

Festival Living Labs

Involving the Festival Community in Sustainable Experimentation

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Publication date

2021

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Design Culture(s)

Citation (APA)

Boonstra, M., Dijkstra, A. M., & Joore, J. P. (2021). Festival Living Labs: Involving the Festival Community in Sustainable Experimentation. In *Design Culture(s): Cumulus Conference Proceedings Roma 2021* (pp. 4783)

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
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Festival Living Labs: Involving the Festival Community in Sustainable Experimentation.

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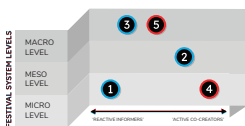


Figure 1: Matrix mapping system levels on a festival scale to social and festival community involvement in waste.



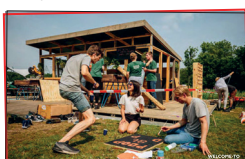
Example 1: Macro-level design: "Trash" instructors that reactively involve the festival community in waste sorting at Northside festival.



Example 2: Meso-level design: local start-ups are actively involved at Northside festival for co-creative redesign of the waste infrastructure, collecting coffee grounds to recycle for new products.



Example 3: Macro-level design: More or less 250 "trash heroes" are reactively involved at Northside festival to sort out the waste. Language is used to build a positive identity around waste sorting.



Example 4: Micro-level design: Festival volunteers at Welcome to the Village festival are actively involved in waste sorting to create awareness about the potential value of human waste for compost.



Example 5: Macro-level design: Festival visitors are reactively involved in response to and interact with new concepts of circularity.

Introduction: How can the festival community be involved in experimentation for sustainable design?

For a radical transformational change for sustainability, design requires an integrated approach, whereas designers have to contextualize their design from product and service level (micro) to integration in the socio-technical infrastructure (meso) toward the societal landscape (macro) (Elschert & Gubayulova, 2018; Joore & Brezet, 2015; Schot & Geels, 2008). Since design functions socially and its features relate to the social and psychological world of humans, both technical and human-centered aspects are important in design development (Franco, 2009). For this reason, many contemporary design paradigms advocate a user-centered and participatory approach (Dell'Era & Landini, 2014). To accelerate design for transformational change, sustainability transition approaches emphasize the importance of experimentation, often in the context of protected spaces (Von Hippo, Fuhrschilling, Frantzeskaki & Coenen, 2019; Schot & Geels, 2008). An approach that can facilitate this space for experimentation providing a real-life community with social, cultural and technical infrastructures to integrate design is that of festival living labs (Jansen, Postma, Markau & Andrius, 2018; Oikawa, Takata, Boudreau, Wiersma & Joore, 2020). Festivals are considered as meeting places of modern culture serving as temporary cities with a social and cultural role to strengthen communities, express social identities and worldviews (Bennett, Taylor & Woodward, 2014; Marling & Kibb, 2011; Larson, 2009; Uysal, Gahan & Martin, 1993; Pallas, 1987). Most festivals are adults every time they are hosted, and these iterations enable interventions to its infrastructures in relation to the festival community. Combining an integrated and human-centered approach, we investigated how the festival community can be involved in experimentation for sustainable design at festival living labs.

Methodology, tools & research process: community involvement and a multi-level perspective

To operationalize the integrated approach a multi-level perspective is used, resulting in the following system levels on a festival scale (Figure 1):

- Micro-level products and services.
- Meso-level economic, technical, cultural and/or social infrastructures, e.g. considering waste management, food consumption.
- Macro-level intangible concepts such as culture and community shared values.

To evaluate festival community involvement the dimension of Dell'Era and Landini (2014) is applied to the festival context. The scale ranges are:

- **Reactive informant:** festival community members respond to design developments and are asked questions and/or are observed.
- **Active co-creator:** festival community members become involved in the design development as partners.

So far, we have conducted two case studies of festivals using participatory observations and semi-structured interviews: Northside festival in Denmark and Welcome to the Village festival in the Netherlands. Northside collaborates with WorldPerfect, a sustainable consulting agency that uses design to accelerate sustainable change. Welcome to the Village festival offers a program, called DOPPEL living lab where amongst others, designers can develop and test sustainable practices. Both festivals are involved in the leading North Sea Region Inno-Quarter project whereas festivals are approached as living labs (Boudreau, 2020).

Case study 1: Northside festival. Reactive and co-creative involvement to design a positive culture around waste

WorldPerfect's purposive experimentation at Northside festival is to change the system around waste management towards a circular approach. They use an integrated approach, involving the festival community as well as "reactive informants" as "active co-creators". On a micro-level WorldPerfect developed "trash" heroes for their different types of waste, that fight up the chain and that communicate the recycling process in order to involve the audience to contribute to waste sorting (Example 1). After the festival, a survey is spread out among the visitors to evaluate the effect of WorldPerfect's sustainability interventions.

On a meso-level WorldPerfect uses the traditions of the festival to redesign the waste management infrastructure, resulting in newly added fractions for waste sorting every year. 12 different fractions in 2019. During the festival WorldPerfect actively involves festival visitors and partners by organizing tours and workshops, on-site collaborations and issue events. Cork and coffee grounds are two examples of newly co-created waste sorting at the festival (Example 2). Also, volunteers reactively participate by collecting and sorting the waste streams. At a macro-level WorldPerfect reactively involves volunteers by using language and identity building as a way to reframe the cultural connotation with waste. For example, the words "resource" is used instead of the less attractive word "waste". The volunteers sorting the waste streams, are called "trash heroes" in order to build a positive identity around waste sorting and recycling (Example 3).

Case study 2: Welcome to the Village festival. Reactive and co-creative involvement for circular design solutions

At Welcome to the Village festival visitors can choose to participate as volunteers in a program called DOPPEL living lab. In this program the volunteers are involved as "active co-creators" in the development and testing of circular design projects. One example project is that of social designer Fides Landman. Her purposive experimentation is about closing the food cycle by introducing six tables that help convert human waste matter into compost to grow vegetables.

On a micro-level Fides involved volunteers to further develop her product at the festival: a food truck that communicates and explains the recycling process to create awareness and to change the perspective about the value of human waste (Example 4). The festival audience is involved as "reactive informant" on a meso-level, giving the opportunity to interact and respond to the designs by participating in little surveys and interviews (Example 5). Also, Welcome to the Village involves the audience by organizing tours around the different projects. Since the implementation of the projects is designed to a defined area and the designs are not fully integrated within the festival infrastructure, we didn't observe community involvement on a meso-level.

Conclusion: Festivals Living Labs as a promising approach for designers

As figure 1 shows, both festival living labs combine active and reactive approaches to involve the festival community in purposive experimentation for sustainable design. At Northside, design elements for waste management are fully integrated throughout the festival and the festival community is reactively involved on all levels. On a smaller scale the community participates as active co-creator to co-design the infrastructure. At Welcome to the Village the festival community involvement in experimentation is reserved to a specific area. This approach might hinder a fully integrated approach of the design elements throughout the festival especially on meso-level design but might reinforce the involvement of the festival community as active co-creator. Reflecting on festivals as a space for experimentation they offer the ability to involve the community on all system levels. By contextualizing design and involving the community, festival living labs can offer a space for designers to experiment in an integrated way and create a potential for sustainable design practices to diffuse more widely. We see festival living labs as a promising approach for more designers to use.

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