

ETHICS



From white elephants to artistic integrity: creating ethical and sustainable events

The world of events is changing. The singular focus on creating unforgettable experiences is giving way to questions. Sustainability and ethical considerations are prompting inquiries about the impact of these gatherings. Are these celebrations truly sustainable, or are they leaving a hidden footprint on the environment and local communities?

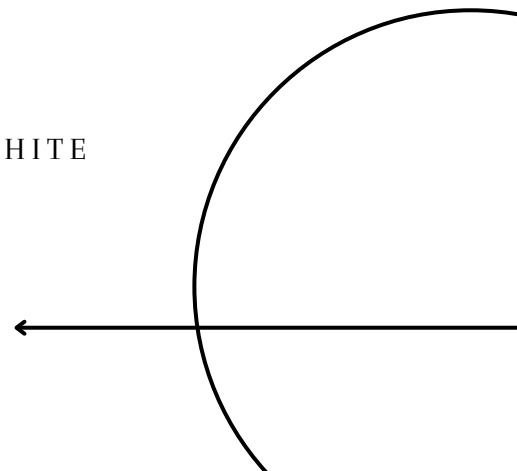
Ethical issues do not only stand for sustainability.

Artistic expression can be seen as a reflection of broad societal and ethical issues. Mega-events like Eurovision offer many members of society a unique opportunity to challenge their own viewpoints. However, when events known for freedom of expression are limited from the top down, their ethics are questioned.

From music festivals to conferences, events have a significant environmental impact, making the understanding of "white elephants" essential. These projects can lead to financial burdens and environmental harm if not managed ethically. By prioritizing sustainability and community engagement, we can mitigate negative impacts and implement long-term benefits.

ARTICLE TITLES

- ART AS A STATEMENT: ETHICAL ISSUES IN CULTURAL EVENTS, EUROVISION'S BROKEN TROPHY
- BALANCING ACT: THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF WHITE ELEPHANTS IN HOSTING MAJOR EVENTS
- GREENING THE EVENT INDUSTRY





ART AS A STATEMENT: ETHICAL ISSUES IN CULTURAL EVENTS, EUROVISION'S BROKEN TROPHY.

The beauty of art lies in its open nature, it welcomes everyone to experience it. Art has many forms and faces and has been accompanying the human race since the very beginning. With its multifaceted nature, it is hard to distinguish the most used form but the one that comes to mind first is music. In modern times music often serves as a tool for sneaking in a message, in its often highly metaphorized lyrics and synced melodic lines or beats. In the field of events in the music world, the most discussed topic as of late is Eurovision. Multinational song contests that each year take place in different countries across Europe. Its history dates back to 1956 when the first-ever Eurovision Song Contest was broadcast in Switzerland (Blakemore, 2024). Marking the history for many years to come.

Artists quickly found their way of communicating through the contest to the broader audience, the songs became more and more thought-provoking and the artistic choices increased in their originality, both in what was expected and delivered. With politics often being the background for said discussions, the main philosophy was to leave the conflicts behind.

A significant shift happened on the 25th of February 2022 when the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) made a statement about excluding Russia from participation in the contest due to the declaration of war with Ukraine (Eurovision Song Contest, 2022). It can be argued that the decision was anticipated by audiences all across Europe, as an act of showing sympathy towards Ukraine. The representative group with their music based on a mix between rap and folk, intensified the message behind their song Stefania which Oleh Psiuk wrote for his mother Yet with the beginning of the war, the song gained a completely new meaning (Trendell, 2022).

The same was expected for the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest, yet many were proved wrong. The first controversy struck when Israel was announced in the contest, with the ongoing political conflict between Palestine and many voices in opposition to their participation. Many were disappointed, however, EBU still stood by their initial philosophy that Eurovision should not be political but purely artistic, which seems contradictory to the 2022 decision. Nevertheless, the contest took off and 37 countries took part.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF EUROVISION 2024

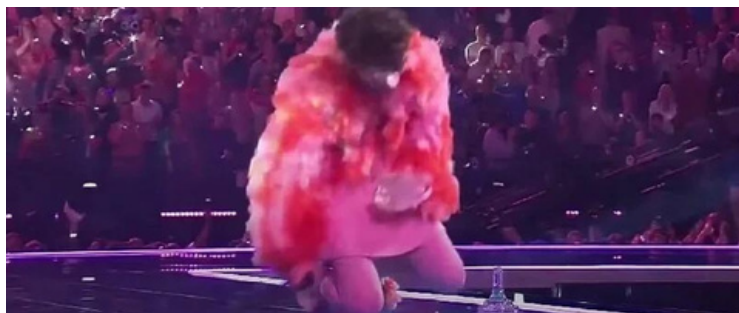
Many performances were immediately well-received by the audience, including as proclaimed by TikTok users as “the most European song ever” presented by the Netherlands representative Joost Klein, named Europapa. Klein’s song may seem like a happy and energetic tribute to Dutch famous techno/rave culture, however once dwelling deeper into the piece, the original story is rather melancholic. Europapa tells the story of an orphan who was travelling throughout the whole of Europe to find peace of mind. What gives the song its true meaning is the fact that Klein wrote it for his father, who had passed away when he was just 12 years old. As the singer says, it was his father who showed him that the world has no boundaries (Eurovision Song Contest, 2024). To everyone’s shock, Joost was disqualified just a few days after the beginning of the contest, for taking part in a “disagreement” with one of the staff members. Many fans touched by the lyrics started protesting and demanding Joost to be brought back to the contest, which eventually did not happen (NL Times, 2024). Many said that he would have been this year’s winner if not for the organizers' decision.

But this may be only left for speculation.

Many complaints have been filed by contestants, Bambie Thug representative of Ireland filed a complaint regarding Israeli broadcaster Kan, who was responsible for harmful comments towards them (Woodcock, 2024). The winner of the contest Nemo Mettler, mentioned in their final interview that they faced many “unpleasant” situations with emphasis on the change that needs to be introduced in Eurovision’s milieu (SBS News,2024).

WHAT’S NEXT?

In light of the current events surrounding the Eurovision Song Contest its heritage, unwanted scandals and tensions targeting its organizers, as well as the rising political background of the contest; it started drifting away from its main philosophy. Mettler’s as the first non-binary winner and their accidental breaking of the trophy is far more symbolic (Minelle, 2024). The contest circles back to its roots, and after 36 years it will be held in its birthplace; Switzerland. Will this periodical circle make Europeans, the organizers and EBU unite and help Eurovision to reform to its original state, a mission to unite nations and spread love?



Swiss singer Nemo Mettler, with a broken trophy after their victory (Koha, 2024)

BALANCING ACT: THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF WHITE ELEPHANTS IN HOSTING MAJOR EVENTS

Have you ever wondered what happens to the Olympic Stadium and venues after the event and games end? The term “white elephant” often describes these large-scale projects that can become financial burdens for their host cities. (Davis,2019). This terms originates from the ancient times in Asia where the king would gift a white elephant to his white elephants for his subordinates so they could have a financial burden. Fast forward to now the white elephants still have the same effect in the event “white elephants” still refer to large scale projects can bring hope for the economic growth and development, they also come both negative and positive consequences (Ganuza & Llobet, 2020).

Stakeholders frequently concentrate on the immediate advantages that these events offer, like employment opportunities for the local community (Drummond & Cronje, 2018b). The stakeholders' perspective, according to Dean et al. (2013), is that they will benefit short-term from the events and games in terms of increased tourism and opportunities for the host cities. Sustainable Development Goals Moreover, these projects caused the rise of ethical concerns regarding community engagement and environmental sustainability. One of the SDGs goals that relates to the white elephant is the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities which is a goal that emphasizes making cities, inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, a critical consideration provides that the white elephants are usually located in urban areas, affecting the livability of host cities.

Case Studies and Long-term Sustainability

In comparison, one of the case studies that aligns with white elephants and SGD's goal is " Hosting major sports events: the challenge of taming white elephants by Jens Alm, Harry Arne Solberg, Rasmus K Storm, and Tor Georg Jakobsen which goes in-depth on the in the sustainability of the winter Olympic venues touching the subject on the ecological, social and economic aspects of these mega-events. Despite the fact the host cities had economic growth and benefits their sustainability remains questionable.

Political and Community Impacts

To address these concerns, implementing stronger policies are needed to ensure sustainability practices during the and after the events. As well effective planning and implementation can help local communities benefit from these projects. For instance, in Barcelona and Valencia cultural and urban development have flourished through careful management of the white elephants (Rius-ULLDemolins et al., 2015).

Overall, white elephants do help the host cities with employment, tourism, and financial strains for short-term benefits. This is where the policymakers should work better on making long-term for the community. In moving forward, policymakers, event organizers, and local communities need to implement a more long-term holistic approach. Additionally. The controversy surrounding the white elephants highlights the conflict between the financial advantage and long-term sustainability. Events can have large short-term benefits, but they are also consistently leaving behind large financial and environmental costs. To ensure that the infrastructure built for these kinds of events continues to benefit the community long after the event has ended, policymakers, events planners and stakeholders must give sustainable development top priority. The detrimental effects of white elephants can be mitigated, and urban resilience and inclusion can be increased by putting strong policies into place and encouraging community involvement. By taking a balanced approach, host cities can ensure their future well-being and benefit from significant events while securing their well-being.

Greening the event industry

The environmental impact of events is undeniable. A single large festival can generate a staggering 100,000 tons of CO2 emissions annually (Owusu, 2023).

The events industry is undergoing a transformative change. While creating memorable experiences is important, sustainable event management is rapidly becoming an essential element for success (Kimberley, 2023). This approach prioritizes environmental and social responsibility, minimizing negative impacts on our planet and communities. It's about reducing waste, and conserving energy. Imagine events that not only entertain but also leave a lasting positive impression.

Despite these challenges, the need for sustainability is undeniable. Tourism contributes significantly to global carbon emissions, with travelers from high-income countries making the largest impact (Sustainable Travel International, n.d.). As the industry evolves, adopting sustainable practices is not only becoming a trend, but a necessity for a responsible future. However, while these practices may help reduce the environmental impact of events, they often require significant investments and this may not always deliver what we expect. Nowadays, people question whether sustainable event management is increasingly used as a marketing tool to appeal to the environmental conscious individuals, raising concerns about "greenwashing", or if it represents a genuine commitment to the environment.

The environmental impact of large-scale events and festivals is a major concern. Specifically, CO2 emissions, from attendee's travel, contribute significantly to the carbon footprint of such events. For example, UK festivals claim that 80% of their CO2 emissions come from attendee's travel (Judith Mair & Andrew Smith, 2021). The Burning Man event, held annually in Nevada's Black Rock Desert, emits about 100,000 tons of CO2 each year, raising concerns about its environmental impact (Tony Owusu, 2023).

Due to these figures, it's essential for event organizers to adopt sustainable practices to reduce their environmental impact. With that said, here are five categories that include ways to make events more sustainable:

- **Zero Waste Initiatives**

Implement strategies to minimize waste generation during events, such as providing reusable or compostable food and beverage containers. Use biodegradable packaging for food trucks and offer reusable, biodegradable and compostable food packaging products to manage waste more sustainably (Su, Tsai, & Bias, 2020). Festivals like The Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival (token system) (Bonnaroo music & arts festival, n.d.) and Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival (biodegradable packaging) (Outside Lands Music Festival, n.d.) successfully reduce landfill waste.

- **Energy Efficiency Measures**

Choose venues with smart energy consumption practices, such as key-operated rooms and smart digital thermostats, and facilities with recycled toilet paper, eco-friendly toilets, and energy-saving appliances (Kimberley, 2023).

Select venues with recycling centres, sorting stations, filtered water stations and LED light sources (Kara Anderson, 2023) to meet sustainability standards (Kimberley, 2023). The Vancouver Convention Centre is a leader in sustainable practices, including recycling programs and water conservation (Vancouver Convention Centre, n.d.).

- **Transportation and Venue**

Seek out eco friendly transport such as bikes, hybrid taxis, cars and buses and encourage ride sharing where possible. Choose event locations that do not require most attendees to travel individually by car, ensure public transport is readily available, and provide the option of attending the event virtually (Kimberley, 2023).

The carbon footprint of a venue is around 4% of the event's total carbon footprint. Select venues that use renewable energy to power their facilities, employ sustainability practices, and offer public transportation, hotels, and shuttles to reduce attendees' need for individual travel (Kara Anderson, 2023).

- **Water Consumption**

Use recycled water for toilets, hire water-efficient toilet providers, waterless or uses 'grey water' and dispose of waste water correctly to minimize water consumption (Water management, n.d.). Minimize water consumption by providing water-efficient toilet facilities and recycling water where possible (Judith Mair & Andrew Smith, 2021).

Provide drinking fountains and encourage attendees not to buy or bring bottled water to the event (Water management, n.d.), similar to the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival (Coachella, n.d.).

- **Local Sourcing and Procurement**


Support local businesses and suppliers by sourcing products and services locally, promoting local food and beverage vendors, and reducing the environmental impact of transportation and logistics (Dale Martin, 22 Jan).

Accessibility is a crucial factor. Promoting public transport or virtual attendance may not be possible in all locations, potentially excluding attendees. There are many challenges in developing a sustainable event. From ensuring waste management to encouraging behavior changes among attendees, every step requires a lot of thought. The high cost of implementing these practices can be a significant obstacle, particularly for smaller events. Additionally, relying solely on venue features or local resources can restrict options and increase costs for event organizers.

In conclusion, while challenges exist, from costs to attendee behavior, the environmental benefits are undeniable. By prioritizing responsible practices like waste reduction, energy efficiency, and local sourcing, event organizers can create memorable experiences with a positive impact on our planet and communities. Creating a balance between idealism and practicality is key. Continuous improvement and innovative solutions will pave the way for a greener future for the events industry.

References

Art as a Statement: Ethical Issues in Cultural Events, Eurovision's Broken Trophy.

- Blakemore, E. (2024, May 10). Eurovision's unlikely historical origins. Premium. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/premium/article/eurovision-history-origins-wwii-sanremo>
- Eurovision Song Contest. (2022, February 25). EBU statement regarding the participation of Russia in the Eurovision Song Contest 2022. <https://eurovision.tv/mediacentre/release/ebu-statement-russia-2022>
- Eurovision Song Contest. (2024, May 9). Joost Klein - EuROPAPa (LIVE) | Netherlands  | Second Semi-Final | Eurovision 2024 [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liHFnml8pxg>
- Koha. (2024, May 12). The Eurovision winner accidentally broke the trophy. Koha.net. <https://www.koha.net/en/kulture/419363/fituesi-i-eurovisionit-e-theu-aksidentalisht-trofeun>
- Minelle, B. (2024, May 12). Switzerland wins Eurovision as chaos engulfs iconic song contest. Sky News. <https://news.sky.com/story/switzerland-wins-eurovision-as-chaos-engulfs-iconic-song-contest-13133959>
- NL Times. (2024, May 11). Cutting Joost Klein from Eurovision is a “drastic” response to minor incident: Dutch team. NL Times. <https://nltimes.nl/2024/05/11/cutting-joost-klein-eurovision-drastic-response-minor-incident-dutch-team>
- SBS News. (2024, May 12). Eurovision winner Nemo breaks trophy, thumb and says contest “needs a lot of work still” [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/5rtu0gCb-Lo>
- Trendell, A. (2022, May 13). Ukrainian Eurovision entry Kalush Orchestra: “This is the highest responsibility possible” NME. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/ukrainian-eurovision-entry-kalush-orchestra-interview-russia-war-stefiana-song-lyrics-meaning-3222586>
- Woodcock, Z. (2024, May 12). Bambie Thug shouts defiant five-word message after Eurovision performance. The Mirror. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/irelands-bambie-thug-shouts-defiant-32788631>

References

Balancing Act: The Long-Term Impact of White Elephants in Hosting Major Events

- Allen, D., Knott, B., & Swart, K. (2013). 'Africa's Tournament'? the branding legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 30(16), 1994–2006. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.861131>
- Alm, J., Solberg, H. A., Storm, R. K., & Jakobsen, T. G. (2014b). Hosting major sports events: the challenge of taming white elephants. *Leisure Studies*, 35(5), 564–582. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.994550>
- Davis, J. (2019). Avoiding white elephants? The planning and design of London's 2012 Olympic and Paralympic venues, 2002–2018. *Planning Perspectives*, 35(5), 827–848. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2019.1633948>
- Drummond, R., & Cronjé, J. (2018a). Building a white elephant? The case of the Cape Town Stadium. *International Journal of Sport Policy*, 11(1), 57–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2018.1508053>
- Ganuza, J. J., & Llobet, G. (2020). The simple economics of white elephants. *Mathematical Social Sciences*, 106, 91–100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mathsocsci.2020.01.011>
- Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>
- Rius-Ulldemolins, J., Martí, G. H. I., & Torres, F. (2015). Urban Development and Cultural Policy “White Elephants”: Barcelona and Valencia. *European Planning Studies*, 24(1), 61–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2015.1075965>
- Robinson, J. A., & Torvik, R. (2005a). White elephants. *Journal of Public Economics*, 89(2–3), 197–210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2004.05.004>

References

Greening the event industry

- Bonnaroo music & arts festival. (n.d.). Our Earth, our home. <https://www.bonnaroo.com/change-the-world>
- Coachella. (n.d.). Sustainability. <https://www.coachella.com/sustainability#body-content2024>
- Dale Martin (22 Jan), The environmental benefits of shopping locally. <https://www.lgcet.com/blog/the-environmental-benefits-of-shopping-locally#:~:text=Local%20businesses%20who%20prioritise%20sourcing,reduce%20deforestation%2C%20and%20preserve%20biodiversity.>
- Judith Mair & Andrew Smith (2021): Events and sustainability: why making events more sustainable is not enough, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1942480>
- Kara Anderson (2023, March 3). 5 Tips to Reduce the Carbon Footprint of your Events. Greenly. <https://greenly.earth/en-gb/blog/ecology-news/5-tips-to-reduce-the-carbon-footprint-of-your-events>
- Kimberley. (2023, September 20). What is Sustainable Event Management? Swift Digital. <https://swiftdigital.com.au/blog/sustainable-event-management/#:~:text=Sustainable%20event%20management%20is%20the,all%20stakeholders%20of%20the%20event.>
- Outside Lands Music Festival. (n.d.). Experiences. <https://sfoutsidelands.com/experiences/>
- Su, C.-H. (Joan), Tsai, C.-H. (Ken), & Bias, S. R. (2020). Proactive Waste Management Solutions: Implementing Reusable and Biodegradable Food Packaging at Food Festivals. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Cases, 8(4), 42-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/216499872000800408>
- Sustainable Travel International. (n.d.). Carbon footprint of tourism. <https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/#:~:text=How%20Travel%20Contributes%20to%20the,contribute%20to%20tourism's%20carbon%20footprint.>
- Tony Owusu (2023, September 5), Burning Man breakdown: How much pollution is the festival emitting? TheStreet. <https://www.thestreet.com/travel/burning-man-breakdown-how-much-pollution-is-the-festival-emitting#:~:text=For%20an%20event%20that%20professes,according%20to%20the%20event's%20organizers>
- Water management (n.d.), City of Melbourne <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/business/sustainable-business/sustainable-event-guide/Pages/water-management.aspx>
- Vancouver Convention Centre. (n.d.). <https://www.vancouverconventioncentre.com/>