a novel solution to a social problem, which is more effective, efficient, sustainable or fair, than existing solutions and whose value created is accumulated primarily for society as a whole and not for individuals in particular. ”

– James A. Phills, Jr., Kriss Deiglmeier & Dale T. Miller, 2008

SUPERBLOOM FESTIVAL BY JANIS HINZ



As part of the project, we have collected various insights into social innovation and related concepts. You can read a short review of the main definitions and delve into participation in Appendix II: The power of Social Innovation and Youth Participation.

WHY DO WE NEED SOCIAL INNOVATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT?

Young people are, in many cases, hardest hit by the present crisis. At a European level, we find ourselves with high rates of youth unemployment, deteriorating mental health, political disaffection, problems of emancipation, or lack of motivation to get involved in a world where youth are suffering the consequences of acts they have not carried out.

At the same time, we have youth who are more sensitised and aware of social issues and who are the leading promoters of change. Still, society often needs to facilitate their active and actual participation too. Problems are shared that denote the adult-centrism of society and that, in some cases, place young people as incomplete citizens in the transition to adult life.

Social innovation can and should be one of the resources that young people use to create change, as a tool that responds to social problems and interconnects different agents, putting creativity at the centre. Due to the easy access, the vast opportunities for execution, and the coincidence with the spaces they frequent, social innovation can be very quickly approached by young people and included in their imagination as a tool for fundamental social change.

Social innovation is intrinsically linked to active citizenship. Active Citizens feel inspired, motivated, and empowered to make a difference. People with the drive and know-how to ensure ideas don't just remain ideas.

Festivals as events have a beginning and an end. But in the big festival community, we can create a movement together. We can spark young people's imagination and stimulate active citizen skills. Together with young people, we can come up with a new blueprint. To think in new ways of living and being in the world. Not at the expense of nature or people but in solidarity and with care.

FESTIVALS AS PLATFORMS FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

Festivals are no longer only music, parties, and fun anymore. They are essential and unique experiences that offer all participants, attendees and volunteers alike; opportunities to develop their skills, change their attitudes, and increase and share their knowledge. In short, they allow you to learn.

Many festivals offer workshops, provide space for information and organise activities in cooperation with NGOs on different social, cultural, environmental, and political issues in the non-music times. So, participants get to engage in non-formal learning activities and be part of informal learning during the entire experience.

Festivals today are developing beyond the classical sense; while music and entertainment are still the primary purposes; the festival settings are becoming more of an experience which offers international interactions; values, and themes that go way beyond the music industry. Environment, anti-racism, LGBTQIA+ rights, and active citizenship are just a few examples of values and themes that festivals embody.

Throughout Europe, good practices exist, demonstrating the potential of festivals to be platforms for change. Following is a range of inspirational examples – social innovation stories from across European festivals – where the somewhat abstract concepts of social innovation and youth empowerment are translated into concrete actions.



Besides inspirational examples, we have also prepared a toolbox for NGOs and festivals. The FUSION Toolbox is for everyone who would like to create a project at festivals and tap into festival spaces' potential for social innovation. Find our FUSION Toolbox on our website: fusion-project.com



PHOTO BY HELLE ARENSBAK

TØNDER FESTIVAL

Tønder Festival is an international music festival in Tønder, a small town in Southern Denmark. Since 1975 folk music fans have gathered annually in late August. Today with a capacity of around 15,000 participants, the festival is organised by a volunteer-based non-profit organisation, which donates its profits to local cultural initiatives and social organisations. During the festival, large parts of town become part of the festival community, as musicians, guests, and locals participate in creating Tønder Festival by interacting and making music together.

CASE: TASTE THE WORLD

Taste the World is a food stall at Tønder Festival run by residents and employees of the local refugee asylum centres. The asylum seekers join the festival community as volunteers constructing and running the food stall and become an integral part of the festival and the local community.

Taste the World is a street-food concept offering dishes inspired by and representing the volunteers' different cultures. The volunteers build the stall, learn about food safety, and develop the stall's dishes. During the festival, they prepare the food and serve customers. All profits go towards social activities at the asylum centres.





BECOMING LOCAL CITIZENS

By volunteering at Tønder Festival, the asylum seekers activate and develop their skills meaningfully while experiencing a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. Being part of the festival community creates a connection to the local host community.

The festival's participants interact with the asylum seekers, a group usually marginalised without much opportunity to interact positively with their host community. At Tønder Festival, they can present themselves differently, as they share their food and culture and become engaged citizens through volunteerism. Randi Arami Maach, project manager for Taste The World and communications consultant for Asyl Syd, elaborates:

“We [Asyl Syd] have an obligation to give asylum seekers insights into the Danish society, and we find volunteer culture to be a part of the Danish society, which they [asylum seekers] should know about.”

– Randi Arami Maach, project manager, Taste The World

Randi Maach also comments on the food stall's outreach: “The festival promotes our users [asylum seekers] as a part of Danish society and as people who are not dangerous to be around. (...) There was a lot of press coverage, and our residents usually get very negative publicity, but in this case, it was very positive.”





PHOTO BY RANDI ARAMI MAACH

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

After the festival, all volunteers receive a certificate for their work. Issuing certificates address innovatively the critical challenge faced by young refugees and migrants. During their migration process, their education and professional skills development are put on hold for an uncertain period. The certificate lessens the negative impact and supplements their CVs. It shows their motivation and willingness to participate in civil society and demonstrates core skills and values, such as collaboration, engagement, and responsibility, to potential employers.

Name: *Tønder Festival*

City & country: *Tønder, Denmark*

Capacity: *15,000*

Site: *Tønder Dyrskueplads*

Camping: *Yes*

Number of days: *4*

Established in: *1974*





PHOTO BY FLEMMING BO JENSEN

ROSKILDE FESTIVAL

Roskilde Festivals is the largest music and arts festival in Northern Europe, gathering 100,000 guests and 30,000 volunteers from the Nordics, Europe and worldwide. It's also one of the oldest, dating back to 1971. At the end of each June, festival-goers gather south of Roskilde, 35 km from Copenhagen. Roskilde Festival presents a diverse and progressive music and, arts & activism programme with more than 180 acts.

It is an independent, non-profit festival organised by The Roskilde Festival Charity Society, and all of its profits are donated to initiatives benefitting children and youth or supporting humanitarian or cultural projects.

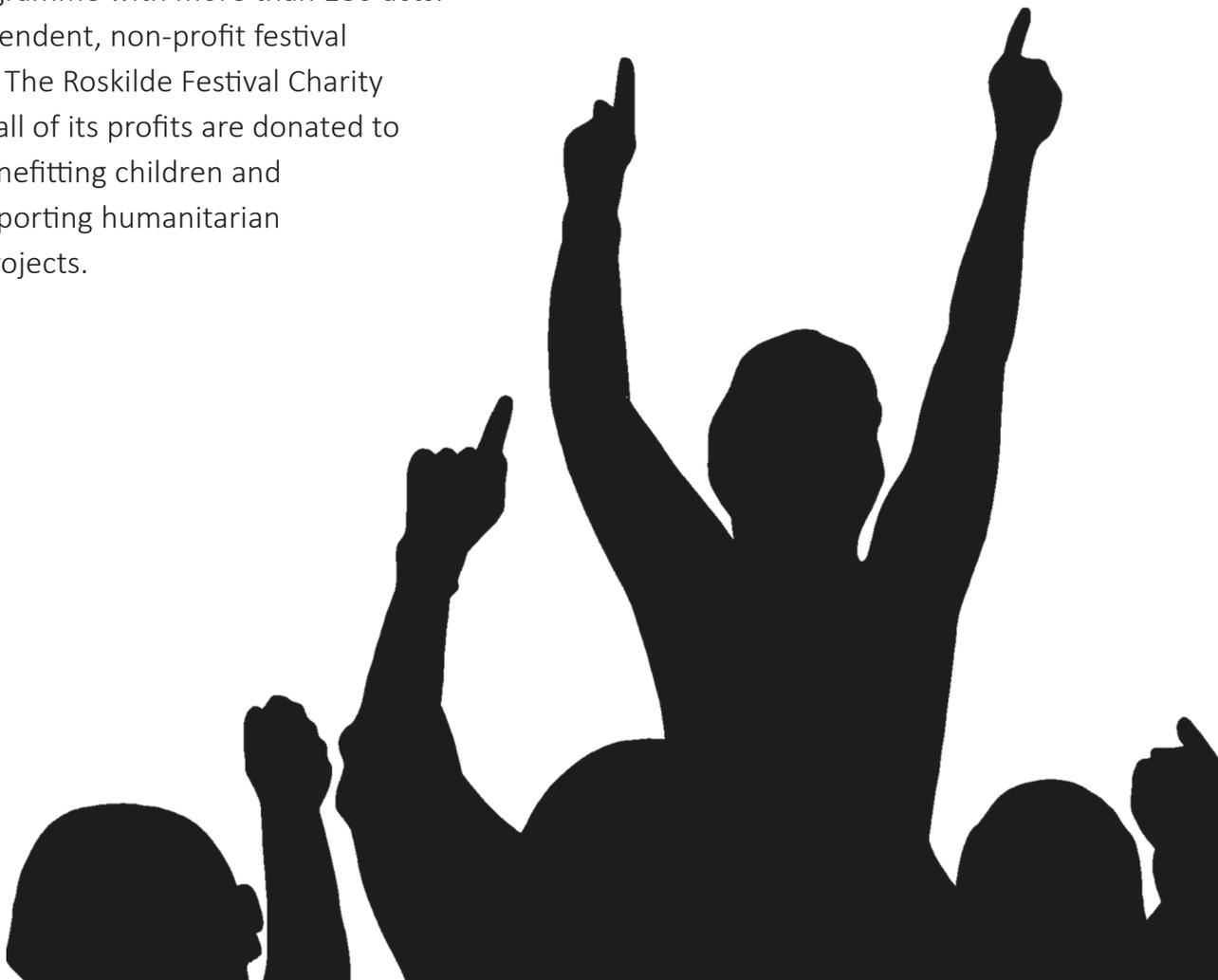




PHOTO BY JOHANNE TEGLGÅRD OLSEN

CASE: CIRCULAR LAB

Together with the Tuborg Foundation, Roskilde Festival has created The Circular Lab providing at least 200 young entrepreneurs with the opportunity to lead the way and develop ambitious circular solutions for the future. Circular solutions are, for instance, about designing long-lasting products or developing new models for the rights of use of a product. The central platform of the laboratory will be Roskilde Festival.



PHOTO BY JOHANNE TEGLGÅRD OLSEN



PHOTO BY JOHANNE TEGLGÅRD OLSEN

TESTING CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS IN A TEMPORARY FESTIVAL CITY

The Circular Lab allows young entrepreneurs to test and develop innovative green solutions at Roskilde Festival. The aim is to increase the influence of young people on a more sustainable future and the climate behaviour of citizens in general. With 130,000 residents, Roskilde Festival is comparable to a larger city. At the same time, the temporariness makes the festival community a unique platform to test new sustainable solutions with the potential to change the behaviour in society.

Kristine Barenholdt Bruun, head of the Circular Lab, emphasises the importance of testing in collaboration with the festival:

“ You must take advantage of the synergy effects. If for example, there are some start-ups testing food solutions, they should test them in the food stalls at the festival, and if some start-ups are testing new circular construction, the festival should take it in and make sure that it becomes part of the way it works with construction. ”

– Kristine Barenholdt Bruun, head of The Circular Lab, Roskilde Festival



FACILITATING CHANGE BY SUPPORTING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

In the project, entrepreneurs gain systematic access to knowledge, professional networks, other companies, and potential investors who can take their solutions forward and create a solid business foundation. The ambition is to help green entrepreneurs of the future on their way by creating a framework where they can challenge and test their concrete solutions in a flexible and giant laboratory filled with people and possibilities. At the same time, the laboratory's solutions should raise awareness of green behaviour among festival participants and contribute to a significant reduction in festival waste.

Kristine Barenholdt Bruun elaborates on the positive outcomes for the start-ups taking part in Circular Lab:

“One of the things the start-ups we work with highlight as a positive outcome is that they get to know each other. They may have been completely alone when starting their business and being a part of this network with other entrepreneurs means a lot. Several of the companies have even started to make joint products, some are considering merging, and cross-cutting partnerships are being formed.”

– Kristine Barenholdt Bruun, head of The Circular Lab, Roskilde Festival

PHOTO BY JOHANNE TEGLGÅRD OLSEN



CASE: DREAM CITY

DREAMING AND CO-CREATING

Dream City is a participant-driven, sustainable, and community-oriented neighbourhood within the larger temporary city of Roskilde Festival. Dream City's inhabitants are young, creative festival participants called dreamers. Starting 100 days before the festival, the dreamers meet during weekends and build their camps. By dreaming and co-creating, they become citizens of Dream City. Together with other dreamers, they create a city and community based on the core values of innovation, curiosity, citizenship, commitment, and diversity.

One of the volunteers from the team responsible for Dream City, Emil Nielsen, explains how this initiative not only creates value for the festival but also has the potential to impact Danish society.

“We often talk about whether we [Roskilde Festival] live in a bubble. Do the things we do at the festival have an impact on Danish society? How big is our effect as a festival? And is it the participants that bring this something to the festival, or do we give something to them that they can use with the rest of the Danish society? Dream city is in many ways representative of how good it can be, how much our community can bear, and in which directions we are going. (...) Dream city is not just the big parties. The Dreamers do events 24 hours a day during the festival shining a light on e.g., concerns for social- economic- and environmental sustainability.”

– Emil Nielsen, Dream City, Roskilde Festival

PHOTO BY NICOLAI HEGELUND VILHELMSEN

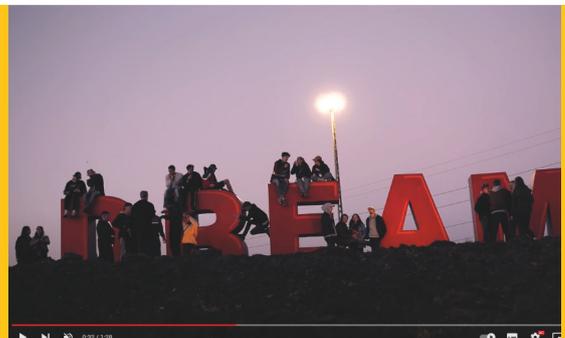




PHOTO BY CHRISTOFFER ROSENFELDT

A TEMPORARY, SUSTAINABLE CITY

Dream City has a formal, city-like infrastructure. Dream City's centre consists of a city hall, community kitchen, and recycling station, providing essential services, facilities, help, and guidance. All camps take responsibility for each other and the area by contributing to the community and creating meaningful events involving dreamers and other festival participants. Camps are encouraged to think sustainably regarding materials, resources, durability, and togetherness when planning their contributions.



UNICORNY CAMP – DREAMING AND QUEERING SPACE

Unicorny Camp, one of Dream City’s many camps, is a safe space for LGBTQIA+ persons at Roskilde Festival. Its residents organise events, such as debates, glitter-wrestling competitions, pride parades and parties, that challenge norms for gender and sexuality dominating daily life in society and at Roskilde Festival. Unicorny Camp seeks to renegotiate concepts of inclusiveness. Emil Nielsen comments on camp life in Dream City:

“Dream City is a place where you are also able to participate as a ‘legitimate peripheral participant’ meaning It’s okay to be a spectator. There are many different people, so you can almost certainly find someone you have a connection with. I’ve heard several people say that they have found themselves in those communities, e.g. in Camp Unicorny.”

– Emil Nielsen, Dream City, Roskilde Festival

PHOTO BY PRESTON DRAKE-HILLYARD



CASE: FLOKKR

Flokkr is Roskilde Festival's community centre. Flokkr is both a stage and a workshop space, acting as a gathering point for guests at Roskilde Festival's campsite. Its name refers to the old Norse word for gathering points. Since 2016, it has been the festival's platform for activists, musicians, writers, hackers, dancers, and scientists.

ART, CREATIVITY, AND MUSIC AS CATALYSTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

After three years of working with Flokkr and witnessing the project's potential, Roskilde Festival turned Flokkr into an all-year platform, Flokkr on Tour visiting Roskilde Festival, its sister conference and knowledge festival GRASP, democracy festivals and youth events in Denmark. In 2022, Flokkr on Tour included four activist movements, The Green Youth Movement, Fridays for Future Denmark, LGBT+ Denmark, Young Energy and the artist-duo, Baum & Leahy, who work with sustainable materials in their art installations. Together with Roskilde festival's curators, they created a temporary place to debate, gather knowledge, and create together. Its objective is to investigate how artistic and creative methods can contribute to broader youth engagement and focus on climate justice and LGBTQIA+ rights.

PHOTO BY ROSKILDE FESTIVAL





PHOTO BY LARS VIBILD

IMAGINING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As part of FLOKKR on tour 2022, The Green Youth Movement held future meditation sessions, inviting participants to reflect on what a sustainable future could look like and what we can do better. Every participant put on headphones and got comfortable sitting or lying down while listening to this pre-recorded meditation journey that would guide them to imagine their take on the future.

In another activity, the activists from The Green Youth Movement invited festival-goers to a workshop styled as a debate about how to talk discuss and talk about the climate crisis. Workshop participants got up on stage and picked sides before they knew what they would discuss. This led to some participants taking opposite viewpoints of what they believed, gaining an understanding of a respectful debate and experimenting with how to phrase different arguments.

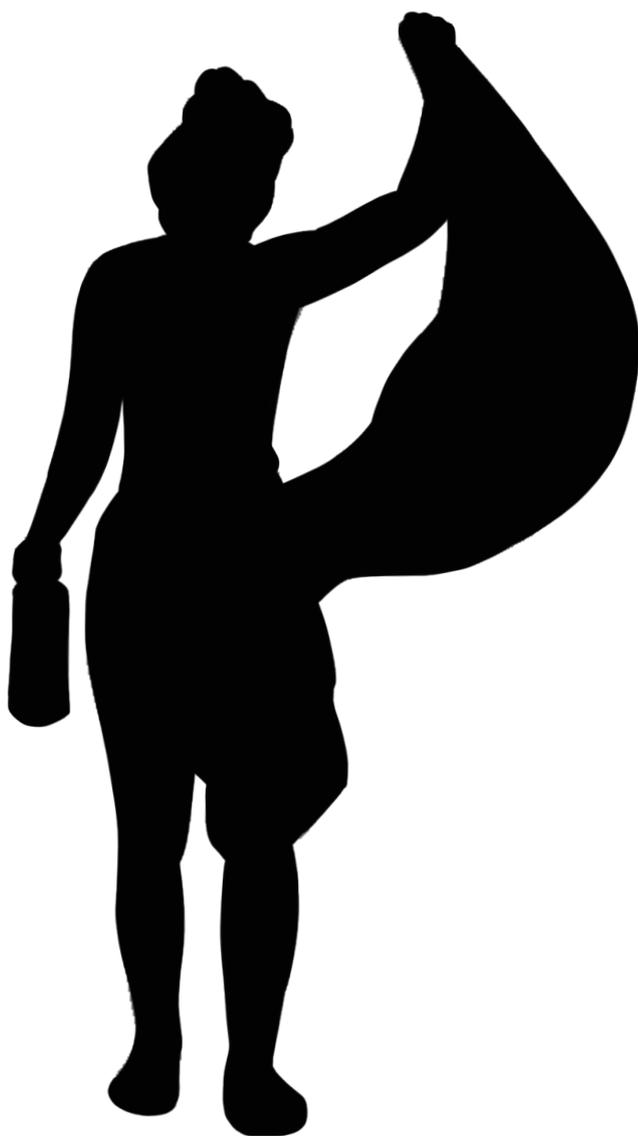


A COLLECTIVE LEARNING PRACTICE

By participating in the FLOKKR on tour-project, NGOs and activist groups experiment using artistic and creative methods as tools for creating societal change. Karin Gottlieb, project manager for FLOKKR, has observed how FLOKKR has not only an impact on FLOKKR audiences but also on the participating youth organisations that are part of FLOKKR on tour:

“When you create interprofessional collaborations, as it’s done at FLOKKR, you can see how the actors make each other better. I do not doubt that ‘Fridays For Future’ and ‘The Green Youth Movement’, make each other better, and have learned so much from each other by being a part of FLOKKR.”

– Karin Gottlieb, project manager FLOKKR, Roskilde Festival





CASE: TURNING TABLES DENMARK

Turning Tables is a global NGO working to empower marginalised youth in different international contexts by providing them with the means to creatively process and express their challenges, hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow, mainly through film, music, and photography. Their programmes build creative environments through inspiration, learning and technology transfer that enables artistic self-expression in spaces where this would otherwise have been impossible.

Turning Tables Denmark runs, together with local artists, creative labs in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Greater Copenhagen and Roskilde. At Roskilde Festival, festival-goers can experience concerts and photo exhibitions by Turning Tables' children and youth.



CHANGE THROUGH CREATIVE ARTS

Through film, photography and music, instructors create a creative and playful free space where children and youth can express themselves. The initiative is rooted in empowering youth, by youth and for youth, amplifying their voices on issues that concern them. Thus, supporting marginalised youth in responding to cross-cutting problems, finding innovative spaces to strengthen their resilience and mental well-being, and providing more links to nurturing social cohesion through positive identity development. CEO at Turning Tables Denmark, Martin Højland, is very aware of how they work with the internal storytelling of Turning Tables:

“ I am invited to so many culture debates, talks, and processes dealing with inclusion, how to include people with other ethnic backgrounds, and how to get what people call ‘vulnerable young people included. Our fundamental idea is just the opposite. Namely, how we as the organisation Turning Tables Denmark, and the artists we are and have employed, can be included in the lives of children and young people in these areas [deprived areas]. We are the ones who have something to gain. It is not about doing something for them [the kids and young people] because we feel bad for them. I think festivals must fundamentally change their perspective and think ‘what are we missing out on by not having them represented at our festival?’ ”

– Martin Højland, CEO, Turning Tables Denmark

PHOTO BY TURNING TABLES



DEVELOPING SKILLS: BUILDING NETWORKS AND CREATING EMPOWERMENT

Turning Tables use a product-based approach to strengthen networks and build bridges within and outside communities. Building and creating products reduce distances between people while working towards a common goal. The process also promotes a technical skill-building capacity in an open space where youth can self-reflect and advocate for change through their products.

This methodology creates individual and collective empowerment and awareness-raising on community, national and international levels. This unique approach of tapping into using music as a universal language for youth communication has proven itself to be very effective in areas where simply reaching out to marginalised youth is often fraught with obstacles. The product-based approach is vital to Turning Tables Denmark, and Martin Højland believes this is the best way to make an actual change toward a more diverse cultural industry:

“ I think one thing that is important in terms of creating social change is to act. To do something. There are a lot of panel debates and conversations about inclusion, rights, and diversity in the music industry. There are an insane number of gatherings of people who sit and talk about the problem [not enough diversity in the music industry]. I think you get more out of acting, e.g., at a festival. Our young people mainly have an ethnic minority background and consist of approximately 50% girls and 50% boys, and we don't sit and talk at the festival about diversity in the music industry, we do a concert at the festival, which is diversity. The festival as a platform must be something other than the 'Folkemødet' [Folkemødet på Bornholm - a democracy festival on the island of Bornholm] where it is just one-panel debate after another. We prefer action as opposed to talk. ”

– Martin Højland, CEO, Turning Tables Denmark

An integral part of supporting youth is to provide a space that enables them to positively develop their identities and keep them in their transition into adulthood. Thus, striving to support youth, their peers, and the communities in which they reside to collectively build healthy dialogue and self-reflection in support of the development of positive coping mechanisms.

PHOTO BY TURNING TABLES



Name: *Roskilde Festival*

City & country: *Roskilde, Denmark*

Capacity: *130,000*

Site: *Roskilde Dyrskueplads*

Camping: *Yes*

Number of days: *8*

Established in: *1971*



PHOTO BY NADJA AUMÜELLER

SUPERBLOOM

Superbloom Festival premiered on the first weekend of September 2022 in Munich's Olympiapark & Olympic Stadium. At this sold-out debut of the now annual event, the 50,000 visitors experienced a festival concept that has never existed in this form on the German market before.

CASE: YOUR PLANET

In addition to stages of various sizes for musical acts, Superbloom devotes half of its program to non-musical content. These include so-called experience areas, which focus on such diverse topics as dance, performing art, (performance), science, fashion, lifestyle, a child-friendly festival or art. And also, an area that sees itself as an interactive playground for sustainability projects, social initiatives and innovative thoughts about our future – it's called YOUR Planet.

A FORUM FOR POSITIVE ACTION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

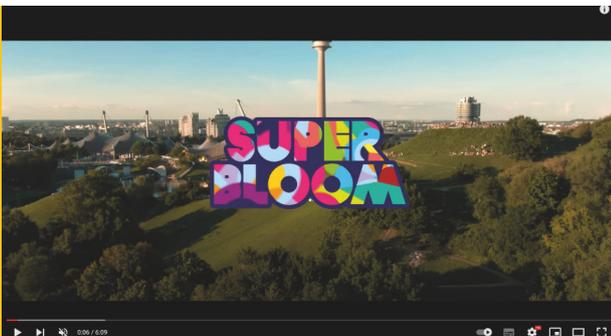
An attractive area on the festival site was selected to realise this plan, and appropriate areas for presentation and action were defined. Here a place was created to escape from everyday life and, at the same, contribute to making the world a little bit better.

Everything could be a potential YOUR Planet event: talks, performances, hands-on activities, workshops and much more. Festival Director Fruzsina Szép describes the team's approach to planning, saying, "We want to offer clever minds and inspiring activists a place at Superbloom to present their projects in a unique mix of information, entertainment and interaction."

ACTIVATION OF THE ACTIVISTS

To fill YOUR Planet with life, the festival needs activists. This is precisely where one of the main tasks of the organisation team comes in: Personally addressing and motivating activist groups, NGOs and public institutions to integrate a wide variety of projects to depict the entire range of socially relevant activities. Szép describes the processes as "Activating the active people in the region and showing their creativity is immensely important to us", and continues saying, "Together with their colleagues from the rest of Germany or the world; they make YOUR Planet colourful and diverse."

Once a year, Superbloom publicly opens a call once a year offering places at YOUR Planet along with explaining conditions for partner organisations. In their application, these describe the message and mission of their actions and planned interaction with the audience – the more creative and festival-like, the better. The festival team uses these applications to curate a coherent program of activities and exhibitors. The classification of the applicants according to the SDGs (UN Sustainable Development Goals) also helps to guarantee a wide variety of content.



POSITIVE POWER

The festival gathered 30 organisations in YOUR Planet in the first year, showing their positive power. These ranged from local climate and environmental initiatives to feminist activist groups and sea rescue NGOs. From political and educational institutions to nutrition projects to the regional chapters of international NGOs such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International.

“It was wonderful to see how the audience accepted the program offer, the stands were busy all day long. People spent much time on the activities, and we had very valuable conversations on stage and at the stalls.”

– Fruzsina Szép, Festival Director, Superbloom

And not only visitors and activists were brought together, but organisations also connected, and the first partnerships born in YOUR Planet have already started.



Name: *Superbloom*

City & country: *Munich, Germany*

Capacity: *50,000*

Site: *Olympic Park & Olympic Stadium*

Camping: *No*

Number of days: *2*

Established in: *2022*



PHOTO BY JÖRG KRÖGER

ROCKEN AM BROCKEN

Rocken am Brocken is an annual three-day open-air festival in Harz, Germany. The first festival was held in August 2007, gathering about 6,000 festival-goers daily. The festival runs under the motto “Nature, Music, Friendship” and takes place on the meadow bordering the Harz National Park; trees and green surround all stages. The festival’s line-up includes around 50 artists representing genres from indie to ska and electro. Green Camping is part of Rocken am Brocken’s DNA – its festival-goers camp within nature and respecting nature and the environment.

THE ACOUSTIC PATH (AKUSTIKPFAD)

The Acoustic Path is a unique experience at Rocken am Brocken that invites participants to experience the harmony of nature and music and immerse in the fascinating flora and fauna of the Harz Mountains. In small groups, festival guests walk along streams and tall trees guided by a ranger into the vivid wilderness of the Harz Mountains. The local forest rangers share knowledge and insights about edible plants, herbs, and rare flowers and animals. They also ensure the group is led safely en route through the woods to beautiful pit stops, where musicians play acoustic sets only amplified by the wilderness.



RECONNECTING WITH NATURE

The Acoustic Path underlines the general modus of the festival to stimulate encounters between nature, music, and humans. The forest adventure holds didactic and perceptive ambitions and potentialities from the knowledge shared by the ranger to the more intangible transition in understanding what nature can be: something to be passionate about and reconnect with, a place of joy, comfort, and shared experiences.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE GREATER ISSUES

The subtle work of changing the perception of nature through experiences is combined with other activities like various learning workshops on nature-related issues. The global issues, climate, and biodiversity crisis are connected to nature's local and bodily experience as a place to respect, protect, and preserve even after returning from the festival. The profits from the Acoustic Path hike are donated to the Harz National Park.



PHOTO BY PETER DIERCKS

Name: *Rocken am Brocken*

City & country: *Elend, Oberharz am Brocken, Germany*

Capacity: *6,000*

Site: *Meadow bordering the Harz National Park*

Camping: *Yes*

Number of days: *3*

Established in: *2007*



PHOTO BY SAARA AUTERE

RUISROCK

Ruisrock is one of Finland's oldest and most prominent festivals. It takes place in Ruissalo National Park in Turku, Finland. During the weekend, Ruisrock takes its guests on a journey into another world full of joy, friendship, and freedom. In addition to the varied music programme, the festival offers a range of high-quality food and drink services.

CASE: RUISSIRAATI

Ruissiraati, or the Ruisrock Jury as the English translation would be, is a panel of 16–24-year-olds from all over Finland. Together with them, Ruisrock facilitates workshops on various topics related to festival production. Sometimes to discuss and get their point of view and sometimes to create new ideas. Producer at Ruisrock Festival Ilona Numminen describes Ruissiraati as a co-creation model for Ruisrock and points to a shift in strategy that began in 2020:

“Until 2020 Ruisrock had been doing quantitative research for over 10 years. We were getting a lot of quantitative data from the audience surveys but were missing deeper insight into the new generation of audience. At the same time, it was clear that our team and the colleagues around us were getting older. We realised it would be necessary to somehow get a better understanding of the Gen Z.”

– Ilona Numminen, producer, Ruisrock

Ruissiraati members join the festival, carry out small follow-up tasks, or participate in action. The experiences this brings them are used to develop the festival in workshops in the inter-festival period during the autumn.



CO-DESIGNING THE FUTURE EXPERIENCE

For Ruisrock, it is of utmost importance to make an event that represents the visions and desires of its audience. Ruissiraati brings new perspectives to the festival's production team and helps to anticipate future trends. With this initiative, Ruisrock presents a way to actively include the voices of young people who, in addition, learn how a festival is organised and can convey the needs or priorities they would like to have. Direct contact with Ruissiraati is essential to show that their voices are heard and that what they discuss in the group is helpful for the festival. Numminen elaborates, saying:

“ Ruissiraati gives the festival actual and up-to-date knowledge about how the potential young audience sees the world and what is important to them. It enables us to see the value and attitudes, the future trends and develop a relevant festival for the young participants. ”

– Ilona Numminen, producer, Ruisrock

RAISING YOUTH VOICES

Ruissiraati meets up with the festival team in workshops to create and develop ideas for the various elements of Ruisrock. Areas of development are decided together – with the jury having the right to bring improvement to the table. As a result, innovations of the festivals are created from the bottom up – the jury members may also be involved in the implementation.

Diversity and active youth participation are keys to this practice's success. Selecting a diverse profile ensures the representation of a variety of realities and ideas and allows young people makes it possible to reflect on their everyday situations. The Ruisrock Jury is thus compiled from a diverse group of young people from across Finland- and to avoid automatic group thinking, previous knowledge of Ruisrock is optional. To ensure that anyone can afford to spend time on this crucial task of social innovation, the jury members are paid compensation for participating in the workshops.

Name: *Ruisrock*

City & country: *Turku, Finland*

Capacity: *35,000 (per day)*

Site: *Ruissalo National Park*

Camping: *Yes*

Number of days: *3*

Established in: *1970*





PHOTO BY MAHDI ARIDI

WE LOVE GREEN

The three-day festival We Love Green was created as part of a new generation of festivals in 2011. It takes place in Paris' largest public park Bois de Vincennes. Its programme includes four music stages, one thinktank stage featured by the french newspaper, Le Monde, an eco-designed scenography, an incubator of 50 start-ups, NGOs, film and documentary screenings, and a food court which brings together more than 50 restaurateurs, chefs committed to organic, local and fair trade. The 8th edition of We Love Green ended with a record attendance of more than 80,000 guests. We Love Green invites artists who make the music of our time.

We Love Green is an experimental festival for sustainable development solutions in the live entertainment and events industries. Via its six cultural line-ups, We Love Green's pop-up village proves sustainable development is compatible with our current lifestyles. They adhere to an eight-point sustainability chart with focal points like energy, water, waste management, carbon offsetting and circular economy, transportation, food services, and raising awareness. Their pioneering eco-friendly production techniques are an essential element of the festival.



CASE: INNOVATIONS VILLAGE

Innovations Village is a place to explore, share, learn, and make a difference. In its Innovations Village, We Love Green brings together innovative companies and NGOs. Together they enable festival-goers to discover creative and activist structures. We Love Green looks to the future by inviting about twenty innovative organisations to present their projects that meet the challenges of tomorrow. A jury of professionals in the sector selects the companies and NGOs making up Innovations Village. The NGOs joining Innovations Village carry important messages and give solutions to current problems.



Today, located at the centre of the festival, Innovations Village is a space for exchanges and meetings for festival-goers, with representatives from the circular economy, the technologies of tomorrow, and activists. By getting involved, festival-goers discover the actors of the social economy, sustainable fashion brands, tomorrow's technologies and influential NGOs, like the Surfrider Foundation, Greenpeace, Amnesty International and Oxfam, which offer workshops, games and plays to communicate sustainability to engage the festival-goers. It's also an opportunity for festival-goers to discover new sectors and meaningful jobs, meet the NGOs, and get involved with them. This is the heart of this innovation hub.

Name: *We Love Green*

City & country: *Paris, France*

Capacity: *80,000 (over 3 days)*

Site: *Bois de Vincennes*

Camping: *No*

Number of days: *3*

Established in: *2011*





PHOTO BY HORIPHOTO.HU

SZIGET FESTIVAL

Sziget Festival is a music and cultural festival held every August in Budapest, Hungary. The festival started as a small gathering in 1993 and has since evolved into one of Europe's largest music festivals that, over six days, brings the biggest names in music from the widest variety of genres with more than 1,000 performances across 60 stages. Each summer, the festival welcomes hundreds of thousands of participants representing more than 100 nationalities. The site lies close to the city centre, allowing festival goers to explore Budapest anytime during their stay.

CASE: SUPERAR

Every year, Sziget pairs up with a charity they want to support. In 2019 and 2022, they partnered up with Superar, where the deposit of every reusable cup dropped off at a collection point at Sziget went towards supporting the Superar program. Superar also performed at the festival both years.



ADVOCATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH MUSIC EDUCATION

Superar is an initiative empowering children and young people from underprivileged conditions through active music-making to overcome their socio-economic boundaries. Superar uses music education as a tool for dialogue between different groups of society, advocating the importance of equal opportunities for all children. Superar sees daily artistic promotion as a promising way of reaching people of every social, ethnic, religious, political, and educational background, educating them to be self-sufficient and responsible European citizens.

Superar believes music education promotes a variety of positive outcomes. Their model is based on the idea that training every student to realise their musical potential improves their focus, motivation, creativity, and confidence. Working together creatively reinforces a sense of community, communication skills, consideration for others, tolerance, and acceptance of criticism. Cultivating these skills is a fundamental part of their model and is at the core of many socio-political and educational issues. More than 2000 children benefit from Superar, including about 27 nations in Austria, Switzerland, Slovakia, Bosnia, Romania, and Liechtenstein.



szigetfestival.com

facebook.com/superarhungary

instagram.com/superar_hungary

RAISING THE PERSPECTIVES OF CHILDREN FOR LIFE

Superar's goal is to enrol many children in music education programs free of charge. The project offers children and families a possibility to connect to their city's public and cultural life, establish connections to artists and their surroundings and thus be introduced to people and ideas that would otherwise not be accessible. The most crucial goal of Superar is to raise children's perspectives for life and help them discover their potential, especially for their educational careers. Superar is constantly working on better education opportunities for children through various co-operations. They organise visits to different departments of their cooperation partners (concert halls, theatres) to introduce children to other options for their vocational education.

“ ... Music as the common language of humanity can play an essential role in the development of the personality. There is growing evidence of the benefits of a high-quality music and arts education providing benefits to children beyond musical skills itself. ”

– Judith Morvay , Program Director, Superar Hungary

Name: *Sziget Festival*

City & country: *Budapest, Hungary*

Capacity: *450,000 (over 6 days)*

Site: *Óbuda Island*

Camping: *Yes*

Number of days: *6*

Established in: *1993*





PHOTO BY MOTHER TONGUES

MOTHER TONGUES FESTIVAL

Mother Tongues Festival is the largest festival celebrating linguistic diversity through the arts in Ireland. The festival is run by Mother Tongues, a social enterprise working to promote multilingualism and intercultural dialogue in Ireland. Its mission is to showcase the country's rich artistic and cultural tapestry and connect people through the power of language. The festival takes place over five days in February, featuring workshops, panel discussions, exhibitions, dance, music, art, live performance, film, and storytelling across more than 15 languages. Mother Tongues Festival highlights international artists now residing in Ireland and engages audiences through their respective mother tongues.

The Mother Tongues Festival aims to welcome communities to develop, enjoy and share culture and creativity; to nurture the next generation of artists; to continue to come together through creativity; and finally, to provide some joy to help people overcome feelings of isolation and loss, and make immigrant families feel at home in Ireland.

The founders of the Mother Tongues Festival, Francesca La Morgia and Elena Cristofanon, describe the festival's purpose as both societal and artistic:

“From an artistic point of view, we want to explore ways to make art through the use of multiple languages and involve local communities more and more in the making of art and in telling their own stories. From a social point of view, we want to challenge the “monolingual mindset” and show everyone in society that multilingualism is an asset for individuals and our communities.”

TOLERANCE: ARTS AND MULTICULTURALISM

The Mother Tongues Festival is committed to creating a safer, more understanding, and more open society through art. As a festival with roots in intercultural dialogue and multilingualism, it is naturally positioned to confront various social issues through its programmes, such as racism and xenophobia. It is fair to say that Mother Tongues Festival is a novel festival that, as La Morgia and Cristofanon describe it:

“Mother Tongues is the only one of its kind in that it offers the opportunity to be immersed in many different languages through creative experiences. We feel that there is a need for our society to become aware of multilingualism and to be open to diversity. We also know that many families lack opportunities to experience their mother tongue outside their immediate family, so our festival offers them an opportunity to enjoy their mother tongue, make new connections, and experience all this through creative encounters.”

– Elena Cristofanon and Francesca La Morgia, founders, Mother Tongues Festival





To engage its diverse and growing audience, Mother Tongues Festival collaborates with other community groups when planning the festival, especially ensuring that marginalised communities are involved in organisation and planning. Best practices in inclusivity and accessibility are sought when putting the festival programme together, including making the event affordable for people of lower economic backgrounds.

The festival fosters a cultural understanding between attendees by bringing different groups together for a transcultural creative experience. This redefines the concept of the 'other' while avoiding the emergence of one dominant or default culture. By bringing people together with different backgrounds but often similar life experiences, the festival creates an atmosphere where people are seen, welcomed, and understood. This helps develop a sense of community around the festival that is now carried yearly.

Name: *Mother Tongues Festival*

City & country: *Dublin, Ireland*

Capacity: *1,000*

Site: *Different venues in Tallaght, Dublin*

Camping: *No*

Number of days: *5*

Established in: *2018*





PHOTO BY DEBBIE HICKEY

SHINE FESTIVAL

Shine Festival is a festival for young women to help each other find their place in the modern world where issues such as low self-esteem, bullying, the gender pay gap, violence against women and equal representation of women in institutions remain some of the major issues yet to solve in our society.

It is organised by The Shona Project, which supports girls and young women in Ireland to find their place and identity and succeed. The festival reaches out to young women, students, and older teenage schoolgirls. Schools are target organisations as they allow the festival organisers to reach hundreds of young women at a time for maximum impact.

EMPOWERING AND INSPIRING WOMEN

When asked why there is a need for Shine Festival, Communications Manager for The Shona Project Ellen Conway explains:

“Irish Girls have amongst the lowest self-esteem in the world, and also have the highest suicide rates amongst teenage girls in all of Europe. Something is happening with our young women, which is worrying. Shine Festival creates an opportunity to connect the young girls of Ireland to inspiring and authentic Irish women, who have overcome a multitude of challenges to be where they are today. We believe by providing girls with inspiring role models, they will feel empowered and supported to use their voices to enact change and reach any goal they have set for themselves.”

– Ellen Conway, Communications Manager, The Shona Project

Shine Festival provides young women with the inspiration they need to alleviate feelings of stress, isolation, and anxiousness that have become more and more prevalent among this demographic, especially since the covid pandemic. The festival invites them to become part of an empowering movement of women who are strong, resilient, and positive. The festival’s speakers cover mental health, mindset, careers, diversity, individuality, and sustainability while also having musical events and poetry.

MAKE YOUTH PART OF THE CHANGE

This method of grassroots engagement and peer-to-peer support instils a sense of togetherness between young women in school and community settings while offering them a national platform where their work and efforts can be celebrated.



This method of grassroots engagement and peer-to-peer support instils a sense of togetherness between young women in school and community settings while offering them a national platform where their work and efforts can be celebrated. Each school and every listener are encouraged to nominate a teenage girl who has shown courage, kindness, resilience, or community spirit. Listeners then select two ‘shine heroes’ from each radio station, and the finalists will appear on air and go on to represent their region at the Shine Festival.

A GREAT IMPACT

The online festival in 2021 eventually had over 40,000 attendees and over 1 million video views. The calibre of the guest speakers makes the event best practice, with ranges from politicians, media presenters, Hollywood actresses and activists. Shine has reached such an audience by creating partnerships with local and regional radio stations around Ireland, calling listeners in every part of the country. To create impact, Conway has advice for others wanting to do a similar project.

“Passion is key. If you aim to promote your passion and unite an audience, this is your unique selling point. Targeting performers/speakers who believe in what you are doing and that align with your mission is also key.”

– Ellen Conway, Communications Manager, The Shona Project



Name: *Shine Festival*

City & country: *Dublin, Ireland*

Capacity: *1,000*

Site: *The Clayton Hotel Burlington Road*

Camping: *No*

Number of days: *2*

Established in: *2018*



PHOTO BY EXIT FOUNDATION

EXIT FESTIVAL

EXIT is a summer music festival at the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad, Serbia, with more than 1,000 artists who play at over 40 stages and festival zones.

The festival was founded in 2000 in University Park as a student movement fighting for democracy and freedom in Serbia and the Balkans. After the Yugoslavian general election in 2000, EXIT moved to the Petrovaradin Fortress in 2001, where it has stayed ever since.

As the festival was formed in the spirit of genuine youth rebellion, as a movement for freedom in Serbia and peace in the Balkans, the festival's mission statement has been clear from the beginning – to achieve social change through the power of music. Social responsibility is still the key aspect of the festival activities, focusing on environmental and humanitarian activities, creative industries development, destination branding, and regional cooperation.

CASE: STATE OF EXIT ZONE

At the EXIT Festival, the central point of the social programs every year is the traditional State of EXIT Zone. Since EXIT Festival arose from social activism, the interactive program of non-governmental organisations is located at the heart of the festival site.

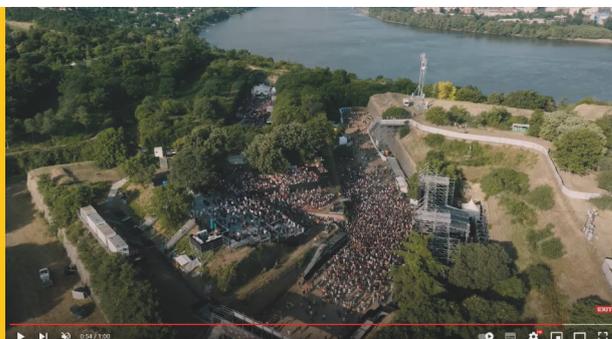
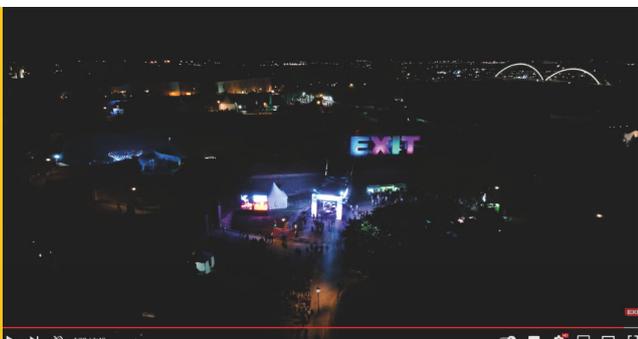
Each year, about 50 organisations and institutions from Novi Sad, Serbia, the entire region, and Europe get a chance to present themselves at the State of EXIT Zone, where young people from all over the world get to know each other and exchange ideas about regional support and cooperation. They get to meet each other and talk about the problems of young people, together finding the solutions and becoming more active in changing the world they live in.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES FOR AN AUDIENCE HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

Discussions on important topics are initiated at the State of EXIT Zone, where a broad series of workshops, panel discussions, music, exhibitions, and other content invite participants to engage.

This is one of the most visited zones during the EXIT Festival. In addition to participative workshops on human rights, reconciliation, freedom of speech, quizzes, screenings of short films, dance workshops, and photo booths, all festival guests have the opportunity to make something together each year. For example, in 2017, the festival guests jointly created a statue of peace and friendship from recycled material during four festival days.

Some of the most prominent intellectuals, social activists and initiators of positive changes have been hosted at the State of EXIT Zone. Some of the topics initiated at this modern forum turned out to be turning points for critical societal changes.



COOPERATIVE INVOLVEMENT OF BOTH IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS AND FESTIVAL GUESTS

EXIT festival has developed a strong focus on protecting our planet and all life inhabiting it. Their commitment to nature is lifted through systematic work with important ecological stakeholders, who recognise this idea and mission as crucial. Under the slogan "Give back to nature – join and plant a tree", Foundation EXIT and #EUforYOU organised an action of planting trees in the fall with 10,000 seedlings.

At the OPENS State of EXIT zone during the EXIT festival, guests could take part in painting a tree canopy on canvas and thus sign up for a tree planting action.

Name: EXIT Festival

City & country: Novi Sad, Serbia

Capacity: 180,000 (over 4 days)

Site: Petrovaradin Fortress

Camping: Yes

Number of days: 4

Established in: 2000





PHOTO BY MARCEL PAZMAN

POHODA FESTIVAL

Pohoda Festival is an open-air summer festival and the biggest in Slovakia. The festival is located at Trenčín Airport and had its inaugural year in 1997. Each year the festival welcomes approx. 30,000 festival-goers and presents them to various musical genres, including rock, pop, alternative, dance, roots, techno and more. But also discussions, theatre, dance, and literature workshops. The festival collaborates with various non-profit organisations.

CASE: NOTA BENE LUGGAGE PORTERS

In socialist Slovakia, homelessness was officially not a problem; the authorities removed people without homes. In post-socialist Slovakia, the issue became visible and apparent with widespread negative perception and stigmatisation of people experiencing homelessness. Proti prúdu is an NGO producing the Nota bene street magazine, providing people experiencing homelessness with a steady income. The project is a success, but many associate it with begging. Therefore, Proti prúdu developed the luggage porters project to improve perception through relations.



PHOTO BY MARCEL PAZMAN

EMPLOYMENT AND RESPECTFUL INTERACTION

The project is an innovative way of bringing people from the margins into the hustle and bustle of the festival community. The luggage porters are selected vendors of the Nota bene street paper, who are employed by Proti prídu to help festival participants with their luggage. The porters earn money and mingle – conspicuously – with people.

THE FESTIVAL PROVIDES A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

Both festival guests and the porters are situated in a setting out of the ordinary. Having a tête-à-tête with a porter, who also happens to be living without a home, creates a rare chance to interact with a person behind a societal category and hopefully creates a lasting change in perception. The changed perspective is used to emphasise a significant societal problem that most people in their everyday life either ignore or silently accept.



AN ALL-YEAR-ROUND STRUGGLE

Pohoda Festival also addresses the issue of homelessness through other activities. In the NGO Passage at the festival, Housing First principles are promoted. Every winter – the coldest and toughest time of the year – Pohoda organises a festival at a homeless shelter to create much-needed awareness of the harsh and often lethal living conditions of homeless people.

“This is one of the best projects of inclusion I have seen. It creates a lot of beautiful, strong, and funny moments. These memories of a personal encounter with a person without a home will increase your willingness to acknowledge the seriousness of the issue.”

– Michal Kaščák, CEO, Pohoda Festival

Name: Pohoda Festival

City & country: Trenčín, Slovakia

Capacity: 30,000

Site: Trenčín Airport

Camping: Yes

Number of days: 3

Established in: 1997





PHOTO BY XAVI TORRENT

CRUÏLLA FESTIVAL

Cruïlla is the Catalan word for crossroads. A word that perfectly represents the core philosophy of the festival, being an event where different musical worlds intertwine, collide, and meet in the middle. Cruïlla is held at Parc del Forum in Barcelona and welcomes around 50,000 festival-goers over three days.

Being one of Barcelona's three major international music festivals, Cruïlla offers a comprehensive and diverse range of acts, from world-famous artists to the best Catalan and Spanish acts. Besides music, Cruïlla hosts social NGOs and cultural associations organising different activities.



CASE: CRUÏLLA'S NGO STANDS

It is, however, not only music intersecting at the cruïllas of Parc del Forum. Issues from current affairs, politics, and society, such as cultural identity and the climate crisis, are also presented. Cruïlla Talks, an initiative that takes place during the festival dates, offers interviews, keynotes and more. By doing so, the festival creates different spaces that juxtapose music, culture, and social work, having guest artists and activists explaining, for example, how to use culture as a weapon of the colonial fight.

Besides the programme, festival-goers can visit information stands from different NGOs that invite them to participate in educational activities and learn more about what the NGOs fight for. Here, organisations such as Save the Children, Óxfam Intermón, or Amnesty International bring their work closer to the population.

To emphasise the ambition of Cruïlla's innovative social practice, the cultural activities are not limited to their main festival. All year round, Cruïlla organises cultural and social activities in Barcelona and its surroundings, approaching culture and art to different neighbourhoods and populations.

The essence of Cruïlla is not to limit the festival solely to a musical experience but to turn our social spaces into a multidisciplinary juxtaposed experience where the arts and collectivisation facilitates new perspectives.



SOCIAL AWARENESS THROUGH ART

Cruïlla champions using art as a motor of change and a tool to bring the population closer together. In addition to the musical and cultural programme, Cruïlla offers other activities that promote social cohesion and awareness of specific issues.

Different exhibitions of graffiti arts allow mostly young artists to exhibit their works, many of them dealing with current issues. Documentaries and audio-visual pieces are also presented; for example, "Miradas del confinament", a documentary broadcasted at the 2021 edition, aims to remember the victims of Covid-19 and highlight the role of health workers.



PHOTO BY XAVI TORRENT

Name: *Cruïlla Festival*

City & country: *Barcelona, Spain*

Capacity: *50,000 (over 3 days)*

Site: *Parc del Fòrum*

Camping: *No*

Number of days: *4*

Established in: *2005*



CONCLUSION

Social innovation happens every day and everywhere: we are constantly negotiating, iterating, and experimenting with our lives, from household endeavours to workplace dynamics. Festivals have unique capabilities across all their differences that create a relatable and attractive relationship with an audience mainly of young people.

In his seminal work *Bowling Alone* from 2000, Robert Putnam¹ describes two aspects of social capital that are important to create values and relations within a defined group of people: First, the bridging social capital is the relations and relational assets one has. And second, the bonding social capital is the group's norms, values, and established communities. The point here is that we trade in a completely different currency unit at festivals than in everyday society.

When looking at bridging, social capital festivals can create a new milieu for bridging, making people meet that rarely would do so. Pohoda Festival in Slovakia has, with their luggage porter project where people without a home offer luggage service to festival goers, created an ideal social setting allowing for an unusual social interaction between people from completely different societal categories: Both festival guests and the porters are situated in a location out of the ordinary.

¹ Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

The porter and the festival goer walk together to the campsite, often engaging in personal conversations. This change in perspective is used to emphasise a significant societal problem that most people in their everyday life either ignore or silently accept. And having a tête-à-tête with a porter, who also happens to be living without a home, creates a rare chance to interact with a person behind a societal category and hopefully create a lasting change in perception.

Festivals also hold power to change the bonding social capital, like in Dream City at Roskilde Festival. This is a city-like neighbourhood at the campsite built by a group of festival goers given 100 days to create their idea of a utopian society slash festival camping site. Together they build a city and community based on the core values of innovation, curiosity, citizenship, commitment, and diversity. By dreaming and co-creating, they become citizens of Dream City.

This example highlights that social innovation at festivals works most powerfully as value-based learning and practices. A project like Dream City is infused with values of human rights and responsibilities, participation and fairness, respect and empowerment.

Festivals can create a unique social environment ripe for activating the power of collective thoughts and actions is nothing new. Just listen to anecdotes from old festivals like Woodstock. But as a project, FUSION hopes to add a structured layer of knowledge creation, elevating the social innovation at festivals from the subtle and sporadic to the level of heuristics and shared learning. Easily compared to the social and educational ambitions in movements like open innovation and citizen science that both value ideas and knowledge created in societal situations.



ROSKILDE FESTIVAL BY LARS VIBILD

The best practice examples of this guide will show us that there are many different takes on utilising social innovation. From the very straightforward “we have a noble cause and an audience, let them interact” to the creation of more complex social milieus like The Acoustic Path at Rocken am Brocken, that allows for festival goers to interact with nature whilst listening to music shows hopefully altering their perspective of the relationship between humans and nature. Or like the Mother Tongues Festival, which is committed to creating a safer, more understanding, and more open society through art. As a festival with roots in intercultural dialogue and multilingualism, it is positioned in its architecture to confront various social issues through its programmes, such as racism and xenophobia.

One clear conclusion from all the case studies must be that not one method is better than the other. That social innovation project most suits the context. Even the learning subject of the project can vary, from the different participating individuals to the group and even the festival itself; like when the Finnish festival Ruisrock actively uses a panel of young festival goers to shape their very own festival – acknowledging the perspective of the users is a salient input.

You are missing half of the picture if you only look at social innovation at festivals as participatory action. Social innovation is mainly about the process that might not be defined or even have a specific goal. This allows us to have new ambitions and plans for the change we want.

However, we must keep this in mind when evaluating the results gained. Often social innovation projects can be assessed by the usual qualitative and quantitative evaluation measures (“percentage of users knowing more about a subject after the encounter than before”). Still, a more insightful step would be to look at social proof – will the relatability and attractiveness of festival culture and its unique relationship with young people affect the actions of the participants afterwards?

So, when a festival like Cruïlla tries to create an immense multidisciplinary juxtaposed experience where the arts and collectivisation facilitates new perspectives, the exciting part is if the festival can make people emulate these new perspectives, new habits, norms – the new social capital they have gained – when they return home from the festival.

Thanks for reading!





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