Exploring notions of sustainability in the context of the performing arts festival

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Abstract

The backdrop of this thesis is the emerging phenomenon of the *sustainable* festival. Namely, an increasing number of performing arts festival organisers, worldwide, are currently claiming that they can recognise and, essentially, address some of the perceived inherently negative externalities of their events. In trying to remedy the unfavourable impacts of their events they incorporate the notion of sustainability into the strategic mission and practical management of these festivals. By calling attention to their sustainability credentials and exercising particular interpretations of the concept, they either label their festivals as sustainable or emphatically promote the events' contribution to sustainability. In doing so, they seem to become part of a coalition of actors that are committed to confronting some of the major global challenges facing contemporary society.

Nevertheless, the discourse over sustainability has been bound to the power effects and processes of establishment appropriation and institutionalisation, which have led to particular understandings and practical translations of its concept. Such processes, along with the policy tools that these convey, have reportedly been responsible for a systematic delimitation of the once plastic, diverse, and open-ended visions of sustainability, defining what counts as sustainability and what does not. As this thesis will argue, these effects have significantly restricted the possibility for alternative understandings of sustainability to emerge from the lower layers of social organisation. The conceptualisation of sustainability as a template for absolute, top-down policy action, however, may be anathema to an institution such as the festival, which is assumed to have a "transformative, transgressive and even revolutionary role" (Bianchini and Maughan, 2015, p.243) in society.

Sustainable performing arts festivals have been mushrooming in number and genres, yet the topic of sustainability has rarely been discussed in a conceptual framework within the relevant bodies of literature. This thesis aims to problematise current sustainability understandings and practice, as well as offer provocations to think afresh about its concept in the particular context of the festival. It will provide conceptual coverage to a developing academic field

and also add a unique, critical voice to a discipline dominated by studies that tend to rest upon largely managerialist approaches to sustainability. Rather than relying on powerful constructs of sustainability, this thesis will try to gain access to and articulate festival participants' perceptions and experiences of processes and *praxes* that provide the possibilities for flourishing festival contexts. The main research question asks: What does it mean for the performing arts festival to contribute to the achievement of a desired future for the festival and its surrounding social context, that is to say, for it to be a *sustainable* festival?

Table of Contents

List of Tables / Figures

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[1] Figures 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, and 14 are provided with permission of the *Music Village* organising team (photo credit: Nickolas Chryssos)

List of Abbreviations

CSR   Corporate Social Responsibility

GRI   Global Reporting Initiative

MV   Music Village

TBL   Triple Bottom Line

UK   United Kingdom

UN   United Nations

UNWS   United Nations World Summit

US(A)   United States of America

WCED   World Commission on Environment and Development

Preface

Festivals must have been formative, important experiences for me. I still have a solid belief that critical decisions in my life were taken drawing on particular encounters, during particular festival experiences. My decision to dedicate myself to a rather romantic niche in economics research and pursue a PhD in the Creative Economy – rather than find a job in the well-rewarded financial sector, for example – is indeed the outcome of such an encounter during the summer of 2010.

Festivals, I believe, are a microcosm of real societies. People attend festivals to meet new people, to interact with each other, to share and negotiate their purposes, to communicate messages, to celebrate the things that are important to them, to be inspired and gain something out of their experience, to change themselves or their peers. At the same time, festivals are complex fields where the possibilities for alternative social arrangements might be revealed, experienced, and tested. In a recent reader, McKay (2015) regarded Woodstock (USA, 1969), Glastonbury (UK, since 1970), and the Nimbin Auqarius festival (Australia, 1973) as "early event markers" which had "the fundamental purpose of envisioning and crafting another, better world" (p.4). If this holds true for those early events, it would be interesting to explore whether or not the emerging *sustainable* performing arts festival constitutes such an experimental world, or part of a ripening*,* evolutionary process directing us to that utopian, idealistic desire of the festival.

Chapter One: Introduction

> A cursory glance at both popular and academic publications
> will quickly assemble a whole array of 'sustainabilities':
> sustainable environments, sustainable development,
> sustainable growth, sustainable wetlands, sustainable bodies,
> sustainable companies, sustainable processes, sustainable
> incomes, sustainable cities, sustainable technologies,
> sustainable water provision, even sustainable poverty,
> sustainable accumulation, sustainable markets and
> sustainable loss (Swyngedouw, 2010, p.190).

1.1 Setting the context: Festivals and Sustainability

In 2017 thirty years will have passed since the publication of the highly influential report *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. Many commentators seem to assume that the report offered the first crystallised interpretation of the emerging, at the time, ideal of *sustainability*, which was defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (ibid., p.16). Later, this definition was endorsed with the renowned trifold model of sustainability, which appears in numerous publications. This model illustrated the image of a *sustainable* society as a balanced pursuit and equal concern for objectives pertinent to social equality, economic growth, and the protection of the natural environment (UNWS, 2005). Since the publication of these reports, the vision of sustainability came to occupy a prominent place in policy agendas, in the public debate, as well as in the world of organisations, although the meaning of its concept remains contested and fluid, and, moreover, the processes through which it has been established as a universal creed have been questioned (e.g. by Parr, 2009). Nowadays sustainability has risen "to the prominence of mantra – or a shibboleth" (Daly, 1996, p.1) so that an increasing number of institutions across society subscribe to its premises;

they become sustainable, thus they promise to help society remedy its current deficiencies and move towards a desirable, sustainable state on the long-term.

Thirty years after the publication of the *Our Common Future* report (WCED, 1987), the adjective *sustainable* is now being used in a fashionable way to describe almost any entity and, to that extent, sustainable Xs are being praised for their promise to deliver not just a better version of *just plain Xs*, but also a better version of society (Allenby, 2004). One of the recent additions to that expanding array of sustainable Xs has been the sustainable performing arts festival, which is the focus of this thesis. Namely, an increasing number of festival organisers, worldwide, are currently claiming that they can recognise and, essentially, address some of the perceived inherently negative externalities of their events. In trying to remedy the unfavourable impacts of their events they incorporate the notion of sustainability into the strategic mission and practical management of these festivals. By calling attention to their sustainability credentials and exercising particular interpretations of the concept, they either label their festivals as *sustainable* or emphatically promote the events' contribution to sustainability. In doing so, they become part of a coalition of actors that are committed to confronting some of the major global challenges facing contemporary society – as these have been defined by the institutions that have established sustainability as a universal, guiding principle and a concrete set of goals. Furthermore, a number of sustainable performing arts festivals of this kind do not simply manifest a commitment to finding solutions for their organisational context and the present society, but also define themselves as complete paradigm shifting projects; hence they promise to make "Another World possible" by becoming "beacon[s] of sustainability" (Sunrise Festivals, 2013).

Sustainability, however, is a discursive notion, open to contention, which lacks a single, universal definition (Webster, 1999). Essentially, as this thesis will show, the discourse over sustainability has been bound to the power effects and processes of establishment appropriation (Ruttan, 1994) and institutionalisation, which have led to particular understandings and practical translations of its concept. Moreover, such processes, along with the

policy tools that these convey, have reportedly been responsible for a systematic delimitation of the once plastic, diverse, and open-ended visions of sustainability, defining what counts as sustainability and what does not (Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995). In turn, as it will be argued, these effects have significantly restricted the possibility for alternative understandings of sustainability to emerge from the lower layers of social organisation. The conceptualisation of sustainability as a template for absolute, top-down policy action, however, may be anathema to an institution such as the festival, which is assumed to have a "transformative, transgressive and even revolutionary role" in society (Bianchini and Maughan, 2015, p.243).

Sustainable performing arts festivals have been mushrooming in number and genres, yet the topic of sustainability has rarely been discussed in a conceptual framework within the relevant bodies of literature. This research project investigates how the concept of sustainability has been interpreted within the contemporary festival scene, employing the sustainable performing arts festival as the specific context. Essentially, it aims to problematise current sustainability understandings and practice, as well as invite creative thinking on the implications of sustainability for the particular context by endeavouring to construct a theory pertinent to the concept of the sustainable festival. The main research question asks: What does it mean for the performing arts festival to contribute to the achievement of a desired future for the festival and its surrounding social context, that is to say, for it to be a sustainable festival?

1.2 Aims of the Research

i) To explore and problematise how the concept of sustainability is being understood, interpreted, and communicated in the context of the contemporary sustainable performing arts festival scene.

Although an increasing number of performing arts festivals are adopting sustainability in their vocabularies and strategies, there have been no attempts, to the best of my knowledge, to investigate how sustainability is

actually being interpreted for and by this expanding segment of the cultural economy. This thesis sets out to address the current gap in the scholarship through a systematic endeavour to locate sustainable festivals around the world and analyse the way sustainability is construed in their mission statements in addition to current practical interventions (e.g., sustainable festival practice). By being mindful of the discursive struggle over the modern meaning of sustainability (Redclift, 2006b; Rydin, 1999; Hajer, 1995), it essentially aims to provide an interpretation of those understandings using discourse analysis to deconstruct them. As part of this analytical approach this research project will problematise whether the current momentum of contemporary sustainable festivals is representative of a genuine, paradigmatic shift towards open-ended, socially innovative initiatives. Thus it will be questioned whether these sustainable events anchor a new sociocultural narrative – what Getz (2009) called for a few years ago – or they are rather reproducing dominant articulations of sustainability that are reinforcing the status quo of particular institutions and arrangements (Banerjee, 2008).

ii) To synthesise the foundations of a theory pertinent to the sustainable festival from the ground up.

The present research aims to take a step back from taken-for-granted assumptions about the festival-sustainability nexus and provide provocations to think afresh about its concept. This, in turn, will suggest new avenues for the scholarship pertaining to the sustainable festival and pose new challenges for sustainable festival practice. This thesis hypothesises that the social construction of sustainability takes place at the intersection of top-down and bottom-up procedures. That space therefore emerges as a site of discursive struggle between a multitude of visions and images of the desired, contextual future of the festival and its larger social environment. Festivals, indeed, "provide opportunities for the enactment of imagination" (O' Grady, 2015, p.92), enabling participants to delve in an imaginary realm where they can perform positive contextual evaluations and conceive the elements that contribute to coveted personal and social states. An immediate implication of

this is to question the elements and processes that are being enacted within the festival world and which festival participants perceive as significant for the achievement of a *sustainable* future and, therefore, *desirable* at all levels of society.

Since the meaning making processes surrounding sustainability have not been previously explored with regards to the particular context and from a bottom-up perspective, and given that the sustainable festival phenomenon is currently under-theorised, a major aim of this thesis is the construction of a theory pertinent to the sustainable festival that is grounded on the subjective understandings, ideologies, and visions of the people who directly experience the festival. It will thus take a different focus from much of the existing scholarship that tends to adopt conceptual models of sustainability developed in other disciplines, and, moreover, neglects alternative knowledges of sustainability that emerge from individual characters, in particular festival worlds.

iii) To propose an empirical approach to the investigation of understandings surrounding sustainability.

By arguing that important knowledge pertinent to the construct of sustainability emerges from the lower layers of social organisation, within particular contexts, and is actually co-created between the researcher and participants (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995), this thesis will employ an empirical, constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) to address the second aim of the present study. This thesis is concerned with "situating human knowledge socially or alternatively with advancing an understanding of reality (…) as socially produced" (Demeritt, 2002, p.771). This research project therefore aims to elaborate and propose an alternative methodological approach to the interpretation and theorisation of sustainability pertinent to the festival, the discipline of which appears to be currently dominated by studies that are mainly conceptual in design.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to address the aims described above, the following research questions were formed:

Main research question

- What does it mean for the performing arts festival to contribute to the achievement of a desired future for the festival and its surrounding social context, that is to say, for it to be a sustainable festival?

Secondary research questions

- How is sustainability being interpreted, communicated, and translated in practice by producers of performing arts festivals around the world?
- What is actually being *sustained* in current approaches to the sustainable festival?
- What does the sustainable festival look like and feel for the people who experience the festival?

1.4 Contribution to knowledge

Festivals constitute a field of study, as Robertson et al. (2009) put it, "still in the process of confirming and safeguarding its academic and professional legitimacy" (p.158). To further narrow down the focus of this thesis, the study of sustainability with particular regards to the festival sector is an emerging area of scholarly research. Relevant studies usually appear in publications in the fields of: festival research; event and festival management; sustainable tourism; cultural tourism; cultural policy; and hospitality and travel research. This project responds to increasing calls for developing the theoretical base of sustainability with regards to the particular field. For instance, Getz (2009) calls for the institutionalisation of a new paradigm for the events sector, one that is responsible and sustainable. In the editorial

introduction of the *Special Issue on Sustainability in the Event Management Sector* Lawton (2011) defined sustainability as a "societal mega-trend" (p.313) and argued that there is a need for more scholarly work in the field in order to better understand sustainability's conceptual and practical implications for the festival and events sector. Even more recently, Pernecky and Lück (2013), editors of a reader on *Events, Society, and Sustainability,* acknowledged that existing scholarly work in event studies driven by the sustainability discourse is gradually increasing, yet, contrary to other sectors, is lagging behind in both breadth and volume. They thus argued that:

> [t]here is room for expanding the conceptual scaffolding of sustainability so that more balanced, informed and well-rounded perspectives can emerge. There is also scope for more theoretical and conceptual richness of the events phenomenon and the field in general (p.3).

By responding to the above calls, this thesis is therefore considered to be an important contribution to the body of knowledge associated with sustainability in the field of festivals and events. Not only because it provides conceptual coverage to a developing academic field that is currently vastly under-theorised, but also because it adds a unique, critical voice to a discipline dominated by studies that tend to offer hands-on approaches to the complex concept of sustainability and rest upon largely managerialist perspectives (e.g., Hillmer, 2016; Jones, 2014; Raj and Musgrave, 2009).

Managerialism has been described as an ideology whose main mission is to spread skills and knowledge from the general discipline of management into every sphere of society (Klikauer, 2015; Mick, 2011). Its doctrine has also colonised festival and event research so that studies such as the above implicitly agree that festival organisations can be optimised – and, thus, sustainability achieved – through the application of management tools. Nevertheless, festival studies that place managerialism at their core are possibly, by default, repudiating the exigencies of sustainability. By contrast, this thesis calls for placing sustainability at the heart of scholarship, in effect, refusing to accept the 'given' – which is not a comfortable position to take.

Pernecky (2013) claimed through a number of propositions regarding the events-sustainability nexus:

> Future events research ought to tackle sustainability critically in order to understand the forces, impacts, and consequences interconnected with sustainability discourse. (…) Events research ought to take into account that sustainability claims can be made on different levels, in varied contexts, and can differ based on the perspectives adopted (pp.17; 20).

The present thesis responds to propositions about the prospects of the relevant body of research such as the above by: i) employing the sustainable performing arts festival as the specific context; ii) adopting a critical perspective on interpretations of sustainability in the particular context that flow from higher layers of social organisation towards the bottom; and iii) acknowledging the value of different knowledges that spring from individuals who are experiencing the festival, so that "new horizons of sustainability can emerge" (ibid., p.15).

The methodological design itself is considered to be an important element of this study. Chapters Two and Four, which address the first aim of this thesis, gradually deploy an interpretive analytical approach (Gephart, 1997) in order to deconstruct current interpretations of sustainability made by and for contemporary sustainable festivals. These two chapters therefore align methodologically with a line of scholarship that employs interpretive analytical approaches in order to understand the meaning of sustainability in particular contexts (de Burgh-Woodman and King, 2013; Hugé et al., 2013; Buhr and Reiter, 2006; Laine, 2005). The subsequent part of the thesis, however, focuses on the polar opposite of this methodological logic; it attempts to elicit knowledge about the sustainable festival drawing on a bottom-up, constructivist empirical approach. Empirical explorations of the constructs of sustainability maintained by those people directly involved in the contexts under scrutiny constitute a very recent development in sustainability studies (Byrch et al., 2015). Hence the present study contributes to the

advancement of this expanding qualitative turn of relevant research in a discipline that has been dominated by studies that are conceptual and normative (Carbo et al., 2014; Milne and Grey, 2013; Banerjee, 2008). Nevertheless, the combination of interpretive-analytical and constructivist approaches in a single research project on the study of sustainability, has not been presented in the literature, to the best of my knowledge.

This research project is also an important contribution to an emerging stream within the body of critical organisation studies (e.g. by Bernard, 2015; Banerjee, 2008; Palazzo and Richter, 2005; Springett, 2003), which views current interpretations of sustainability as inherently problematic. This line of research therefore attempts to explore the contradictions within the dominant interpretations of its concept, in contrast to mainstream perspectives that unquestionably praise sustainability and accept its creeds. By adopting a critical perspective to the study of the sustainable festival, this thesis establishes the *festival* as an additional sector and, thus, an appropriate organisational context for the advancement of this marginal research field.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided in seven chapters, the remainder of which are summarised below:

Chapter Two reveals, from the outset, the principles that inform this thesis' approach to the notion of sustainability. Since the adjective *sustainable* is differentiating the meaning of the sustainable festival from that of the *plain* festival, the etymology and lexical definition of the term will be explored. The chapter then adopts a historical-dialectical approach to trace the ideological precursors which have significantly affected the modern doctrines and concepts of sustainability, followed by a dedicated section to the intellectual developments and political movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which arguably provided much sustenance to the crystallisation of sustainability as an alternative ideal of future society. It will be argued that the once plastic discourses of sustainability have been bound by the twin

processes of establishment appropriation and institutionalisation, supporting the interests of particular organisational actors and institutions across society, while marginalising alternative understandings and practices associated with its concept. Focus will then be directed towards theories of sustainability pertinent to the world of organisations in order to construct a critical framework for the notion of the *sustainable organisation* and, hence, problematise whether that sustainable turn represents a genuine commitment to a flourishing human(e) society or constitutes an instrument pursuing particular strategic or institutional gains. Chapter Two concludes with an alternate, less-mainstream and rather personal view of the sustainable organisation, therefore reporting, again, on the principles that have directed the present study and positioning the author among dominant discourses of the concept.

Chapter Three seeks to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on the role of festivals in society in order to create a feasible research context for the study of the sustainable festival. It defines the notion of the *festival* through the shared characteristics that are considered to be relevant to the festivals that constitute the focus of this thesis, namely performing arts festivals. Since one of the secondary questions of this research asks "What is actually being sustained in current approaches to the sustainable festival?" this chapter will narrow down on a brief conceptual discussion about the relationship between festivals, stability and social change.

Chapter Four contributes to the existing body of knowledge a comprehensive exploration of how sustainability is being interpreted, constructed, and communicated by and for producers of sustainable performing arts festivals. Since festivals occupy a significant place within the creative economy, this chapter sets out to provide a brief account of how sustainability is being understood within the cultural sector. Focus will then be placed on scholarly contributions from the field of festival studies in order to provide a review of current literature and establish an understanding of the main discourses that inform discussions of sustainability in this particular domain. In an attempt to delimit the scope of this research, this chapter will

address the conceptual overlaps and boundaries that exist between the sustainable festival and other types of performing arts festivals that proclaim to have taken an alternative course to staging cultural experiences. The secondary question "How is sustainability being interpreted, communicated, and translated in practice by contemporary performing arts festivals around the world?" will then be addressed through an exploratory mapping study of sustainable performing arts festivals from around the world. This section aims to elicit how the notion of sustainability is currently being interpreted and operationalised within the festival scene by employing interpretive textual analysis as its analytical method. Drawing on the broader, macro-level discursive repertory of sustainability – presented in Chapter Two – this chapter will provide a critical discussion of contemporary discourses pertinent to the sustainable festival, exposing in that way the conceptual deficiencies and contradictions inherent to current interpretations of its concept.

Chapter Five will justify, discuss, and present the philosophical assumptions and the methodological design underpinning the empirical part of this qualitative study.

Chapter Six contributes further to the existing body of knowledge, presenting and analysing the processes emerging from the empirical research and enacted within the festival context, that were perceived to be significant constituents of a sustainable festival – a festival that thrives symbiotically with and within the larger social systems in which it takes place, contributing, in that way, to the achievement of a socially desirable future. First, it will provide an overview of the guiding principles that inform the present analysis, presenting a threefold conceptual framework that will be used as a background system for organising discussion. A conceptual reconstruction of the festival environment, from the bottom-up, will then follow, revealing the complex interrelationships that are deemed to be important elements for the well-being of the broader festival system and, therefore, desired processes for its contextual future.

As a way of conclusion, and in order to capture the value of the present study, Chapter Seven will offer four propositions which may be of particular value to sustainable festival scholarship and practice.

Chapter Two: Sustainability

> As hard as it might be to believe, the world once made do
> without the words "sustainable" and "sustainability." Today
> they're nearly ubiquitous (Caradonna, 2014, p.1).

Sustainability – as the derivative of the adjective *sustainable* – belongs to those omnibus terms that embrace many different usages and interpretations, employed by many different people, for many different purposes. Its concept has often been used in a rather imprecise manner, for example, to manifest a general consensus that sustainability is a wise orientation for societies to follow, and fundamental for their future, without making any effort to ground such statements on particular contexts – cultures, social arrangements, historical time or physical environments. It has been crystallised as a tangible notion and enjoyed broad societal resonance since the last three decades of the previous century, in a multitude of attempts made to address various social, political, economic and environmental problems facing contemporary societies. Essentially, it is currently increasingly providing a common language, "a lingua franca for the twenty-first century" (Thiele, 2013, p.1) across a great variety of actors, who seem to be favourably disposed towards any sustainable X, as if they know what sustainability really conveys. As Becker et al. (2005) have observed, "the only consensus on sustainability appears to be that there is no shared understanding" (p.382).

This chapter aims to enhance our insight into the concept of sustainability in order to build a working, critical conceptual framework. This, in turn, will help better address the idea of the sustainable festival as well as provide the basis for a critical discussion about its interpretations, over the fourth chapter in this thesis. It begins by laying out how sustainability is theorised and understood in this thesis and, therefore, it reveals the principles that inform my critique to its contemporary, mainstream discourses. This is followed by a brief exploration of the etymology and the lexical definition of the terms that label the concept of sustainability. It then expresses a belief

that the historical precursors of sustainability need to be traced back in efforts and doctrines before the concept "rose to the prominence of mantra or a shibboleth" (Daly, 1996, p.1) during the past thirty years, and provides an account of three, often overlapping, conceptual realms out of which sustainability emerged.

The following section argues that the intellectual developments and political movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s provided much sustenance to the crystallisation of sustainability as an alternative, however abstract, ideal for future society, and then offers a brief review of the collective legacy of that era for the modern meaning of its concept. Although this section calls for a historical review of the above issues, it will not attempt to carry out a full review of this kind. By contrast, it will attempt to combine areas of discourse that have been kept apart and whose construals are necessary for a proper conceptualisation of the sustainable festival and its problematic. It then considers the dominant sustainability definitions and discourse as a result of the twin processes of establishment appropriation and institutionalisation, which this thesis regards as largely responsible for the creation of the particular conditions that have led to the marginalisation of alternative understandings of sustainability. This section is underpinned by a belief that the reality of sustainability was once plastic, yet, over time, one which has been crystalised into a series of concrete constructs that constitute now a *real*, historical reality. It is thus aiming to provide a historical-dialectical perspective for understanding the congeries of factors that have led to the current configuration of the sustainability paradigm.

Both the bottom-up, grassroots discourses and the top-down, "macro-level discursive repertoires" (Laine, 2005, p.400) of sustainability presented in this chapter will be used later in this thesis as forming the background from which festival organisations and related individuals draw their respective understandings of the concept. This section then provides a brief exploration of why sustainability has become an institutionalised practice within and across the world of organisations, looking critically on the concept of the *sustainable corporation*, and problematising whether the sustainable turn of organisations represents a substantive concern and a genuine commitment

for a sustainable, flourishing human society. In conclusion, this chapter provides a personal interpretation of the sustainable organisation.

2.1 Interpreting sustainability

Sustainability means many different things to many different people (Lele and Norgaard, 1996; Redclift, 1987). This is because the concept of sustainability is vague and ambiguous, and, moreover, it seems to have become so hackneyed that it has often been a source of confusion (Rana and Piracha, 2007). While for some the concept appears to be complex, a fashionable buzzword, for others it might be unfettering; it might serve as a conceptual prism through which they may project their dreams, concerns and hopes about a better future. Consequently, before I introduce a conceptual framework for sustainability and start deconstructing and questioning its dominant discourses, I need to provide a prelude of this kind to the critical discussion, which will follow. Namely, it is important to position myself, locate this thesis in the context of mainstream discourses of the concept, and describe how sustainability is theorised and understood in this study. This self-reflexive approach is also important from a methodological point of view because it provides recognition of the influence of my values, assumptions, and personal biases on the process of inquiry (Cunliffe, 2003). As Creswell (2007) notes, in qualitative research the researchers' interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, context, and prior understandings. On that account, and given the need to declare my position with respect to the domain, in this section I acknowledge and make visible my subjectivity in interpreting the construct of sustainability and, moreover, provide a prodrome for the justification of the methods employed in this study (Chapter Five).

First, to me sustainability is a vision, an open-ended guiding image of the future that informs the present. It represents a hope-filled plan for human fulfilment, far more than a mere concern for the natural environment or an obsession about perpetual economic growth, as it is widely accepted. It is therefore clear that, to me, the vision of sustainability is related to subjective emancipatory, anthropocentric goals, which are concerned with both the

material (physical) and the social world, and projected over a more *beautiful* society. The optimistic qualities of sustainability thinking are explicitly voiced through the following excerpt of the Tutzinger Manifesto (2002, p.1), which calls for the essence of the cultural-aesthetic dimension of sustainability:

> If sustainability is to be attractive and fascinating, if it is to appeal to the senses and convey a meaning, then beauty becomes an elementary component of a future that has a future, a way of life to which all people are entitled.

Nevertheless, as it will be argued, rather than calling for a complete rearrangement of the various elements that synthesize the current social organisation to fit the logic of societal fulfilment, dominant notions of sustainability employ the logic of markets and neo-liberalism[2], as well as the norms these embody to determine the future of development and the environment. But, to me, sustainability is fundamentally anthropocentric simply because *development* and the *environment* (in the meaning of a *nature* 'out there') are meaningless without connoting a flourishing humane world. My understanding of sustainability is thus informed by an on-going tradition – which dates at least to Aristotle, Kant, and, more recently, Haq (1995), Amartya Sen (1999), and Martha Nussbaum (2011) – that treats human individuals and societies as the real ends of all developmental activities.

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[2] Although the concept of neo-liberalism has been broadly debated, in this study it is understood as the dominant global political and economic system, and the affiliated social order, that has been sculpting the Western world (and beyond) since the 1970's (Chomsky, 1999). Neo-liberalism is largely characterised by free market-economy regimes – that encourage profit-maximising, private enterprises to flourish – and ascribes supremacy onto transnational, non-governmental organisations for determining the future of a global society. Furthermore, its paradigm places particular emphasis on, and essentially rewards, individual responsibility in decisions (e.g., consumer choice). A critical understanding of neo-liberalism regards its social order as a "hegemonic project" and maintains that elite actors and dominant groups organised around transnational coalitions "have the capacity to project and circulate a coherent program of interpretations and images of the world onto others" (Springer, 2012, p.136). Throughout this thesis I often use the term *late capitalism* as synonymous to *neo-liberalism*.

MacIntyre (2007) holds that "there is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a *telos*" (p.215, my italics) – or of a variety of ends or goals – towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present. Nevertheless, sustainability to me is not a *telos*, not a particular, static point that we desire to reach sometime. It is not a teleological project with predetermined directions and a utilitarian focus on satisfying and maximising current and future, narrowly defined needs – as it is commonly upheld. Instead, it is a dynamic, never-ending process of envisioning and trying to build resilience with our present, turning our vision for a better future world into action, which, in turn, will become the "nourishment for the dreams of the next generation who will prosper on the fruit of our vision" (Kim and Oki, 2011, p.249). So construed, sustainability is evidently bound up with the notion of *change*. As Olson (1995) put it, future-oriented, emerging visions and images of a sustainable society are "believable, highly positive, and open-ended, inviting further elaboration" (p.15). They essentially respond to key challenges facing our present society and are therefore firmly grounded on issues that at least a segment of society perceives as problematic. This approach bears two dimensions: one predictive and one normative. The former is an affirmation that the current social configuration has particular deficiencies and is likely to collapse. The latter suggests that we should expect this breakdown and need to proceed to particular actions in order to avoid it.

That the future flourishing of our society is dependent on the decision-making processes of the present is without doubt. Sustainability, therefore, is not only an optimistic vision but also a call to action: to change the present human society so it can, not only survive, but also flourish, over the long term. Sustainability, in that sense, is *radical* – in the original meaning of "going to the roots" (Chambers and Cowan, 2004, p.13) – and, consequently, it serves as an instrument of societal change. Furthermore, this implies that sustainability refers to a particular kind of action, which is best described by the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* (Greek: πρᾶξις). *Praxis*, is transformative action that is morally-committed, independent from any external end, guided by virtuous and ethical intentions for individuals and the humankind, and

oriented towards changing society (Knight, 2007). As Kemmis and Smith (2008, p.4) put it:

> *Praxis* is what people do when they take into account all the circumstances and exigencies that confront them at a particular moment and then, taking the broadest view they can of what it is *best* to do, they *act* (italics in original).

In pertinent philosophical considerations, *praxis* is often opposed to the inferior activity of *poiesis* (Greek: *ποίησις*), which involves instrumental reasoning to produce a known outcome, prescribing both the means and the ends to achieve that in a top-down manner (Knight, 2007). In the context of this thesis, sustainability *praxis* is therefore opposed to sustainability *practice* (or poiesis), which is principally oriented towards the reproduction of stability, purposefully serving ends (or teloi) (pre-) determined by actors other than the agent who commits the action. For the above reasons in this thesis the concept of praxis is an important component to exploring alternative knowledges of sustainability, which might reside outside of the boundaries of its dominant discourses. However, my interpretation of sustainability praxis is not drawing on forms of political activism that imply protest against contemporary social arrangements and direct, counter-hegemonic confrontation through existing institutional channels. It rather resonates with Day's (2004, p.734) concept of the "politics of the act" which suggests:

> giving up on the expectation of a non-dominating response from structures of domination; it means surprising both oneself – and the structure – by inventing a response that precludes the necessity of the demand and thereby breaks out of the loop of the endless perpetuation of desire for emancipation.

A sustainability praxis-as-"politics of the act" is a form of activism that offers glimpses to alternate social arrangements and is often not defined or consciously perceived to be a form of activism. In being more creative, abstract and participatory, it creates and enacts an alternative vision of society through avoidance of opposition. By contrast, sustainability practice,

performed through a seeming confrontational stance in relation to existing conventions, may alter the content of current institutions and arrangements but not their form.

Third, this thesis suggests that the vision of sustainability informs, and is also informed by the present reality. Lukács's dialectical theory (cited in Kearney, 1994, p.144) maintains that visions both reflect existing structures and project alternative ones, suggesting a "dialectical rapport" between consciousness and reality, subject and object, humanity and nature, organisation and society, or the individual and society (Demeritt, 2002; Capra, 1982). The ramifications of the epistemological debate of how we know what the present reality *really* is and the philosophical consequences of the above dualisms go beyond the scope of this study, yet I need to address a major implication of this perspective: to me, sustainability is context-specific. It is affected by a plethora of abstract values and ideals that are shaped by, and within, particular social milieus. All the above affect the vision of sustainability and the vision, changed, does affect social reality to further change it. As an instrument of knowledge formation sustainability thinking has the capacity to pioneer fresh and emerging context-specific ideals and values, engage them into a conversation with established, conventional norms and behaviours, and then translate them into action.

My approach to sustainability, therefore, also implies a dialectical relationship between the subjective and objective aspects of the deficiencies of current social arrangements, on which perceptions of what is sustainable – meaning what can or should be maintained – and what is not are grounded. The subjective dimension of a problematic social situation refers to the belief that a particular condition (e.g., pollution, poverty, inequality, war, or crime) will diminish the present or future quality of human life, a belief that a social arrangement is harmful to society and therefore should be changed (Mooney et al., 2007). The objective dimension of a challenging social condition refers to the acceptance of the existence of a *real* problem, a problem that is not only discursively constructed but also has physical substance, one that society can, for example, feel and experience. Again, this should not be misunderstood as a claim that there is a divide between consciousness and

reality, or society and an environment *out there*. Instead, what I call a *real* problem is actually the product of the vision of sustainability, and the sustainable X is not separate from the real X. Sustainability envisioning, then, acquires meaning within specific contexts and place/time particular social arrangements that determine our perceptions of the surrounding environment, in which particular socio-ecological problems, for example, have occurred. Essentially, my view of sustainability has a *dialectical* element, which implies that there exists an interplay between the material environment, ideas and actions To quote Pepper (2003): "what we do is influenced by ideas, social structure and relations, nature, aesthetic desires, and a sense of anticipation about the future, and none of these is more important that the others" (p.14).

Last, conceptualising sustainability as a vision implies that the meaning making of sustainability is intrinsically an individual act. Vision is an individual's image of the future and, therefore, there can be no universal construct of sustainability that cherishes a specific, unitary system of social configuration, nor a master plan or a universal set of rules for a sustainable society. Drawing on Castoriadis's (1975) conception of *social imaginary* I argue that what is defined as sustainability at higher levels of society is the nexus of individual visions of sustainability and what is shared understanding amongst them. At higher societal levels, therefore, sustainability does not express what societies envision but rather what particular individuals envision society to be. The main difference between sustainability on the level of individual and sustainability on higher layers of social organisation is that in the latter context sustainability is institutionalised. This suggests that higher level sustainability(-ies) are translated into institutional arrangements: they have a firm location and take on a life of their own in practices, powerful discourses, concrete policies, and institutions[3] (Strauss, 2006). If the vision of

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[3] This thesis adopts a broad definition of institutions as "regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life" (Scott, 2008, p. 48). Institutions, therefore shape individual and organisational behaviour through the formal or informal manifestation of principles about the way things are, or the way things should be. Although this definition of institutions connotes stability and order, this does not imply that institutions do not undergo change. Giddens's (1984) theory of *structuration*, for example, suggests that these institutional processes of construction are on-going, meaning that social structures are re-produced and modified by the continuous actions of social actors – both

sustainability is real in its effect, it must be somewhere and denote something. For example, as I will address later, at the level of the firm sustainability is often institutionalised (or corporatised) through the adoption of routinised sustainable practices or the so-called Triple Bottom Line (TBL) initiatives. At the level of governments and supra-national organisations sustainability has a concrete location in dominant emblems such as sustainable development or, its 'twin', environmental discourse. There, visions of sustainability are appropriated and then promoted to lower levels of society as universal principles and strategic plans, in a way that is legitimating and justifying the status quo of particular social arrangements and organisational interests (e.g., the interests of corporations, international organisations, and governments).

These processes of appropriation and institutionalisation, therefore, favour particular concerns (e.g., the concern about environmental degradation or the stability of the economic growth) and solutions (e.g., technological and managerial innovations), while alternative knowledges and voices – that might link their optimistic sustainability visions with deeper questions about the social order and general human flourishing – might become marginalised. Consequently, to me the social construction of sustainability takes place at the intersection of institutionalised top-down, and problem-orientated, visionary bottom-up procedures. Institutionalised sustainability(-ies), together with the individual visions and conversations at the lower levels of society, therefore frame the cultural phenomenon of sustainability, which emerges as a site of discursive struggle between different visions and images of the future society. Over the next two chapters I will attempt to make visible the hidden boundaries and processes which flow from the former – and all that those imply for the particular context of the sustainable festival – leading to the marginalisation of other viewpoints that might emerge from the latter.

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individuals and collective actors – making such processes operate not only in a top-down, but also a bottom-up course.

2.2 Etymology

Sustainability as a term and concept has been discussed so much recently, eliciting passion and engagement, that it would be helpful first to revisit its etymological origins. Therefore, this section will begin by setting a simple question. What is *sustainability*, or, more specifically, what is it implied when something is defined as *sustainable*? The term resists clear definition and this section is not an endeavour to provide one.

The word *sustainable* is derived from the Latin verb *sustinere – sus*: up; *tenere*: hold, keep (Thiele, 2013; Pearson, 2012; Bosselman, 2010). *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (2010) defines sustainable as an adjective meaning: i) able to be maintained at a certain rate or level; ii) conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources: our fundamental commitment to sustainable development, and; iii) able to be upheld or defended. The derivative noun, sustainability, literally expresses the capacity of something of *supporting*, *maintaining*, *enduring*, or *prolonging* its life or existence. In its etymological rudiments, therefore, its meaning is akin to the endurance of anything – be that a living being, the natural environment, an organisation, a process, or an outcome – over time. Nevertheless, it is important to note that while sustainability – in respect of the vocabulary – can be seen to have unlimited applicability, its common usage refers to the level of the corporate world and its relation to the natural environment. Indeed, sustainability has been classified as a derivative of the adjective *sustainable*, defining the latter within the terminological limits of the above nexus as:

> the property of being environmentally sustainable; the degree to which a process or enterprise is able to be maintained or continued while avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources (ibid.).

As I will later argue, such definitions that knit the meaning of sustainability around the interplay between businesses and the natural environment have come to dominate the debate on sustainability and largely affect its

operationalisation. Lele and Norgaard (1996) note that, lexically, "sustainability is simply the ability to maintain something undiminished over some time period" (p.335). Obviously, standing as a noun, alone, sustainability has little meaning because it does not name what is being *sustained*, or what or who is doing the *sustaining*. As Grober (2012) notes, in this shallow sense the word means nothing more than "long-lasting" (p.18). This terminological limitation has been at the root of several debates problematising what exactly is being *sustained* in the abstract idea of sustainability (Redclift, 1987). Daly (2007) holds that besides meaningless, when alone, sustainability is an abstract noun, just like *beauty*, *justice*, and *truth*. In a similar vein, Caldwell (1998) argues that sustainability undefined is a term of indefinite applicability, and therefore its practical meaning requires specificity. Consequently, rather than talking about sustainability in the abstract it is much more productive to transform it into an adjective – *sustainable* – and then name something as *sustainable*, a noun that is being *sustained*. Now, having introduced a noun into the sustainability query, almost obliged by grammar, it seems to be much easier to approach the meaning of this concept and answer the initial questions of this paragraph.

It is very common in scholarly texts as well as practical situations to use sustainability synonymously and interchangeably with another term that is *sustainable development*; when one speaks of sustainability, almost unconsciously, sustainable development might be implied (Melissen, 2013). But if sustainable development becomes our focus we now have to deal with the meaning of development, which is not less conceptually elusive. There is an important contradiction in terms, because sustainability and development are based on very different and often incompatible assumptions. To quote Banerjee (2003, p.158):

> To sustain means to support from below, to supply with nourishment; it is about care and concern, a concept that is far removed from development, which is an act of control, often a program of violence, organized and managed by nation states, international institutions, and business corporations operating under the tenets of modern Western science.

A thorough review of the meaning of development is beyond the scope of this thesis (for this see Rabie, 2016; Lehmann, 2014; Sen, 1999). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight in this section an implicit conflict between the fundamental concepts that synthesise sustainable development. Paradoxically, these two words, individually, actually refer to different things and this leads to a terminological oxymoron (Missimer et al., 2010; Bartlett, 2006; Newman, 2006; Banerjee, 2003; Holmberg and Robèrt, 2000): whereas sustainability describes the maintenance of a preferred, current condition, development hints to change, advancement, or growth. Sustainability points to a *στάσις* (Greek: *stasis*, the condition of standing still) whereas development refers to an on-going process of *change*. Obviously, it is only when the adjective sustainable is added to development that this process of change acquires the meaning of *on-going*. Thus, although when taken apart these terms have conflicting implications, joined together, each word changes the meaning of the other and eventually ascribes a potentially workable meaning to sustainable development. And the central challenge inherent to this meaning is, in Hart's (1997) words, "to develop a sustainable global economy: an economy that the planet is capable of supporting indefinitely" (p.67).

Before moving on to a deeper exploration of the formulation and institutionalisation of those concepts, it is important to note that the adjective sustainable has recently been used to describe virtually any entity. At best, as Allenby (2004) argues, the adjective sustainable now indicates "a generally supportive attitude towards environmentalism, and, most of the time, a mild impulse toward redistribution of wealth" (p.13). The word sustainability seems to have become a very fashionable term to use nowadays; there is, I would argue, *sustainability everywhere*. As put by Swyngedouw (2007, p.20), we now have:

> a whole array of 'sustainabilities': sustainable environments, sustainable development, sustainable growth, sustainable wetlands, sustainable bodies, sustainable companies, sustainable processes, sustainable incomes, sustainable cities, sustainable technologies, sustainable water provision,

> even sustainable poverty, sustainable accumulation,
> sustainable markets and sustainable loss.

Grober (2012) cynically states that now everything may be sold "under the hollow label of 'sustainability'" (p.18), observing a strong relationship between the proliferation of sustainable Xs and consumer culture (Featherstone, 2007). This implies, in turn, that the sustainable X might not signalise the possibilities of a genuine shift towards a more desirable and socially benign X but, instead, constitute a brand new product in the global marketplace. One of the latest additions to the above array of sustainable Xs is the sustainable festival, which is the focus of this study. As a direct corollary of that proliferation of meanings, interpretations and applications, one could find it difficult to distinguish between a sustainable X and a plain X. In conclusion to this section, I would like to raise a different sort of question: is the sustainable X a preferred, or even idealised, version of the plain X? If yes is the answer, then what are the historical circumstances and ideological constructs out of which the current growing quest for sustainable Xs emerged?

2.3 The Conceptual Roots of Sustainability

Over the past three decades sustainability has come to be established as a permanent, dominant topic on the public discourse, in politics and policy-making, "an issue whose importance goes without saying" (Hajer, 1995, p.1). There seems to be a consensus that there is a need for human societies to live sustainably or, in other words, for there to be a sustainable world. Most scholars seem to assume that the idea of sustainability came into sight for the first time in 1987 when the (former) Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland publicised the influential *Our Common Future* report (Dresner, 2002). In my view, this publication is neither the prologue nor the epilogue to sustainability's conceptual evolution process. Sustainability is not an invention of the late Twentieth Century but is deeply rooted in many previous cultures (Grober, 2012). A key task of this section is to identify the precursors underlying the historical emergence of sustainability – before the terms

sustainable and sustainability have been employed – on the basis that these may contribute to the ways that sustainability is embedded in current discourse[4]. Although it could be highly debatable when the formulation of modern sustainability thinking exactly began, I would argue that sustainability needs to be associated with three, often overlapping, realms, which continue to influence us today and provide different ways of tracing its historical origins.

The first is knitted around a particular view of the natural environment, which regards the latter as essential to sustaining the survival of human beings and, at the same time, as valuable on its own right – whatever that value is. It has been the locus of eco-centric ethics that regard humanity as a component of a global ecosystem, and either prioritise non-human nature over everything else or prize nature's utility for humans (Eckersley, 2003). Mertig (2015) theorises that as a division between "conservationist" and "preservationist" (p.55) approaches of the non-human environment's valorisation. Being attentive to this eco-centric view, a number of authors ground the emergence of the idea of sustainability thousands of years ago, in religious traditions, in concerns about environmental change – human-caused or not – and within practical attempts performed by early human societies to (re)establish a balance with their physical surroundings, e.g., tackle shortages of essential natural resources. As Bosselmann (2010) informs us the historical roots of the concept can be sought in ancient cultures that were seeking to live in harmony with their natural environment, not only because this was instructed by their commonly-held belief systems, but also because this was a way to secure their livelihood. Similarly, Hughes (2009) argues that the roots of this human quest can be traced back thousands of years and provides a number of examples of ancient societies trying to adapt to their changing natural surroundings and raising concerns about their need to live sustainably. According to this approach sustainability thinking thus appeared

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[4] The term "discourse" draws on John Dryzek's (2013) definition: "A discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together in coherent stories or accounts. Discourses construct meanings and relationships, helping define common sense and legitimate knowledge" (p.9).

as a need to ensure human societies' long-term survival, manifested through a quest to achieve a *harmonious* human-to-nature relationship. In other words, the idea of sustainability emerged through the realisation of the changing state of the natural ecologies and life-support systems, and the dependence of human societies upon them.

Essentially, this historical approach embarks from the point of acknowledgement that humankind may potentially have the power to create an *imbalance* in the former relationship since human activity has become "the dominant driver of the natural environment" (Sachs, 2008, p.128). By the same token, Glasser (2016) comments that sustainability has its genesis in trepidation, which stems from an immemorial concern that humans, in their quest for a good life, may have, purposefully or not, "over- stepped boundaries and set in motion serious and potentially irreversible harms" (p.57). This paradigm lauds to a certain degree the simplicity of life, in accordance with the rules of the natural world, inspiring a course of thinking that was later picked up by philosophers during the Enlightenment (e.g. by Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Gilbert White). This line of reasoning is also evident in a number of contemporary expressions of the Green Movement – such as *Gaianism* (Lovelock, 2000) and *Deep Ecology* (Naess, 1989) – that advocate Nature's intrinsic worth, and then instruct societies to mould their lives according to Nature's limits. Furthermore, this paradigm was also picked up by the 19th century Conservation Movement, which advocated the protection of the natural world for its intrinsic worth as much as for the value it had for humans and, moreover, manifested an explicit conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the environment (Worster, 1994). The influence of this environmentalist realm is evident in contemporary perceptions, which regard sustain-ability as the ability of human societies "to order their behaviour and institutions toward maintaining ecological integrity in human relationships with the earth" (Caldwell, 1998, p.1) through an implicit ethical as well as utilitarian valorisation of the natural environment. This particular historical approach justifies the claim that sustainability and environmentalism – the social concern over environmental change – share common roots and many common directions (Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2007).

The second realm is justifying the historical emergence of the concept of sustainability on anthropocentric considerations rather than eco-centric ethics. For instance, Hackett (2006) maintains that sustainability represents a positive vision of the future, the origins of which should be traced far back in time, and to a number of civilisations that have flourished over the course of human history. Specifically, Hackett refers to the 16th-century Iroquois Confederacy, which proposed a standard of judging decisions based on the well-being of their tribe seven generations into the future. In light of this approach, the idea of sustainability emerged historically out of the realisation of the complex systemic and interdependent features of human flourishing. Human flourishing over time, and not mere survival, is the cornerstone of this approach and concerns about a *positive* human future were shaped essentially out of ethical conceptions of the *good* and *responsible life*.

The conceptual roots of this approach stretch back to classical philosophical contributions, for example, as reflected in Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* (Greek: *εὐδαιμονία*). They are also replicated in left-wing critiques of the Industrial Revolution (e.g., Engels, 1892). This realm harmonises with a contemporary thread in the sustainability discourse, which calls for human-centred institutions where aspects of human flourishing or fulfilment – such as human health, longevity, education, access to material goods, bodily security, political rights, environmental quality, and inter/intragenerational justice – are treated commensurably to each other (Nussbaum, 2011; Diener, 2009; Dasgupta, 2001; Haq, 1995; Nussbaum and Sen, 1993; Schumacher, 1973). It is also in tune with *eco-socialist* analyses of sustainability, which suggest economic and social arrangements that – being fundamentally anthropocentric – promise a socially just and environmentally benign global society informed by a nature-society dialectic, and all that this implies (Wall, 2005; Pepper, 2002; 1998). This historical approach, I argue, although ostensibly anthropocentric in its conceptual genesis, is also largely responsible for the emergence of the so called *systems thinking* in contemporary sustainability theory – the study of the relationships in complex, interrelated systems, and the acknowledgement of *complexity* as a quality present everywhere in the world – whose ultimate end is the flourishing of humanity as much as the flourishing of the broader systems in which

humanity is embedded (Parker, 2014; Thiele, 2011; Robèrt, 2002; Daly, 1973).

The third set of conceptual predecessors suggests that sustainability thinking has deep roots in the science of economics itself, bearing conceptual links with the fathers of political economy and, essentially, the funders of the classical theory of capitalism. Hence another repository of knowledge and experience that we need to take into consideration in order to better understand the precursors of sustainability includes early practices and concerns raised about the ecological and societal limits to economic development and growth. An administrative manual from the early Eighteenth Century, the work of Hans Carl von Carlowitz, acknowledged that the *well-being* of the local forestry industry depended on the constant supply of timber from the local forest (Bosselmann, 2010; Spangenberg, 2004). However self-evident this argument might sound today, Carlowitz's study is still important not only because it recognised, for the first time, the interrelationship between the economy and the local natural environment, but also because it actually introduced the terms sustainable, sustainability and sustainable use (German: *nachhaltig; nachhaltigkeit; nachhaltende nutzung*) (Grober, 2012).

Moreover, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, and Thomas Malthus are cited quite often in the literature on sustainability as early critics of the industrial society – but not critics of capitalist economics – who raised questions about the deficiencies of industrialisation and expressed their fears about the limits of economic development (Caradonna, 2014; Pol, 2002; Mebratu, 1998). Some of the observations at that time include: the excessive population growth; scarcity of natural resources; and poor living conditions in cities. All those were perceived as limits to the economy that challenged the ability of economic growth to continue forever. Essentially, those early critics, who were favourably disposed to industrial capitalism, recognised the particular negative externalities of the form of society but shared a techno-centric belief that careful management – within existing forms of social organisation – could eliminate them.

In my view, the realisation of the clear links between the economy and the natural and social environment, the acknowledgement that the economy

is vulnerable to collapse due to administrative short-sightedness and non-comprehensive management, alongside an emerging ideology that economic growth and capitalist institutions should be the ultimate emblems of progress and development, have directed much of the evolutionary process of modern sustainability thinking. Furthermore, these intellectual premises implied that problems such as the degradation of the natural environment or the poor quality of life should not be understood as the externalities resulting from anomalies of the existing institutional arrangements of society but rather as management or policy-making problems. As this thesis will later argue, this particular realm should be regarded largely as responsible for the establishment of the sustainability debate since the early 1960s, channelled both through the modern critics of the growth-obsessed society (e.g., Meadows et al., 1972; Carson, 1962; Diamond, 2005) and the "institutional crusaders" (e.g., Hajer, 1995, p.12), who responded to shape, institutionalise and appropriate, in turn, the concept's place in modern discourse and policy making.

2.4 Late 1960s – early 1970s

The previous section provided a brief account of the historical precursors of sustainability that were developed well before the concept – actually a blend of concepts, as I argue – first appeared as a straightforward, environmental and socio-economic ideal in the second half of the Twentieth Century. Awareness of these historical formulations helps position our current perceptions of sustainability within appropriate contexts. This brief section will embark on the argument that the intellectual and political movements of the post-war era – which burst out, in part, as a reaction to the twin evils of ecosystem destruction and social injustice, and as a critique to the mainstream social configurations of modernity – provided much sustenance to shaping sustainability as an alternative, however abstract, ideal for future society. The reason that my review considers the post-war era as the starting point of analysis is not because the previous two centuries have nothing to do with the evolution of sustainability thinking but rather because of the

significant role that the political movements and intellectual developments of the 1960s played in shaping its modern meanings.

Many authors regard the period between the late 1960s and mid-1970s as the direct predecessor of the emergence and establishment of the idea of sustainability as a key challenge of the global society and, therefore, an appealing topic for academic and political debate, as well as a promising field for policy-making. There is a general agreement that this is because since the late 1960s the Western world experienced the dawning of changing perceptions regarding the natural environment and the limits of economic development, which was part of a much broader value change that occurred at that time (Ray and Anderson, 2000). This has been evidenced by a growing literature on environmental degradation, overpopulation, over-exploitation of natural resources, famine, and social injustice and oppression (Lovins, 1977; Inglehart, 1977; Pirages, 1977; Hirch, 1976; Schumacher, 1973; Meadows et al., 1972; Goldsmith, 1972; Ehrlich, 1968; Mishan, 1967; Carson, 1962). Concurrently with this increasing pool of research-backed knowledge, a series of ecological disasters (e.g., the Torrey Canyon oil spill in 1967; the Three Mile Island Accident in 1979), natural resource crises (e.g., the 1970's energy crisis) and environmental movements with political resonance (e.g., the 1974 Chipco uprising in India) were unavoidably confronted with public attention and reinforced a widespread problematisation of the costs and shortcomings related to growth (Stivers, 1976).

That data and those actual events, which proved to be shocking to many societies across the globe, shared a common premise: that environmental protection, social prosperity and economic growth were evidently and significantly interwoven. Essentially, they provided the core support to the emergence of social and intellectual movements with overlapping foci that, collectively, envisioned and pressed for a better global society. These include the *Green Movement* (Galtung, 1986), the C*ounter-culture* of the 1960s (Roszak, 1969), the *New Left* (Marcuse, 1972; Thompson, 2013) and the latter Sustainability Movement (Ruttan, 1988) – among others. It was clear that the escalation of societal and environmental problems led to the creation of two opposing camps: government, corporate,

and international organisations' interests on one side, and a diverse array of actors that called for conceptual re-consideration and political re-configuration of existing institutions, on the other (Escobar, 1992). I need to clarify at this point that I use the term *movement* in its broadest meaning and not limited to organised social, mass public demonstrations. It is also important to highlight that it is not the intention of this section to try to summarise all the complex currents of politics and thinking developed over those decades[5] but rather provide a very brief account of the collective contribution of this era. I will do so by portraying the shared legacy of the most influential texts that were published during that era.

In my view, the contribution of this era to the modern inspiration, conceptual crystallisation, and operationalisation of sustainability is critical. The developments and productive activism of this era left an important legacy, one that can be found in many current concepts and practices surrounding the idea of sustainability today. A first aspect of this legacy is the establishment of the environment as an all-embracing concept in public discourse, one that suggested an old-new way of considering *nature* and humanity's place in it (Sandler and Pezzullo, 2007; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). This new, *ecological* approach to the environment criticised a fundamental dualism in Western thinking: the perceived deterministic relationship between nature and humanity, which suggests a separation between the natural environment as an entity *out there* and human society as something *in here*. This holistic understanding of the environment implies a complex, dialectical relationship between human society and its social arrangements, on the one hand, and human activity and ecosystem degradation, on the other. It is precisely this kind of systems thinking that provides much sustenance to the modern idea of sustainability. The ecological conception, therefore, is largely responsible for the creation of a new kind of worldview that allowed for "more critical perspectives on the romantic narrative of the progress of industrial society—a narrative that was

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[5] For this, cf. Caradonna, 2014; Dryzek, 2013; Grober, 2012; Dobson, 2007; Hajer, 1995

either apathetic toward or overtly hostile to the natural world" (Caradonna, 2014, p.110).

Despite the very many different voices among scientists, activists, scholars, and utopian thinkers, collectively, those movements explicitly confronted a relatively stable and seemingly effective economic system, which succeeded the post-war era, and its ends in particular. For example, they questioned the fundamental axiom that economic expansion – *growth* – is inherently a positive thing. The research-backed *Limits to Growth* report (Meadows et al., 1972) is often cited in sustainability literature for the apocalyptic message it proliferated and its critical contribution to the formation of the sustainability movement. This politically powerful report provided a neo-Malthusian vision of the Western society (Pirages and Cousins, 2005) warning for serious crises that were about to face humanity if the ecological and social limits to growth were not recognised, and relative actions were not taken at a global scale. As encapsulated in this report, and combined with the writings of environmentalists such as Carson (1962), the message of this era was straightforward: a growth-obsessed society – one that is progressing by expanding its economy at the expense of the ecosystem and global social statuses – will eventually collapse. *Limits to Growth* seemed to present environmental problems as a global crisis, yet suggested the application of technocratic, top-down practices, as a legitimate strategic approach to prevent a global collapse (Meadows et al., 1972). It therefore saw existing ecological and social problems primarily as technological problems that needed to be resolved within the frameworks of the established social order.

Further evidence of the widespread change of perceptions over the boundaries of economic growth and its association with ecosystem degradation is provided by the proliferation of non-governmental organisations with an environmental focus during that era, as well as the foundation of international institutes and conferences devoted to addressing the mounting crises related to unlimited, sustained growth (Finger and Princen, 2013). The explicit claim that social prosperity could not be taken for granted as growing forever, alongside the warning that there might be soon a turning point to Western economies' macroeconomic growth, had a huge

impact on the conceptual formation of sustainability (Blackburn, 2007; Caldwell, 1998). Importantly, as will be argued in the following section, this message ignited a political-institutional response that introduced environmental protection as well as development – instead of the ill-conceived concept of economic growth – as top political priorities.

A third set of – initially marginal – ideas that were developed during that era and provided sustenance to the modern sustainability debate relates to the problematisation of the current economic and social arrangements of Western society itself. Perhaps the most radical idea was the suggestion of a feasible, alternative social order characterised by small, highly communal, decentralised and self-sufficient social units, therefore resonating largely anarchist ideas that were developed in the previous century by authors like Kropotkin (Cahm, 1989). Goldsmith's (1972) *Blueprint for Survival*, for example, connected the dots between environmental problems, the immorality of the dominant mode of production, and the hierarchisation of modern society to provide a critique of the latter. This idealist, hope-filled environmentalist manuscript directly questioned the *technocratic* response of governments and the corporate world towards social and environmental matters, arguing for an urgent, radical change in economic organisation rather than merely corrective improvements to the existing order.

Similarly, Schumacher's (1973) highly influential book *Small is Beautiful* further built on that decentralised, participatory utopia to argue against the discourse of growth – as a definition of *progress* – and the de-humanisation of work, inspiring suggestions that capitalism itself needs to be fundamentally transformed if we wish to move towards to a new, more sustainable society. Schumacher warned of the illusions of any form of centralised gigantism and suggested the formation of an alternative economic system, one that focused on small-scale social units empowered to deliver structural solutions according to their own needs and wishes. This very call for decentralisation of responsibility, and, thus, a complete institutional restructuring as the only way to ensure the survival and flourishing of the global society, explicitly questioned the legitimacy of orthodox policies and beliefs with which governments pursued to manage the mounting debate over

current challenging matters. The focus of this school of thought was on alternatives for society rather than on reformative, alternative solutions within society. Hence contributions such as the above raised fundamental questions over the actual nature, function and effectiveness of the core institutional arrangements of modern societies, providing an additional, alternative direction to the conceptual formation of sustainability.

2.5 The Age of Establishment Appropriation

It is my thesis that, despite the varying concerns and assertions, the collective legacy of the intellectual developments and political movements of the 1960s-70s heralded the beginning of another struggle between various actors – including theorists, activists, politicians, and scientists, but also organisations, governments, corporations and the media. An oft-cited argument within the sustainability literature is that the meaning of sustainability was forged largely during seminal events and throughout influential publications (Rogers et al., 2008) including: the 1972 United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm; the proceedings of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987; the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro; the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg; and, more, recently, the Rio+20 conference (United Nations, 2012).

This section will consciously avoid commenting on the – already well-covered – debate about the particular institutional formations, meanings and complex ramifications of sustainability, because such an effort would exceed the scope of this study. Instead, it will provide a brief introduction to the power processes that have led to particular interpretations of sustainability and, thus, constrained the possibilities of less mainstream, more abstract, contextual and open-ended construals of its concept. Namely, I will argue that the current sustainability discourse could be regarded as the outcome of a process that has been referred to as *establishment appropriation* and then outline the major implications of this approach. In such a process, a

progressive rhetoric is initially furthered by critics because it constitutes a challenge to the legitimacy of dominant institutions and practices. If the groups and symbols involved are sufficiently threatening to the established order, dominant institutions will attempt to respond by strategically appropriating or embracing the symbols themselves (Lawn, 2001; Ruttan, 1994; Ruttan, 1991, p.5; Buttel and Gillespie, 1988). Drawing on this theory I therefore regard dominant sustainability constructs as an outcome of a process in which particular agents have been systematically demarcating the boundaries relating to how the concept should be understood and undertaken. The theory of establishment appropriation is informed by Foucault's (1980) analysis of power, which portrays the way particular organisational and institutional practices create discourses, thus determining what is right or not right to do or to be. The very process of establishment appropriation is a tangible manifestation of what Foucault calls *disciplinary power*; it is thus a particular "technique and tactic of domination" (ibid., p.102) that is being exercised by the institutions that inform the dominant socioeconomic paradigm.

> This new type of power, which can no longer be formulated in terms of sovereignty, is, I believe, one of the great inventions of bourgeois society. It has been a fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism and of the type of society that is its accompaniment (Foucault, 1980, p.105).

In the case of the sustainability movement, however, this particular tactic of domination, establishment appropriation, constitutes an unusual practice of power; it is not emerging out of an ideological conflict between two opposing camps (e.g., grassroots movements and capitalist institutions) but rather out of a peculiar dialectic between actors that might reside in opposite sides. This means that actors who intentionally exercise this tactic – the *appropriators* – seemingly have a similar sense of commitment to creating fresh "structures and institutional arrangements" (WCED, 1987, p.27) to those whose ideals and symbols are appropriated, empowering, in that sense, each other. In other words, elements of an emerging value system that is marginal, abstract, malleable and experimental – yet potentially rebellious – are manipulated

ideologically, appropriated and institutionalised, creating a paradigm that is widely appealing to the public and involving feelings of mutual contribution to a common objective. Yet this process aims to establish a culture of order and control that grants privilege to a particular social system.

As explained by Lawn (2001), by playing a significant role in the evolution of these emerging symbols, dominant institutions are able to de-mobilise serious external challenges and ensure their own continued dominance and longevity. As Banks (2007) asserts – with particular reference to the realm of cultural industries, the radical philosophies that underpin emerging counter-cultures are very vulnerable to appropriation when their ethical templates re-appear, re-worked, in the rhetoric of dominant institutions including "profit-hungry companies" (p.158). The above perspectives constitute part of left-side critiques of capitalism that emphasise the latter's surprising ability to survive by absorbing large part of countercultural critiques into itself, thus disarming the greatest part of potentially "anti-capitalist forces" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007, p.27) in innovative ways. In this "new spirit of capitalism" (ibid.) sustainability is shaped out of processes of appropriation of seemingly rival elements, and then re-configured as a leading paradigm. Hence, in their struggle for hegemony, dominant political, business and economic institutions – with potentially varying interests – create discursive formations manifested through the propagation of credible and attractive storylines regarding the challenges facing the global society (Hajer, 1995). By this approach, the dominant actors of the political and business domain may reconcile their own interests and objectives with the mounting challenges (e.g., those coming from grassroots movements) and create a sustainability *movement* (or *culture*) that moves emphasis from radical alternatives *for* society, to practical alternatives *within* society instead. The process of establishment appropriation is thus institutionalising or regimenting (Bernstein, 2002) what is otherwise "the open and creative state of a potentially revolutionary dynamic of affectivity" (Parr, 2009, p.30). By drawing on the theory of establishment appropriation I argue that current notions of sustainability, rather than portraying a notable conceptual and political advancement in the flourishing of societies, are very much subsumed under a dominant socioeconomic paradigm that places focus on economic growth,

competitive and profit-driven corporate culture, and individual responsibility. Hence I align my analysis with a recent critical current running throughout sustainability research, which regards the current dominant sustainability discourse as the result of a hegemonic system of signification that disguises otherwise unsustainable logics and practices inherent to the doctrine of late capitalism (Foster et al., 2011; Cock, 2011; Parr, 2009; Banerjee, 2008).

In the following section I will consider the influential *Our Common Future* report (WCED, 1987) as a reference-point for this process, because it provided the first fine-grated definition of sustainability: as the mode of development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p.41). It is widely recognised that it is with the publication of this report that calls for sustainability gained momentum and attempts to re-organise capitalism were first practised, in accordance with a paradigm shift towards a more sustainable form of capitalism (Newell and Paterson, 2010; Parr, 2009; Robinson, 2004). With a straightforward orientation to a global audience, the report suggested that if the global society wants to move to a more sustainable future it needs to integrate social, environmental, and economic considerations. Importantly, it provided definitions of what represents the environment and development, and called attention to their inextricable relationship:

> [T]he "environment" is where we all live; and "development"
> is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that
> abode. The two are inseparable (WCED, 1987, p.7).

Five years later, the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit of 1992 (UNCED, 1992) proposed an operational framework that needed to be integrated in policies and programmes that promote sustainability objectives. This framework, in particular, was conceptualised in the highly influential three-ring model of sustainability in which the economy, social justice, and the environment appear as three different but interconnected and complementary dimensions that should attract equal concern for the achievement of a sustainable society. The Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), published by the United Nations *World Commission on the Environment and Development,* did not

deny the existence of serious economic, social and environmental problems. On the contrary, the report provided strong political resonance to current, global problems confronting humanity and made them into a political priority. It offered a thorough analysis of the anthropogenic causes of the observed crises, highlighted the need for action, and provided solutions and recommendations for a "sustainable course of development" (ibid., p.191).

> The time has come to break out of past patterns. Attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and environmental protection will increase instability. Security must be sought through change. The Commission has noted a number of actions that must be taken to reduce risks to survival and to put future development on paths that are sustainable (ibid., p.256).

The report thus underscored the inadequacy of mainstream modes of organisation against these mounting crises. Nevertheless, despite the seemingly radical and revolutionary language that it employed, the report did not do anything but crystallise the idea of sustainability while reverting it to sustainable development. Coupled with the subsequent ground-breaking conceptualisation of the three *pillars* of sustainability (UNCED, 1992), the report united under the umbrella of development the previously unpaired concepts of the Economy, social Equity and the Environment (or the three Es) – which had been the foci of criticism in previous decades. It therefore sustained – rather than challenged – the imperative of economic growth and furthered its institutional advocacy. This is precisely what many of the scientists, theorists, and social activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s attempted to criticise: the hegemony of the growth-principle in conventional Western economics and its embracement as a self-justifying end by the dominant agencies in determining the policy decisions of the international community (Daly, 1996; Schumacher, 1973).

As Hajer (1995) notes, inside the NGO, financial, and other political elites there was a growing concern that the radical confrontational style of many of the social and intellectual movements that emerged from the

counter-culture of the 1960s, *unnecessarily* called for a debate over the nature and causes of crucial social and environmental matters. The latter movements envisioned and often took action on what they considered to be better alternatives for society by questioning the legitimacy and ability of current institutions to provide technological solutions to problems that were primarily political and structural. *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) appeared as a catalyst of a coalition which, being confronted by the rather progressive rhetoric of the 1960s, managed to build a storyline that appropriated the challenges (e.g., environmental degradation) expressed by peripheral groups and converted them into mainstream, economic concerns that appealed to many actors across the political and social domain. Further evidence to this argument is the fact that powerful international organisations such as the *International Monetary Fund* and the *World Bank* – which were supposed to stand in the opposite bloc, that is neo-liberalism – quickly adopted the UN's rhetoric and development goals.

> Sustainable development recognizes that growth must be both inclusive and environmentally sound to reduce poverty and build shared prosperity for today's population and to continue to meet the needs of future generations (The World Bank, 2016).

They did so by mixing together sustainability with sustainable economic growth and by using business-as-usual, neoclassical, pro-growth economics "to criticise the effects of business-as-usual economics" (Caradonna, 2014, p.158). Additionally, this discursive formation has been characterised by an optimistic attitude, expressed by a strong confidence towards the ability of technological innovations and managerial improvements to provide solutions to current problems. This reformist, techno-fix approach has attracted much criticism from scholars arguing that a sustainable world is simply not possible without radical changes in the current social organisation itself (Clark and York, 2012; Foster, 2008). As Lawn (2001) notes, it became uncomfortably clear through the intellectual and political movements of the 1960s-70s that any broad acceptance of their findings and theses would require radical policy

changes. Reactions by international organisations such as the above communicated a light, conservationist critique to the shortcomings of the social order that they informed. Only particular aspects of the emerging sustainability discourse were selected and integrated into that hegemonic, credible and attractive narrative of organisation and society. Essentially, simultaneously with the process of appropriating the emerging sustainability culture, ideas related to neo-liberal approaches to sustainability were institutionalised based upon the assumption that market-based mechanisms and free-trade schemes can help society reach desired levels of sustainability, on the one hand, and that high rates of global economic growth and privatisation of the commons are preconditions for societal sustainability, on the other (Bernstein, 2002). Rather than addressing the root causes of serious global problems and threats – which may be well-founded in particular economic, political and social configurations – the above organisations seem to have positioned themselves well in an emerging radical, widespread critique and, essentially, played an instrumental role to the creation and proliferation of a discourse that could be easily accommodated by the international community.

Many of the voices that belonged to the radical core of the 1960s' movements provided emphasis on the local contextualisation and implementation of decisions that aimed to tackle severe current problems. In their hope-filled vision of the future they thus called for small-scale, democratic and self-sufficient communities, as well as social arrangements characterised by the dispersal of authority and responsibility to the lower level of organisation (Frye, 1980; Schumacher, 1973). Such participatory, bottom-up approaches to dealing with the legitimate challenges of society – which partly lend themselves to anarchist visions of the ideal society (De Geuss, 2002) – constituted another set of radical thoughts in the context of the Western socio-economic identity. Sociologists have indeed attributed to social movements the ability to challenge – and often to give rise to – radical changes in established institutional practices. Giddens (1987, p.48), for example, in an attempt to compare grassroots movements with established organisations, saw the former as more innovative and bearing a higher potential to create new social configurations.

> Social movements have more dynamism, and in some ways
> greater transformative potential, because they are specifically
> geared to the achievement of novel projects, and because
> they set themselves against the established order of things. If
> they are not always the harbingers of the future states of
> affairs they announce, they are inevitably disturbing elements
> in the present. Hence (…) they may identify previously
> undiagnosed characteristics of, and possibilities within a
> given institutional order.

Hence, I would argue, another achievement of those supra-national institutions' political response was the transformation of selected aspects of abstract, open-ended counter-culture ideals emerging from the lower levels of society and from particular contexts – sustainability – to an ultimate end and a universal set of principles – sustainability or sustainable development – that offered sovereignty to national governments, corporations, and powerful transnational organisations to provide particular non-political solutions to existing problems and restructure the international economic system within its constraints, and in a top-down manner. This kind of sustainability can become "a blueprint for authoritarian, top-down policy action" (Yanarella et al., 2009, p.297). The macro outlook of a sustainability culture introduced and regulated from the top is very antithetical to one that is designed and operated at the micro, lower levels of society. As Parr (2009) elegantly put it, the more the sustainability discourse is being depoliticised, the more "the power of sustainability culture is appropriated by the mechanisms of State and corporate culture" (p.6). Rather than calling for a paradigm shift – a complete rearrangement of the various elements that synthesize the current structural conditions of society (e.g., the modes of production and consumption) – to fit the logic of human fulfilment at the lower levels of social organisation, appropriated discourses of sustainability employ the logic of markets and neo-liberalism to determine the future of a global society using development (in the meaning of economic expansion) and the environment (in the meaning of nature *out there*) as their currency.

One of the emblems that dominated the sustainability discourse since the publication of the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) is the resource-

scarcity problem. In particular, the message proliferated by the coalition of actors who shaped that global concern (Ruttan, 1994) – *Our Common Future* and its sequels – was simple: humanity will be confronted with a number of serious and coinciding scarcity problems.

> The history of technological developments also suggests that
> industry can adjust to scarcity through greater efficiency in
> use, recycling, and substitution (WCED, 1987, p.53).

To that end, the UN approach raised natural resource scarcity, a concern that could be traced much further back in the classic work of Thomas Malthus, to a major political goal. It thus provided the public with an idea of what this problem might mean, and also proposed a set of universally acceptable, reformist solutions such as the opening up of new regulatory markets and managerial efficiency (Redclift, 2009). Regarding this particular component of the discourse from the perspective of the idea of establishment appropriation might have important implications to the way we understand the conceptual formation of sustainability. By appropriating a particular element of an emerging sustainability rhetoric – one expressed by previous movements and publications (e.g., Meadows et al., 1972) – that concentrated on the impacts of resource scarcity for the future survival and flourishing of humanity, this institutional coalition managed to turn the attention from problems inherently related to growth and the current mode of production (e.g., over-production) to the new (old) problem of natural resource scarcity. One could therefore argue that in the context of the sustainability debate resource scarcity has largely been pushed to denote an independent problem, not one in relation to a particular social organisation. Terms such as *shortage*, *scarcity*, or *depletion* create images of technical needs, not structural necessities (Barbier, 2013; Perelman, 1979). They thus imply that if only we had more natural resources available, for example, or better methods and technologies for managing those resources, within the limits of the current form of economic organisation, then problems would suddenly disappear.

By contrast, the idea of treating resource scarcity as a variable dependent on particular socioeconomic and political arrangements has been expressed in Marxist analyses of sustainability and the environmental

discourse that regard the problem of scarcity as holding a relative meaning, which is socially and culturally determined (Böhm et al., 2012; Pataki, 2009; Spoehr, 1956). Pepper (2003), for example, holds that scarcity is not inherent in nature as neoclassical economists maintain; its definition is "inextricably social and cultural in origin" (p.99) because it can be assessed only in respect of what a society wants to attain in the first place. Similarly, Harvey (1996) argues that ideas about resources are not neutral, making sustainability "a debate about the preservation of a particular social order" (p.148). Therefore, by embedding scarcity in their storyline, that "discourse coalition" (Hajer, 1995, p.58) might have actually altered the perception of problems at part of the lower levels of society – who regarded scarcity as the result of the inability or unwillingness of a particular order to provide long-term social prosperity – and thus allowed space for the proposition of technocratic fixes that could apply universally.

By drawing on Ruttan's (1994) theory of establishment appropriation it appears to be difficult to attempt a critical positioning among the current dominant sustainability discourse without providing a critique of various components of the neo-liberal logic of late capitalism. Although it is not the intention of this thesis to provide another critical contribution to the dominant socioeconomic paradigm, several points of this critique will be discussed in light of the empirical findings of this study, seeking to uncover context-specific institutional arrangements, within the festival, that are likely to contribute to an alternative, context-sensitive interpretation of sustainability.

2.6 Sustainability in the world of Business[6]

The contemporary festival scene is increasingly following the trends and also imitating the corporate principles and managerial techniques

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[6] I use the terms *corporation, business organisation, corporate organisation*, *enterprise*, *firm*, and *business* to refer to a group of people working together towards a common objective – that is primarily profit making – in an institutional context with separate legal entity. Although I

practised by the business world. This has led many commentators to regard festivals as business organisations, and as a particular segment of a growing entertainment, experience, or tourism industry (Frost et al., 2015; Stadler et al., 2014; Finkel, 2010; Cummings, 2007; Sundbo, 2004; Harris, 2004). As Andersson and Getz (2009) note, there is a discernible trend towards the commodification and standardisation of the festival product, while festival organisations both compete and collaborate in an attempt to increase festival audiences, efficiency and financial profit. Similarly, more and more festivals are managed by professional event organisers and consortiums of concert promoters that actively embrace commercialism, sponsorship deals, profit-making orientation and an ethos of customer service (Anderton, 2008). Therefore, given that the leadership and management roles of festivals are increasingly taken up by cultural professionals, it has been argued that "we are in an era of professionalisation of festivals" (Newbold et al., 2015, p.xxiii). Just like other organisations in society, festivals evolve and try to adapt to changes in consumers' preferences or even create new consumers' needs, as well as respond to political pressures, economic conditions, and paradigm shifts. The sustainable festival itself might be the result of the festival sector's effort to get on board with the emerging paradigm of sustainability, as the latter has been gaining momentum in the contemporary business world. This section thus aims to offer a brief critical exploration of the reasons that brought sustainability to become a popular paradigm for the corporate world and an institutionalised practice at the level of the firm.

Many of the intellectual developments, research-backed publications and activist movements of the 1960-70s made it clear that an important obstacle to their envisioned sustainable society has been the vested interests of private business organisations, one of the core institutional arrangements of modern society, which made profit while their practices caused evidently societal and environmental harm. Perceptions about non-sustainability were

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understand the limitations of using these terms interchangeably and without making any distinction, it would be beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed elaboration of different definitions.

spreading to the public and the debate on alternatives for society, as Robèrt (2002) put it, "was confrontational and fragmented" (p.7) during that era. Drawing on the analysis presented over the previous section I would argue that the changing public perceptions regarding the role of business in the creation of serious problems in society and the increasing pleas for a sustainable turn manifested by prominent figures from NGOs and policy-making through an appropriated powerful sustainability discourse – that legitimised the status quo of particular arrangements and favoured particular interests – were two important reasons that created the conditions for sustainability to became an appealing issue in the world of business.

The publication of the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987) triggered scholarly and practical attempts to discuss and incorporate notions of sustainability into the world of enterprise. Caradonna (2014) provides a brief historical account of this procession and reports that the first grave attempts to transmit the ethics of sustainability into the world of business appeared in the early 1990s. He particularly regards Karl-Henrik Robèrt's organisation, the *Natural Step* (founded in 1989), as one of these efforts to help business corporations line up their values with those of sustainability and rethink their ultimate purpose. In classical, liberal models of corporate organisations the main responsibility of a firm has been the production and proliferation of profit and its distribution to investors, without making any distinction between profit that has been created responsibly, in social terms, and profit that stems from corporate practices that produce damage to part of the society (Salzmann et al., 2005). The incorporation of sustainability ethics in business practices constructs a broader definition of corporate responsibility that is conceptualising firms as fulfilling a social duty beyond the production of financial profit. Since the early 1990s, sustainability-related initiatives, whatever these might refer to, have been praised for their potential positive contribution to a great variety of dimensions across society as well as within the immediate corporate environment (Epstein, 2014). For instance, recent research provides abundant evidence that implementing sustainability strategies in business practice is positively correlated not only with social benefits (which are often hard to measure) but also with real, quantifiable and measurable benefits for the corporation itself, including the creation of new

market opportunities, achievement of competitive advantage, image/brand enhancement, and increased profitability (Benn et al., 2014; Willard, 2012; Mort, 2010). Szekely and Knirsch (2005, p.628) defined the meaning of sustainability for businesses as:

> sustaining and expanding economic growth, shareholder value, prestige, corporate reputation, customer relationships, and the quality of products and services. It also means adopting and pursuing ethical business practices, creating sustainable jobs, building value for all the company's stakeholders and attending to the needs of the underserved.

That corporate institutions play an important role in present society cannot be questioned. Essentially, like the rest of society, corporations could potentially have a vital role in building a better version of society in the future – an envisioned sustainable society (Brown, 2001). The question might be, however, what notions of sustainability are current corporate sustainability initiatives affiliated with?

2.6.1 The Triple Bottom Line

Perhaps the most influential theoretical advance for the institutionalisation of sustainability at the level of the firm has been John Elkington's (1997) idea of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). In his book with the captivating title *Cannibals with Forks* Elkington implies that if a cannibal utilising a fork can be regarded as progress*,* then so can sustainable forms of capitalism. This *fork*, however, is three-pronged, implying, in summary, the idea that the purpose and success of a company should be evaluated against three interrelated shear zones. The first is economic, which is directed to the maximisation of profit, in the long term, through the most efficient use of capital and available resources. The second bottom line is environmental, stressing the idea that financial gains should be attained while respecting the Earth's ecological systems, e.g., by minimising or, at least, considering the risk of environmental harm. The third is social, which asserts that sustainable

firms need to take into consideration and integrate the needs of many actors across society, e.g., by making positive contributions into the local community or avoiding business practices that result into social harm (ibid.).

Since its introduction, Triple Bottom Line has come to be a very popular operational as well as accounting practice in business, and almost a cornerstone of the idea of the sustainable corporation – a firm that embraces the principles of sustainability into its mission and practice (Elkington, 1994). Further evidence to the argument that sustainability is being institutionalised in the corporate sector constitutes the increasing implementation of sustainability standards and certification systems (NSF, 2016; BSI, 2016). Banerjee (2008) argues that as discourses of sustainability become increasingly institutionalised at the level of the firm, they become "corporatized" (p.92). Banerjee points to the definition of the *sustainable corporation* offered by the Dow Jones *Sustainability Group Index* to provide evidence for this argument:

> A sustainable corporation was defined as one 'that aims at increasing long-term shareholder value by integrating economic, environmental and social growth opportunities into its corporate and business strategies' (ibid., p.89).

Definitions such as the above, however, have been complicit in treating sustainability as increasingly synonymous with the logic of TBL. Essentially, the checklist approach of the TBL seems to de-construct and re-frame open-ended visions of what sustainability might be, translating the concept into safe and reductive corporate language. By employing the TBL approach, (institutionalised) sustainability appears to be tractable and manageable, a trifold concept that corporate actors can now understand and that is attainable, and, of course, does not stand against business-as-usual practices. As Hawken (2002) put it:

> At this juncture in our history, as corporations and governments turn their attention to sustainability, it is crucial that the meaning of sustainability not get lost in the trappings of corporate speak... I am concerned that good housekeeping practices such as recycled hamburger shells will be confused

with creating a just and sustainable world (cited in Milne, 2013, p.144).

It would be interesting to explore the way that notions of corporate sustainability are formulated, interpreted, and operationalised in both scholarly and business publications but that would exceed the scope of this study[7]. Instead, I will skip this step and provide a critical exploration of some of the reasons that sustainability has become a popular, institutionalised practice at the level of the firm, while trying to inform it drawing on my previous analysis of theories that underpin the larger sustainability debate.

2.6.2 Sustaining corporate capitalism

It is my thesis that the formulation of a sustainability discourse related to the realm of business, since the early 1990s, did not occur to challenge capitalism, profit-making, or corporate growth, but rather to sustain them. For instance, a number of intellectual and applied advances that tried to bridge sustainability with the corporate world were even self-proclaimed as revolutionary, e.g., books such as *Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* (Hawken et al., 2010); *The New Capitalist Manifesto: Building a disruptively better business* (Haque, 2011); or *The Natural Step Story: Seeding a quiet revolution* (Robèrt, 2002). However, instead of placing a critique of capitalism at the centre of their discussion, those approaches offer revisions of practices that encourage traditional business (except sustainable), which could be comfortably accommodated by firms, within the current modes of production and consumption. In the words of Dunphy and Griffiths (1998), "[s]ustainability of this kind is simply a more effective way of doing business" (p.12).

Dominant notions of corporate sustainability are following this line of argument and that has uncovered new areas for critique. Banerjee (2003), for example, holds that corporate discourses on sustainability produce an elision

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[7] Montiel and Delgado-Ceballos (2014) offer a detailed, up-to-date review of the field of corporate sustainability in order to understand and organise its different definitions.

that shifts the focus from radical discussions about the constitution of business "to sustaining the corporation through growth opportunities" (p.163). In other words, the corporate sector appropriates sustainability – this time the process takes place at the level of the firm – and establishes it as an instrument to maintain the following assumption: the universal goal of a sustainable future can only be attained through corporate expansion and financial growth.

We can easily witness business and other financial elites manifesting commitment to the vision of sustainability while simultaneously ensuring continued corporate growth. Unilever's (2013) sustainability strategy, for example, promises a better future for global society while creating huge opportunities for business growth. This premise is precisely what has been upheld in the definition of sustainable development and is also present in the TBL approach to sustainability. The idea of driving corporate growth through sustainable business practices has indeed been very popular among relevant business publications (e.g., Wilhelm, 2013; Soyka, 2012). By definition, however, prioritising the organisational self-interest of corporate growth over any potential communal good is antithetical to the principles of a sustainability mission that is anthropocentrically grounded. There is nothing radical in this growth-obsessed corporate paradigm of sustainability and, therefore, it seems improbable that new "structures and institutional arrangements" (WCED, 1987, p.27) will emerge from within the corporate world. This drives us to question what is tempting profit-driven corporations into that new sustainability culture; is it *really* changing ethical positions and a broader need to contribute to a sustainable future society or just a new approach to pursue the (old) central objective of business growth?

2.6.3 The influence of consumer culture

Another thread of my argument regards the dominant corporate sustainability discourse as sustaining – rather than challenging – the structural conditions of the current economic paradigm as a whole, and draws attention on a particular theory of late capitalism, namely consumer culture. Featherstone (2007) describes that consumer culture is premised upon the

expansion of commodity production and consumption, and, essentially, constitutes the productive power of capitalist culture in contemporary Western societies. Theorising the economy as a consumer culture places particular emphasis on lifestyle and assumes that consumers' satisfaction and happiness is achieved through the consumption of goods and services.

As Rossi et al. (2000) articulate it, the marriage between commerce and the vision of sustainability aims to turn "the entire world population into active consumers" (p.274) of sustainable products, while creating both societal and shareholder value. According to a particular point of view, it is the increasing pressures from the consumer base that is prompting corporations to adopt a more sustainable approach to commodity design and production and, consequently, introduce new sustainable products and services in the market (Maxwell and der Vorst, 2003). In other words, it is individual consumers' subjective preferences that are determining what needs to be produced by firms.

On the other hand, in the context of capitalist markets, profit-driven businesses are competing with each other for profits and market share while striving to establish or develop their brand identity. One of the available tools to survive competition and grow as a business is the introduction of new or differentiated products and services to attract consumers (Porter, 2008). Critics such as Parr (2009) hold that since the 1990s, it has not been an emerging ideology or a counter-culture that has made sustainability – at least the sustainability that derives from the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) – mainstream. Instead, the current status of corporate sustainability is largely attributed to a multitude of corporate initiatives aimed at creating opportunities for businesses to re-brand their products and services as sustainable, within a competitive global market.

The promotion of products that are marketed as conductive to sustainable living is perhaps an achievement of a conscious strategic corporate effort to create new consumption patterns. Organic and fair trade produce, sustainable SUV cars, sustainable festivals, as well as NASDAQ's Sustainable Bonds (NASDAQ, 2016) might just be some examples of products that consumer culture has managed to offer and whose

consumption is represented as an individual, as well as social, good. This is precisely an appropriation of abstract ideals and practices of the sustainability movement that emerged out of concerns about living an ethical, healthy, responsible, and fulfilling collective life. As Banks (2007) skilfully put it, capitalist businesses dedicate particular energies "to delve into the recesses of transgressive cultures in order to retrieve signs, symbols and texts that can be fashioned into new commodities or used to sell existing ones" (p.157). Consumer culture thus introduces into the market a continuous string of products and services that are branded as sustainable, and which are then eagerly consumed. A new market for symbolic, sustainable goods emerges as a new form of social distinction and identity (Lash and Urry, 1994).

Drawing on the previous argument we could regard the sustainable consumer (Prothero et al., 2011; Glig et al., 2005) as an activist: by buying and using a sustainable product or service he or she engages in an economic activity that is perceived (by him or her, or by a large part of society) to change the world around him or her, including the way business organisations are operating. This creates a subjective feeling of satisfaction and empowerment to the consumer who finds the "inner power and social potential to challenge the status quo, to change the system" (McGregor, 2005, p.437). What is ignored, however, is that in this effort the consumer does not only empower himself or herself but is reinforcing businesses and the system of capitalist production as well, which might have been responsible, in part, for the creation of the problems that the sustainable consumer is perceived to challenge. This is the reason I theorised earlier (see 2.5) the process of establishment appropriation as an unusual tactic of domination (Foucault, 1980) over an emerging, and potentially revolutionary, culture; instead of aggressively disallowing emerging symbols, this culture of appropriation is packing and selling them as a benign commodity, manipulating in this way the ideals, feelings, perceptions, and the innermost self of the individual consumer. Through his or her individual efforts to promote the ideals of sustainable living, this sustainability activist is eventually "adopting the tropes of commodity capitalism" (Banks, 2007, p.162).

In my view, the rhetoric of a sustainable corporation legitimatises the maintenance of a consumer culture with a high production rate of commodities in order to keep firms and the economy growing, yet it bears a low output of human fulfilment since it lacks genuine anthropocentric orientation. It is, perhaps, a key element in corporate efforts to appropriate a sustainability culture emerging from the bottom, and manipulate and institutionalise it in inherently unsustainable arrangements.

Through this process of appropriation, emerging yet abstract sustainable world considerations are being institutionalised in a product, namely a sustainable one. Essentially, the more corporatised sustainability becomes, the more it becomes commoditised, and the more sustainability culture becomes incorporated in business, the more the profit-maximizing opportunities of corporate capitalism are advanced (Parr, 2009). Ironically, as Pepper (1995) notes, perceived parts of the sustainability movement "have become counter-revolutionary through not challenging the material basis of our society but becoming an important part of it; conveying the idea that it can continue in a very basic way." (p.151) Therefore, we can endorse boundless consumerism as long as it is sustainable (meaning the consumption of sustainable products) and part of sustainable capitalism. This econo-centric logic, however, is aligned with an individualistic, hedonistic ethos that is far away from visions of societal flourishing.

2.6.4 Sustainability reporting

Another explanation of the popularisation and institutionalisation of sustainability in the business world connotes equally serious implications for the ethics of sustainable corporate practice. In the following paragraph I argue that business organisations might benefit from institutionalising sustainability in more dimensions of their operation because this is an effective way to avoid confrontation and reinforce the structural conditions at place, even if the corporate initiatives remain merely symbolic. It has become an increasingly common practice for corporations to project an idealised view of their operation by selectively disclosing information, in the form of strategic

sustainability plans or reports, about making a positive contribution to their broader social and environmental context.

> Sustainability reporting helps organizations to set goals, measure performance, and manage change in order to make their operations more sustainable. A sustainability report conveys disclosures on an organization's impacts – be they positive or negative – on the environment, society and the economy. In doing so, sustainability reporting makes abstract issues tangible and concrete, thereby assisting in understanding and managing the effects of sustainability developments on the organization's activities and strategy (GRI, 2013, p.3).

Through the corporate practice of sustainability reporting firms are communicating that they are actually sustainable or that they are moving towards sustainability. As Milne and Gray (2012) inform us, the vast majority of routinised sustainability communications of that kind employ the language and principles of the concept of the TBL, thus using the latter as a synonym for sustainability. Nevertheless, sustainability strategic plans and reports are often being accused of serving as marketing tools aimed mainly to enhance the corporate image and establish social legitimacy (Nyberg and Wright, 2013). There is plenty of up-to-date evidence of well-known firms that are often criticised, and sometimes penalised, for deliberately misleading the public about their sustainability vision and strategy (Gürtürk and Rüdiger, 2015; Bowen and Aragon-Correa, 2014). Scholars have just begun to highlight the real risk of tipping into a dangerous, more sophisticated form of *green-washing*, that is *sustainability-washing* (Yang et al., 2015). Given that information is selectively interpreted and voluntarily disclosed, the reliability of sustainability reports can easily been questioned. This is the reason that Boiral (2013), for instance, views corporate sustainability reporting as a kind of simulacrum, "an artificial and idealised representation that is disconnected from reality" (p.1037). Yet those symbolic, strategic simulacra make it possible to establish an authentic corporate sustainability discourse that can be manipulated by corporate elites to legitimise particular tangible corporate

practices and arrangements. By employing the optimistic language of sustainability, businesses may even camouflage the inherently sinful nature of some of their practices and, perhaps, bury the lack of any true commitment to contributing to a sustainable society. In other words, firms may use the affective rhetoric of sustainability in order to mask otherwise unsustainable operations and strategic corporate objectives.

Reporting of this kind results in the creation of a misleading impression that the organisation's efforts and performance are appropriate to sustainable society considerations. The end result is that sustainability communications proliferate the message that the firm has already achieved the goals of sustainability, even if this tool has been used to mask the practices the firm perpetrates against the values of a flourishing society. Hence a washed version of sustainability seems to emerge out of interactions between actors within a social field, where ideals and symbols are produced, interpreted, negotiated, and then appropriated and validated in institutional processes. Sustainability culture, again, has been appropriated and institutionalised at the level of the firm; it has once again been corporatised. This time it has been institutionalised in the process of sustainability reporting, where it appears as a *telos* that the firm has identified beforehand and eventually reached. As articulated by Parr (2009), when the affective power of sustainability culture is institutionalised, "a series of hierarchical power relations come into being" (p.29). Through that conceptual prism, sustainability reporting can be seen as a routinised form of discourse, which manifests the power of the corporation to both determine what sustainability is and what sustainability is not, as well as instruct society how it can achieve its ultimate *teloi*. In my view, sustainability communications therefore reflect both how businesses *wish* to understand sustainability, and how businesses *wish* society to interpret sustainability.

Paradoxically, the practice of sustainability reporting may sustain business-as-usual and produce greater risk of societal un-sustainability. In contrast to the dominant attitude that enthusiastically welcomes such corporate initiatives, I therefore regard sustainability reporting as another institutional barrier to sustainability – as I understand the term. Not only

because it does not allow voices from the bottom to expand and fashion alternative discourses based upon a dialectical approach to sustainability, but also because it allows businesses to deliberately confuse their often myopic, short-term objectives with the vision of creating a flourishing and sustainable humane world.

2.6.5 Corporations and institutional isomorphism

Last, I will draw on the theory of *isomorphism* to regard corporate sustainability – as the institutionalised norm defined through the TBL approach and the dominant definitions of the sustainable corporation – as a mechanism that allows organisations not only to respond to pressures that come from their external environment, but also acquire strategic (internal) and institutional (external) legitimacy. In the context of corporate sustainability the theory of isomorphism may provide another explanation of why firms are increasingly aligning their mission with sustainability goals. The ensuing discussion, therefore, aims to explore very briefly the implications of isomorphic pressures on corporate sustainability.

By borrowing the concept of isomorphism from evolutionary biology, researchers including Hawken (1968), Hannah and Freeman (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and later Mason (2012), and Sridhar and Jones (2013) explored the external circumstances that model the internal affairs of an organisation. As DiMaggio and Powell (1983) put it, highly structured organisational fields, such as corporate firms, provide a context in which "individual efforts to deal rationally with uncertainty and constraint often lead, in the aggregate, to homogeneity in structure, culture, and output." (p.147). Isomorphism, therefore, refers to the degree of structural, cultural, and output homogeneity between businesses, caused by the internalisation of influences from the external environment. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe three isomorphic processes through which organisational change occurs: coercive, normative, and mimetic. All three types of isomorphism influence business firms when they promote their commitment to sustainability, e.g., by adopting sustainability reporting, employing sustainability experts, utilising

sustainability certifications or producing so-called sustainable products and services.

First, coercive isomorphism results from both formal and informal pressures that come from other organisations or stem from the cultural expectations in the society within which firms function. For example, although sustainability reporting and practices constitute behaviours that businesses voluntary adopt, firms are almost impelled to turn sustainable – according to definitions of sustainability that have gone through the twin processes of appropriation and institutionalisation – or, at least, engage in sustainable behaviour, by pressures coming from public perceptions about mounting social problems. Furthermore, dominant discourses of sustainability that are propagated by powerful supranational NGOs and governments, alongside profit-oriented stakeholder interests, also reveal the coercive pressures that justify why and how firms are increasingly focusing attention on particular elements of the sustainability discourse. By aligning with dominant notions of sustainability firms may acquire institutional legitimacy for their established practices as well as enhance their image and social legitimacy.

Second, normative isomorphism stems from the professionalisation of workers (e.g., managers), who acquire similar education by the established training institutions (e.g., universities and professional training centres), and follow particular frameworks or benchmarks in exercising their occupation. Recent empirical evidence has revealed, for example, that sustainability courses across higher education curriculums possess a similarity of orientation (Blewitt and Cullingford, 2013; Djordjevic and Cotton, 2011). Beyond higher education, professional certifications (e.g., diplomas) for the newly-appeared occupation of "sustainability auditor" is heavily drawing on the principles of the TBL (IEMA, 2016; ECI, 2016). The produced homogenous expertise and skills in sustainability management may hence overrule possible variations in traditions that are moving beyond the Brundtland (WCED, 1987) definition of sustainability or the TBL framework. Given that universities and training centres are important institutions for the development of corporate norms of sustainability – since they are educating

the future professionals – they thus provide a vehicle for normative isomorphism to occur.

Third, mimetic isomorphism refers to a corporation's response to uncertainty and threats to its longevity, by copying the practices and behaviour adopted by other successful firms or more influential competitors. By copying other firms' sustainability strategy and practices, for example, a business may follow a trend that seems to be appealing and successful, remain in competition with its peers, as well as sustain operational objectives (e.x. corporate growth) and, therefore, generate internal legitimacy. The theory of establishment appropriation explained why and how dominant corporate actors self-legitimate in nascent fields, imposing their vision of sustainability by manipulating values within the business world and across society. In turn, institutional isomorphism describes why sustainability gains momentum as the new field of corporate practice, influencing heavily smaller or diverse organisations in their appreciation of the emerging field (Mason, 2012). Interestingly, this theory predicts that a growing number of organisations, outside the core business realm, will experience an isomorphic turn into sustainability. Indeed, drawing on the theory of isomorphism we can observe processes of sustainable turn to currently take place across non-profit organisations – including museums (Alcaraz et al., 2009), primary schools (Warner and Elser, 2015), social enterprises (Rajput and Namita, 2014), and even the Army (the antithesis of the values of a civil society) – which are trying to accommodate environmental pressures and ensure the maintenance of their societal appeal and institutional legitimacy (Foltz et al., 2009; Warnock, 2008; Webster and Napier, 2003).

2.6.6 Sustainability in the world of Business – a conclusion

This section attempted to provide a brief explanation of why sustainability has become a popular, institutionalised practice within and across the business world. It might read as a polemic on the sustainable corporation but my initial intention was not one of that kind. I rather intended to expand my thinking and point out that a critical examination of the course of sustainability from within the business realm is essential in order to

understand whether or not the sustainable turn of organisations represents a substantive concern and a genuine commitment for a sustainable, flourishing human society. Nevertheless, by raising this question I provided evidence that the institutionalisation of corporate sustainability may stem from corporate engineering that is speculating in the affective power of the emerging sustainability culture, in order to pursue particular strategic and institutional gains. I also implied that firms, which constitute dominant institutions of contemporary society – and, thus, potential agents of both societal stability and change, might exercise their power to define and shape a particular sustainability discourse, one that is not challenging the development paradigm, which they inform. It is therefore possible that the invention and institutionalisation of instruments for approaching sustainability such as the Triple Bottom Line, does not constitute an innocent practice.

By contrast, reducible corporate translations of sustainability might have been deliberately employed to produce confusion about what sustainability is, and to set the particular *teloi* of sustainability. What is neglected, however, is that these *teloi* resonate with particular established interests that provide social legitimacy for the corporate world for serving as a vehicle to get society to a particular sustainable future, one that is tailored in a way that expands particular economic interests. This section also questioned whether it is a matter of coercion, normative compliance, or mimesis for organisations to try to be sustainable. All the above observations suggest that despite the fact that firms and other organisations across society are increasingly posing as companions of a sustainable world, one needs to be alert and take into consideration, first, what kind of sustainability corporations are communicating, and second, the deeper reasons that have popularised sustainability and pushed it into a marriage with the ethics of the corporate world.

2.7 An alternate view of the sustainable organisation

I have not argued in this section that it is impossible for sustainability to find its niche in organisations in general, but, in particular, in organisations

that are bound with the logic of a profit-driven, competitive and expansionist market economy, and that use the principles of sustainability – however those have been defined and by whom – selectively and instrumentally to satisfy narrow, self-serving business interests. The fact that a number of corporations might endeavour to bring into existence more environmentally benign and socially responsible practices within the current social and economic conventions is, of course, a welcome development that should not be disregarded. Indeed, such (perceived as) sustainable practices, if genuine, might have already produced tangible benefits for societies, or put differently, reduced the potential negative externalities of the operation of businesses.

Despite the fairly gloomy picture that I have portrayed, it is important to acknowledge that the scenario of a sustainable organisation may actually be a possibility, if not already existing among the millions of organisations around the world. Reflecting on my interpretation of sustainability, I can argue for the view that the sustainable organisation's fundamental commitment is to facilitate the emergence of a flourishing society, one that creates a high output of human fulfilment in the present as well as the future. It is also an organisation with an active role in furnishing the possibilities for productive, creative, and even subversive social arrangements.

Given that sustainability visions are associated with emancipatory, open-ended goals, the sustainable organisation allows its human actors to seek alternative configurations, if needed, within and beyond the immediate organisational environment, in an on-going endeavour to build resilience with the broader changing social context. A sustainable organisation cannot entertain universal top-down conceptualisations of sustainability unless it is informed about what society and whose sustainability we refer to. Therefore, it would be impossible to outline any particular principles, measures, practices, or behaviour that this sustainable structure needs to internalise or comply with in order to classify as sustainable. Last, the very concept of the sustainable organisation embraces a dialectical view of the sustainability-organisation relationship: the sustainable organisation is shaped from within itself, by the human actors who constitute it and whose formulations of sustainability are created within the particular place/time-specific physical as

well as social contexts that surround and penetrate the organisation. The sustainable organisation can be considered as the emergent property of a conversation – which is a fundamentally social process – about desired future institutions (Robinson, 2004). This implies that in order to understand what sustainability means from an organisational perspective, it is an appropriate starting point to consider the perceptions of the individuals who experience the organisation about the role of the sustainable organisation in a flourishing society. And this is precisely what this research aims to instigate for the particular organisational context of the sustainable festival.

Chapter Three: Festivals in society

> [F]estivals can have a transformative, transgressive and even revolutionary role. (…) On the other hand festivals may be used by audiences as a break from normal life and as such may not be experienced by them as transgressive or revolutionary. Festival experiences may simply reinforce the status quo and social stability, by offering opportunities for recreation, relaxation and distraction from complex economic and political issues (Bianchini and Maughan, 2015, p.243).

Festivals have been an important, inextricable part of the fabric of societies perhaps since the beginning of civilisations. Their role, form, as well as meaning and relevance, have been shifting as a result of larger systemic pressures and transforming social milieux. As complex sociocultural phenomena, festivals have therefore been experiencing a continuous evolutionary process over time. This is not to state that festivals have been passively receiving and merely adapting to signals from their broader social environment; the opposite. As many historians and social scholars would agree, festivals have been associated with, and played a significant role in, both the maintenance and the re-structuring of societies, hence providing for their meaningful development (Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013; Sharpe, 2008; Waterman, 1998; Abrahams, 1982). For many people festivals have thus both contributed to the re-production of existing social relations as well as provided the space for individuals and communities to challenge prevailing norms and dominant social arrangements, and, eventually, bring about societal change. This unique function of festivals – of providing a vehicle of social stability and permanence, and, at the same time, serving as a medium through which the creative possibilities of *alternatives* might emerge – is very important for studying the festival-sustainability nexus.

This brief chapter seeks to provide theoretical coverage on the role of festivals in society, focusing on the notions of stability and change, in order to

address how we have arrived to discuss about sustainability in the particular context of the festival. In an attempt to create a feasible research context for the study of the sustainable festival, it will first define the festival through the shared characteristics that are considered to be relevant to the festivals that constitute the focus of this research project. One of the secondary questions of this research asks "What is actually being sustained in current approaches to the sustainable festival?" In order to conceptually support this question (which will be addressed in the next chapter) this chapter will provide a discussion about the relationship between festivals, stability, and social change. This chapter will conclude with a brief note arguing for a more transformational approach to the study of the festival-sustainability nexus, one that is inclusive of the idea of festivals in the service of social change.

3.1 Defining the festival

In order to explore the academic and operational context of the sustainable festival (in the following chapter), an understanding of the definition of the festival is crucial. There are as many definitions of what a festival is (or what the term festival means) as there have been many different festivals throughout the history of civilisations. This thesis will purposefully avoid providing a single definition of the festival, respecting the complexity and the diverse morphology and meanings of that cultural phenomenon. Instead, it purposefully limits its scope to those festivals that are: i) built around an artistic and cultural core, in the sense that they are featuring works of performing arts and also providing the means to engender artistic creativity; ii) staged at an outdoor physical setting; iii) produced for a purpose and, essentially, to attract an external audience; and iv) recognised as an important component of the contemporary global cultural economy. Seeking to develop a framework for the present investigation, this section will attempt to address a number of commonalities that are considered to be relevant to the festivals that constitute the focus of this research project, namely contemporary performing arts festivals. Hence the following discussion is by no means an exhaustive attempt to describe 'what makes a festival', but

rather provides a basis for approaching that important segment of the modern cultural economy.

First, festivals are social phenomena; they are intertwined with the fabric of the societies that host them and provide spaces for collective interaction and experiences. They reflect the values, worldviews and character of the societies that celebrate them, hence revealing what is important for societies at particular contexts and times. This is the reason that part of the scholarship focusing on festivals and their role in society has traditionally originated from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and folklore. For instance, in his edited collection of essays with the title *Time out of time*, Falassi (1987, p.2) regarded festivals as particular scenes and occasions of collective celebration and collective conviviality, and then offered a (nowadays) classical definition of the festival – specifically tailored to the language of social sciences – as:

> a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festival celebrates.

The above definition is more akin to early festive events of human civilisation, at a time that festivity was purely organic and often spontaneous (Pieper, 1965; Huizinga, 1949), or to festivals that sprang from communities bound together based on shared beliefs or place – a typical characteristic of primitive, *gemeinschaft* societies (Tönnies, 2001). Nevertheless, it is also relevant, I would argue, to contemporary forms of festivity that may not have a functional role in society as described above (e.g., may have a commercial orientation) and may not be staged by or for a community in the gemeinschaft sense. D' Arcier (2014, p.111) asserts that contemporary performing arts

festivals are both social and historical phenomena, "both rooted in and responding to the spirit of the times and to our consumer society." Hence, if we recognise consumerism (both cultural and material) as a dominant worldview as well as a value system, and embodied lifestyle (Miles, 1998) in large part of western societies, then commercial music mega-events may be regarded as festivals drawing on the oft-cited Falassi's (1987) definition, in the sense that they constitute part of the global society's celebration of consumer culture (see 2.6), providing for the ideological as well as physical survival of the current social and economic order. Hence the above modern social phenomena are rooted in contemporary collective experiences that celebrate global-scale worldviews and ideologies that are important to current societies.

There should have been a time when early forms of festivals – in which *rituality* and *organicism* occupied a central place – first enabled the distinction between participants who actively participated in the festivals' activities and participants who just observed. Since that time, festivals have been attracting an audience, without whom they would not have a reason for existence. Even though festivals might be hosted and staged for various reasons, that orientation towards attracting participant audience is the second common feature that is characteristic for festivals. This is particularly the case for modern, renowned music mega-festivals such as *Glastonbury*, which are deliberately staged to attract several thousands of spectators, or festivals that have been established as tourist attractions such as the *Galway International Arts Festival* (Ireland). With particular regards to the latter, the attraction of tourist-audiences and their presence at the core or the periphery of festivals, has given rise to a particular scholarly discipline known by the term *festival tourism* (Picard and Robinson, 2006; Quinn, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004). Nevertheless, festivals, especially popular music festivals, reflecting on larger cultural developments – as epitomised by the influential publication *The Experience Economy* (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), may invite their audience to take part in immersive, co-creative experiences and, thus, participate more actively – than being mere spectators – in the events' activities. As O'Grady and Kill (2013) put it, the modern practice of staging collective and individual experiences within festival contexts, not only for entertaining festival-goers

but also for engaging them, is "shifting the emphasis from distanced spectatorship to active participation and involvement" (p.271). The boundaries between participant audience and participant artists or performers might have started to fade, yet the distinction remains between those who organise and produce the events – defining the festivals' mission, actual structure, and content – and those who are being attracted to them from *outside* to *consume* the festivals, that is their audience. As will be implied as this thesis develops, this blurred line between festival producers and festival audience often establishes festivals as contexts for active reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984) or potential transformation of social relations and culture.

Festivals are de facto *ephemeral* in nature. They are usually recurrent, fixed over the annual calendars, and their lives are short in most cases. Besides being bounded by time, most festivals constitute spatially-limited realities, take place in particular geographical areas, usually outdoors, and often establish a long-lasting relationship between their identity and the host place. From the perspective of Pieper's (1965) *Theory of Festivity*, during festivals, festivals necessarily allow participants to stand in stark contrast to behaviour that is informed by the conventions of daily life, establishing a "special, unusual interruption in the ordinary passage of time" (p.3). For others, there are festivals that, instead of providing temporary spaces of emancipation or windows to alternative forms of social organisation, simply act as space-times of revelry which offer "a brief escape into a hedonistic world that gives respite from workday responsibilities" (O' Grady, 2015, p.82). But all perspectives agree that festivals serve as space-times that temporarily interrupt, and often disrupt, the normal, daily life, providing participants with a joyous *anapavla* (Greek: *ανάπαυλα*, respite, a restful break from the necessary and often unpleasant work for survival) and the opportunity to celebrate in a "time out of time" (Falassi, 1987, p.7). As Gibson and Connell (2012, p.4) elegantly put it,

> [m]ost festivals create (…) a time and space of celebration, a
> site of convergence separate from everyday routines,
> experiences and meanings – ephemeral communities in
> place and time.

All festivals are meant to be experienced as sites of *playfulness*, which is, in it, a defining ingredient of festivity. As spaces of joyful potential, festivals showcase the "experiential qualities of pleasure, fun, and freedom of choice" (Sharpe, 2008, p.218) and, thus, are meant to be experienced as *leisure*. Regardless of the degree of participants' involvement in the festival context (e.g., detached spectators – active participants), this playful element renders festivals as realms in which participants may temporarily imagine, and taste, not only a diverse range of leisure practices but also forms of social co-existence and human-to-human connection that might be radically different to those of the real, concrete world (Rojek, 2010). On the other hand, festivals, in exhibiting the qualities of leisure, have been critically theorised as not being sites of creative, social-emancipatory potential but rather contexts where "a form of leisure which is self-serving, privatised and about the pursuit of individual interests in a consumer society" (Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013, p.52) is being reproduced.

Festivals are always staged with a *purpose*; they appear for a reason and their survival is dependent on their ability to fulfil their aims and missions. This has been exemplified by early festivals, whose purpose was the signification and celebration of individual or collective transitions from one stage of life to another, acting as "rites of passage" (van Gennep, 1960) and, thus, contributing to the symbolic, periodical renewal and development of individual or communal life. The notion of *purpose* implies that festivals are always planned and, often, carefully controlled. In other historical, socio-cultural circumstances festivals have been deliberately devised as concentrated temporal and spatial contexts for commercial and social exchange, the demonstration of communal wealth and welfare, as well as the manifestation of political sovereignty, often aiming to attract "travellers as naïve and willing observers" (Picard and Robinson, 2006, p.1) of the planned happenings. The purpose(s) of staging a festival, however, might not be necessarily stated explicitly but rather implicitly inferred by looking at the events' embedded practices and outcomes. Festivals, reportedly, have been staged to purposefully provide affirmation of particular social statuses and reproduction lifestyles, for instance, urban upper-middle class events such as the *Salzburg Festival* (Klaic, 2014; Waterman, 1998) and the recent

phenomenon of the posh, niche-type festivals that are accorded the label *boutique* (Johansson and Toraldo, 2015; Stone, 2009). Other festivals were staged as a form of political protest, with the dual purpose of providing symbolic opposition to the social arrangements that have been perceived as responsible for the social ills of their time, as well as energising the possibilities of alternative, more favourable, forms of social organisation and cultural orders. For instance, McKay (2015, p.4) describes the late 60's and early 70's versions of *Woodstock*, *Glastonbury*, and *Nimbin* festival as heightened space-times staged with the "fundamental purpose of envisioning and crafting another, better world." Further to examples of festivals created to provide idealistic glimpses to utopian versions of society, other festivals may be staged as convenient vehicles to establish commercial ventures with the fundamental compensatory purpose of producing economic profit and growth opportunities for organisers or investors. This commercial orientation of festivals has been characteristic since the late 1980's whereby corporate entities started to move into the festival scene as sponsors and professional event producers (Morey et al., 2014; Seiler, 2000). Evidently, there are as many different purposes for staging festivals as there are festivals themselves.

If festivals are staged with a purpose, there should be an expectation that the production of these festivals will bring about some kind of effect or outcome. Indeed, although festivals are temporary events, by definition, they have a wide range of *impacts*, which might extend into other realms and well beyond their short lives and defined spatial frames. For instance, festivals have been associated with: tangible contributions to the economies of host communities (Dwyer and Jago, 2015); positive impacts to the image of the places in which they take place (Richards and Palmer, 2010); the creation of subjective feelings of self-gratification, fulfilment and, thus, individual well-being (Yolal et al., 2016; Liburd and Derkzen, 2009); the renewal of the creative and artistic energies of locales (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010); the augmentation of social capital (Richards et al., 2013; Arcodia and Whitford, 2006); and with significant political impacts (Bennett and Woodward, 2014; Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013). The topic of festival impacts constitutes a very well-documented research area and, therefore, impact studies occupy a

large part of festival-related literature. This large body of knowledge pertinent to the realm of festivals provides tangible evidence that festivals have the capacity to *transform* part of the complex social and physical environment in which they take place. Essentially, this vast literature implicitly suggests that this transformative capacity could be instrumentally used to bring about desirable effects. Nevertheless, this shared characteristic feature of festivals is not always leading to predicted and favourable outcomes. There is a growing concern within relevant festival scholarship and practice about the unintentional, negative impacts that the whole process of planning and staging contemporary festive events entails. These considerations are built principally around the impacts of festivals on their immediate or broader physical surroundings, and less on the events' effects on socio-cultural dimensions of their environment (Pernecky, 2013). For instance, the massive piles of garbage and abandoned tents that necessarily portray the post-festival landscapes (Kerr, 2011; Stone, 2009) – a manifestation of today's throw-away society; the potential contribution of the festival sector to the perceived troublesome process of climate change (Gössling et al., 2009); the destructive effects of the commodification of culture on local cultural heritage (Small et al., 2005); and the social costs of festivals for host communities (Gursoy et al., 2004), are just some of the issues that have been highlighted in pertinent discussions. In response to the increasing awareness of the festivals' negative externalities, event organisers and scholars are regarding particular practices performed within the context of festivals as problematic. They thus call for a need to evaluate these impacts and consequences, and, essentially, consider more responsible practices in staging events, that is practical interventions aiming to minimise any impacts deemed as unfavourable (Getz, 2009).

3.2 Festivals, stability and social change

Already from the above discussion festivals emerge both as special bounded space-times that provide for the stability of the societies that host them and as sites that present glimpses of alternate practices and orders,

thus offering the raw material for social innovation and change or even contributing – directly or indirectly – to changes in the contexts in which they operate. My argument is that these two facets of festivals have historically played an important, formative role in defining the limits and possibilities of festival practice, and continue to resonate in contemporary formations of festivals, such as the so-called sustainable festivals that this study will critically explore over the next chapter. The previous chapter clearly acknowledged an understanding of sustainability that is fundamentally different from the dominant environmental or economic foci. This interpretation, in turn, implies that under the lens of sustainability the complex relationship between festivals and society needs to be addressed. This section therefore aims to contribute to our understanding of the relation between festivals and social stability, on the one hand, and festivals and change, on the other.

Klaic (2014) traces the origins of contemporary festivals back to primitive ritualistic celebrations, which punctuated the flow of societies' ordinary time, providing symbolic affirmation of social groups' shared ideals, practices, and welfare, and engendering the societies' continuity. In effect, these early festivities, whether they were staged to express societies' "allegiance to supernatural powers, their ancestors or current rulers" (ibid., p.3), they strengthened social hierarchies and communal value systems, as well as shaped individual identities and the sense of the self. In order to provide evidence for this argument Klaic (2014) specifically refers to the Greek *Dionysia* – festivals of the 5th century BC honouring the God Dionysos, which symbolically established the Athenian hegemony over other Greek cities – and the later Roman festivities, which "served to appease the masses and secure their allegiance to the rulers or power contenders" (p.4).

Festivals have reportedly contributed directly to the reinforcement of established social relations and public consciousnesses in many other historical circumstances (Muir, 2005). This implicit – yet fundamental – political role of festivals as stabilisers of existing social orders and prevailing norms also resonates with the 19th century arts festivals of Bayreuth and Salzburg, which can be regarded, in Quinn's (2005, p.929) words, as

concerted "efforts made by social elites to exert their dominance and demarcate social boundaries between themselves and the population at large". The argument that festivals provide contexts for fostering social stability can be furthered to include pragmatic, tangible considerations as well. For instance, a number of scholars have highlighted the fact that many festivals since the 1950s have been staged by communities, local authorities, and governments as strategic manifestations of agendas aiming to create destination images, increase foreign tourism, or generate flows of financial capital towards the host economies through attracting tourist audiences' spending (McKay, 2015; Picard and Robinson, 2006). This implies, again, an intersection between festivals and issues related to the notion of social stability, with symbolic as well as pragmatic implications, which in the latter case refers to the continuation of capital accumulation (both cultural and financial forms capital) at the level of a city or region, or, from a rather macro-perspective, the stability of the economic paradigm of growth and the reproduction of global capitalist relations (e.g., global competition between cities).

All the above provide strong intellectual links to the notion of social reproduction. Perhaps for this reason Waterman (1998, p.60) argued that contemporary, popular festivals can potentially "develop into active interpretation(s) of cultural producers and consumers", warning for the manipulative power that particular actors can exert through staging festivities. Other studies have problematised the degree to which contemporary forms of leisure, such as festivals, have been "eroded by historical (and hegemonic) tendencies towards consumerisation and commodification" (Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013, p.52), thus reproducing particular dominant subjectivities of leisure and cultural experience in contemporary society (also in Mair, 2002; Hemingway, 1999). It is essentially the elements of playfulness, expressiveness, and liminality (Turner, 1987) that may render festivals into events orchestrated to reinforce the reproduction of particular ideologies, cultures, and social structures, and thus provide for their prevalence and stability (Anderton, 2008; Waterman, 1998; Debord, 1994; Jackson, 1988, MacAloon, 1984). This is because festival spaces have the affective power to temporarily give authority to the overturning of social order, within controlled

spatial and temporal contexts, providing participants with a fake sensation of emancipation from the reality from which they seek to escape, since at the end of the events norms and social orders are restored. By inviting external audiences to 'join in and play along' within their space-time and according to their plans or rules, festivals "facilitate the unquestioning acceptance of the cultural *status quo* or system that they embody" (Wolf et al., 2010, p.vii, italics in original). In this way, they may be regarded and experienced as universally accepted, standardised models of contemporary sites of leisure provision and practice.

Underlying such an interpretation of festivals as joyful spaces for recreation and leisure is the idea of the manipulative potential of festivity, which has obvious resonance with Bakhtin's (1984) theory of the carnivalesque. This also has conceptual links with Gluckman's (1954) reading of ritual performance, presented in his famous anthropological study *The Rituals of Rebellion*. In this study Gluckman (ibid.) observed that although some rituals allowed participants to reveal and openly express social tensions, they were never directed against the established social order. Instead of engaging participants in a revolution, threatening – for example – to change society in a radical way, they actually created cathartic effects that would eventually lead to the stabilisation of society. Additionally, as Guss (2000, p.12) notes, festivals and other festive events have often been condemned for serving as instruments of social control:

> [e]ven when they exhibited transgressive or inverted behavior, they were still perceived as being convenient safety valves through which the ruling class could dissipate revolutionary energy and thus maintain the status quo.

According to the above perspectives, festivals can be seen as embodying relations of power, sometimes carried out in a sinister form. By supplying their public with ready-to-consume, carefully planned events, spectacles, and orchestrated opportunities for performative engagement, they may divert the attention of their audiences from complex, critical political issues. In this way, festivals might serve dominant interests and reaffirm the social relations and

institutional arrangements that already exist, while deliberately marginalising others.

Nevertheless, festivals can also be seen as important contexts for fostering contextual or broader social change. In a recent chapter, Biaett (2015) brings evidence from archaeology to argue that even organic forms of festivity – festive, ritualistic activity or celebration that is deeply embedded in the cultural and social fabric of a community – have been capable of creating remarkable socio-cultural changes as early as the prehistoric times that people lived in nomadic clans of hunter-gatherers. The early festivals' subversive, anti-structural potential and ability to serve as mediums of resistance to established social conventions has been a well-discussed topic in festival studies over the previous decades (Waterman, 1998; Turner, 1982; Abrahams, 1982). Collectively, these studies have investigated the role of festivals in securing cultural and physical spaces in which participants can express their discontent, through the ritualisation of resistance and protest, challenging dominant ideologies and threatening to change society in some fundamental way.

Similar scholarly attempts to explore the notion of festival-as-protest and its potential role in the service of broader social change have continued in conceptual investigations of modern events. Namely, the literature has focused on the so-called countercultural performing arts festivals of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which were nourished with the political energy of concurrent social movements (see section 2.4). As Klaic (2014) reports, performing arts festivals that took place between this relatively brief period expressed their opposition to major political events of that era (e.g., the US intervention in Vietnam) and became critics of the established institutions and cultural orders that they perceived as being responsible for a number of unfavourable developments across the globe, including environmental degradation and oppression of civil rights. Essentially, they embodied their non-conformist and rebellious ideology in a celebratory framework, namely a celebration of countercultural claims, values, and practices, which offered their audiences the opportunity to imagine, and even experience, alternative models of social organisation. Hence popular festivals such as the *Woodstock*

Music and Art Fair (1969, United States); the *Isle of Wight* (1968-1970) and *Glastonbury* (since 1970) festivals in the UK; and the *Aquarius Festival* (1973, Australia) manifested a radical, anti-establishment, emancipatory ideology, positioned themselves in direct opposition to the dominant, mainstream values and politics of western world, and promised to provide the social space for participants to envision and craft a meaningful, alternative version of society (Gebhardt, 2015; Kerr, 2011; Bennett, 2004; McKay, 2000; McKay, 1998; Peterson, 1973).

A growing seam of literature is employing contemporary performing arts festivals as media for a conceptual exploration of the role of leisure in social change, focusing on the argument that festivals, besides serving as spaces of protest, can provide creative ways for groups and individuals to enact the conditions of individual and social transformation. Sharpe (2008, p.231), for instance, introduces the notion of "pleasure-politics" to argue that public manifestations of leisure, such as festivals, are not merely spaces where dominant social relations are being reproduced, but also constitute politically-charged contexts that are significantly affecting relations of power in the broader cultural sphere. In Sharpe's view, festivals are fundamentally political because, quite often, these events "express ideological conflicts, favour specific social interests, and marginalise others" (p.218). Relying heavily on previous contributions on the transformational qualities of leisure (Mair, 2002; Rojek,1999; Hemingway, 1999) she goes on to suggest festivals as "avenues for social change" (ibid.) and appropriate contexts to investigate the intersection of the politics of social action and the pleasure of leisure. Sharpe's (2008) empirical exploration of a popular performing arts festival revealed that festival organisers' choices regarding the staging and management of the festival itself – rather than its content – communicate a particular political standpoint as well as enact the directors' "vision of the society they desired to create" (p.227). This vision is channelled through practices that adopt principally anti-capitalist and anarchist ideologies: they are underpinned by the philosophies of autonomy, financial self-sufficiency, localism, and environmentalism; reinforced by an imminent valorisation of active participation, spontaneity and improvisational performance; and

enacted through a tangible rejection of the traditional festival-business model that draws attention to standardisation, commercialisation, and profit-making.

Through a purposeful organisational effort the festival is therefore deliberately exposing participants and other stakeholders to a set of alternative festival practices and organisational as well as societal values, fostering social change by inspiring participants to adopt its ethos in their everyday worlds. It is important to note that Sharpe's (ibid.) understanding of the festival as a medium for enacting and experimenting with alternative forms of social organisation – through the agency of the festival organisers – draws on the notion of "politics of the act" (Day, 2004), which is also resonating the present thesis interpretation of the sustainability praxis (see section 2.1). In espousing this position, Sharpe (2008) witnesses in the particular festival context a creative, non-confrontational style of defiance, one that is much more imaginative, joyful, and efficient in disrupting established institutional arrangements, therefore fostering social change by exploiting the affective qualities of leisure in their greatest potential. As such, instead of engaging festival participants into direct protest towards the structures the festival (or better, the festival organisers) stands *against*, the organisers' approach creates a participatory, experiential as well as expressive context for participants to taste the alternative reality the festival enacts and stands *for*.

Although an important contribution into the investigation of the relationship between festivals and social change, Sharpe's (ibid.) work does not adequately address the particular dimensions of change that are being (or might be) enabled through the agency of performing arts festivals that deliberately position themselves as alternative to mainstream popular events and commit themselves to social transformation. This gap has been recently addressed by O'Grady (2015), who contributes a reading of participants' experience within the context of the British alternative festival scene. Her article argues that alternative festivals – events that incorporate practices and values that can be viewed as oppositional, marginal and generally rejective of the mainstream festival culture manifested by contemporary, highly commercial and corporatised events – can provide participants with

"collective experiences that have the potential to be transformative" (p.93).
She grounds these transformative qualities of the festival onto self-reported
(and thus subjective) participants' accounts of the perceived impact of festival
experience on eudaimonic and hedonistic aspects of personal –
psychological, spiritual, and physical – well-being. Essentially, besides the
transformative potential at the level of the individual, O'Grady (ibid.) argues
for the longer-term, broader societal effects that the festival generates by
enabling participants experience alternative forms of social organisation,
which emerge out of the intersection of the ethics of social emancipation,
radical human-to-human and human-to-nature connectivity, as well as active
participation. Her work therefore provides a reading of a particular type of
performing arts festival, the alternative festival, establishing it as an
appropriate framework for an exploration of the practices that might introduce
aspects of desired social imaginaries to the concrete world. In that sense,
O'Grady (ibid.) implies a dialectical rapport between an alternative, highly
positive vision of society – one that resides in the imaginative realm that is
constructed by participants who experience the festival – and the present
reality, with all its deficiencies, arguing that such festivals provide important
opportunities for the enactment of "ways of living differently" (p.92), hence
fostering personal and social change.

3.3 A concluding note

Given the present thesis' interpretation of sustainability as an
instrument of societal change, and the festival as an agent of such change, I
could argue that there is much substance in the nexus between festivals and
sustainability that needs to be explored. That substance should be much
greater than the elements contained in dominant views about what it means
for something to be sustainable and what is considered as un-sustainable.
For instance, the previous chapter has already provided evidence that
sustainability has been largely established as a blend of environmental
concerns and approached through a reformist logic that favours particular
political and corporate interests – hence providing for the stability of particular
institutional arrangements. Nevertheless, the above brief discussion proposed

a complex relationship between festivals and society, and provided linkage to existing literature that raises questions about festivals in the service of societal change. To the extent that sustainability envisioning and praxis can be radical (Knight, 2007), and festivals can be understood and analysed as contexts for fostering social change (Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013; Sharpe 2008), this thesis calls for a more transformational approach to the study of the festival-sustainability nexus. Such an investigation requires tackling this intersection critically and through a conceptual as well as empirical prism, which is precisely what this thesis set out to achieve in the following chapters.

Chapter Four: The Sustainable Festival

> Sustainability needs to be tackled not mainly through the
> prisms of event management but understood in a wider
> context of society. Festivals are the fabric of society,
> contributing to the complex socio-cultural-political worlds we
> live in. The acknowledgement of the significance of this
> phenomenon is a fundamental requirement for moving the
> study of sustainability and events forward (Pernecky, 2013,
> p.26).

The sustainable turn is an emerging phenomenon within festival research and practice. This section will therefore attempt to understand how sustainability is being interpreted, constructed, and communicated in this particular segment of contemporary culture and society, arguing for a number of shortcomings in current approaches. To do so, it will first trace references to sustainability within the wider arts and culture domain, maintaining that festivals are important players within the creative economy. This review will not be exhaustive, but will rather endeavour to provide an indicative summary and categorise the sector's dominant views of sustainability culture. It will achieve this by reviewing contributions relevant to the sustainable festival within the wider scholarly area of festival and event studies in order to identify and classify the main discourses that inform discussions of sustainability in this particular domain.

This review of available research, concerning the intersection of sustainability and festivals, aims to provide context for a critical discussion of current understandings that inform contemporary sustainable festival practice, which will be presented later in this chapter. The following section will try to delimit the scope of this research by addressing the conceptual overlaps and boundaries that exist between the sustainable festival and other types of

performing arts festivals that proclaim to have taken an alternative [8]course to staging cultural experiences. Namely, I will briefly explore the conceptual implications of two types of festivals that position themselves in a seemingly socially desirable route: the green festival and the responsible (or ethical) festival. The final sections of this chapter will provide a brief critical discussion on how sustainability is actually understood, communicated, and practically approached by contemporary performing arts festivals. These sections will draw on, and expand upon, the findings of a previous study conducted by the author (Zifkos, 2015). That critical discussion about the sustainable festival will reflect on the larger discursive context of sustainability (as presented in Chapter Two) as well as on critical contributions in the scholarly discipline of sustainability studies. In conclusion, this chapter will summarise the implications of dominant understandings of the sustainable festival by attempting to provide an answer to the question: 'What is actually being sustained in current approaches to the sustainable festival?'

4.1 Sustainability in the Arts and Culture Sector

Festivals can be seen to occupy a major position within the creative economy as they are concerned with the generation, exploitation, and distribution of goods, services, and experiences that use human creativity and culture as their primary input, and their output is cultural in nature. Positioned firmly with what Du Gay and Pryke (2002, p.16) call "'soft' knowledge-intensive" cultural industries, festivals have recently been praised for their central role in the development and current status of the European creative economy, representing a significant industry contributing to the sector's growth (EY, 2014; BAFA, 2008). They are thus often encompassed in terms such as *cultural industries, creative industries, creative economy, arts sector*,

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[8] I understand that the term *alternative* is quite loaded and, therefore, highly contested. It is usually used as an overarching term to indicate something (e.g., a particular practice or worldview) that is marginal and often oppositional. In the context of the present research project the term *alternative* is employed to express something that is framed dissimilarly to what is perceived to classify as *mainstream*.

and *creative sector*[9]. Essentially, it is maintained that festivals play a crucial role in the creative industries, to the degree that they have been regarded as "field-configuring events" for the creative sector, or "tournaments", where different cultural values are negotiated and determine the institutional arrangements in the particular industry's field (Moeran and Pedersen, 2011, p.10). Recent academic literature, industry reports, as well as a growing number of relevant conventions provide evidence that sustainability has turned into a focus of attention for a diversity of actors within and across the creative sector of the economy. Before delving deeper into the festival-related literature, it is therefore informative to reflect briefly on how the concept of sustainability is being approached in the context of the arts and cultural sector, of which festivals constitute an important component (UNCTAD, 2010). This overview is not exhaustive, but merely aims to provide an indicative summary and categorise the sector's dominant understandings of sustainability culture.

A first understanding of sustainability in the arts and culture sector is characterised by an overriding emphasis on financial aspects and the notion of *organisational viability.* As noted by WolfBrown consultants and Woronkowicz (2012), historically, sustainability for an arts organisation referred to the sustaining of the organisation itself, an objective that could be primarily attained through the generation of enough earned and contributed revenue to fund current operations. According to Adrian Ellis (2004), director of cultural consulting firm *AEA*, sustainable arts organisations are those

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[9] Defining the *cultural or creative industries* constitutes a condensed area (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2005). This thesis adopts the UNCTAD (2010 p.8) definition of creative industries which states that the creative industries: i) are the cycles of creation, production and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs; ii) constitute a set of knowledge-based activities, focused on but not limited to arts, potentially generating revenues from trade and intellectual property rights; iii) comprise tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value and market objectives; iv) stand at the crossroads of the artisan, services and industrial sectors; and v) constitute a new dynamic sector in world trade. Later on, the Creative Economy Report 2010 considers the contemporary festival sector as a direct outcome of the growth of the cultural industries, in which leisure, (serious) fun, experiences, and tourism have come together with pleasure and labour to develop what is labelled as the festival phenomenon. The terms *cultural industries, creative industries, creative economy, arts sector*, and *creative sector* are used in this thesis interchangeably to imply the same thing.

organisations that are "artistically outstanding, serve their diverse communities with imagination and verve, and are, at the end of the day, financially solvent" (p.4).

The essence of this view is of an organisation that produces a creative product that society values, an organisation that maintains and increases its audiences while at the same time praises the sanctity of profit. For instance, in a study exploring the sustainability of a Canadian orchestra, emphasis has been placed on the efficiency of its operational model, the ability to maintain a strong position amongst a competitive performing arts market, as well as its fiscal soundness (Finley et al., 2006). As they explicitly state in the title of their study, the opposite of sustainability is bankruptcy. At the same time, advocates of the public-funded arts sector have also used the concept of sustainability largely drawing upon the sector's economic viability and financial security. On that account, when they are calling for a sustainable arts sector what they imply is an economically thriving sector, which attracts enough public funds and generates adequate income to sustain the operation of its organisations (Freudenberg, 2010; Ragsdale 2011). In an exploration about the private sector's potential to support financially the creative sector, the Australian Council for the Arts (2016) seem to understand sustainability as the outcome of the direct investment in artistic companies directed towards helping the latter "deliver artistically and culturally vibrant programs, and inventive ways to expand their audiences and markets" (p.1). Echoing similar views, Arts Council England (2010) asserts that the organisation's fundraising capability and capital structure are the two key building blocks that need to be in place for the arts sector to become "more resilient and sustainable" (p.5). Evidently, understandings of sustainability within this category place priority on the importance of sustaining the financial base of the artistic/creative organisation so that investors gain a return on profits and the organisation can remain viable in the competitive creative marketplace.

According to the second category of views across the cultural industries, sustainability is interpreted drawing on the narrower conception of classic environmentalism, which accuses modern civilisation of neglecting human impact on the natural environment (Forster, 2015). As a constructive

reaction to those developments, sustainability is understood as the adoption of practices that minimise the negative environmental impact of the creative organisations' operation or raise public awareness on issues related to the natural environment. Sustainability is thus used as just another term for environmentalism or greening. For instance, when Baumast (2012) talks about sustainability in the arts, she builds on the argument of a two-facet environmental footprint of the sector. On the one hand, Baumast notes, by creating appropriate works of art and communicating them to its audience, a *sustainable* arts organisation – a theatre company, in particular – may use the affective charge of sustainability to inspire, and even mobilise, the public about issues related to the protection of the non-human nature. Second, and more importantly, sustainability in the arts is related to a continuous pursuit of becoming environmentally friendly by employing *green* practices in the very operation of the organisation, including waste reduction, recycling, greenhouse gas emissions monitoring, water management, or use of renewable energy. Accordingly, Madan (2011), founder of the *Greener Museums Ltd* and sustainability advisor at *Tate*, applies the concept of sustainability in the museum context by taking on an environmental-impact perspective. Using previous examples from across the field, she suggests a number of green initiatives that museums could employ in order to operate in a sustainable manner, focusing first and foremost on waste reduction and energy saving operations. Madan (ibid.) also highlights that (environmental) sustainability performance needs to be systematically measured and planted in every part of the museum organisation.

A similar interpretation of sustainability was made by the "Forum for the Future for Creative Industries" (2010), which aimed to inspire a discussion about the big sustainability challenges facing society and opportunities that the latter presents for creative businesses, yet focused principally on environmental (or green) aspects of its concept. Initiatives that follow this tight understanding of sustainability as-eco-efficiency are increasingly gaining popularity among creative organisations, as evidenced from the great number of reports published by *Julie's Bicycle* (2016), a consultancy and certification charity dedicated in bridging the gap between sustainability and the creative industries. Collectively, such understandings of sustainability draw on Gifford

Pinchot's (cited in Kagan, 2013, p.10) resource conservation ethic, which reflects the general tenets of utilitarianism. By theorising that it is to the best of our (human) interest to protect some parts of the natural world, such environmentalist understandings of sustainability in the creative sector are providing an overriding emphasis on minimising environmental damage (e.g., do-not-harm or zero-waste commitments) so as to ensure continued continuous benefits for humanity. This perspective is particularly evident in the following quote (Moor and Tickell, 2014, p.5):

> There are plenty of compelling reasons to embrace
> *sustainable arts practice* [emphasis given by the author]:
> climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and water use are
> already having far reaching consequences on the natural
> equilibriums upon which we depend. The arts, like any other
> sector, draw on these resources, and have a real ecological
> footprint.

Another shared understanding of sustainability within the creative sector is firmly framed around the so-called three pillars of sustainable development (UNCED, 1992) and the Triple Bottom Line of environmental, social, as well as financial outcomes (Elkington, 1997). This interpretation of sustainability, as a balancing act between three interdependent realms, has remained popular and dominant within creative businesses with commercial and market orientation in particular (Bridgstock, 2013; Hartley, 2005; Aitchison and Evans, 2003). The idea of translating sustainability into simplistic triptychs, such as the TBL, has yet inspired a wealth of variations of trifold models across the creative industries research and practice. For example, Hunt and Shaw (2008) explore what the concept of sustainability might connote in the context of the arts and introduce a threefold definition of sustainability for the creative industries, using the metaphor of a three-legged-stool (pp.6-7):

> One leg stands for the product (art), the second for the
> operating structures it uses to make and sell the product
> (operation) and the third for the way the whole is financed.

(…) A sustainable structure is one in which all three legs are
of the same length, equal in importance and quality.

The above perspective offers a translation of the popular corporate sector's TBL reporting practice, one that creative professionals can understand and operationalise by focusing on the continuous improvement of their creative products and services, efficiency in management, as well as a healthy financial base. WolfBrown consultants and Woronkowicz (2012) are questioning traditional understandings of sustainability in the creative sector – as the outcome of sustaining enough earned and contributed revenue to remain viable – and provide examples of arts organisations which were once financially sustainable but all of a sudden ceased to exist, and of others which continue to grow despite operating in marginal budgets. In particular, they focus on the micro-level of creative enterprises and propose what they consider to be a more nuanced three-dimensional perspective of sustainability, inspired by the principles of the TBL. According to their approach, sustainability in cultural organisations needs to be understood as a balancing act between the following three interrelated and often competing priorities: community relevance, artistic vibrancy, and sound capitalisation. In their words, "these elements give organisations the ability to excel in a permanent state of flux, uncertainty and creative tension" (ibid., p.6). Fulfilling the element of high levels of community relevance allows cultural firms to manifest their public value, not by producing what the community desires but understanding and creating what the community really needs. Second, artistic vibrancy refers to the whole of a creative organisation's artistic health and is regarded as the lifeblood of cultural organisations and the "inspiration that motivates donors and engages the community" (ibid., p.9). The last element of their understanding of sustainability, capitalisation and sound fiscal policy, serves the other two by ensuring a culture of economic and organisational performance measurement, fund-raising, and financial planning and control.

A rather rare understanding of sustainability relevant to the creative sector can be found, curiously, in a recent World Bank policy research paper where Kabanda (2014) explores the way the performing arts enable the transition towards a sustainable future taking on an explicitly stated

anthropocentric perspective. This report draws heavily on Amartya Sen's interpretation of sustainability, as a developmental process that makes people's lives "richer and finer" (ibid., p.ii). Kabanda argues that the creative sector is constitutively a part and, essentially, an enabler of this process of human-centred development. While the report recognises that the arts sector is enriching the economic life of people, thereby constitutes an important material contributor to the quality of life, it highlights the role of culture and the arts in generating profound non-monetary, social utility and, thus, promoting "meaningful development" (ibid., p.1). A sustainable creative sector, according to that perspective, is a creative sector that is necessarily grounded in the quest for, and tangibly contributes to the open-ended conditions for flourishing human societies.

Lastly, another distinctive interpretation of sustainability can be found in Sacha Kagan's (2013) recent book *Art and Sustainability*. Here, Kagan argues that culture – understood both as art forms and a set of values and norms – can be instrumental in moving society towards an alternative worldview based on complexity and a systems-oriented, holistic approach. For Kagan, sustainability is a dream of living well, a cultural construct, and, essentially, a fundamental generative part of the fabric of human societies. In his words (ibid., p.13):

> As a shared dream, vision and worldview, as well as a conversation, sustainability reveals itself as a cultural phenomenon, if 'culture' is understood as value system and set of signifiers framing social identities and dispositions to act and to believe.

With that in mind, Kagan links the notion of sustainability with that of social change and problematises whether the creative sector is capable of motivating actors across society to question established conventions and, eventually, allow transformations across social fields. In questioning that, he introduces the concept of a "double entrepreneurship" (p.400) through which creative actors (e.g., artists) escape from conventions within their particular art worlds while simultaneously challenge broader societal arrangements.

4.2 Sustainability and the sustainable festival in literature

The topic of sustainability is rarely conceptually addressed or explicitly discussed in the scholarly area of festival studies. Although sustainability is increasingly featuring in the vocabularies and mission statements of the contemporary performing arts festival scene (e.g., a growing number of festival organisers are calling attention to their events' sustainable practices or even label and promote their festivals as sustainable), there have been no attempts – at least to the best of my knowledge – to thoroughly explore how sustainability is actually understood and acted upon in this particular segment of the cultural economy. As Arcodia et al. (2012) report, sustainability issues have not been extensively discussed in the field of festivals and events. Nevertheless, a number of texts published within the research domains of event management, leisure and tourism studies, as well as relevant events industry reports, examine festivals in the context of certain dominant understandings of sustainability. This sub-section intends to compile and analyse a review of relevant English-language literature to identify and classify the discourses[10] that inform discussions of sustainability in this particular scholarly domain. It is important to note that the vast majority of papers that were retrieved and reviewed during that endeavour belong to an emerging area of pertinent academic literature, namely *sustainable event management*. This review of available research, concerning the intersection of sustainability and festivals, aims to provide context for a critical discussion on current interpretations of the concept of the sustainable festival, which will be presented later in this chapter. Three major discourses in relevant research have been identified and then described: i) approaches attending to *green* concerns, that are concerns relating to the protection of the natural environment – the environmentalist perspective; ii) the sustainable festival as a long-living, profitable organisation/business; and iii) the operational triple-

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[10] As stated earlier in this thesis, *discourse* is drawing on Dryzek's (2013) definition of a shared way of understanding the world. Discourses construct meanings (e.g., the *sustainable* festival) and inform practices (e.g., the practices surrounding festival management).

bottom-line approach. These are also summarised in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in Appendix A with annotations.

4.2.1 The dominance of greenism

What becomes obvious fairly easily throughout a review of the relevant festival research that discusses issues related to the sustainable festival is that the concept of sustainability is often approached from a rather eco-centric perspective, placing the natural environment at the centre of analysis. This interpretation recognises that sustainability is essentially related to the preservation, protection, or restoration of the natural environment and, therefore, is manifested as an environmentalist ethic. A common thread within that scholarly area, and this understanding of sustainability in particular, is that definitions of sustainability are being confused and used interchangeably with the notion of *greening,* that refers to the transformation of products, services, processes or organisations into more environmentally friendly entities (Harris et al., 2002). This set of understandings is built around the belief that staging a festival leaves, unavoidably, a negative impact on the natural world, which implies a particular relationship between the festival – as a separate entity – and the natural environment – as the environment *out there*.

Laing and Frost (2010), for example, explore the challenges and opportunities related to staging a sustainable festival and define the latter as "an event that has a sustainability policy or incorporates sustainable practices into its management and operations" (p.262). In order to do that, they refer to the *Glastonbury Festival*, the *Peats Ridge Festival*, the *Burning Man Festival* and the *All Points West Music and Arts Festival*, considering them as events that are committed to improving and developing their sustainability initiatives equating, however, the term sustainable to environmentally friendly. This large emphasis on the greening capabilities of the sustainable festival drives them to consider practices that aim to reduce the negative environmental impacts, associated with staging events, as "more sustainable options for festivals" (p.263), and as channels for communicating important political messages in relation to global environmental challenges. A similar

understanding of sustainability is adopted by Mair and Laing (2012), who attempt to explore sustainability by addressing the drivers of, and constraints to, achieving *green* festival performance. Based on examples from the UK and Australian festival scene they hold that the sustainable festival is an event with ethical considerations that are manifested practically through the adoption of proactive environmental management practices – including encouraging access by public transport, responsible waste management and the minimisation of energy use. According to this viewpoint, performing arts festivals are considered to be "at the vanguard of promoting sustainability" (p.688) due to their ability to green their operation as well as deliver pro-environmental messages to a wide range of stakeholders. Educating audiences and promoting sustainable (*green*) values is also the fundamental principle of Kennell and Sitz's (2010) understanding of the sustainable festival. Namely, their study provides an exploration of the rhetoric and the reality of a particular music festival in the US, *Bonnaroo*, which markets itself as sustainable. In this paper, the sustainable festival emerges as an event deeply committed to environmentalist values by offering pro-environmental educational activities for volunteers and festival-goers; a festival that embeds green policies into its core values and markets "itself with messages of environmental responsibility" (p.1).

Oliver, Naar, and Harris (2015) contribute an exploration of festival attendees' perceptions of the sustainable practices of a particular segment of the hospitality industry, namely the hotel sector. In an attempt to increase the generalisability of their results the authors recruit participants and collect data from two different types of festivals: "one traditional and one sustainable" (p.7). Nevertheless, as implied by the hypotheses of that study, what makes the sustainable festival different from the non-sustainable one is the official incorporation of eco-friendly or environmentally friendly practices, that are organisational efforts aimed to minimise the environmental impact associated with the festival's operation. Employing a similar interpretation, Wessblad (2015) contributes a case study of the famous *Malmo* mega-festival in Sweden, using sustainability as a representation of the green ambitions of the event. The continuum of eco-centric perspectives on festival sustainability is also taken up by Goldblatt (2014), who associates sustainable festivals with

environmentally friendly events. Essentially, Goldblatt (ibid., p.346) provides his own definitions of sustainability and sustainable development, which are grounded on a particular component of the natural environment, that is natural resources:

> *Sustainability:* The ability to wisely use the resources of today to create ever stronger and more successful tomorrows.
> *Sustainable development:* The ability to only use the resources you need today to insure that you have sufficient resources for use in the future (italics in original).

The above definitions suggest that the sustainable festival is, in fact, the outcome of an operational system that allocates and manages scarce natural resources with earnest respect. As the next section will show, this viewpoint has largely been maintained in contemporary interpretations and understandings of the sustainable festival in relevant event practice.

A recent contribution by Cummings (2014) provides an investigation of sustainable practices, adopted and performed by festival organisers, by reviewing literature surrounding the greening of the contemporary festival industry. Cummings's chapter is drawing on examples of famous music festivals of the British, US, and Australian scene, in particular, in order to explore the role of festival organisers in "moving towards more sustainable festival practices" (p.169). Cummings' sustainable festival is described as an attempt of the contemporary event industry to bring to terms a corporate business model with an approach to environmental responsibility. Importantly, Cummings recognises the significant role that festivals play in shaping a global awareness of political-ecological issues and argues that sustainable festivals may act as facilitators for the transition towards "green governance" (p.169): a paradigmatic shift in the way humans relate to the natural environment.

Brooks et al. (2007) attempt to understand what a sustainable music festival might look like and contribute a draft generic strategic plan for festival organisers that seek to move their events towards a premise of sustainability. Their definition of the sustainable festival is founded on the realisation of what

might actually be unsustainable for the music festival industry, that is its ecological impacts on natural systems, which are "largely characterised by unsustainable flows of energy and materials between the event, society and the biosphere" (p.v). In their vision of festivals in a desirable, sustainable society, "sustainable music festivals produce no waste, use renewable energy and transport artists and audience cleanly and efficiently." (p.10). Brooks et al. go on to propose an operational, strategic framework – what they call the "6 strings of sustainability for music festivals" (ibid., p.48) – that festival organisers need to adopt for their events to become sustainable, which largely focuses on the planning and implementation of green initiatives. These include initiatives attentive to the goal of no waste being sent to landfill due to staging the festival, the use of energy that is being sourced from 100% renewable resources, and collaborating with stakeholders (e.g., suppliers) who are also committed to sustainable (meaning to them 'environmentally friendly') practice.

In another recent chapter, Frost, Mair and Laing (2015) explore the future of events that are incorporating green or sustainable practices by employing three case studies of festivals that have recently been awarded for their sustainable practices, namely *Bluesfest*, the *City of London Festival*, and the *Manchester International Festival*. As the authors explicitly state, the term *green* is used as a synonym for *sustainable*. That appears to be an oxymoron, however, because later in that chapter the authors cite the following interview excerpt, which is a statement contributed by *Bluesfest's* (ibid., p.118) organisers:

> Sustainability does not stop at being green, but 'you've also got to talk about fair trade and you've also got to talk about social justice'.

The above quote provides evidence of the failure to understand that, at least in the eyes of interviewees, a sustainable festival is perceived to be conceptually different from a *green* festival. The terminological complexity in this study is also evident further below in their chapter: while describing *Manchester International Festival* organisers' vision to "make the festival a sustainable event" (p.118), it is the managers' greening attempts – e.g., the

"investment in environmentally friendly facilities and practices" (p.115) – that are being considered as the basis of sustainability in the particular festival context.

References to the sustainable festival that attend to this reductive interpretation of sustainability – as a purposeful managerial practice towards greening – can be also found in a number of festival industry reports. *A Greener Festival* is a not-for-profit organisation established to promote sustainable performing arts festivals and, thus, contribute to the development of a sustainable festival industry. To quote Ben Challis, co-founder of the organisation:

> An ever-growing number of festivals in the United Kingdom
> and around the world have been at the forefront of promoting
> sustainability, whether by reducing greenhouse gas
> emissions, minimising waste, reducing their event's
> environmental impact or championing positive behaviour
> such as recycling (Sustain, 2012, p.2).

Similarly, Charly, curator of the *Accidental Festival*, describes the measures his team are deploying to ensure that their festival remains sustainable. Charly defines sustainability as the "ability to continue something without any detrimental effects on the environment" and states that: "We are all about making this festival sustainable" (Accidental Festival, 2012). Evidently, again, this understanding of sustainability is associated with the minimisation of the festival's impact on the earth's systems, which, according to that viewpoint, is unavoidably negatively affected by the event's operation. Hence the sustainable performing arts festival is defined as a more favourable, environmentally friendly version of a *common* festival, the latter meaning a festival that is not consciously engaged with environmentally friendly strategies.

By the same token, a very recent report entitled *The Show Must Go On* (Johnson, 2016) provided the vision as well as the pledges for a "sustainable festival industry" (p.4), aiming to furnish a rigorous basis for the festival industry to respond to the mounting challenges of global climate change. This optimistic report particularly acknowledges the important role of "committed

festival organisers" (ibid.) in taking action and conveying the messages of sustainability, in a way that a sustainable future appears achievable in the next decade. In this context the contemporary sustainable festival is regarded as an exemplar organisational model of environmental responsibility.

Collectively, the viewpoints within this first category confirm Allenby's (2004) argument that the "sustainable X", as opposed to "a just plain X", indicates, at best, "a generally supportive attitude towards environmentalism" (p.13). Essentially, they reflect certain dominant perceptions in sustainability discourse in which the concepts of sustainability and environmentalism have been conflated and confused, associating any sustainable X – the sustainable festival in this case – with practices and ideologies that flow from popular light green [11]ethical prescriptions. Furthermore, this environmental management approach to the sustainable festival emphasises the particular importance of technology (e.g., management systems) in maintaining a balanced relationship between human activity (the festival) and environmental health, pointing to a natural environment 'out there' and, therefore, implying a deterministic relationship between human and non-human nature (e.g., the natural environment). The above observations will be further discussed in section 4.4.3.1.

4.2.2 Survivability

A second category of understandings of sustainability within the scholarly area of festival and event research is grounded on the festival's ability to be sustained – meaning to survive or endure as an organisation, or, at least, maintain particular dimensions of its operation (e.g., profitability or visitor attendance) at a certain level. Aw previously noted, this interpretation is

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[11] The term *light green* is used by Pepper (2003) to refer to a techno-centric environmentalist ideology that recognises environmental (related to Earth's natural systems) problems yet maintains that our current form of society is always capable of dealing with them by advancing its economic and environmental management systems. It is opposed to *deep green* ideologies, which maintain a strong sense of respect for nature – in its own right, prioritise non-human nature and, therefore, express a solid eco-centrism. Both ideologies suggest practical solutions within existing social conventions rather than radical alternatives for society instead.

rooted to the Latin meaning of the word *sustinere* (*sus*: up; *tenere*: hold, keep), which literally means the capacity to *maintain*, *endure*, *hold up*, or *support* (Thiele, 2013). Carlsen et al. (2009), for example, explore the challenges confronting festival managers to identify the prospects of festival futures. They understand sustainability as a synonym to *viability*, focusing in particular on the importance of innovation and competitiveness for a festival to avoid failure and, thus, to be sustainable.

Song et al. (2015) argue that focusing on the maintenance of high levels of festival performance and attendee satisfaction is "a key characteristic of sustainable festivals" (p.323). They go on to measure these two qualities by trying to capture subjective visitors' perceptions of festival success and ability to produce a range of positive impacts. Lee and Groves (2013) discuss the "49-year successful story of sustainability" (p.16) of a Canadian American festival by exploring the factors that help create positive long-term relationships between attendees and the host communities. They argue that the festival has remained alive through the past half of the century relying upon the maintenance of close, long-lasting relationships between hosts and visitors, which drives the authors to regard it as a model of sustainable destination development. Duran et al. (2014) draw on data from one of the oldest cultural festivals in Turkey – the *International Troia Festival* in Çanakkale – to propose a "sustainable festival management model" (p.173). Their sustainable model is defined on a basis that involves enduring visitor satisfaction, economic prosperity, as well as the festival's engagement in the creation of benefits to host communities.

Similarly, Kruger and Saayman (2012) hold that a sustainable festival is an event that can maintain high levels of festival-goer attraction, which is, as they state, the most crucial factor for the "long-term sustainability of the festival" (p.147). The main idea in Larson et al. (2015) is that building and sustaining legitimacy for their events constitute critical strategic challenges for festival directors that wish to transform their festivals into sustainable ones, that is for those events to occupy "institutional status and a unique niche in the community" (p.161). All the above papers seem to emphasise the success of those events in the long run, and therefore the events' longevity, in their

understanding of which festival is sustainable and which is not. The opposite of a sustainable festival is a festival that, over time, is "reduced or even disappears" (Song et al., 2015, p.321).

Among publications that interpret festival sustainability as an issue of organisational survival we can observe a particular focus on the maintenance of incoming financial flows. The 'business case' for sustainable festivals also reports on sponsorship attractiveness and internal cost savings. Palmer and Thelwall (2013) define the sustainability of small arts festivals in terms of their ability to survive, which is manifested practically as the ability to manage sponsor relationships and attract donations. Similarly, Marschall (2006) employs the term "self-sustainability" (p.164) to reiterate the festival's ability to secure its survival by continuously pooling resources – principally referring to financial funds. Another recent study regards festival patrons and the economic contribution of repeat festivalgoers as "a prerequisite for sustainable festivals" (Lee, 2016, p.187).

Ensor et al. (2011) have contributed, to the best of my knowledge, the only one study of its kind within this research area, investigating empirically understandings of sustainability held by individuals who have a direct role in the production of the events. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with elite festival directors in order to capture their perceptions of festival sustainability and elicit their "attitudes towards the dynamics of creating and directing sustainable festivals" (p.315). In their exploratory study they found that the majority of festival leaders interpreted sustainability as a matter of a festival's ability to survive, and not in terms of an event's ability to address its impact on the natural environment. A brief search for festival organisers' views of the sustainable festival also revealed a similar understanding of sustainability as the ability to prosper economically and, eventually, keep in existence. Asking the organisers of the *Hull Comedy Festival* to comment on the effects of the recent recession upon the sector provided similar insights on the way event professionals regard sustainability:

> Has it proved harder to attract sponsors and funding? YES!
> We get fantastic support locally from different public/ private

entities. However to make the festival sustainable we always
have to seek large sponsors (Yorkshire Festivals, 2012).

Researchers' views of sustainability in this context and understandings
of the sustainable festival, in particular, can also be sourced from a number of
relevant conventions. For instance, the majority of the contributors to a
workshop entitled *What makes festivals sustainable?* – organised in Le Mans,
France by the international research consortium *European Festivals
Research Project* – approached festival sustainability in terms of continuity of
the event itself and dedicated their efforts in exploring the conditions of
survivability for particular festivals (e.g., Karlsen, 2006). In a similar vein, an
expert Q&A panel hosted by the De Montfort University (2012) in March 2012,
interpreted festival sustainability as a matter of long-term survival of the
festival sector as a whole. The issues of access to funding and the attraction
of sponsors have been central to this second strand of research surrounding
the sustainable festival. Sustainability as a festival's ability to survive by
ensuring access to sufficient funds and maintenance of fruitful relationships
with donors is also manifested in the following report excerpt, from a
symposium in London, dedicated to *The Future of Festivals*:

> Many of these festivals emerged and grew in the economic
> boom of the last decade, fuelled by public sector spending,
> corporate sponsorship and the disposable income of
> audiences. Now, in different economic times, how many will
> survive? What strategies will festival organisers need to
> adopt to make themselves more *sustainable*? (LIFT 2012)

4.2.3 The Triple Bottom Line approach

What is also revealed through a literature review that entails the words
"sustainable" and "festival" is a set of understandings of sustainability
underpinned by the prevalent Triple Bottom Line accounting framework
(Elkington, 1999). This line of reasoning is interpreting the sustainable festival
as an organisational model that begins to merge corporate environmentalism
(or greenism) with broader societal concerns, while maintaining a firm focus
on the festival's sustained ability to remain financially sound. Within this

discourse, sustainable practices refer to a trifold operational framework that festival managers can adopt to sustain their events through growth opportunities and, eventually, ensure their success in the long-term. In other words, within this third set of understandings, sustainability is regarded as a business goal, namely a strategic effort to align the festival activities with broader societal needs.

Getz and Andersson (2009) adopt such an approach and address the sustainability of festivals from the perspective of the event organisations themselves. Essentially, their understanding of the sustainable festival is critical to interpretations of *sustainability-as-survivability* and *permanence*, arguing that it is not merely longevity that defines sustainability. In their words:

> Conceivably a festival or event organization can be "permanent" and the event produced indefinitely, but it could fail to meet other elements of triple-bottom-line sustainability. Accordingly, sustainability includes longevity, but longevity is but one measure of sustainability (ibid., p.3).

They go on to theorise the various dimensions of festival sustainability drawing on a kind of triple bottom line approach that considers concerns in reference to the natural environment (natural resource base), broader cultural and social factors, as well as issues of financial viability. Furnishing relevant managerial practices towards fulfilling the above three dimensions of sustainability, together, bears – according to that view – great potential for the festival organisation to achieve long-term viability and become a "hallmark event" (p.3) in its community.

In another conceptual paper, Getz (2009) attempts to define the scope of sustainable events policy and practice. He explicitly calls for the institutionalisation of a new paradigm of sustainability, "one that employs a triple-bottom-line (TBL) approach both to the determination of the worth of events and to evaluation of their impacts" (p.62). While advocating for the adoption of a proactive entrepreneurial approach to festival management (e.g., what the TBL suggests) he states that sustainable festivals:

> are not just those that can endure indefinitely, they are also events that fulfil important social, cultural, economic and environmental roles that people value (Getz, 2009, p.70).

Furthermore, for Getz (ibid.), *green events* – events that "adopt measures to reduce, re-use and recycle" (ibid.) – are part of this movement to the new event sustainability paradigm.

Gration et al. (2011) employ two case studies of Australian non-urban festivals to illustrate the need for refined managerial interventions that aim to ensure the sustainability of the events industry. In their attempt to develop a planning and evaluation model particularly applicable to festivals, they also contribute an interpretation of sustainability reflecting upon the triple-bottom-line operational framework. As they argue, that all three TBL dimensions – people, natural landscape, and profit – are instrumental to the sustainability of these events and the vast majority of festival directors are quite familiar with operationalising the TBL-approach to sustainability, as their interviews revealed. In a recent report published by Creative Carbon Scotland (2015) the definition of the *sustainable* music festival is informed by the inclusion of particular *sustainable* practices – attentive to the TBL framework – aiming to minimise the festivals' impact on the environment in terms of waste, energy and water use, as well as encompassing a firm commitment towards respecting habitats, sourcing ethical produce, and supporting local businesses and communities.

Last, a small number of recent theses have also been echoing the TBL approach to understanding sustainability. Ashdown's (2010) thesis, for example, contributes an evaluation of policy instruments and guidance tools that are designed to help music festivals become more sustainable. The starting point of Ashdown's inquiry is the fact that festival production has been associated with waste management problems, and, moreover, festivals require large amounts of energy resources – which, as the author highlights, are a precious commodity. As well as recognising the need to be environmentally aware and economically sound, Ashdown supports that a sustainable path for the festival industry would require an investment into the local community, fulfilling in that way all three bottom line dimensions her

interpretation of the *sustainable* festival. A triple-bottom-line approach has also been employed by Stettler (2011), in a study entitled *Sustainable Event Management of Music Festivals*, which aimed to help readers understand the ambiguous concept, as well as the conditions of sustainability in the particular context of the festival. Being critical of dominant interpretations of sustainability that are bound to the limitations inherent to the notion of *event greening*, Stettler's thesis suggests that the concept of *sustainable* festival management should be:

> stretched to embody a more holistic meaning of sustainability and should equally embrace at least its social, economic and environmental dimensions. […] Only by striving to recognize its holistic meaning can the concept, process and goal of sustainability reach its greatest potential (ibid., p.10).

This sub-section presented an overview of sustainability understandings, as these seem to have developed through relevant festival literature. It revealed three implicit dominant interpretations: the *green*, the *survivability*, and the *triple bottom line* perceptions of the sustainable festival. These are also summarised in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in Appendix A with annotations. Undoubtedly, there are many more particular understandings that can be detected within the above broad categories. However, further in-depth delving into these understandings, e.g., through the employment of a critical discourse analysis approach (which could be the subject of a future study), would exceed the scope of this thesis. This broad classification will serve as a heuristic framework that will guide a critical discussion of the current understandings that inform the contemporary sustainable festival rhetoric as well as practice.

4.3 Conceptual overlaps: green or environmentally friendly festivals, responsible or ethical festivals and the sustainable festival

Before proceeding to the next section, which will explore interpretations of sustainability within the domain of sustainable festival practice, it is important to delimit the scope of this research by addressing the conceptual overlaps and boundaries that exist among types of performing arts festivals that proclaim to have taken an alternative, seemingly socially desirable route to staging such cultural experiences. These overlaps include *green* or *environmentally friendly* festivals, *responsible* festivals or *ethical* festivals, as well as the *sustainable* festival, which is the focus of this study. This thesis argues that the boundaries between those emerging forms of festivals are often quite unclear, defined by the common historical trends that have informed the evolution of those events. These conceptual overlaps are also underpinned by the inherent ambiguity and subjectivity that describes all the above concepts (e.g., what does the notion of *responsibility* entail?) as well as the difficulty in the actual evaluation of the manifested commitments (e.g., has a green festival been *really* environmentally friendly?). Furthermore, as a growing number of these relatively new types of festivals nestle themselves more firmly in the annual cultural calendar, so their mission, rhetoric, and pertinent practice become increasingly diverse.

Besides delimiting the scope of this research by building a framework through which to acknowledge the conceptual overlaps between these types of festivals, this brief section aims to provide the rationale for refraining from using the above terms interchangeably (e.g., green festival interchangeably with the term sustainable festival). Last, throughout this section and recalling my personal interpretation of sustainability (see section 2.1), I propose that the sustainable festival needs to be approached as a conceptually different scholarly domain – although partially akin – to the above types of festivals.

4.3.1 The Green festival

The debate about what being green actually means and what kind of environmental concerns are included in particular definitions of the *environment* has been an on-going issue since the 1980's (e.g., Weston, 1986; Pepper, 1993; Dryzek et al., 2003). For instance, if being green or environmentally friendly connotes a concern for the environment, does the environment convey the social and physical surroundings in which we live, or does it express a concern for nature and earth's ecological systems? For most people, however, greening essentially refers to the latter and, with particular reference to organisations, it refers to the incorporation of environmentally friendly practices – practices preoccupied with the protection of nature and ecology – into traditional organisational activity, for example, in business or public policy (Guziana, 2011). Therefore, the term green festival is used to describe "a live event that seeks to minimise its resource use and potentially negative impacts on the environment" (Live Earth, 2012). As Gibson and Wong (2011) note, contemporary green festivals send a powerful message to festival audiences that they are forward-minded and aligned with contemporary issues such as climate change, manifesting that they are able to leave a less negative legacy to their surrounding environment and, at the same time, enhance their own brand. In their words:

> By advocating practices such as recycling, use of public
> transport, waste minimisation and use of sustainable
> materials and services, festivals seek to 'green' their image
> and make practical improvements on their environmental
> record (ibid., p.92).

Green festivals perhaps sprouted up out of the legacy created by the late 1960's-to-early 1970's counter-culture political movements, which reacted to the various ecological and social crises facing humanity and, essentially, criticised some of the mainstream social arrangements of modernity (Turner, 2015). Early examples of green festivals include *Woodstock* (USA, 1969), *Glastonbury* (UK, since 1970), and the *Nimbin Auqarius* festival (Australia, 1973), which, in demonstrating their "rebellion against the dominant 'parent' culture" (Sharpe, 2008, p.219), invited their audiences into a radical,

campaigning environmentalism that sought social change. In line with that view, in a recent reader, McKay (2015) regards these first green festivals as "early event markers" which had "the fundamental purpose of envisioning and crafting another, better world" (p.4). Hence these festivals seemed to be proliferating a holistic approach to environmental issues, one that would fashion the conditions through which structural social change would become possible. That ideology, which carried a broad interpretation of the environment and provided links to activism and social change, has been characteristic of the era that nourished the environmental movement (Weston, 1986) and shares precisely the same political-historical context that enabled the emergence of the sustainability movement (see 2.4).

Nevertheless, definitions and practical approaches to the modern green festival are underpinned by much narrower perceptions of the environment. Festival features that account for the broadly appealing label green now seem to refer to practices that include recycling, waste reduction, water saving, elimination of carbon emissions, use of renewable energy, etc. (Laing and Frost, 2010). Approaches such as the above focus on the Earth's resources and ecological systems while they explicitly neglect interactions between the festival, on one hand, and the social environment – the sociocultural, political, as well as economic context in which our lives take place – and the material, human-made environment – such as the urban settings or infrastructure – on the other hand. Essentially, they are established in critically inaccurate suppositions of what constitutes nature, and, consequently, prioritise particular concerns (e.g., environmental conservation) at the expense of a focus on social issues. That divergence of the contemporary green festival from the logic demonstrated by its ancestors in the 1970s, is historically bound by the course of ecological modernisation, which refers to the changing way of conceptualising the environment and, hence, the larger environmental problems (see Hajer, 1995). It has thus been determined by processes of establishment appropriation (Ruttan, 1991), through which values and symbols have been appropriated, re-interpreted in simple manageable concepts, and institutionalised, so as to fit the interests of particular actors across society. This restriction in focus, I argue, leaves important gaps to be filled later in this thesis by the sustainable festival, an

event whose fundamental mission is the envisioning and enablement of another, more humane society.

4.3.2 Responsible and Ethical festivals

Responsible and ethical festivals constitute a rather recent phenomenon within the sector. Smith-Christensen (2009, p.25) defines responsible festivals as:

> events sensitive to the economic, sociocultural and environmental needs within the local host community, and organized in such a way as to optimize the net holistic (positive) output.

Getz (2009) has recently called for a move towards a *responsible* festival sector by emphasising the need for a "paradigmatic shift" (p.75) in the way festivals are planned and staged. Namely, Getz suggests the institutionalisation of a new paradigm, "one that employs a triple bottom line (TBL) approach both to the determination of the worth of events and to evaluation of their impacts." (ibid., p. 62). The responsible festival, therefore, seems to expand the ethical focus of the contemporary green festival (which is limited to particular environmental concerns, as the previous paragraph explained) in order to include broader social responsibility initiatives and marry them with the values of the corporate world (for the TBL framework was invented by and for the interests of business). In other words, this emerging type of responsible festival, as Whitford (2010) skilfully put it, "effectively tries to balance business and community interests" (p.5). As is the case with modern responsible organisations, the responsible (or ethical) festival is typically thought to incorporate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes (Musgrave 2011; Smith-Christensen 2009), which refer to a "subset of corporate responsibilities that deals with a company's voluntary and discretionary relationships with its societal and community stakeholders" (Waddock, 2004, p.10). These might be operationalised, for example, by drawing on broader concerns about employment practices, philanthropy, fair trade, equitable growth, as well as environmental well-being.

It might be questionable, however, whether that kind of festival responsibility (or ethical turn) reflects a paradigmatic shift in itself or simply attempts to manifest an alternative mission statement about what is important for the festival organisation and its stakeholders. Defining responsibility after the adoption of easy-to-fit institutionalised frameworks such as CSR and TBL – which, interestingly, are also used to model many of the self-labelled sustainable festivals – into the production of such events seems to suggest rebalancing endeavour between social, corporate, economic and environmental values that are informed by existing business conventions. Moreover, it implies a disposition towards neglecting the complexity that characterises social systems, trying to translate that into simple relationships that can be managed by putting into action the appropriate tools.

From a different perspective, the ethical festival seems to encourage stakeholders (e.g., festival-goers) to engage in responsible behaviour (e.g., recycle or buy fair-trade products), that is behaviour driven by ethical norms, which have been pre-framed by the event organisers, taking into consideration the consequences of their decisions and actions. There is no doubt that a responsible change in attitude such as showing respect to particular social constructions (e.g., the natural environment) would be socially desirable and perhaps beneficial. It could be argued, however, that this kind of festival responsibility not only does not challenge the material basis of particular behaviours (e.g., consumerism) but also communicates the message that these can go on in the very same way. For example, *Glastonbury*, which is supposed to "exemplify the ideal of responsible entertainment" (Laws, 2011, p.205), has recently been criticised as a "modern cathedral of consumption" (Flinn and Frew, 2014, p.418).

It would be worth trying to explore in detail the similarities and differences between those festivals that position themselves as socially desirable alternatives to contemporary festival practice. That would definitely open up new avenues for academic and policy debate. Nevertheless, engaging in a deeper critique of emerging types of festivals that seem to have taken an alternative, ethical as well as seemingly radical route would exceed the scope of this study. This section sought to provide a brief picture of a

number of conceptual and practical overlaps that might exist between the sustainable festival and other contemporary types of differentiated events (e.g., focus on the protection of the natural environment; incorporation of CSR and TBL approaches). At the same time it aimed to set the boundaries between those festivals – which are quite often explored in relevant literature as conceptually akin – drawing on my own interpretation of sustainability.

4.4 A critical discussion of current understandings of sustainability in the context of the sustainable festival

The thesis will now move on to provide a brief critical discussion on the way in which current sustainable festivals actually understand, communicate and undertake sustainability. This section largely draws on, and expands upon, the findings of a previous study conducted by the author and published in *Tourism Planning and Development* (Zifkos, 2015). That study aimed to locate sustainable festivals around the world and capture understandings of sustainability. The motivation of that research was not to provide an exhaustive list of sustainability constructs or quantitative results for the particular festival ecology but rather to create a valid sustainable festival map and, therefore, reveal the festivals in which (and about which) perceptions of sustainability in this particular context are formed and reproduced. That background study then investigated relevant texts providing information about those festivals (including festival websites, sustainability reports, press releases, reviews) in order to elicit how those organisational actors actually interpret and operationalise the concept of sustainability. The philosophical approach and methods of that exploratory background research will now be presented, in order to provide context for the critical discussion of the contemporary sustainable festival that will follow.

4.4.1 Philosophical Approach

Since texts contain statements and statements are the fundamental unit of discourse, texts constitute a sensible starting point for a relevant

discourse analysis (Fadyl et al., 2013). Being attentive to a Foucauldian approach, this study perceives written language (texts) as "a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (Fairclough, 1992, p.64). I therefore regard the language used in those texts both as being shaped and constrained by social structure, in its broadest sense, and as playing an active role in the social formation of reality, of "its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them" (ibid.). As Hajer (1995) rightfully puts it, "we always act upon our images of reality and are dependent on certain discourses to be able to express ourselves" (p.16). This thesis regards sustainability as one of those socially constructed realities that inform the particular festival context (e.g., sustainable festival management) and is produced, reproduced, and transformed through discursive action. Adopting a postmodern perspective, the following section will thus endeavour to challenge those texts and deconstruct them "for their 'subtexts' of dominant meanings" (Creswell, 2013, p.27).

This section aims to understand how the concept of sustainability is perceived and operationalised in the particular context of the festival by analysing communicative texts compiled by and for the identified sustainable festivals. It particularly seeks to find in these texts stereotypical representations of sustainability and the sustainable festival, and attempts to interpret the grounds of their deployment. The wider context of pertinent discourses that operate at different layers of society is considered to play a significant role in the rhetoric and reality of sustainability in the particular institutional field, that is the micro-level of the festival. The broader, "macro-level discursive repertoires" (Laine, 2005, p.400) of sustainability described in Chapter Two of this thesis are therefore considered to constitute a background from which festival organisations and related individuals draw their various understandings of the concept. In that sense, the larger discursive struggle over the essence of sustainability formed the framework against which relevant texts have been analysed and interpreted.

4.4.2 Data and Method of background desk research

This desk study is timely and contributes empirical data and findings to a scholarly field that lacks academic rigour. It does so by offering a comprehensive map of sustainable performing arts festivals and, importantly, a discourse analysis of communicative texts produced by self-defined sustainable festivals. The present thesis regards discourse analysis as an interim empirical method, and, thus, an empirical bridge to its next potential level of analysis, which will be deployed over the next two chapters. Discourse analysis, as an empirical method (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007; Foucault, 2002), offers much potential to help understand the viewpoints expressed through the communication tools of those festivals and provide a critical engagement with those views. Moreover, it serves as a theoretically informed approach to empirical research, whose "primary aim is to lend empirical visibility to all parts of discourses constituting and structuring social life" (Marttila, 2015, p.146). This theoretical embeddedness of discourse analysis aims to provide visibility to already conceptualised phenomenal structures of discourse – such as the discourse over the notion of sustainable festivals.

Sustainable performing arts festivals were mainly located by Google's public domain search engine and running searches according to the following heuristics: i) "sustainable festival" AND music; ii) sustainability AND performing AND arts AND festival; and, iii) sustainability AND festival AND music. The web-based searches yielded relevant websites, sustainability reports and other industry publications, advertisements, as well as online newspaper articles that contained the phrase "sustainable festival" or indicated a clear relationship between the constituent concepts of this phrase. The same search-terms were used within Google Scholar aiming to encounter references to sustainable festivals in published academic articles. Last, a small number of texts were retrieved following the above heuristics from *Nexis*, a database of UK national newspapers.

This web-based search has been systematic in the sense that it was repeated at various stages of this research project to reassure that the whole population of sustainable festivals would be identified. It should be noted that the texts yielded by the searches were all in English. A recognised limitation

of this study is that it only yielded websites in English. A search in different languages including German (*Nachhaltige Festival*), Italian (*Il Festival Sostenibile*), Spanish (*Festival Sostenible*), and French (*Le Festival Durable*) might return more results about this emerging genre. Given the absence of empirical work, another shortcoming of this background research is its limited ability to assess the *real* (measurable) implications and outcomes of the festivals' mission statements and relevant sustainability practice.

The texts referring to the selected sustainable festivals were carefully reviewed in a repetitive manner, paying particular attention to how the concept of sustainability is manifested (e.g., mission statements; declared commitment) and practically approached (e.g., particular sustainable practices). Mindful of Gephart's (1997) approach to understanding the meaning of texts and then developing and elaborating theory, this study employed "computer-aided interpretive textual analysis" (p.585) as its method of analysis:

> Interpretive textual analysis seeks to develop or recover themes, meanings and patterns in textual data; to provide 'thick' interpretations which display how concepts are operative in the data; and to ground theory in data in an ongoing or iterative process of analysis (ibid.).

The *Nvivo* software package was used as a supportive tool to record similarities and differences in the statements and create interpretive themes (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In particular, this package was used to retrieve all theoretically significant phrases, terms, and words, and then to arrange the data in a manner convenient for the study. Throughout the whole analytical process I have been reflecting on the broader discursive context of sustainability (see Chapter Two), with particular regards to the way larger discourses might have potentially affected sustainability views at the micro-level of the festival. Being attentive to a theoretically informed analysis of socially situated texts (Fairclough, 2003), emerging themes were contextualised against critical contributions in the scholarly discipline of sustainability studies (e.g. by Parr, 2009; Redclift, 2006; Luke, 2005; Pepper, 1993).

4.4.3 Findings – discussion

This background scoping exercise identified a total of 81 performing arts festivals which are subject to one or more of the following criteria: i) are self-proclaimed as sustainable; ii) have a dedicated section to sustainability on their website; iii) explicitly express a commitment to sustainability; or; iv) are considered as sustainable festivals by someone else. The identified festivals were located in North America (23), the UK (20), mainland Europe (18), Australia (15), Asia (2), and Africa (3).

Live music performances constitute the main type of input for all identified performing arts festivals. Hence the vast majority of those events are marketed as *music* festivals by their organisers. However, instead of using the term *sustainable (live) music festivals*, for the purpose of the present analysis, I emphasise the term *sustainable performing arts festivals*. This term is more inclusive of other genres of the performing arts, including, among others, theatre, dance, opera, live drawing, liquid light, and puppetry, which are also encountered in several of the identified festivals.

It is important to note that any results relating to *sustainability* festivals – meaning festivals that are sustainability-themed (e.g., festivals about *sustainable living*) – were excluded from this research since our focus is the sustainable performing arts festival. It should also be noted that the discussion that follows is just epitomising the most significant observations (with regards to the scope of the present thesis) that emerged through the analytical process and it does not aim to be exhaustive. A central thesis that emerges out of this section is that current interpretations of sustainability in the particular context of the festival attend to firmly demarcated conceptual boundaries, with all that this implies for what is being understood as sustainable festival practice. This desk-research yielded results that were both anticipated and unanticipated, which will now be discussed in the following three sections.

4.4.3.1 The Green view: focus on greenism and the natural environment

Through the analysis of selected texts it became clear that all the identified sustainable festivals related their sustainability mission and practice to environmental concerns, manifested through an explicit rhetorical emphasis on environmental consciousness. Deeper analysis, however, revealed that sustainability is construed as being a much narrower, though significant, concept solely related to Earth's ecological systems or *nature*. Sustainability in literature and public discourse is indeed quite often narrowly defined in physical terms, where it refers to the maintenance of certain environmental functions (Neumayer, 2007), and this seems to be the case for the majority of the sustainable festivals. Some years ago, Klaic (2014) foresaw that given the growing concern about climate change festivals would increasingly combine their artistic work with "environmentalist and ecological themes" (p.48). The sustainable festivals of this group seem to fulfil Klaic's *prophecy* since in total 54 of those festivals subscribed to the Green view.

The emphasis of this understanding of sustainability is on preconceived global ecological problems that have remained dominant in the environmental discourse since the late 1970s, including the greenhouse effect, the depletion of scarce resources, and the increasing quantities of environmentally persistent and toxic waste (Hajer, 1995). In this interpretation, sustainability is about acknowledging the festivals' potential negative environmental impacts and deploying, accordingly, appropriate practices – what those festivals define as sustainable practices – that seek to remedy the externalities that this particular human activity entails. For example, *Way out West*, in Sweden, decided to become "the most sustainable festival in the world" (Way Out West, 2016) by reducing the event's environmental impact by 25% in the past year. Similarly, *Splendour in the Grass*, in New South Wales, is considered to have been adopting "Sustainable Event Management practices before the name SEM came into existence" (Howell, 2012), drawing on its leave-no-trace environmental ethos. And *Bumbershoot* (2013) aims to become "one of the most sustainable festivals around… (and) a sustainability trailblazer within the festival industry" by adopting a set of environmentally friendly practices. In summary,

sustainable festivals included in the Green view are labelled as such based on the incorporation of sustainable practices such as on-site waste reduction initiatives (e.g., recycling, composting, and reusing); carbon offsetting schemes; introduction of off-grid energy or contracting with renewable energy providers; encouraging audiences to travel by public transport (so as to reduce CO_2 emissions); and raising-awareness campaigns regarding climate change.

Such a vocabulary of festival sustainability shifts away from a holistic, open-ended, and *radical* – in the original meaning of "going to the roots" (Chambers and Cowan, 2004, p.13) – conceptualisation of sustainability since it focuses on the much narrower ideology of greening. The definition of the environment lies at the very core of distinguishing sustainability from greenism. Does being environmentally friendly mean practising one's concerns for nature (or Earth's systems)? Or does it mean, as I theorise it does, crafting the conditions for flourishing social environments in addition to socially desirable physical surroundings? Festivals have, indeed, been associated with risks for ecological systems, and have had a tangible impact on physical dimensions of their surrounding environment. This is a simple result of both the hordes of visitors travelling to *consume* the festival (as a larger package of products, services, and cultural experiences) within a particular time and space, and the large amount of resources that a number of these events require in order to be staged. Hence, as it is generally maintained, festivals do generate critical unsustainable (negative) flows of energy and material that undermine the quality of natural systems. To quote Brooks et al. (2007, p.30):

> Most, if not all, of the critical flows of material and energy are net contributors to unsustainability; they contribute in multiple ways to the systematic increase of toxic, scarce or persistent materials in natural systems, or contribute to the systematic degradation of those same systems.

Yet, genuine intentions on behalf of festival organisations and sustainable operational strategies aiming to minimise or eliminate such negative impacts fall in the wider focal area of green business practice. This is simply because

sustainability of that type is being associated with the protection of nature alone*,* leaving the interplay between the festival and its complex social surroundings (or environments) rather unaddressed.

The analysis of sustainable festivals' websites revealed that a number of events associate sustainability with policies that aim to reduce environmental impact, which is underpinned by a logic that embraces a romantic view of the natural environment. That eco-centric view is also the core ideology of both the conservation and the environmentalist movements (Adams, 2015). For instance, a naive conservationist rhetoric is evident in *Peats Ridge Festival*'s (2012) mission statement: "Our mission is to be a sustainable event and to help spread the word about preserving this beautiful world we live in." The fact that the majority of the identified sustainable festivals have been classified in the Green view, however, does not simply imply a mis-understanding, a myopic interpretation of sustainability or a naive operationalisation of sustainable festival practices. By contrast, it implies something fundamentally antithetical to the idea of sustainability, and potentially illusive. Minor improvements in festival policies and environmentally benign practices (e.g., recycling, use of renewable energy, etc.) are welcome, for these being "inexpensive steps to make the world less *unsustainable*" (Yanarella et al., 2009, p.297, italics in original). Therefore, attempts made by event professionals to bring into existence less parasitic ways of staging festivals *within* current business conventions should not be dismissed.

Yet this faith in soft technological improvements overwhelmingly draws attention on a single dimension of the environment*,* while the 'foes' of sustainability – which might well reside in larger social environments and institutions – are neglected and never directly challenged. Essentially, this neglect implies a latent acceptance of the present economic and social conventions, providing for their stability. Conformity and stability, however, are not really manifestations of sustainability but, actually, constitute its nemeses. Consequently, the sustainable festivals that subscribe to the Green view are largely irrelevant to the meaning of sustainability and conceptually equal to the modern, so-called Green events (see 4.3.1).

It is also important to reflect on the fact that a number of sustainable festivals that interpret sustainability as a concern for Earth's environment employ professional consultants to monitor the performance with regards to the events' sustainability goals, further identifying them as sustainability *experts*. Lucy B., *Glastonbury*'s "sustainability coordinator", is committed to the festival's "Leave No Trace" pledge and aims to change festival-goers' travel habits by encouraging them to car-share or travel by coach and rail, recognising that transport is the biggest part of the event's environmental footprint (Palazzo, 2016; Vaughan and Randerson, 2009). Two other professional sustainability coordinators, Laura P. (for *Latitude*, *Reading*, and *Leeds Festival*) and Laura S. (for *Bonnaroo*) have similarly been employed full time to design, communicate, and monitor practices pertinent to sustainability (Bonnaroo, 2016; Julie's Bicycle, 2015). Apparently, there seems to be an oligopoly of expertise in the contemporary sustainable performing arts festival scene, which might have resulted to a particular power balance as well as the establishment of a homogenous, "normative isomorphic" (DiMaggio and Powel, 1983, p.147) system of language, interpretations, and practices of sustainability within the industry. The narrow understanding and practice of sustainability in this sector might therefore be regarded as an outcome of exercising expert knowledge that has been purposefully socially constructed, and applied, by experts in their own interest (Scott, 2001). This, however, is demarcating the conceptual and practical boundaries of sustainability, thus contributing to the maintenance of a divide between expert interpretations of sustainability and alternative, lay knowledges that might exist among other people who experience these performing arts festivals.

Last, reflecting findings against the theory of greenwashing I would like to problematise whether the sustainable festivals included in this category are underpinned by a genuine, though short-sighted, commitment to sustainability or they rather express a deceptive intent towards disguising socially destructive practices by promoting their sustainable image. The increasingly common practice of festivals projecting an idealised view of their operation does not necessarily make a positive contribution to their wider environment; as it is the case for many other organisations across society, with special

regards to for-profit businesses, the emotional power of sustainability might be purposefully used to mask otherwise un-sustainable actions. Indeed, there have recently been claims of greenwashing for a number of festivals considered to capitalise on their sustainability credentials, as Laing and Mair (2011) report.

This has also been confirmed by the present study which, ironically, revealed sustainable festivals that actually contradict the principles of their green interpretation of sustainability. *Bonnaroo festival* (2013), for example, gives early registrants a chance to win an all-new – petrol engine – Ford *Fiesta*, although it communicates a strong commitment to sustainability by employing a year-round sustainability coordinator. Similarly, the line-up of the – self-proclaimed as sustainable – *V Festival* (Virgin, 2010) includes artists that travel around the globe in their private jets such as Sir Elton John. Such approach to sustainable festival practice, as performed by production co-ordinators and marketers, comes from a disconnect and compartmentalisation of the sustainability focus from the rest of the festivals' organisational structures. The label of the sustainable festival might therefore not be indicative of a genuine, paradigmatic transformation of festival practice, but might rather simply constitute another marketing attempt employed by festival managers, who are trying to differentiate their events from existing green festivals, as well as put them on the global festival map and attract sustainability-concerned visitors. In other words, the particular sustainable festival that assigns to the Green view might actually be another attempt by profit-oriented festival organisations trying to "preserve and expand their markets or power by posing as friends of the earth" (Parr, 2009, p.16), and, eventually, the green-sustainable festival establishes itself as a new cultural product category.

4.4.3.2 The TBL view: Relative weighting of environmental, social, and economic aspects

The second view of sustainability that emerged through the analysis of texts is distinguished by its managerial rhetoric. For sustainable festivals of this category, sustainability is a goal that can be attained by incorporating

festival practices that balance the various environmental, social, and economic impacts of the events. It is therefore ascribing to an interpretation of sustainability informed by the accounting notion of the triple bottom line of "people, planet, profits" (Elkington, 1997). This construct of sustainability has also been apparent and reoccurring in reviewing relevant literature, as revealed in section 4.2.3. The adoption of the TBL metaphor from sustainable festivals of this kind attempts to frame the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the festivals so they can be measured and reported in a way that is similar to business financial accounting models. This is providing the sustainable festival, as an organisation, with the institutionalised corporate language as well as the tools for meeting the objectives of the TBL tripod, which now become sustainability objectives. As manifested by the *Sunrise Festival* (Sunrise Celebration, 2015):

> Sunrise will be a beacon of sustainability. We will grow and develop balancing the social, economic and environmental impacts of our activities. We believe we have the most comprehensive sustainability policy and strategy of all music festivals in the UK.

As I argued previously, discourses of sustainability are becoming corporatised to an increasing extent, and the festival sector is following this trend, developing to an ancillary of this process. This is confirmed both by the present study's findings as well as by the proliferation of scholarly contributions dealing with TBL approaches in festival management in the relevant literature (e.g., Gration et al., 2011; Hede, 2007;Sherwood, 2007). There is no doubt that such an interpretation of sustainability broadens the scope of greening – which has been the focus of the majority of the identified sustainable festivals – to include the social and economic dimensions of the festivals' environment. Yet advances that introduce such popular corporate discourses of sustainability into the festival sector are moving away from the emancipatory, bottom-up and confrontational logic of sustainability, to the comfortable, measurable, and, often, deceptive corporate practice of triple bottom line reporting.

I argue that the adoption of this trifold sustainability tool enables festival organisers to introduce two additional forms of capital –environmental and social – into their accounting practices that can be traded-off with economic capital. And this is communicated as an acceptable practice oriented towards sustainability. For instance, the environmental impact – again, the term *environment* used in the meaning of a *nature out there* – of a festival might be balanced by making charitable donations. As *Hopscotch* festival's directors state: "we offset our environmental impact with locally sourced renewable energy and carbon offsets through a contribution to NC GreenPower" (Hopscotch Music Festival, 2014). In other words, a festival whose "main goal is to become sustainable" (Cathell, 2015) is explicitly admitting its negative impact on the environmental capital involved in the process of staging the event, yet having the economic privilege to pay a fair amount of funds to a charity is enough to clear its appraisable 'sins'.

A fundamental contradiction in the TBL approach that these sustainable festivals follow has just been exposed. Essentially, this practice is portrayed as a strategic solution for achieving a sustainable world. Similarly, other sustainable festivals that attend to the TBL approach consider the practice of making ethical products available for sale to festival-goers as being an important step towards delivering benefits to the social sphere of their environment. To them, the 'innovation' of introducing a social dimension of capital (e.g., fair trade merchandise) that does actually co-exist with the economic one, implies a sustainable, moral transformation in the business of producing festivals. As described in *Fringe Festival*'s (2013) *Guide to Sustainable Practice*, "where practical, local, ethical and green products are purchased" (p.2).

Such TBL practices, however, represent safe reformist business interventions that do not necessarily challenge the larger social mechanisms that might inhibit societal flourishing. The sustainable festival of this group aspires "to be a catalyst for positive change" (Wonderfruit, 2016) while advocating for managerially efficient, non-institutional solutions that sustain the legitimacy of particular arrangements and behaviours. In the above two cases, for example, the employed TBL-informed *sustainable* festival practices

nod to social equity and environmental respect while extolling the ability of market mechanisms (e.g., carbon offsetting and ethical accreditation schemes) to solve what are supposed to constitute serious contemporary problems. But the production and consumption of festivals is embedded in larger systems (e.g., the festival as a capitalist corporation), and trends (e.g., the social and economic order of consumerism) which that kind of sustainable festival avoids to confront, projecting instead an untrue trifold vizard of sustainability.

As it is the case for the sustainable festivals that ascribe to the Green view, these festivals seem to be quite counter-radical in the sense that they are not questioning the structural conditions of our society but simply become part of it. For instance, the "throw-away consumerism" (Malewitz, 2014) that takes place in a festival is acceptable if it is sustainable and part of a sustainable turn of the festival industry, e.g., if there are management systems in place to deal with excess waste and increased CO_2 emissions, or if managers' decisions have been taken by bringing into attention decent global working conditions in other continents (e.g., fair trade) or the earnings of local farmers. Hence this kind of sustainability revolutionarism turns out to be an applicable signal and restorative apparatus for the current paradigm of consumer capitalism, providing for its adaptation to its contradictions and subsumption of protest – if the festival is regarded as a potentially liminal space of objection to the established order (Abrahams, 1982).

On reflecting this particular view of the sustainable festival on the broader discursive context of sustainability one could realise the extent to which the neo-liberal philosophy of individualism has affected sustainability rhetoric and practice at the micro-level of the festival. Notably, since the publication of the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987), all efforts conducted by dominant international organisations to communicate sustainability as a universal set of principles placed emphasis on changes in individual values and individual responsibility rather than on the need for institutional change (Springett, 2015). Individualism, as Harvey (2007) maintains, informs and shapes the neoliberal determination of transferring all responsibility to the

individual. As described in the *Sunrise Festival's* (Sunrise Celebration, 2015) dedicated page to sustainability:

> This year we are again carrying out an improved
> sustainability appraisal of Sunrise: Another World festival. […]
> We will, as ever, be surveying YOU, our audience, about your
> attitudes to the event, how you travelled, where you came
> from, your use of local services and so forth, so that we can
> measure better our social, economic and environmental
> impact. We are also, for the first time in 4 years, collecting
> and collating details of all crew travel, to get a better picture
> of our environmental imprint on the Earth. Hopefully, all this
> will be used to come up with some meaningful statistics that,
> in turn, can be used to inspire further positive action! (capitals
> in original)

Stylistically, the above excerpt takes on a peculiar tone, repeating the word 'you' many times, also using it in uppercase, thus semantically positioning individual participants as autonomous agents who have the power to determine the level of festival sustainability based on their individual choices. This shift of responsibility to the individual implies that festival-goers are exclusively responsible for all the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the festival. Hence festival participants have a power of choice and control over creating either an unsustainable or a sustainable event. In turn, this suggests that a festival which has in place a managerially effective system of controlling, measuring and disclosing the impact of its visitors' individual choices – as the TBL reporting suggests – is capable of becoming a model for other festivals that wish to follow the sustainable path.

What has been neglected, however, is that in operationalising the TBL sustainable framework the festival has externalised its losses to its wider environment as an issue of good individual and corporate practice, while the mechanisms that nurture these harms are still in place. Further, a number of sustainable festivals that inform their sustainability mission and practice drawing on the principles of TBL reporting seem to perform reward schemes for festival-goers who engage themselves in what the organisers have pre-defined as sustainable behaviour. For example, *Roskilde Festival* offers cold

beer in return for full bags of recycling (Jones, 2014) and *Glastonbury*'s sustainability scheme provides discounted entry tickets to those who decide to travel to the festival via public transport (Moore, 2014). Similarly, another festival that adopts the logic of TBL reporting to communicate its sustainable intervention, *Isle of Wight* (2013), offers rewards to individual festival-goers who decide to re-use their tents – rather than leave them behind – and, moreover, proudly advertises that it would donate abandoned tents to charity. This logic, however, prises utilitarian, narrowly-defined gains over broader, communitarian considerations and the very practice of attending a sustainable festival is rendered to one of passive consumption at the level of the individual. In this context the sustainable festival constitutes simply a utilitarian space-time for meeting individual, private ends. This is relevant to Borgmann's (1993, p.41) reading of leisure in the context of late 21st century, which emphasises the notion of "leisure as consumption". Namely, Borgmann provides an interpretation of people's behaviour while being engaged in contexts of leisure, where "the public could gather and enjoy itself".

> But the people who filled these spaces had become silent,
> passive, and distracted. No longer actors and connoisseurs
> of public spectacles, they had begun to turn into recipients
> and consumers of commodities, produced for them by
> experts (ibid.).

From that perspective, individual visitors' desire to maximise own benefit, through passive consumption, is regarded to be good for sustainability, as is the individual organisation's (e.g., the festival's) desire to maximise profit. Informed action towards true sustainability has no place in a world full of self-interested festival-goers and competing festival organisers. Perhaps for Pieper (1965) festivals that engage participants in such individual gain-maximising (yet sustainable) behaviour would fall into the category of "pseudo-festivals" (p.4) simply because the loss of utilitarian profit for the people who participate in festive activity is a vital ingredient that makes a playful event, a *festival*. As Pepper (1995) notes, individualism's optimism places faith in a continuous process of individuals changing their values and

lifestyles driven by own interest, which should then "enable a more sustainable world to be created" (Positive News, 2012).

The argument that a socially desirable form of festival, the sustainable festival, will emerge through individuals' efforts seeking to maximise their personal benefit – a typical feature of a *gesellschaft* society – is difficult to accept. This logic focuses attention on sustainable change coming through individuals' changing lifestyles, as a bottom-up process, and not on the covert social conventions and ready-made ideas – created at higher layers of social organisation – that drive individual behaviour towards certain ends, quite often to the opposite direction. TBL approaches endeavour to frame sustainability, in the context of the sustainable festival, in the language of conventional event business. What would be interesting, however, is to try and articulate the business of creating festival experiences and staging festivals in the language of sustainability.

4.4.3.3 Alternative understandings of sustainability and the sustainable festival

Throughout the analysis it became clear that a small number of sustainable festivals have a sustainability mission orientation and employ practices that seem to diverge, to a smaller or larger degree, from dominant interpretations of sustainability in the festival sector. More importantly, these festivals seem to reject standardised, ready-made models of sustainability that are being imported by the world of business and imitated by the festival industry at large. I regard such festivals as strongholds of resistance to institutionalised interpretations of sustainability for they seek to understand and establish its concept on their own terms. I thus considered these sustainable festivals to constitute a spectrum, rather than a category, of events which convey understandings of sustainability that are quite different to those constructed within the previous two categories. This section will select and discuss briefly some shared or distinctive features of those festivals' understandings of the concept.

Despite the various sustainability ethoi communicated through their mission statements, collectively, the *sustainable* festivals that have been classified in this category express, firstly, a much broader understanding of the term environment. This understanding goes beyond reductive views that interpret the environment as nature per se (e.g., festivals of the Green view) or as a set of particular ecological, social, and economic elements that can be measured and effectively managed (e.g., festivals of the TBL view). This view also implies an understanding of sustainability as tied to larger socially constructed systems in which the festival takes place. Hence there exists a dialectical, organic relationship between the festival and its surrounding environment. For instance, as manifested by the organisers of the *Taragalte World Music* Festival (2013) in Morocco: "Taragalte wants to create a positive and sustainable future by learning from, and preserving, the past". The term *past*, in *Taragalte*'s sustainability aims, refers to intangible artefacts of the host region's ancestral cultural heritage, including beliefs and value systems, musical forms, as well as aspects of the host community's nomadic quotidian life. It is thus implied that by contributing to dimensions and sustaining its intangible, complex cultural environment the festival may nurture its own flourishing, sustainable future. A sustainability mission inclusive of such cultural concerns provides signs of a more holistic environmentalism that is aware of the complexity of the challenges human societies face and which are not restricted to the issue of climate change. It is an expression of a kind of cultural environmentalism, I would argue, which focuses attention on the festival's (and all the human agents' that constitute it) relationships with complex, contextually informed and socially constructed environments that are remarkably much more nuanced and varied comparing to those suggested by the other two categories of sustainable festivals.

Similarly, *Rothbury Music Festival* (2011) acknowledges that music – both as an element of human culture and as a recreational and educational field – lies at its very core. Consequently, *Rothbury* (ibid.) includes in its sustainability practice particular efforts that aim to help keep music as a subject in local schools' (in Michigan) curriculum, supported by donations of musical instruments, as well as by offering performance opportunities and master classes to music students in the host province. Again, this provides

evidence of a more inclusive understanding of the surrounding environment and, moreover, a more holistic view of the resources – or "flows of energy and material" (Brooks et al., 2007, p.v) – that are significantly important for the festival to operate and sustain its presence in the long-term. Sustainability, as understood by the sustainable festivals of the Green view (green environmentalism), is solely grounded on the way the festival relates to Earth's ecological systems by providing particular emphasis on the needed resources for staging the event (inbound flow, e.g., energy; food) as well as the impact of the flow of material from the festival to its natural surroundings (outbound flow, e.g., waste; CO_2 emissions). By contrast, by contextualising sustainability within the framework of a broader environmentalism, the events of this category may reveal how the festival – and its participants – relates to complex, socially informed surroundings.

Across the sustainable festivals of this category a number of mission statements seemed to challenge the festival sustainability philosophies embodied in the "leave no trace" ethos, which is quite a popular approach among sustainable festivals. As argued earlier, the sustainable festivals that subscribe to the *Green* and *TBL* constructions of sustainability maintain that the very premise of a festival that aims to become an advocate of this sustainable turn is well founded on the "zero impact" ethos. For example, *Sunscape Festival* (2015) and *Lightning in a Bottle* (2016) explain the reasons that make them *sustainable* events by communicating the implementation of "leave no trace" policies such as providing on-site recycling points, setting rules for participants to take everything out with them, or dealing with noise pollution.

Paradoxically, this is a confession that these events unavoidably develop a parasitic relationship with their surrounding environment (however this has been defined) and, therefore, labelling themselves sustainable commits them into practices that aim to minimise the anticipated negative impacts. At best, if the employed sustainable practices work effectively, as planned, the festivals' surrounding environments are expected to remain (ideally) intact after the events are over, as if nothing happened. Unlike those events, the *Building Man Festival* (2014) in Herefordshire proudly stands for

the complete opposite: it declares a commitment to replace "the outmoded 'leave no trace' philosophy" (ibid.) with a "leave trace" one and, thus, conveys a message of sustainability activism. *Building Man*'s sustainability interventions are attentive to a "leave trace" ethos which includes the development of permanent site infrastructure (e.g., arts hubs) that would be later used by communities – thus affecting dimensions of its built environment – and action taken to pioneer and encourage participants to experiment with alternative economic models and social relations (e.g., socially valuable participation; bartering and gift economies).

At a conceptual level, this acknowledges that the sustainable festival might be capable to develop a symbiotic relationship with its broader environment and also extolls the role of the festival for creating a meaningful transformation, enhancement, and even evolution of its complex surroundings. In other words, these alternative views of the sustainable festival convey understandings that match sustainability with the notion of change, change that is not limited to changing individual values or lifestyles but rather refers to the alteration of the various dimensions that constitute the complex, socially constructed environment in which the festival takes place.

Another feature of the construct of sustainability present in a number of (what this section labelled as) alternative sustainable festivals is its human-centred perspective. Across the mission statements of those events, it is emphasised that commitment and practical approach to a sustainable world encompasses actions necessarily aimed at the promotion of human well-being and development; interventions that are perceived to enable participants to transform themselves, their social environment and, thus, lead flourishing lives and communities. *Saga Fest* (2015) in Iceland, which is self-labelled as *transformative* and *sustainable*, quotes World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of human well-being and division into three categories – physical, mental, and social – and profoundly commits itself to the latter. Its sustainability strategy therefore regards human beings as the real end of its existence and particularly aims to design activities that provide for its participants' "personal and collective well-being" (ibid.). As stated by Scott Shigeoka (2015), founder of the festival:

> Transformative music and arts festivals provide opportunities
> for diverse communities to gather, co-create and deeply
> connect with each other. They are essentially pop-up
> experiences that serve as a training ground for people to
> imagine and design radical and fresh takes on the concept of
> "community".

This construct of sustainability seems to be informed by a kind of collective, long-term anthropocentrism that stems from a particular individual-society dialectic, quite dissimilar to the eco- and techno-centricity that characterises the majority of the sustainable festivals. Essentially, as the event claims, there exists an important function of the festival with regards to sustainability, namely to create temporary communities where participants (including guests and hosts) have the chance to experience and play with alternative societies that place inclusivity, participation, shared learning, authenticity and imagination at the core of social life. For example, *Saga Festival*'s organisers convene regular community meetings, before the event, where members of the local community are invited as equals to contribute ideas into the event planning, think about their potential role in the actual staging of the festival, or simply share any concerns regarding the effects of the event on them (Saga Festival, 2015). The festival also includes in its activities a series of workshops – which take place in parallel to the main music line up – where guests and members of the local community are invited to co-create a meaningful leisure and learning experience by "sharing stories, experiences and connecting with each other" (ibid.). It would be very interesting to explore empirically in the future whether this emerging rhetoric of sustainability in the context of the festival is matched by reality and whether it can *really* accomplish radical, socially desired change. At a conceptual level, however, this anthropocentric ethos implies that sustainable practices are understood as interventions in the festival's broader social environment aimed at qualitative, non-measurable, and often subjective and context-specific improvements in dimensions that furnish the possibilities for individual as well as societal prosperity. In turn, the sustainable festival emerges as an organisation that is dependent upon the health of its affiliated communities to survive and flourish. These dimensions have largely been neglected in the

seemingly reductive interpretations of sustainability within the Green or the TBL views.

4.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter sought to understand how sustainability is being interpreted, constructed, and communicated in the particular context of the festival. In light of the findings of both the present literature review and a background desk-research conducted by the author (Zifkos, 2015), a number of conceptual deficiencies and contradictions inherent in those contemporary approaches and understandings of sustainability, both in relevant scholarship and in festival practice, were highlighted and critically discussed. The sustainability commitments and true potential of existing sustainable festivals, it is argued, need to be treated with suspicion since these events are not threatening to change society in any fundamental way. An overall recommendation which emerges out of this discussion is that a sustainable turn of the festival – a shift towards an organisation whose principal commitment is to ease the emergence of a sustainable society, a society that supports broader societal fulfilment – is impossible to be attained if current approaches to sustainable festivals are not fundamentally conceptually confronted. As a way of summary, this concluding section will briefly reflect on the implications of dominant understandings of the sustainable festival by attempting to provide answers to the question 'What is actually being sustained in current approaches to the sustainable festival?'

Although each identified sustainable festival sculpts its sustainability mission and operationalises pertinent practice in its own way, they all seem to have a common pattern and share similar understandings of the concept, which derive from mainstream discourses and institutionalised, organisational interpretations of sustainability. As argued, it seems clear that across the majority of the so-called sustainable performing arts festivals, sustainability is substituted for varieties of shallow green business practice or triple bottom line disclosures on festival organisational performance, which frame and communicate the notion of sustainability in comfortable, corporate language.

Analysis revealed that this sustainable festival employs a limited range of elements to construct itself as a socially desirable, sustainable agent. Reflecting on the critical framework presented in the previous chapter I could argue that sustainable development – the appropriated, institutionalised and inherently reductive version of selected aspects of sustainability constructs – is the presiding discourse determining festivals' approaches to a sustainable turn.

Nevertheless, considering the way this dominant discourse has been constructed at higher levels of society and conveyed – in a technocratic, top-down approach that favours particular institutional interests – a particular way of conceiving what sustainability is and how societies can get there, it is questionable whether any radical version of staged festival experience committed to the advancement of societal flourishing will emerge from within current sustainable festival models. By contrast, detaching sustainability from its open-ended, visionary and context-specific premises entails the danger of rendering its concept into a blueprint for top-down festival organisers' action. That separation produces, in turn, a serious deviation, from contributing to long-term, social fulfilment to sustaining the festival organisation through new market opportunities. Their embodied sustainable practices act as corporate *blessings*; they renew and strengthen established ways of producing contemporary cultural products through differentiating their outputs that, in turn, enable them to carve out a niche market appealing to a progressive consumer audience. Festivals of that kind might become "pseudo-sustainable" events, to borrow Boorstin's (1962) prophetic words; events that merely struggle for their own prestige and position in a highly competitive sector by providing purposefully planned staged experiences and program participants' sustainable behaviour. Whether those sustainabilities are real – that is for them to embody emancipatory and transgressive qualities – or not, is not of interest as long as the pseudo-sustainable festivals have achieved to attract significant attention, visitors, and revenue. In questioning 'What is actually being sustained?' in these sustainable festival approaches, the answer thus points to the latter.

The fact that festival organisers seem to be acknowledging a number of potentially unfavourable impacts of their decisions and actions to the surroundings of their events and attempt, in response, to introduce managerial solutions that embody more environmentally benign and (seemingly) socially responsible practices is a welcome development, if candid, that should not be dismissed. Significant benefits for a wide range of festival stakeholders might be produced through reforming festival practice towards that end, *within* the current social and business conventions. The dominant understandings of sustainability among the majority of contemporary sustainable festivals, however, are underpinned by the same assumptions that govern the prevailing socio-economic paradigm of late capitalism, to name just a few: market powers and responsible management practice can be trusted to achieve sustainability (as a *telos*); it is possible to observe, measure, and reduce the impact of corporate practice to the environment *out there*; promoting individual responsibility (e.g., translating individual choices into market preferences) can help current production processes to adapt to major challenges and overcome ecological or social constraints.

Sustainability is not merely about managerial efficiency; this thesis theorised sustainability as embodying emancipatory visions of alternatives for society, a process that might involve problematising the fundamental causal social structures that systematically undermine societal flourishing. Therefore any endeavour to envisage a sustainable world would involve conceptions of alternative arrangements and alternative societies. As Banerjee (2009) skilfully put it, sustainability "is about rethinking human–nature relationships, re-examining current doctrines of progress and modernity, and privileging alternate visions of the world" (p.92). Introducing in the micro-environment of the festival non-institutional, ideologically safe, inexpensive, jolly and appealing – to the language of business – sustainability initiatives that are governed by a techno-centric corporate logic does not directly challenge any existing dominant assumptions and trends, or the larger social arrangements within which festivals and festival experiences take place. The prevailing sustainable festival model is therefore incapable of offering any critical modification or complete dismissal of conventional institutional or

organisational behaviours that determine our lives. By contrast, current sustainable festival practice is actually postponing, purposefully or not, the daunting venture of problematising and confronting larger constructs and social conventions, contributing in that sense to their perpetuation. Hence current approaches to the sustainable festival seem to maintain a certain established, dominant ideological order. In other words, those seemingly progressive, socially desirable, alternative and even revolutionary initiatives in the context of the festival, which for some scholars represent a paradigmatic shift towards the institutionalisation of sustainable festival practice (Getz, 2009), seem to preserve the larger social trends and knowledges that festival organisers purport to subvert.

As Kuhn (2012) notably argued, the transition from one paradigm (e.g., the conventional or non-sustainable festival) to a new one (e.g., the sustainable festival) is rather "a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications" (p.85), manifesting, in that sense "a decisive difference in the modes of solution" (ibid.). A number of representatives of this new field of the festival industry propagate the bold message that "Another world is possible" (Sunrise Festivals, 2013; Positive news, 2012) through the exercise of their sustainable practices. Hence it may be also informative to invoke here Foucault's notion of *heterotopia* (Greek: *ἕτερος τόπος*, another/different place). For Hetherington (1997, p.40), the Foucauldian term *heterotopias* refers to:

> spaces in which an alternative social ordering is performed.
> These are spaces in which a new way of ordering emerges
> that stands in contrast to the taken-for-granted mundane idea
> of social order that exists within society.

Thus heterotopias provide the space for human occupants to envision and challenge prevailing norms, and even experience within a particular time-space a subversive, alternative version of what is perceived to be mainstream. Indeed, the festivals' potential to serve as heterotopias has been

well documented in both 'classical' and contemporary festival studies (Olsen, 2013; Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013; Bakhtin, 1984; Turner, 1982).

Drawing on the above notions, however, it is difficult to regard the contemporary sustainable festival as a genuine agent of a paradigm shift or a move towards another world. Current models of the sustainable festival are not intended to trigger fundamental change in society. They simply provide for the continuation of ideologies and practices that are convenient for the broader social and economic configurations in which they are embedded. There is no radical re-visioning of ways of engaging in the social and economic life or ways of living, and, thus, sustainability of that kind is counter-productive. This argument provides an alternative answer to the question 'What is actually being sustained?' in current sustainable festival approaches: besides the festival organisation itself, it is the dominant socio-economic paradigm that is being sustained.

The relationship between recreational activism – considering sustainability-oriented interventions in the context of festivals as a form of activism – and neoliberalism is an area that has just started to attract scholarly attention (Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013; Erickson, 2011). In light of findings, the present thesis draws on these studies to argue that sustainability activism of that kind, performed both from the perspective of festival participants and festival organisers, actually works (often unintentionally) to legitimise neoliberalism's economic and social agenda. This is, firstly, because festival participants perceive the impacts of the employed sustainable practices as an outcome of their individual choices, neglecting that their choices also support the expansion of current modes of production into their social lives, and failing to realise the conventions that provide these choices. Secondly, sustainable festivals can be seen as powerful, almost ideal spaces for 'educating' the public about neoliberalism and reproducing its logics (e.g., efficiency of market-based solutions) by engaging participants into aestheticised, affective modes of commodity consumption (e.g., organic and fair trade products or the sustainable festival as a product itself). Nevertheless, these processes of commercialisation and commodification of experience are typical in the realm of late capitalism,

which is being intensified in the particular context of the festival through the adoption of seemingly progressive practices.

This chapter also provided evidence arguing that current approaches to understanding sustainability in the festival context imply a parasitic relationship between the festival and its host environment (reductive definitions of the environment employed). As a result, festival directors label as sustainable, events that embed into their mission and operation the goal of minimising the anticipated negative impacts (or externalities) produced by staging their festivals. The telos of the sustainability mission of a number of identified sustainable festivals is thus manifested through a leave no trace ethos. Nevertheless, this admission is precisely the opposite pole of sustainability: put differently, I argue that a great number of contemporary sustainable performing arts festivals should be rather labelled as un-sustainability-aware because in their endeavour to deploy rhetoric and tactics in achieving sustainability they are actually attempting to measure their distance from their telos of sustainability, inverting in that sense the core ideological problem.

At best, if the employed sustainable practices work effectively, as planned, the festivals' surrounding environments are expected to remain (ideally) intact after the festivals are over, as if nothing happened, and the festival ends up being sustainable. This conceptual approach is, however, quite oxymoronic given the wealth of evidence that festivals have the potential to change a wide range of dimensions of their broader surrounding environment, by making desirable, positive contributions to it, which the majority of contemporary sustainable festivals seems to currently neglect. A third answer to the question 'What is actually being sustained?' in current understandings of the sustainable festival would therefore point to the short-sighted conception that the festival is inherently associated with the creation of unsustainable (in the meaning of adverse) flows of materials and energy in relation to its (external) environment, which need to be eliminated or, at least, minimised.

An emergent argument of this thesis is that the contemporary sustainable festival scene needs to go through its own metamorphosis; new

narratives of the sustainable festival need to be developed, constructed from the ground up, to overcome the deficiencies and contradictions of current theoretical and practical interpretations of sustainability in the particular context. Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) regarded festivals as "arenas of discourse" (p.103), providing opportunities for the creation of new discourses by enabling individual participants express and negotiate their views. That very capacity of the festival to furnish the opportunity of creating new discourses is precisely what this thesis will address.

Having uncovered in this chapter the misunderstandings and limitations governing current sustainable festival understandings I will move on to the remainder of this thesis to take significant strides in remedying these conceptual shortcomings and re-constructing the meaning of the sustainable festival. The critical conceptual framework that has been developed over Chapters Two and Four provided evidence of the negative conditions within which current sustainability understandings have been demarcated. This framework will be integrated with the findings of a qualitative, empirical study which aimed to elicit perceived aspects of the performing arts festival that provide the creative possibilities for traversing the largely deficient concept of the contemporary sustainable festival. In other words, the key objective of the empirical inquiry has been to capture and make sense of processes and perceptions conductive to an alternative paradigm of the sustainable festival. This was made possible by exploring participants' narratives and visions of a festival that thrives symbiotically with the complex, larger social systems in which it takes place – that is, for it to be a sustainable festival.

By encouraging festival participants to project their subjective accounts, emotional and social worlds, as well as their lived experiences over a festival that contributes to a flourishing society over the long-term, I attempted to reveal some elements, processes, and principles that, at least, could re-introduce humanity into sustainability discussions pertinent to the particular context. Additionally, by outlining the conceptual boundaries within which sustainability is currently being understood and undertaken, it became possible for the researcher to elicit and conceptualise the sustainability praxes (plural of *praxis*; as opposed to sustainability/sustainable *practices*)

being enacted in the particular field outside of the boundaries of those demarcations. This, in turn, could guide some dialogue about the alternative knowledges that might inform the concept of the sustainable festival. Essentially, through that attempt I hope to open a new avenue for a re-appropriation of the (once plastic) construct of sustainability in the particular context of the festival – which is the overall aim of this thesis – over and against the dominance of shallow environmentalist (green) or reductive managerialist business accounts of what constitutes a sustainable festival or sustainable festival practice.

Chapter Five: Empirical Research Design and Methods

All empirical research is grounded on certain philosophical assumptions about what constitutes appropriate research and what are the most reasonable methods for the generation of knowledge in a particular study. It is therefore important to present the design of this research, which, as Yin (2003) suggests, is the "logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions" (p.20).

The philosophical background and design of the first part of this empirical study – which used discourse analysis to provide clarity to the phenomenal structure of discourse over the notion of sustainable festivals – has been embedded and presented in the previous chapter (see 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). This chapter will outline, justify and discuss in detail the philosophical assumptions and the methodological design underpinning the second part of this empirical, qualitative research project, which aims to elicit knowledge about the sustainable festival drawing on people's experience. Further, it describes the research process adopted to address the following secondary research question.

- What does the sustainable festival look like and feel for the people who experience the festival?

5.1 Philosophical, paradigmatic, and interpretive framework

As qualitative researchers, we are obligated to be "reflexive about what we bring to the scene, what we see, and how we see it" (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). I will now briefly discuss the philosophical, paradigmatic, as well as interpretive frameworks that will shape the empirical part of this research. As Creswell (2013, p.20) notes, in conducting qualitative research, researchers make particular assumptions, which reveal their philosophical stance towards the nature of social reality (*ontology*), the way they derive or create the knowledge (*epistemology*), the contribution of values to the research

(*axiology*), the language of the research (*rhetoric*), as well as the methodological tools used in the process (*methodology*). Scholars that undertake qualitative research therefore adopt a particular philosophical stance on each of these assumptions (ibid.). First, in reference to the ontological assumption, the acknowledgement that there is significant value in sustainability knowledge and meaning emerging from the bottom-up, constructed at the level of the individual, implies the embracement of the idea that there exist subjective, diverse realities, namely, in this case, differing visions of sustainability. This relativist ontological stance therefore suggests that there is no single, objective social construct of sustainability that can be discovered and described (Schreiber and Martin, 2013).

This stance, in turn, prescribes a particular epistemological position: that knowledge is created from "shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.130). A practical implication of this stance for the present research is that I regard the particular context of the festival as a significant field for constructing knowledge interactively with the research participants and material collected in the field. My major task in the quest of meaning making has therefore been both the explication of participants' understandings and realities, and the reflection of those multiple realities on my own sustainability understandings and analytic insights.

The axiological question asserts that in qualitative research scholars accept that their inquiry is value-driven and, consequently, they "actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field" (Creswell, 2013, p.20). In section 2.1, I positioned myself firmly among the dominant discourses of sustainability and reported my values and biases. That section acknowledged the principles directing my inquiry and thus acknowledged that interpretation of data largely flows, and is shaped, from my own personal background, understandings and experiences. It therefore provided me with the reflexivity to make confessions, confront myself, and make my "assumptions explicit so that the reader is aware of their impact" (Cunliffe, 2003, p.995).

The rhetorical issue relates to the writing style and the vocabulary of emerging terms. My textual strategy is obvious to the reader: I quite often refer to myself in first-person singular, employing the personal pronoun "I" and also allow space for definitions of employed terms (e.g., sustainability; the sustainable festival, etc.) to evolve throughout the thesis rather than define them myself based on existing viewpoints. Finally, my methodological approach is considered to be hermeneutical and dialectical, attending to an inductive, ground-up logic, since the final aim is to "distil a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions" (Lincoln and Guba, 1994, p.111). Indeed, as stated previously, the present study aims to expand our understanding and meaningfully re-appropriate the plastic construct of sustainability in the particular context of the festival over and against the dominance of concrete, top-down structures that inform environmentalist or reductive managerialist business accounts of what constitutes a sustainable festival or sustainable festival practice.

Qualitative researchers also bring into their study their worldviews or set of basic beliefs, which have been defined as "paradigms" (ibid.). The description, in the previous paragraph, of the philosophical assumptions that guide my inquiry has already revealed that I have adopted a social constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2006; Knorr-Cetina, 1981), which suggests that the inquirer seeks to understand the complexity of the contextual, subjective participants' meanings of a situation. Bringing this belief into this study implies that the construction of the sustainable festival is alterable, as is its related reality. This, in turn, has led me to endeavour the development of a pertinent theory inductively and from the bottom-up, through interaction with festival participants within the particular context of the performing arts festival, and by recognising that interpretation of what I find is shaped by my own experiences and background (Creswell, 2013).

The paradigmatic frameworks, in turn, are informed by particular interpretive stances that qualitative researchers adopt, which operate at a less philosophical level yet provide a pervasive lens on all dimensions of any qualitative scholarly inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Section 4.4.1 briefly addressed

the postmodern influences of this study, directing it towards challenging contemporary understandings of sustainability residing at higher levels of social organisation and attempting to interpret the inconsistencies and contradictions embedded in its dominant discourses. Maintaining a postmodern interpretive position also suggests that the aim of research is not only to understand festival participants' constructions of sustainability but also reconstruct the visions of sustainability that they initially hold, emphasising the importance of interpreting participants' "envisioning of new possibilities" (ibid., p. 27). Constructivist grounded theory, which is the employed approach to this study, falls directly within the postmodern interpretive framework since it liberates meaning creation (ibid.). This approach provided this study with the ability to tease out the product of participants' attempts to explore the knowledges that might inform an alternative narrative of the sustainable festival.

5.2 Research approach

5.2.1 Qualitative inquiry

In positioning myself against dominant understandings of sustainability, in section 2.1, I argued that the social construction of sustainability takes place at the intersection of institutionalised top-down, and problem-orientated, visionary bottom-up procedures. Over the previous chapters I attempted to bring to the surface the hidden boundaries and processes which flow from the former – and all that those imply for the particular phenomenon of the sustainable festival – leading to the marginalisation of other viewpoints that might emerge from the latter. Nevertheless, maintaining that the knowledge of sustainability emerges from the bottom-up, I contend that it is important to listen to the voices of individuals, explore their complex, subjective meanings of sustainability forged within the particular context of the festival, and interpret how sustainability is being understood and undertaken outside of the boundaries of current dominant top-down demarcations.

I also wanted to go a step further than mere interpretation by creating the foundations of my own theory of the sustainable festival as it has been arising "from a shared horizon between participants and researcher"

(Schreiber and Martin, 2013, p.185). In order to achieve this overarching aim the methodological approach needed to be empirical and qualitative. Namely, a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) was employed in order to elicit understandings and perceptions of sustainability in the context of the performing arts festival and ultimately create an alternative, ground up interpretation of the sustainable festival.

5.2.2 Constructivist grounded theory approach

Charmaz's (2006) approach to qualitative inquiry places priority on subjective, multiple realities; advocates for studying how participants construct meanings in particular contexts; and maintains that both data and analysis are "created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (p.130). Meaning and knowledge are constantly in a process of construction as we interact and develop dialogues with others. As Creswell (2007) notes, any conclusions developed by researchers relying on grounded theory are "suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive" (p.66). Nevertheless, drawing on a constructivist grounded theory approach means, for the particular study, more than creating a theory from looking at how individual festival participants perceive their context in terms of the sustainability issue. In addition to theorising participants' values, ideologies, views, and actions, Charmaz's (ibid.) grounded theory approach acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation, characterised by a strong element of reflexivity. In her words: "[t]he theory depends on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (p.130).

Reflexivity in this approach is embedded in all parts of the research process. As Alvesson and Skoldberg (2010) argue, the inquirer is actively engaged in the creation of meaning during the interview process, by framing for example the questions and responses, in addition to the analysis and synthesis of the interview material that follow. This is precisely the reason that I dedicated a large part of this thesis to declaring my positions pertinent to the domain I investigated as well as to addressing the critical framework on which I have been reflecting throughout all aspects of this research project: to provide the rationale that the interpretation of sustainability in the particular

context is also a construction of my own reality, which is affected by my personal views and values. This approach enabled me to draw reflexively on the literature and the critical framework developed earlier in this thesis and also acknowledged the inevitability of embedding existing knowledge and understandings into the empirical research. Therefore, I value this particular approach to inquiry for providing me with reflexivity about my own interpretations and positions in addition to those of my research participants (Charmaz, 2006).

Drawing on Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach I always tried to maintain my awareness of the risk of being caught in a "self-referential loop" (Cunliffe, 2003, p.992), which would limit the value of the present study's empirical insights for the broader body of knowledge. Being conscious of that risk and utilising Cunliffe's (ibid.) suggestions, I was led to question the limitations I might have foisted on research participants and myself in order to introduce new ways of theorising sustainable festival practice and the sustainable festival paradigm. In the context of this research project these limitations refer to: my understanding of sustainability (as portrayed in 3.1); the critical theoretical framework that I considered regarding the contemporary sustainable festival scene; my initial conceptualisation of the sustainable festival – as an entity that thrives symbiotically with its larger surrounding environment and is committed to the emergence of a flourishing society; as well as my commitment to elicit participants' perceptions that are informed by ideas that reside outside of the boundaries of current dominant sustainability constructs.

5.2.3 Case study

Complementing the over-arching constructivist grounded theory approach, an instrumental case study was used to establish a bounded festival system (or context) – bounded by place, time, theme and human activity – on which to focus the exploration of sustainability. When the purpose of case study is to provide insight into an issue beyond the case, and, thus, the case itself is of secondary interest, it is called "instrumental" (Stake, 1995). Hence the case of the *Music Village* festival has not been

utilised (justification for case study selection can be seen in the next paragraph) in this qualitative study to gain insight into the specific festival itself, but rather to address a research question that is defined on some other ground. A case study approach also supports the exploratory nature of this empirical part of this study since it enables data collection from multiple sources of information and allows the construction of meaning as data collection and analysis progress (Yin, 2003).

5.3 Justification for case selection

Although the subject of inquiry is sustainability in the particular context of the performing arts festival I have purposefully rejected the option of selecting a festival that is already self-ascribed as sustainable or emphatically promotes a commitment to sustainability. Therefore, an important criterion for identifying an appropriate case festival to conduct my empirical research was that it had to have no self-association with sustainable practices or mission. As the previous chapter uncovered, the vast majority of contemporary sustainable festival organisations understand and undertake sustainability based on appropriated and institutionalised constructs, which have been engineered at higher levels of society. Moreover, it has been reported that existing sustainable festivals constitute popular destinations for festival-goers who are striving for sustainability (whatever that means) or are engaging in eco-friendly or green behaviour (Mair and Laing, 2013; Cummings, 2014). Selecting a festival of that kind as the bounded system for the present investigation would imply attempting to create meaning through dialogues with participants who are drawing on already *known* sustainability principles and values. In turn, interacting with research participants who are biased towards certain dominant views of sustainability would undermine any exploration of envisioning of new possibilities emerging from the bottom-up – which my constructivist approach requires.

In a recent study of the psychology of sustainability, Jones (2015) highlights the fundamental attribution error of making observations and exploring people's perceptions within sustainability-themed environments. Namely, as Jones (ibid.) notes, given the effects of the situation on behaviour,

the interaction between individual participant and context is often a very complicated and powerful way to predict thinking as well as behaviour according to pre-determined frameworks. The end result is that participants living in a situational boundary, such as the sustainable festival, might behave and perceive their realities in an entirely different way than they would do in their normal lives, neglecting significant alternative options when trying to construct descriptions of their understandings. The possibility of encountering festival participants falling into the paradox of *knowing* what sustainability is about, and yet not seeming to know, would therefore be high. Again, the present approach to this study relies on emergent, open-ended and naturally occurring constructions of concepts (Charmaz, 2006).

An important consideration for identifying the *Music Village* festival as a suitable case study for this research has been its prolonged duration. The epistemological assumptions conveyed to this empirical study suggest that the longer the inquirer stays in the field, the higher levels of reciprocity with those being researched can be developed, and the more meanings he or she can construct from first-hand interactions and information. The vast majority of performing arts festivals last for a limited period of time, usually two to four days, and are held annually or less frequently (Williams and Bowdin, 2007). Hence developing reciprocity with participants and maximising data-collection – and therefore meaning-making – opportunities constitute major challenges for any qualitative research conducted in a setting temporally bound such as the festival (Holloway et al., 2010). The *Music Village* festival has a rather unusually prolonged duration (it lasts for two weeks); it takes place annually; and, moreover, it is staged in different physical settings and formats throughout the year. Given the context-sensitive nature of the present study's approach to interpretation and theory construction, the *Music Village* seemed to provide those opportunities for a detailed exploration of the contextual specificities of the inquiry.

The primary purpose of the empirical part of this study has been the reconstruction of the concept of the sustainable festival through the co-creation of meaning with research participants, while being situated in a pertinent festival context. I particularly sought to capture knowledges and

perceived *praxes* of sustainability that reside outside of the boundaries imposed by its dominant constructs. For this reason I considered it important to select as the instrumental context of this inquiry a performing arts festival that embraces a mission statement that is morally-charged – yet independent from external ends (at least with regards to the construct of sustainability) and instrumental reasoning – and oriented towards changing society in some basic way.

> Rather than falling into the typical traditions of a closed circle festival or a touristic fete, we intend to establish a creative symbiosis among artists, music lovers, locals and the natural environment and hope to create an institution that will reinforce both creativity and human relations (Music Village, 2013).

As manifested through the above excerpt, the *Music Village* organisers aspire to establish something much broader than a 'festival', namely an 'institution' that serves anthropocentric objectives (such as the reinforcement of 'human relations') while endorsing creativity as a moral value. Furthermore, the notion of 'symbiosis' seems to be central in the festival's open-ended, optimistic vision of society, recognising in this way the complex interactions that develop between the festival microcosm and its surrounding environment, on the one hand, and the potential role of the festival in facilitating any mutually advantageous exchanges that are prescribed by those symbiotic relationships, on the other. Essentially, by interpreting the above excerpt I would argue that the festival's mission is activism in the sense it questions the ability of current institutions (what is addressed as *closed circle festivals*) to provide for what the *Music Village* values in order to justify its call to action. Drawing on the postmodern, constructivist stance of this study, I recognise the potential agency of the festival's mission in the construction of subjective meanings pertinent to the notions of the sustainable festival. The fact, however, that the *Music Village* communicates a mission orientation that is visionary, open-ended, hope-filled, activist, as well as largely anthropocentric – as is my interpretation of sustainability – implies that any participants' views arising from the bottom-up and charged with similar moral principles, are

unlikely to encounter any barrier (e.g., imposed by particular power dynamics) in the process of meaning creation; for example, conceptual obstacles associated with meaning construction that view the festival as unavoidably creating direct, negative impacts to an environment which equals nature or society as excluded *others*.

5.3.1 The Music Village: a brief presentation of the case context

The *Music Village* is a small performing arts festival that takes place over two weeks every August in the village of *Agios Lavrentios* (English: Saint Lawrence), in mainland Greece. Its host environment is nestled in a mountainous landscape (mount Pelion) that is rich in natural resources and cultural heritage. Agios Lavrentios' relative isolation from major urban centres has historically bestowed its host community with autonomy and cultural distinctiveness. The high concentration of artists, scholars, and craftspeople has created a local community, which, up to date, discloses a cosmopolitan idiosyncrasy. This sophisticated amalgam is currently manifested not only in the traditional architecture of the village (90 percent of the buildings are listed), which is full of picturesque charm, but also in its living heritage – its community's ideals and cultural expressions (Papathanasiou, 2006).

Figure 1. Views of Agios Lavrentios.

The *Music Village* festival was instigated by three friends, musicians[12], who shared a common dream: to create a celebration of creativity, a festival that would serve as a social space for performing artists, creative professionals, music lovers, as well as the local community. The first festival in 2006 was received with great acclaim by its target audience, since it established itself, at once, as an alternative performing arts festival committed to active participation and unobstructed, creative expression. Over fourteen days the festival showcases every summer a number of performances, embracing a variety of performing arts genres. Although there is a large focus on music performances (genres include classical, avant-garde jazz, traditional, and contemporary improvisation), the festival also features circus arts, puppetry and shadow theatre, musical theatre, as well as arts exhibitions – to mention just a few. These pre-scheduled events take place around the village; these sometimes occupy and alter the use of certain spaces used by the local community (e.g., the central square; church courtyards; the school) while in others they construct "living spaces" (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981) in previously unused places (e.g., the surrounding forest) – thus temporarily creating meaning for their temporary inhabitants. In addition to the staged performances, the *Music Village* offers a series of parallel events (e.g., creative activities for the visitors' kids; walking trails) and workshops/masterclasses, giving attendees (as well as local residents) the chance to experience the festival, if they wish, in a rather active way, one that promotes participation and, thus, reinforces "both creativity and human relations" (Music Village, 2013).

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[12] These three directors are often referred to in this study as the "Music Village organisers"

Figure 2. The festival temporarily appropriates spaces around the village.

The festival is predicated on an ethos of openness and inclusivity, openly inviting festival-goers and locals to choose their mode of participation and negotiate their relationship with the event, the festival content, the place and all others. This often renders the festival to an unpredictable and loosely organised space-time, where anyone can affect the way the event is actually delivered to its audience. A major part of the *Music Village* itself is not pre-scheduled but rather constitutes the outcome of spontaneous events. There may be staged outdoor performances, for just a few spectators, that spring from some creative idea exchange between visitors and invited artists. There may also happen chaotic fiestas, fusing together the whole festival population until the early hours. The festival is always in a process of being created, providing for spontaneous interactions and performances, in addition to the pre-scheduled activities and pre-determined content.

Figure 3. Spontaneous events occupy a large part of the Music Village content.

5.4 Data collection methods

The philosophical assumptions and approaches to the current inquiry, as discussed previously, created the need for employing particular methods for gathering data and constructing meaning. In this empirical study, primary data was collected in a natural setting through participant observation and interviews in order to "keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold" (Creswell, 2007, p.39). I used extensive field-notes to record observations and interviews, as well as photography and audio recordings. This was combined with a review of documentation relevant to the *Music Village* such as videos, a short film, press releases, websites, reports, and promotional material.

5.4.1 Participant observation – The Sustainability Observatory

Participant observation as a research method is generally associated with ethnography. Brewer (2000) considers participant observation to involve "data gathering by means of participation in the daily life of informants in their natural setting: watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities" (p.59). In their attempt to provide advocacy for using ethnographic methods to bring in-depth understanding of festival participants' meanings Holloway et al. (2010, p.77) noted:

> Participant observation means that researchers are
> immersed in the setting; they interact with participants,
> observe what is going on and are able to ask questions about
> it.(...) The researchers can move around in the location as
> they wish, without appearing unusual or intrusive, observing
> in detail, with access to opportunistic interviewing, as well as
> to spontaneous observation.

Participant observation was carried out in the festival's natural setting (the village of Agios Lavrentios) over a four-week period in total, namely during the 2013 (18/8 – 1/9) and 2014 (18/8 – 1/9) staging of the *Music Village* festival. There, I observed individual and collective actions in various contexts in order to make a "conceptual rendering of these actions" (Charmaz, 2006, p.22); I attended and participated in various elements of the festival (both official and informal aspects and happenings including concerts, parallel activities, workshops, and spontaneous fiestas) and tried to make sense of processes that I considered as significant; I took photos to capture information and help my memory in recalling details and contexts; I also kept detailed written field notes of what was being said, and tried to be attentive to the language that participants used and the meanings they conveyed.

Reflecting on my earlier point that both data and analysis emerge as the product of "shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (ibid., p.130), I need to recognise that the material gathered through participant observation – principally field notes – constitute

social constructions. As Geertz (1973) argues, while discussing his own experience of keeping field notes, "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p.9). Observation in this empirical study took on the form of non-participant observation (Flick, 2009) as I acknowledged my role and obviously did not act as an ordinary participant of the festival. By making notes both during the researched contexts and, always after the events, I was able to interpret my experience in a reflexive way, thus minimising the risk of being unconsciously caught in a "middle-ground position" (Creswell, 2007, p.139) between a participant and non-participant.

Throughout the whole process of participant observation, I tried to keep a focus on the central phenomenon – sustainability – rather than the festival setting itself. Essentially, as is the case with all aspects of the data collection process, while engaging myself in observations I aimed to stay open, alert and make sense of processes and perceptions conductive to an alternative paradigm of the sustainable festival.

De laine (2000) contends that entrée as well as the development of rapport and trust constitute important dimensions of participant observation. Being aware of these challenges I aimed to gain full access to any potential aspect of the festival setting, both from the perspective of the festival organisation and festival participants. I employed a particular strategy towards that end, namely the establishment of a symbolic module within the festival, which I called a "Sustainability Observatory". It should be noted that through the Observatory I did not intend to monitor the performance of the festival with reference to sustainability, e.g., by applying a benchmarking facility, as its name might imply. By contrast, this module provided the rationale for my presence in the festival as a researcher; informed festival participants about my role and intentions; quickly lowered the barriers between the internal festival participants and myself as the external researcher; and, thus, served as an instrument for, what Yin (2011) describes as "nurturing field relationships" (p.118).

The Observatory was advertised through the festival website; a page-long printed description of the module was included in the welcome pack that

all visitors received upon arrival; and a plasticised A4 announcement was pinned on the festival's announcement board at the central square. In addition, I was openly invited by the festival organisers and encouraged to present briefly myself as well as the scope of my research during the opening events of the two festivals I attended (in 2013 and 2014). All the above may be seen as indicators of the high level of entrée and rapport achieved concerning the festival organisation. Furthermore, the Observatory played an important role in establishing rapport with festival participants, which is a prerequisite to gaining solid data in the context of a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). For example, I was approached by participating artists and leaders of workshops and other parallel activities to attend their events and sessions in order to take up an active role in participation yet maintain my role as a researcher and capture, in person, the happenings.

I quite often wandered around the village (which, as a whole, was the festival venue), always wearing my name badge, trying to find opportunities for observation and interaction. By acknowledging my presence in the festival via the Observatory I implicitly communicated that I was open to share, if asked, the way I was situated with regards to the phenomenon of the study (e.g., sustainability), neutralising in that way any potential power imbalance and fostering reciprocity – which are important tenets of the constructivist grounded theory approach (Schreiber and Martin, 2013). For instance, I was openly invited to participate in dialogues with participants (e.g., during informal gatherings) who were attracted by the Observatory advertisement and found the scope of my research interesting, which provides further evidence of the established levels of rapport.

5.4.2 Interviews

In addition to participant observation, face-to-face interviews were conducted i) to explore participants' subjective understandings of the festival in relation to its environment; and ii) to elicit meaning from their normative visions about the role of the festival in the emergence of a *better* society. Given the exploratory character of this empirical study, these elements of *abstraction* and *utopianism* were considered as important points of departure

to engage participants in opening up, from the bottom-up, the conceptual spaces for alternative, context-sensitive knowledges of sustainability, over and against its dominant discourses – as discussed earlier in this thesis.

Unlike reformist approaches that currently dominate the sustainable festival scene and encourage festival participants to "pit the present against the present in order to shape the future" (Jordan, 2002, p.46), anchoring interviews to the principles of abstraction and utopianism encouraged research participants to reflect on an unknown future, unleashing their imagination by emancipating individual opinion. Those elements are therefore strongly aligned with my interpretation of sustainability (see section 2.1). It needs to be noted, however, that I use the term utopianism not in the meaning of a blueprint for a perfect society – which would risk closing down the vision into an ultimate telos – but rather in terms of its "critical, transgressive, and transformative functions" (Fournier, 2015, p.181), providing the conditions for a perpetual movement towards the cultivation of alternative possibilities.

The interviews, 34 in total, ranged from pre-arranged, in-depth and recorded interviews that were scheduled at a time and place convenient for the participants (most lasted approximately 45-75 minutes), to spontaneous, informal, and even serial conversations that arose naturally during various encounters and settings within the event (these lasted 5-15 minutes). The informal atmosphere of the festival greatly facilitated the kind of naturally occurring, informal, yet meaningful interactions, which were kept short because they had not been arranged in advance and participants were keen to move on.

The conversations that were recorded were subsequently transcribed. Where interviews were not recorded and only handwritten notes taken, these were immediately typed following the interviews, allowing time for reflection on the content. Furthermore, upon the completion of interviews, I always made notes to record my impressions of the discussions. Mindful of my bottom-up, poly-vocal approach to inquiry, and attempting to challenge and neutralise any potential power imbalance between the researcher (myself) and the *researched*, I did not manipulate any "hierarchies of credibility"

(Charmaz, 2006, p.137). Hence I refrained from any type of differentiation between participants in the processes of selection and engagement in dialogues, or in ascribing different weight to the words of people with different status within the festival setting.

My definition of research "participants" therefore refers to a broad range of human actors within the festival context, who maintained various statuses, positions, roles, and backgrounds, including festival-goers undertaking various levels of participation in the event, the festival organisers, volunteers, members of the host community or visitors to the village, participating or non-participating creative professionals and artists – to name just a few. I did not recruit participants on the basis of any predetermined sampling strategy. Selection of participants was provisional, often spontaneous or, sometimes, a matter of anticipation (e.g., I waited at the central square until approached by festival participants).

Reflecting Ingold's (2008) call for ethnographers to engage in "participatory dialogue" (p.87) with research participants (or the co-researchers), taking a constructivist perspective on the process, and products, of interviewing, and regarding interviews as social productions and projects of meaning creation, I employed the "active interview" method introduced by Holstein and Gubrium (1995). A central tenet of this approach is that the interviewee possesses a stock of knowledge that is simultaneously "substantive, reflexive, and emergent" (p.30) and which can be potentially accessed by its possessor in order to produce narratives of knowledge.

> Treating the interview as active allows the interviewer to encourage the respondent to shift positions in the interview so as to explore alternate perspectives and stocks of knowledge (ibid., p.37).

It is the researcher who is responsible for instigating interviewees' responses. The active interviewer thus "activates narrative production" (ibid., p.39) aiming to arouse responses that are pertinent to the researcher's interest. Guided by the principles of this approach, while engaging in conversations with people in

the festival I aimed not to tell participants what to say but rather provoke the construction of pertinent descriptions of contemporary happenings and behaviours as well as visions concerning the festival in the long-term and its relation to the desirable social order and the surrounding (social) environment. In turn, those descriptions and visions, in the form of narratives, provided me with the means to conceptualise issues and connect knowledges in order to address the research questions of this study.

Almost obliged by the constructivist ground theory approach, a major consideration for this data collection method was to promote reciprocity, and thus foster the conversational give-and-take, in order to co-create meaning with participants (Schreiber and Martin, 2013). I have always been prepared to listen carefully and accommodate respondents' views, while, simultaneously, remaining willing to share (and I often did) my own, as well as others' positions, regarding the questions under consideration. For example, I often framed particular questions to encourage respondents to reflect on other participants' disclosures using the following pattern: "Other participants mentioned that… What do you think about that?" Another strategy employed towards that end was to provide interviewees with the opportunity to sketch in the form of a mind map, with my help, a number of conceptualisations emerging out of our dialogues. Besides providing for reciprocity, this exercise facilitated the simultaneous coding, interpretation and construction of knowledge during a number of interviews, and, moreover, created an additional stock of research material (9 sketches in total) that was co-constructed between the respondents and myself. Essentially, this innovative as well as productive strategy inspired me to create concept maps subsequently to the interviews, which were utilised at the later stages of analysis as a means of comparison against emerging themes.

Despite the obvious openness and flexibility of these active conversations, the very process of interviewing was not without structure. As a general rule of the interview process, I devised open-ended, broad, and sensitive-to-the-context questions to initiate the dialogues. I then focused the active interviews on establishing the parameters of interest and the discursive base from which participants could express their understandings. On some

occasions I was asked to provide a general definition of sustainability and the sustainable festival. In response, I briefly expressed my broad interpretation of sustainability (see 2.1) and personal description of the qualities of the sustainable organisation (see 2.7). This provision of initial context and the broad outlining of the forthcoming questions thus encouraged participants' descriptions and visions to emerge.

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) comment that the point of the active interview is to capitalise on the dynamic interplay between the researcher and the researched "to make reveal both the substance and process of meaning-making in relation to research objectives" (p.76). Accordingly, as narratives were being unfolded, my main consideration was to orient participants' contributions to the varied aspects of the questions under investigation. I thus needed particular strategies to facilitate this challenging dimension of active interviewing. Towards that end, during the interviews, I shared with respondents various parts of my notes seeking their further input (feelings, ideas, even criticism) on the emerging constructs. This implied a particular amount of give-and-take, which constitutes anathema to more conventional, standardised approaches to interviewing (ibid.). During the interviews I was therefore engaged in a simultaneous and collaborative construction, initial coding, and interpretation of knowledge that, in turn, provided for meaningful "horizons of meaning" (ibid., p.58), pertinent to the idea of the sustainable festival, to emerge. Essentially, this technique is strongly aligned to the logic of the constructivist grounded theory approach highlighting that simultaneous data collection and analysis are prerequisites for a fine-grated theorisation of the processes under study.

5.4.3 Documents and audiovisual material

It has been noted that the logic of grounded theory directs the methods of data collection, making the researcher adapt according to the requirements or opportunities emerging from the field (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Indeed, although I had no initial intention to examine documentary material, while being in the field, I encountered recourses that I had not anticipated and

which seemed to bear the potential of enriching data in addition to advancing emerging concepts. The main documents consulted and, thus, used as supplementary sources of data, fall in the following two categories:

- texts compiled by participants of the *Music Village*, some of which were published on the internet in a weblog format (e.g., Jim, 2014), and

- audiovisual material containing festival participants' narratives of their experiences in the festival during past events e.g., the *Music Village* (2013) and *Fengaros Music Village* (2014) documentaries, The *Secrets of Music* (2013), as well as unpublished videos, part of the festival's archive.

Although these documents had been produced for different purposes, I treated this archival material as data that added to the expanding choir of voices and, therefore, contributed to the emerging grounded theoretical framework.

As was the case with interview data, in reviewing this material, I particularly sought narrated references pointing to a symbiotic relationship between the festival and its surrounding environment. I also attempted to elicit voices among festivalgoers who – reflecting on their experience in the event – spoke about the nature of the festival experience in the service of human fulfilment as well as social change. Hence I tried to explore how festival participants conceive the role of particular elements of the festival in creative, emancipatory, and thus alternative social arrangements.

5.5 Data analysis and synthesis

Although the stage of data analysis does not have a distinct beginning (Creswell, 2007), formal data analysis began with the careful review and transcription (where needed) of collected material. Specialised qualitative analysis software (NVivo) was utilised in order to store and manage data (including interview transcripts, concept maps, field notes, transcripts of film excerpts, and photographs) more efficiently, and assist the codification and

interpretation of the material. Relying on Charmaz's (2006) social constructivist guidelines on conducting grounded theory analysis I undertook an active approach to coding. It is important to recognise, however, that *active* coding occurred and developed as an integral part of the data collection process and not just afterwards, during the official analytical stage. For instance, with particular respect to the conducted active interviews, when I asked a participant about "perceived positive flows of resources between the festival and its environment" I already coded the contextual reality in a way that linked with the concepts of symbiosis and change. Mindful of the active coding strategy, during the formal phase of data analysis, I kept my codes open-ended, simple and precise, and made them fit the data "rather than force the data to fit them" (ibid., p.49). This allowed me to interact with the data again and again, continuously raising questions about them, and realising the emergence of a nascent, grounded theory that has been always suggestive and incomplete (ibid.).

Coding took place in two phases: i) an initial, which involved a close, careful reading of the loaded material; and ii) a focused phase, which entailed a selective use of the most important or recurrent initial codes in order to synthesise and interpret more extensive sections of data. With regards to the first stage, I read the texts line-by-line and created open, *in vivo* codes in order to place emphasis on the value of the participants' voice and meanings, and also test my ability of apprehending what is important in the particular social setting. This facilitated the separation of information in initial categories and the disclosure of pertinent processes. An example of some initial, *in vivo* codes (which equate with NVivo's *nodes*) assigned to an interview with a festival participant (interviewee 06) is given below:

- Festival experience providing energy
- Engaged in constant state of thinking
- Moments of intense encounters and creativity
- Aura that binds us
- Alternative to mass-produced culture

In the context of the second phase of coding these *in vivo* codes were selectively rendered to make the categorisation of data more incisive and

comprehensive, in order to lay the ground for the latter synthesis of meanings. An example of focused codes referring to the same interview excerpt follows:

- The inner self – subjective wellbeing
- Spontaneity and the unpredicted
- Creative potential
- Creating communities
- Critique to consumer society

The on-going refinement of these focused, yet *active* codes provided for the construction of more inclusive coding frames. These broader coding frames were inclusive of the questions I brought to the data – in my attempt to advance and discuss participants' values, perceptions, experiences, as well as their visions – and eventually revealed the core interpretive themes of this empirical inquiry.

5.6 Ethical issues and considerations

This empirical research was carried out in accordance with the guidelines, principles and regulations regarding the use of human participants provided by the University of Leeds. Formal approval was obtained from the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee. Furthermore, an agreement was signed with the *Music Village* organisers, which provided details of the research project. This allowed full access to the event, provided permission to review the festival's archive and use data collected during the festival in the present thesis as well as any related scholarly publications.

An important consideration while being in the field was to make myself visible and disclose my presence and intentions to all people present in the setting. This was achieved through the employment of the Sustainability Observatory and its related techniques (e.g., name badge, leaflet in welcome

pack, announcements, etc.), as mentioned in the last paragraph of section 5.4.1. All observations were conducted in public, open-air spaces and collected information has been completely anonymous. Although children were present around several venues (*Music Village* is a family-friendly festival and children often take up an active role e.g., in festival performances) my research did not involve any interaction with them.

All participants who took part in the longer interviews (45-75 minutes) were clearly informed about the purpose of the study and the related interview procedures and use of data. They were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to answer to any questions or withdraw completely at any stage of the interview without any consequence for them (and thus collected data at the point would be erased). There were no participants who refused to answer or withdraw from any interview. Interviewees were also reassured that all data would remain confidential and would be securely and safely stored at the premises of the University of Leeds. They were also told that they had the right to access their data (and transcripts of that) at any time prior to the publication of the thesis or ask for complete removal of their information. No participant asked for review or removal of his or her data. Last, participants were informed that their identity would not be disclosed, ensuring anonymity of all human agents. Mindful of that, I coded each participant according to his or her role in the festival (e.g., volunteer, member of the host community, visitor, workshop participant, performer, etc.). All the above information was also made available to participants in written; a four-page-long copy of the Information Sheet (see in Appendix C) was given to each interviewee to retain. The last of page that copy was a consent form that participants had to sign and return to me (only the last page), ensuring that informed consent was obtained. Participants who took part in the shorter interviews (5-15 minutes) were briefly, verbally informed about the study and asked if they were happy to participate. They were given an A5 leaflet describing the above and providing them with my contact details.

Chapter Six: Findings and discussion

Chapter Four made a significant stride towards unsettling the conventional understandings of the sustainable festival. It provided evidence that the sustainable festival, as an emblematic model of change, in fact fails its basic purpose of anchoring the vision and praxis for a new paradigm. What it has actually reproduced is an interpretation of sustainability, one that has been forged at higher levels of society, phrased in a language that is appealing to the world of organisations and, essentially, has been sympathetic to the technocratic rationality and the logic that forms the basis of late capitalism and consumer culture. I argued in the conclusion of Chapter Four that the contemporary sustainable festival scene needs to go through its own metamorphosis; a need to envision and create a new theory of the sustainable festival to overcome the deficiencies and contradictions vested in current theoretical and practical interpretations of sustainability in the particular context.

I argued that what is needed to expand the theoretical scaffolding of its concept is, first, a shift in the way that the sustainable festival is perceived: from regarding the sustainable festival as a temporary, parasitic organisation that unavoidably creates negative impacts to its external environment, to perceiving it as an entity that can develop a long-term, symbiotic relationship with the larger social systems in which it takes place, and of which it constitutes inseparable part. This suggests, arguably, a call for moving the focus of sustainability in this context, from short-term organisational gains and unfavourable impacts, to the desired long-term legacy of the festival in its broader, socially-shaped environment. Second, I argued that it is important for these context-sensitive constructs of sustainability to emerge from the bottom-up, namely through the appreciation and conceptualisation of the understandings, value systems, and visions of the people who experience the festival, rather than merely through the adoption of philosophies and selected elements of dominant discourses which have been constructed elsewhere. Last, I argued against constructs of the sustainable festival that implicitly accept, unquestionably accommodate and provide for the continuation of

existing social and economic arrangements. Consequently, I called for a new construct of the sustainable festival that allows human agents to problematise and challenge, if needed, current assumptions and conventions, and can encourage them to envision and facilitate the emergence of desirable, socially-relevant alternatives.

This chapter contributes further to the existing body of knowledge, presenting and analysing the processes emergent from the empirical research and enacted within the festival context, that were perceived to be significant constituents of a sustainable festival – a festival that thrives symbiotically with and within the larger social systems in which it takes place, contributing, in that way, to the achievement of a socially desirable future. The chapter will first provide an overview of the guiding principles that inform the present analysis, presenting a threefold conceptual framework that will be used as a background system for organising discussion. A conceptual reconstruction of the festival environment, from the bottom-up, will then follow, revealing the complex interrelationships that are deemed to be important elements for the well-being of the broader festival system and, therefore, desired processes for its contextual future. A language that is familiar to existing sustainability discourses will be purposefully employed from the outset of this section, not only as a strategy to create a kind of "access point" into the intersection of institutionalised and subjective understandings of sustainability, but also to provide emphasis on the alternative knowledges about its concept that have been, up to date, largely neglected in current dialogues.

Discussion will be organised in six broad environmental dimensions or *resource* categories: i) intangible cultural resources; ii) creativity; iii) the natural environment; iv) the built environment; v) economic resources; and vi) social assets. Hence this section aims to provide an alternative perspective on the meaning of the festival environment, one that is informed by participants' subjective positive imageries of the performing arts festival and its surrounding context.

6.1 A conceptual framework for the sustainable festival

To ground a new theory of the sustainable festival on the findings of the present empirical study and provide an interpretation of it – in conjunction with the interpretations of research participants – this thesis will now introduce a conceptual model of the sustainable festival. The framework, which is illustrated in Figure 6.1, consists of three interdependent dimensions, namely *symbiosis*, *subjectivity*, and *change*. These elements better describe a set of provisional, guiding ideas and a background system of organising discussion, rather than the ultimate ends of the present analysis.

Figure 4. A conceptual framework for the sustainable festival

It is clear to the reader that the comprising aspects of this framework align with an interpretation of sustainability that is more abstract and substantially different from interpretations that dominate prevailing discourses across the contemporary sustainable performing arts festival scene. Based on an open-ended set of principles or axioms, this model will therefore be used to facilitate the emergence of the foundations of a new theory of the sustainable festival, through an attempt to explore the alternative knowledges of sustainability that are enacted in the particular context. I will now briefly outline the comprising elements of the above conceptual model.

6.1.1 Symbiosis

The festival constitutes a system by itself, a "contextualised concept directed internally and externally by other social relations" (Picard and Robinson, 2006, p.4). It does not exist in isolation but is rather embeded in a much broader environment, that is the social and physical surroundings in which it takes place. In an attempt to propose a conceptual tool that will help remedy the deficiencies of those approaches to the sustainable festival that accept a parasitic relationship between the event and its natural and social environment I will employ a metaphor from biology, namely the concept of symbiosis (Greek: *συμβίωσις*, meaning *living together*). Metaphors might be very helpful in discussions about ideas that convey high levels of abstraction, such as the present framework of the sustainable festival. As Chertow (2000, p.314) notes, the symbiosis metaphor:

> builds on the notion of biological symbiotic relationships in
> nature, in which at least two otherwise unrelated species
> exchange materials, energy, or information in a mutually
> beneficial manner – the specific type of symbiosis known as
> mutualism.

Symbiosis is an important aspect of the suggested framework because it provides a language that is familiar to existing articulations of sustainability. It thus offers a textual and conceptual strategy to create a kind of access point into the intersection of institutionalised top-down, and subjective, visionary processes, within which the social construction of sustainability takes place.

The employment of the metaphor of symbiosis allows the present study to adopt an 'ecological approach' (Ingold, 2000) to the exploration of the sustainable performing arts festival, to better study those complex interrelationships between the festival and the other systems wherein the festival occurs. As Ingold (2000, p.19) states:

> [a] properly ecological approach is one that would take, as its
> point of departure, the whole-organism-in-its-environment. In
> other words, 'organism plus environment' should denote not a
> compound of two things but one indivisible totality.

In addition, as Rojek (2001) notes, organisms "have historically provided a rich source of metaphors for describing and understanding social relations and processes" (p.24). By drawing on that metaphor and taking on the aforementioned ecological approach, the festival will be represented as a living organism situated within a larger context of nested systems that comprise a particular *habitat*, or what I am often alternatively addressing as the *broader festival environment*. That conceptual construct will "denote not a compound of two things but one indivisible totality" (Ingold, 2000, p.19). From this point of view, however, this thesis's ecological approach should not be misunderstood as being centred on nature or encouraging favourable environmental (in the meaning of pro-Earth's ecology) values. Hence my ecological approach is rather indented to situate the festival in a context of dynamic engagement with the constituents of its physical and social surroundings, of which it is part.

I will discuss in the following section the perceived flows of "material, resources, energy, or information" (Chertow, 2000, p.314) that provide for mutually beneficial – or symbiotic – interrelationships between the festival and its indivisible (yet undefined) environment. This metaphor will also facilitate an exploration of aspects of the broader environment on which the festival depends in order to survive, as well as an identification of the perceived positive contributions that this environment gains from its association with the festival. Furthermore, as suggested in relevant literature, mutually beneficial symbiotic associations may be permanent, the organisms never being separated, or they may be long lasting (Paracer and Ahmadjian, 2000). This property shifts the focus on the long-term implications of those relationships, offering an alternative perspective to current sustainable practices that prioritise short-term, measurable gains and trade-offs (e.g., in the case of the TBL approach).

6.1.2 Subjectivity

I previously asserted that I interpret sustainability as a highly positive vision, and, consequently, defined the sustainable X as a hope-filled image of the plain X projected over the future. As Olson (1995, p.18) maintains, such

images of the future are: i) believable (exist within the realm of possibility); ii) highly positive (they have an inspirational, visionary quality that attracts and motivates people); iii) open-ended (they are not static; serve as navigational compasses for the construction of a desired future *X*); iv) responsive (these images address particular challenges facing the current X and seek to revise, through call to action, the aspects that can be improved); and v) integrative (they provide individuals with a comprehensive story of "what is happening" and "what could be").

I also argued for the social construction of sustainability in the particular context of the festival, and the need to capture and interpret the perceptions and visions of the people who experience the festival – whose understandings and diverse realities have, up to now, been largely neglected. By conceptualising the construction of the evolving image of the sustainable festival as being sensitive to the context and, in particular, to a dialectic interplay of meaning-making processes which involve the agency of individual participants, an emergent expectation of this thesis is that a theory pertinent to the sustainable festival will certainly be a normative one; it will involve values, emotions, aspirations, as well as subjective perceptions and judgements. Hence subjectivity, as a quality of knowledge construction appreciative of participants' value-bound sayings and visions (Flick, 2009), is the second aspect of the proposed conceptual framework that will guide the following discussion.

6.1.3 Change

The third component of this background framework refers to the notion of *change*. The notion of change, however abstract, is itself a fundamental axiom in sustainability thinking. As noted, sustainability implies action and the capacity for transformation, not the reproduction of stability or stasis (Lemons et al., 1998). I have previously alleged against interpretations of sustainability across the sustainable festival scene that subscribe, from a micro-perspective, to a leave-no-trace – in other words: make-no-change – ethos, despite promising "[a]nother world is possible" (Sunrise Celebration, 2015). I have also argued against interpretations and interventions that call for a

paradigm shift (McReynolds, 2015; Hall, 2012; Stettler, 2011; Getz, 2009) while, in reality, those suggestions attend to policies that contribute to the maintenance of dominant socioeconomic and organisational arrangements. Embedding the notion of change as another background axiom into the following discussion will enable the elicitation of the perceived constructive change processes, those that potentially do leave trace and do challenge the status quo of broader paradigms by providing windows to alternative conventions. Essentially, it will facilitate the conceptualisation of aspects of the festival that bear the potential of cultivating creative and transformative actions, what I defined earlier as sustainability praxes, that are informed actions, morally-committed, focused on subjective results and undertaken to produce or inspire change (Kemmis and Smith, 2008). The notion of change will therefore play an instrumental role in the following attempts to capture those immanent activities, which originate from the festival, change its indivisible environment, and end in the festival itself – for the festival is part of its environment.

Using the above conceptual model and its related axioms as a supportive framework for my analysis, I will now employ a particular strategy to elicit and interpret the ways that the human actors of the festival make sense of sustainability in the specific festival system. Namely, the following sections will attempt a conceptual reconstruction of the festival environment, which will be achieved through the exploration of the resources that flow between the festival and its indivisible environment. Embedded in this approach will be an attempt to conceptualise several sustainability praxes that are being enacted and nurtured within this expanded environment. Those are morally-committed actions, independent from any external end, and oriented towards changing positively the broader festival context in some fundamental way.

6.2 The festival environment

Through the analysis of texts associated with the identified sustainable festivals it became evident that current interpretations and practical

approaches to sustainability subscribe to, and have been largely monopolised by narrow environmental considerations, which draw on certain definitions of sustainability (e.g., WCED, 1987; UNCED, 1992). In summary, these are currently restricted to fixed interpretations of the festival environment as: i) the Earth's ecological systems (nature) and resources that are impacted by processes associated with the production of the festival (the Green view, section 4.4.3.1); or ii) slightly expanded interpretations that are inclusive of quantifiable social and economic dimensions of the festival environment, in addition to physical ones (the TBL view, section 4.4.3.2).

Since I have argued against the shortcomings of these interpretations and the wider ideologies from which these emanate, the first aim of the remainder of this chapter to reconstruct the meaning of the festival environment from the bottom-up. In other words, this section aims to provide an alternative perspective on the meaning of the festival environment, one that is informed by participants' positive imageries of the performing arts festival. This will be conducted through the exploration of participants' subjective understandings of the festival in relation to its surrounding environment, which in this study is regarded to be both socially and physically constructed (Wenston, 1986).

I will purposefully employ a language that is familiar to existing articulations of sustainability in order to further uncover current gaps, discuss possible commonalities with dominant understandings of the concept, and, essentially, provide an alternative view of the complex, mutually beneficial relationships that develop between the festival and its environment. In particular, I will use the term *resources*, which has been a key concept in the broader sustainability debate on which most contemporary interpretations of sustainability pertinent to the sustainable festival scene draw. For instance, one of the main arguments within the sustainability discourse is that the resources upon which a system depends need to be safeguarded. This has been defined as the resource-based discourse of sustainability (Wall, 1997), which is grounded on the argument that it is impossible in the long run for a system to survive beyond the resources provided by its external environment. At the same time the term resources, in relevant dialogues, refers to aspects

of a system's surrounding environment that are being affected by the operation of a particular system. As commonly maintained in contributions within the scholarly area of event and festival management studies, in particular, the existence and operation of the festival depends on resources that the event draws from its immediate or distant environment (e.g., energy, land, human resources, food & beverages, economic capital, etc.), while at the same time that very existence and operation does affect aspects of its environment (e.g., contributing to the depletion of resources that are scarce; diminishing the quality of employed resources) (Gibson and Wong, 2011; Andersson and Getz, 2007; Quinn, 2005). As argued, this might justify, in part, the fact that the majority of the contemporary, self-proclaimed sustainable festivals have focused their sustainable mission and practice on reducing their negative impact to the natural environment and the resources pertinent to that.

Being aware of this tradition, and as an interim attempt to reconstruct the meaning of the festival environment, the following section will discuss the profile of the resources upon which the festival employed in this study depends and has a tangible impact. As Buck (1998) puts it, "[a] resource is anything that is used to meet the needs of an organism" (p.3). By drawing on that definition, and considering the festival as an organism nested within, and seeking a symbiotic relationship with its broader physically and socially determined habitat, for the purposes of this thesis, a resource is anything that: i) is important for the survival and prosperity of the festival, and ii) can be affected positively (e.g., refined, augmented) by the operation of the festival. Therefore, in this thesis, for something – matter or process – to be classified as a resource, the above two criteria had to be fulfilled. Importing more terms from existing, dominant articulations of sustainability, the term resources will be used interchangeably with the notion of *assets*, which particularly refers to resources regarding them as "a store of immediate and future value" (Manzi et al., 2010, p.66) for future societies.

In order to remain consistent to the dialectical, organic perception of reality (Demeritt, 2002; Capra, 1982) that underpins this empirical research, it is important to emphasise that resources are both *real*, meaning they have

material substance, and are also socially and culturally shaped, as they are "assessed only in respect of what a society wants to attain in the first place" (Pepper, 1993, p.99). Hence I recognise the existence of resources in the festival environment that have a physical or symbolic reality, yet do not have a fixed meaning but are dynamically constituted through social practice in the particular context of the festival; as White and Ellison (2006, p.2) put it, "all forms of resources (…) have material, relational and symbolic dimensions". This approach enables this study to consider the on-going social construction and moderation of resources, as human participants experience the festival interact with, and change their physical and social surroundings. Importantly, they select and define the present resources that need to be sustained based on their subjective judgements about what might be important for their idealised vision of festival experience and even the future society.

Therefore, the question taken up in the following section regards the resources that participants understand to be important for the well-being of the festival system and which are also positively affected by the operation of the latter, changing the festival's social environment – since resources are part of that environment, and provide for its future. It is apparently important to note that while this thesis will construct broad resource profiles to record different types of assets, it will avoid generalising or suggesting that those resources have a fixed meaning that might be applied in different contexts. Consequently, I need to recognise that there might be many more, and perhaps quite different, resources that could potentially constitute part of the following categories if the subject is a different festival context. Different people, in different festival worlds, will tend to draw attention to different kinds of resources.

This section is not intended to provide a thorough account of anything that falls in the practical dimension of needed inputs to or impacts of the festival; this could have been the subject of an event management study. By contrast, my attempt aspires to a higher conceptual level, which stems from the inquiry's constructivist approach and aims to situate knowledges of sustainability socially and alternatively. Discussion will be organised into six broad resource categories: i) intangible cultural resources; ii) creativity; iii) the

natural environment; iv) the built environment; v) economic resources; and vi) social assets.

6.2.1 Intangible Cultural Resources

A dominant theme in participants' accounts of important *substance* that the festival draws from its surrounding habitat – and is critical for the festival's long-term prosperity – and, conversely, is positively affected by the operation of the festival, refers to the notion of *intangible cultural resources*. Intangible cultural resources are made up of all immaterial manifestations of culture, the totality of "elements representing the living culture of human communities, their evolution, and their continuing development" (Lenzerini, 2011, p.102). These resources are products of human life that come into being and are transmitted through social and cultural processes. Intangible cultural resources are also considered to be the glue that ties culture and non-human nature together, and shapes the *humanness* of humanity (Murray-Ellis, 2011). UNESCO (2003) defined these resources as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills […] that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage". References to music and other intangible cultural artefacts were dominant within relevant participants' accounts, whereas other forms of intangible culture – including "skills", "ways of living", "tradition", and "local rituals and customs" – were mentioned less often.

In a number of active dialogues with various festival participants, music was mentioned as an important – often the most important – input of the festival and a "critical life-giving substance" (interviewee 15). Quite often, responses highlighted that music was something vital for the existence of the festival itself, since it constitutes the core of the latter's content and structure. As interviewee 15 remarked, "it is music that is the most critical resource for the festival. It defines its content and also its audience." Such references to music drew on utilitarian considerations, meaning that it can be regarded as an interim, useful asset for the festival that needs to be employed in order to produce something else, may that be a performance, an educational project, a social effect or even the particular festival identity.

As I will discuss later in this section, the idea of music-as-a-resource also drew upon moral judgements and sensibilities. For instance, a number of participants referred to music's innate, "indisputable right" (interviewee 03) to be passed on to other people, contemporaries or future generations, as this flow conveys desirable qualities for future society at large. The following discussion will mainly focus on the dialogue that the researcher had with interviewee 03, who gave the most fine-grained picture of music as a resource. The interview took place just after the interviewee participated into a workshop on early 17th century music.

When asked about the vital inputs of the festival, which the event draws from its surrounding environment, interviewee 03 responded promptly that it is the "mixture of art", which:

> has been either chosen by the event organisers to be
> presented in the festival performances or comes into being
> directly from the people that get here and participate actively
> in the event's performances.

As I will discuss later in this section, for a number of reasons, people and their social interrelations are often considered to be a vital resource for the festival environment. It is, however, evident in the above narrative that people are important for the festival as creators, carriers or bearers of cultural resources, as well as active contributors to the artistic programme of the event. As is the case for other research participants, the term people here refers to guest artists and performers, as well as festival goers and members of the local community that decided to take up an active, participatory role in the festival.

> People, the carriers of music, exchange through the air
> cultural information, without considering any limitations
> (interviewee 20).

The idea of a *mixture of art* led me immediately to seek what are the structural elements that constitute that mixture.

> I can define that, historically and geographically. First, I
> believe that an important ingredient of that mixture is old

music, which we have inherited from either our folk tradition or by named individual creators such as the composers of the baroque period for example. What is more important though is that old music co-exists here with contemporary creations. Then, geographically, it is a mixture of music coming from both the East and the West, and each artistic idiom meets all others here, at this cultural crossroads (interviewee 03).

Recognising that the defining ingredient of that mixture is music, and after the interviewee's introduction of the notion *old music*, I placed another prompt. Hence I asked whether old music constituted a kind of heritage, in an attempt to capture the latent moral background of this statement, e.g., if the latter creates an obligation for involved parties to preserve music in the context of the festival.

Yes, I assume that old music is indeed a kind of heritage which obliges us the art practitioners to revitalise and remind our audiences of something. But this is different to just preserving it. I'll talk about baroque music, in which I specialise. I don't think that we are able to preserve that old art form because we do not know exactly how it sounded like, since we haven't been living at the time that the latter was alive, nor has this music been ever recorded. (…) Therefore, it does not oblige us to preserve it since we simply can't, but we are obliged to remind our audience of that. That old music can indeed serve as raw material for contemporary compositions or other works of art. It would be such a pity for this heritage not to survive or even flourish. (…) Regarding old expression of art, these can only survive through activities that encourage artistic encounters, or cultural and human interaction. (…) In the context of the festival, we, the present generation, are not only reminded of that rich heritage but we also have a tremendous opportunity to absorb it and use it as pattern to create something new, and this can be performed in real time (interviewee 03).

Several implications emerge from the above narratives. First, music – as representative of the performing arts – acquires the property of being conceived as a *biotic* resource for the festival context; a resource that is present in the biosphere since it resides and originates in human life, in living human beings or people that have lived in the past. Applying this property, a latent appreciation of the creative aspects of human life becomes evident, since people are regarded as the principal carriers of these resources. It is implied that this expression of human culture, namely music, comes into being through social and cultural processes, such as the "encounters" that interviewee 03 refers to. And the festival is indeed an institution that is deeply dependent on such flows and processes for its very existence, which feed the festival's content with vital intangible resources such as music.

Essentially, it emerges from the above excerpt that the festival is perceived to facilitate the creation of desired *temporal* (the conveyance of cultural resources between generations) as well as *spatial* (between people and the place) associations between people, culture, and the place. Those connections, thus, contribute to the production and re-production of cultural assets or, in other words, the creation, renewal, replenishment or enrichment of the stock of those intangible resources. Such a process is deemed to be a positive contribution of the festival to its environment and, at the same time, a necessary process for its continuity and content. This is enabled either when the festival presents a line-up of staged contemporary performances or when it showcases and dramatises snapshots from the cultural tradition of a local community. For example, interviewee 15 led me to interpret local myth as another asset that falls into this category:

> I don't know whether or not this is easily observed, but I think local stories do actually give life to the festival. I can recall a performance staged two days ago when the musicians went up to the stage in the formation of a centaur and walking like a centaur [!]. Isn't that an example of local culture that is embedded to the festival experience? Or when local legends are inspiring the production of whole events, I'm talking about

the drama performed at the Virgin Mary churchyard
(interviewee 15).

Figure 5. Local myth (the "Centaur") embedded in various performances:
Facilitating temporal and spatial associations between people, intangible
cultural heritage, and the place.

Another interviewee seemed to understand local customs as another cultural
resource being circulated and reproduced within the bounded system of the
festival:

The fact that the Music Village takes place among a living
community and not in the middle of nowhere makes some

> traits of the local lifestyle be transmitted to the visitors, and
> this is another source of its power. It makes a huge difference
> and importantly it is conducted in a very organic and
> unplanned way. Just come to the village square at two in the
> afternoon and you will think that the village is deserted but
> then realise that visitors are practising siesta, a very local
> thing! (interviewee 09)

I could therefore ascribe a second property to intangible culture and consider this set of resources – including music and local traditions – as socio-cultural resources; assets that are created and maintained largely through social activities. By reflecting this interpretation on the resource-based discourse of sustainability – which maintains that the resources upon which a system depends need to be safeguarded – we are directed to pay attention to the particular socio-cultural processes that are responsible for encouraging the creation and conservation of these resources. It can be elicited from participants' accounts that the festival is one of those socio-cultural activities where intangible cultural resources come into being, are negotiated, exchanged, consumed, and potentially preserved for future use. Apparently, the very action of incorporating manifestations of local culture in the festival content is regarded as a positive action, guided by ethical intentions – a proper representation of a praxis. Neither the notion of intangible resources, such as music, nor the processes and actions that are responsible for their production and reproduction have ever been included in discussions of sustainability pertinent to the contemporary festival scene – with the exception of few cases (e.g., Rothbury, 2011).

> It has been long ago since I last watched Karagiozis
> (traditional shadow theatre). I was pleased to hear that the
> young man who performs this rare art also offers workshops,
> I' m thinking about enrolling my grandson for that (interviewee
> 19).

The third property of intangible expressions of culture is *renewability*. Intangible cultural resources are renewable because almost every human being that comes to life is able to create, and does produce, some kind of

new culture that is added up to an imaginative existing stock of cultural assets. Cultural resources are thus considered to be "surviving traces" (interviewee 03) of societies' past culture-creation activities, which, when revisited, reconstructed and enlivened, transform into new forms of intangible artefacts and are eventually enriching the stock of cultural heritage that currently exists (Keitumetse, 2014; Wall, 2009).

Applying the property of renewability onto intangible cultural resources highlights that these assets can replenish with the passage of time. As long as there exist environments – such as the festival – that foster and serve as catalysts for the (re)production, maintenance, and evolution of intangible cultural assets, the stock of these resources could be potentially continuously expanding. Nevertheless, it emerged through participants' narratives that cultural assets are in danger of fossilising, becoming extinct or even being destroyed. Interviewee 03 makes particular reference to this idea and implies that such cultural resources cannot be limited *per se*; but they might be endangered. In particular with regard to resources pertinent to the performing arts, which do not bear a tangible reflection (e.g., 17th century chamber music), they are endangered when people do not perform them and, thus, any form of intangible cultural asset can potentially become extinct. An ethnomusicologist who participated in the Music Village provided an example of a particular, historic music genre that lost its ambience:

> Byzantine music restricted itself inside the church, prohibited
> secular music in the church, and ostracised all instruments.
> (…) Since societies started getting secular, that music got
> into the history wardrobe (The secrets of music, 2013, 11:43).

Only when individuals participate in cultural and social encounters do they become inheritors, communicators, and reproducers of endangered intangible resources, and, eventually, these assets can secure their continuity. The property of renewability in reference to cultural resources is therefore very different to the way other forms of renewable resources are being conceived throughout the dominant sustainability discourse. Renewable natural resources, for example renewable energy sources – which have been the focus of interest of many contemporary interventions within the sustainable

festival scene (e.g., Shambala Festival, 2016; Lighting in a bottle Festival, 2016), theoretically can never get exhausted.

Another finding of the present study, in relation to the ascribed property of renewability, is that in their attempts to address the threats to intangible cultural resources, such as music, participants raise an ethical question about people's (in abstract) responsibility to transfer intangible assets to future generations. "The next to come will be definitely richer if we manage to secure the stories that we have inherited", says interviewee 15, reflecting on the previous night's musical comedy that started with an improvisation inspired by a local myth. A strong moral principle, underpinned by a preservationist perception of immaterial cultural heritage, therefore seems to underpin sayings such as the above. Such statements imply that individuals and communities bear a kind of obligation towards future society, namely the obligation to transmit the intangibles they have inherited to their descendants. The intergenerational conveyance of intangible cultural heritage is therefore seen as another positive action – a kind of praxis.

Interestingly, this moral argument, the present generation's obligation to bequest resources to future generations, is one of the theoretical pillars of dominant interpretations of sustainability (Troy, 2013; Caldwell, 1998). In the present research, however, we can also observe an interesting distinction between the notions of "preservation" and "reminder" (interviewee 03), which could have an important impact to the way that "obligation" is conceptualised and interpreted. That being the case, preservation of immaterial forms of culture is regarded as being difficult to achieve, if not undesirable. The introduction of the term "reminder" makes an appropriate connection to the subsequent statement, namely that intangible cultural heritage does not only survive as-is but also enlivens and evolves through activities that inspire artistic encounters and people's – the *carriers* of that asset – interaction.

"Reminder" implies change. This prompts us to interpret the social processes related to cultural inheritance as fundamentally evolutionary or transformational, pointing to on-going, active streams of cultural production. Intangible assets in the context of the festival are not being transferred as-is but are communicated by their current carriers as "reminders" of a particular

moment of creativity that took place within a special historical context. Although people are regarded as carriers of past culture, they are also viewed as exercising their agency and changing the existing culture, thus creating a new one, sourcing their inspiration by existing stocks of cultural resources.

Figure 6. The performing arts festival as a catalyst for processes of social cultural inheritance through which existing stocks of intangible cultural resources are both being preserved and conserved. In this photo: traditional shadow theatre (Karagiozis) at the Music Village.

About a hundred years ago there was a thing that it was called Chautauqua. It was a kind of a place where people would go when the weather was nice, in summers, seeking

new ideas or old ideas that would find new ideas upon. (…) I
think this place, Agios Lavrentios, the Music Village, is kind of
a modern day Chautauqua (Music Village, 2013, 2:32).

It is those culture "reminders" that thus provide participants with the means to truly engender their creativity and dare to enrich, even change, that "stock" of existing cultural assets. Existing stocks of cultural information are passed onto current generations and then form the "raw material" for contemporary systems of knowledge and expression to be created. Gibson (2007), for example, has considered the role of festivals in the diffusion of musical genres, arguing that this is contributing to cultural change. That moral argument is therefore not implying an obligation (for the current generations) to "preserve" the stock of intangible cultural resources, but an obligation to "communicate" them as an act of opening the possibilities to foster the on-going delivery of those assets. This normative proposition is also expressing an appreciation for the social platforms and space-times of cultural encounter that provide for the productive exchange and evolution of such assets among and between generations. Festivals, arguably, emerge as catalysts for processes of social cultural inheritance that are both preserving (maintaining in original form) and conserving (transformation and evolution are "acceptable" and often necessary processes) this stock of intangible resources, which are largely referred to positively as important on-going processes that provide for flourishing communities.

The above discussion has already expanded the currently narrow interpretations of the environment that are being reproduced within, and for, the contemporary sustainable performing arts festival scene. This is because a new environmental dimension, that is intangible culture, emerged as an important, yet abstract, construct from participants' accounts about what is vital for the existence, continuation and flourishing of the festival. At the same time, it can be interpreted that those resources do not only flow *to* the festival as inputs from its surrounding environment but also flow, changed, *from* the festival back to that environment – as outputs, remaining indivisible part of it, to enhance the existing stocks of these assets. Under that view, a sustainable festival can be conceptualised as a platform that enables complex temporal

connections of people with intangible heritage as well as intangible culture in the future. Further, it appears that this intangible set of resources represents a pivotal factor upon the formation of social interconnections between people, thus providing for the development of both bridging and bonding qualities of social capital (Putnam, 2003), at various levels of the festival community (this argument as well as the notion of social capital will be further discussed in 6.2.6).

A number of complex symbiotic relationships between the festival and its expanded environment have just been uncovered; relationships through which the festival *does* leave its trace on its environment by impacting, positively, part of its surroundings – which constitute, at the same time, its vital resources and reason for existence. That festivals have remarkable cultural and artistic value is without doubt. Yet the notion of intangible culture is absent from contemporary sustainable festivals' interventions and, moreover, has been a curiously under-researched aspect in the literature related to sustainable events. Therefore, findings could potentially suggest new pathways for future research as well as practice pertinent to the topic of sustainability.

This section provided evidence for conceptualising intangible cultural heritage, in particular music, and new culture as resources that have survived from the past, are currently being exchanged, re-interpreted, evolved or (re)created within the festival system, and can then be passed on. Moreover, it revealed a first set of actions, or praxes, that embody the potential for changing that environmental dimension – and thus the festival itself – in some desirable way. The final beneficiary of this on-going favourable environmental impact is the larger future society, whose members will be able to access and further draw on that evolving pool of intangible cultural resources, as their ancestors would do.

6.2.2 Creativity

Participants' references and conceptual descriptions surrounding the notion of *creativity* shaped the development of another active theme in the

present analysis. Hence creativity emerged as another resource and dimension of the festival environment, which, through a complex set of flows, is regarded as a contributor to its own flourishing, and at the same time, a contributor to essential societal possibilities. This study employs the definition of creativity as discussed by Sternberg and Lubart (1999), namely as the ability to produce work that is both novel (e.g., original, unexpected) and useful. In this section I will therefore draw on participants' references to perceived processes, engendered by groups or individuals affiliated with the festival, that have resulted, or might result in the future, into something "new" and "useful". Given this thesis's stance to sustainability as a productive, open-ended, hope-filled construct, my intent in this section is to discuss a selection of narratives that regarded creativity as a positive contributor to the festival and the other social systems wherein the festival occurs.

> Throughout these two weeks participants here celebrate.
> They have fun but they also create something [pause] they
> need to create something and they do so. Isn't that one of our
> positive endowments to the festival? (interviewee 18)

> You can see that even the kids and residents are taking part
> actively in that celebration of creativity. They are not only
> watching but also doing music, fiestas, they develop
> friendships and create followers for their ideas. You can't
> really tell how far the outcomes of each one's contribution
> might spread and who might benefit eventually (…) Others
> might have done something that no one is aware of. For
> instance I've been googling yesterday and found a great blog
> with black and white very artistic photos from last year's
> festival, I think it's called Jim's blog (interviewee 09).

A first point of discussion is the interrelationship between human creativity and another set of resources that have been conceived to be important for the festival and its social surroundings, namely intangible cultural resources. By reconstructing and interpreting participants' remarks I could argue that creativity, conceived both as an individual and social need, as well as a potentially beneficial resource for the festival, is understood as

the process by which elements of the repository of the available cultural resources – both tangible and intangible – are recombined in novel ways in order to produce something that did not exist before.

In the particular empirical study this creative process, or praxis, of recombination was understood to contribute positively, first, to the festival itself and, second, to the larger context of intangible culture. With regards to the former, participants highlighted the productive potential of festival-goers' creativity to generate valuable content for the event, thereby enriching a vital resource for its existence and longevity. It is participants' musical creativity, the local community's creative contribution to the event production, as well as the unplanned, undirected and rich – in cultural content – festive happenings that were stressed in many interviewees' responses.

> I think exactly this unpredictable thing [participants' creativity] bequeaths the festival with unique pieces of performance and art and eventually creates great part of the festival itself (interviewee 18).

I need to note, however, that the *Music Village* festival is guided by a strong ethos of participation and co-creation, which is being animated by officially-embedded activities (e.g., workshops) or spontaneously occurring participatory activities (e.g., fiestas) that are parallel to, and feed into, the main event. The process of inspiring the creativity of workshop participants to develop and present a contemporary drama based on a local fable – that is an artefact of previous generations' creativity, alongside the active participation of members of the local community, was considered by interviewee 15, for example, as one of those beneficial flows towards the festival. The importance participants ascribed to what might be defined as user-created content might lead future relevant research and practice towards a new conceptualisation of festival sustainability, inclusive of the potential creative contribution of each individual participant.

Figure 7. Creativity as a resource: Festival-goers and members of the local community exercise their creativity and generate valuable content for the festival.

Second, I could interpret the creativity that has been engendered within the context of the festival as an interim or transitional resource; once appeared and animated there is the potential to be stocked by becoming part of the growing repository of tangible or intangible cultural heritage. In the above excerpt interviewee 09, for instance, is making the link between a

participant's individual creativity and the creation of cultural content, expressing an appreciation for that positive contribution to the larger arts context. The creative act of capturing instants of the festival experience with his camera, and then publishing content in a blog is regarded as a favourable addition to the particular artistic domain, implying an underlying appreciation of the intrinsic value of the art (Reeves, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001).

The previous section provided a brief exploration of the renewable nature of intangible cultural resources. Nevertheless, culture was interpreted as a living, growing repository, which could be better conceptualised as a living organism, drawing again to the symbiosis metaphor of the employed conceptual framework. This means that intangible culture is *born*, but it can also become *obsolete.* It is the interim resource of human creativity that is responsible for cultural resources' enrichment, preservation and survivability through time, and the consequential delivery – as a moral obligation – of these assets from one generation to another. In this sense, creativity is a critical resource to be considered in festival sustainability discussions because it can bring forth a variety of new cultural assets, thereby enriching the cultural/social environment in which the festival takes place, and which constitute the reason for its existence.

Another characteristic implication of perceiving creativity as a resource is its potential to affect positively a broad range of dimensions of the broader festival habitat other than the dimension of intangible culture. Hence a number of participants reported on particular cases in which people's creativity – deployed under certain circumstances and human encounters in the festival setting – has led or might lead to perceived positive effects in multiple dimensions of the immediate or distant environment of the festival. It would be useful to make a distinction here between perceptions of creativity as a resource that is *endogenous* to the festival habitat, meaning that it has been generated within and during the festival itself, and creativity that is *exogenous* to the festival, which refers to creativity that participants deployed outside the festival but conveyed and re-used within its spatial and temporal settings. The changing image of the village's built heritage (e.g., conversion or refurbishment of abandoned private houses and public infrastructure), for

example, is perceived to owe much to the creativity that emerged during undirected participants' interaction, through the agency of the festival.

> The idea and the actual human support network for developing the building of Stratonas into a venue that would be used by the local community to host cultural activities and events was formed here in one of these summer gatherings (interviewee 01).

Beyond the perceived contribution of participants' creativity to physical and tangible elements of the village and the host community, a range of rather intangible contributions of that creative capacity have been identified. For instance, I observed a general appreciation of the creative ways that invited pedagogues and performers employed in order to raise awareness and actively suggest practical ways of including, into the festival activities, disadvantaged members of the community – e.g., children with special educational needs and disabilities. Amimoni's[13] intervention, for example, during the festival through public performances and workshops can be seen as one of those morally-committed actions, or praxes, that embody creativity's potential for desirable contextual change. Furthermore, particular spurts and flows of creativity were perceived to be able to educate in some unintentional manner active and passive festival participants about a number of issues, including the value of the surrounding forest, as well as the appreciation of contemporary artistic genres and applied knowledge or ideas.

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[13] Amimoni is a charity and official partner of the *Music Village* that supports programs for children with special needs. Their mission is to educate children with serious sight problems and multiple physical disabilities through pleasant and creative activities to provide them the means to control their daily life (Amimoni, 2015).

[P.] had a great idea. He offered to do these horse rides through the forest and now this constitutes one of the official activities with which someone might be engaged in parallel to the other things that happen here. I'm sure this is intensifying the respect one might already have for the local surroundings and for mother nature in general (interviewee 07).

Figure 8. Creativity as a resource: raising awareness of social inclusion and respect for the physical surroundings.

Participants' creativity that was deployed during the festival was even reported to have had a favourable contribution to the subjective dimensions of personal wellbeing. C.N., for example, is a performing pianist who has also developed a method for increasing performers' physical movement and cognitive capabilities, while aiming to prevent musculoskeletal disorders associated with the intense practice of their art (Noulis, n.d.). This participating performer exercised his creativity – which is exogenous to the festival – and offered to deliver, during the event, workshops and restorative sessions to other festival participants. To this end, C.N.'s creative theoretical and practical offering was perceived to have benefited a number of individual festival participants. These observations make discussions about the links between creativity and festival experience relevant to the topic of sustainability, by opening up an avenue to consider the therapeutic implications of creativity in the context of leisure (Whiting and Hannam, 2015; Creek, 2008) as an additional constitutive element of a theory pertinent to the sustainable festival.

It is not the intent of this section, however, to provide a detailed account or evidence of the perceived contribution of that creative energy to all dimensions of the broader festival setting. Exploring participants' and stakeholders' subjective perceptions, and analysing the actual positive impacts of festivals on various aspects of the events' host environment is a well-developed theme in event and tourism studies (e.g., Richards et al., 2013; Quinn, 2006; Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Small, Edwards and Sheridan, 2005). Nevertheless, in the particular body of festival-related literature that explores issues pertinent to sustainability, scholarly discussions are often narrowly connected with the effects of income or job generation of festivals to the sustained growth of local communities, therefore considering these events as contributors to the economic sustainability of their host environment (O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002). There has rarely been any discussion of the role of participants' creativity as a force that enables the broader festival social environment to flourish through the generation and dissemination of positive spin-offs. As Harre (2013) notes, sustainability is strongly aligned with positive ideas, perceptions, emotions, which through the agency of human creativity can lead to desired actual outcomes. Hence

approaches to the concept of sustainability inclusive of creative processes might form a fertile ground for future research and theory development for the sustainable festival.

The relationship between deployed creativity and potentially favourable impact is, however, far from simple since these outcomes emerge out of dynamic, complex interactions and processes. The notion of *emergence* refers to processes within complex systems in which larger entities are shaped and arise through the interaction of their smaller parts (Barton, 2013). Because any favourable outcomes – both perceived and actual – of such interactions are emergent, the direction that these positively charged currents of creativity will travel and eventually materialise is hard to envisage in advance.

> People carry on them different experiences and worldviews
> and ideas. Especially for those who decide to take up a rather
> active role in the festival the potential of each other's
> creativity influencing each other even far beyond the festival
> is high (interviewee 04).

Therefore, in light of this thesis' empirical findings, I could argue that sustainability-relevant, favourable outcomes might not arise necessarily in pre-designated sustainable elements or practices of the festival (e.g., "sustainability zones"; "sustainable merchandise"; "zero trace") but can also arise in any setting where creativity comes into being and flows across human and non-human agents of the festival habitat. This could also suggest a shift of scholarly focus, from measuring the positive impact that festivals might have on particular dimensions of their host environment, to exploring the mechanisms and interactions that – through the agency of creativity and its diffusion towards many directions – might potentially lead to a flourishing future for human communities in all their wholeness.

> Many things in the festival do happen in an unpredicted way
> and expand towards many positively charged directions, I
> can't think of anything going in the opposite direction, at least
> people who get here are already positively charged. They

bring their appetite to have fun but they are also given
opportunities [-] although they are not aware of that [pause] to
bring their ideas and experiences and create new ones and
eventually put some of these into practice. We just need a
spark to think and create something that would potentially
make a small or big desirable change to us or the world that
surrounds us. It is being so close to one another and attuned
that provides room for such sparks (interviewee 16).

A common thread in the above excerpts is an appreciation of the
collective dimensions of creativity; an interacting and collaborating group of
people have the potential of generating greater ideas and positive spin-offs
than individuals alone. This also suggests a communitarian reading of
creativity, one which stands in stark contrast to dominant conceptualisations
that emphasise individual autonomy. Such an approach to creativity is
compatible with earlier contributions and appeals for aesthetically embedded
worlds that focus on social creativity rather than on self-expression and the
agency of the individual (Gablik, 1995). Importantly, in contradiction to
contemporary ideas advocating individual, self-expressive modalities of
creativity, which echo the practices of the so-called "creative class" (Whiting
and Hannam, 2015; Florida, 2002; DCMS, 2001), a collective approach is
much better suited to the search process and the ideals of sustainability – as
collective improvement and transition to a better state of a given context.

I feel privileged to observe participants bearing witness to
other participants' creativity in working on a play or a music
session, for example, while being part of a larger workshop
group. It's even more peculiar when you see residents taking
part more proactively and creating something they feel they
share afterwards. It is strange because these people in
particular [local residents] leave together yet rarely have
perceived this place as a creative space. Isn't that a lesson of
proper citizenship? (interviewee 13)

The excerpt clearly refers to a kind of festival experience which acquires
shared meaning for its participants, what Arai and Pedlar (2003, p.190) would

call a "communal celebration" of creativity. According to this interpretation of creativity, the kind of leisure experience that the above text describes is "not a good to be consumed; rather it is something that everyone shares" (ibid.). Unlike the sustainable festival experience that the majority of contemporary sustainable performing arts festivals offer to their public – an experience intended to be consumed in a passive way by attending individuals – the above reading hints at the possibility of a more active as well as collective form of leisure. Essentially, it shifts the focus of the sustainable festival from the realm of consumption to the realm of production, which is a much more desired quality in sustainability thinking – as argued above.

In the above excerpt, when interviewee 13 talks about the potential of practices around which people (members of the local community) have been brought together, she describes their contribution to the creative content of an artistic outcome, that is a performance which has been also prepared and presented thanks to their active participation. Nevertheless, it is evident that the collective practice described above has also broader community implications (e.g., "a lesson of proper citizenship"), which further provides for this thesis' interpretation of creativity as contributing to range of dimensions of the broader festival habitat other than the dimension of intangible culture. This statement will also be discussed in a later section.

Figure 9. A communal celebration of creativity?

Discussions about collective forms of creativity also constitute an emerging theme within contemporary domains such as positive psychology, which explore the processes that enable people and communities to thrive. As Csikszentmihalyi (1996) points out, social interaction has the potential of "making the invisible visible through conversations that would bring out new ideas that could not arise in the minds of the single individuals" (p.672). Almost all human individuals have the crucial preconditions to create new ideas. It is groups of people, however, utilising shared domains of experience and knowledge, and being embedded in settings of social interdependence and contagion (Walker, 2010) that form the basis of achieving greater creative potential.

In this vein, the festival is regarded as a space-catalyst for collective creativity to emerge, eventually intensifying the reproduction of this resource. It provides the space for mutual engagement between participants – festival goers, visitors, locals, performing artists, educators, volunteers, authority representatives – who, by losing themselves in the interaction and dynamics of "group flow" (Sawyer, 2008), are creating the potential of benefits that are greater than each individual would be capable of contributing alone. Sawyer (2003) defines such creative groups as "complex dynamical systems", which bear "a high degree of sensitivity to initial conditions and rapidly expanding combinatoric possibilities from moment to moment" (p.10). This implies, again, that it is very difficult to predict in advance the depth and direction to which the outcomes of festival participants' encounters will travel, since group creativity is an emergent resource.

Furthermore, creativity is perceived as an important resource in the particular context for another fundamental idea in sustainability thinking: change. Sustainability in this thesis is not regarded as a definitive condition of harmony – a static state in the future, but rather as a continuous process of change, a process of coevolution with, and adaptation to, the immediate or distant host environment (Thiele, 2011; Pulselli and Tiezzi, 2009; Capra, 2002). Adaptation refers to the processes of change by which an organism becomes better suited to its environment (Troy, 2013). Under the lens of the

sustainability envisioning, this insinuates an expanded understanding of adaptation, evoking positive associations for the future of the festival as well as the future of the surrounding social environment. Employing the metaphor of the festival-organism and drawing on the concept of symbiosis furnishes our understanding of creativity as a vector of change, contributing to the construction of a better future for the festival as well as the broader social reality. In the context of the performing arts festival, sustainability might hence be applied in reference to the change processes that nurture the quest for perpetually higher resilience in the complex festival habitat. Creativity, especially cooperative types of creativity, therefore emerges as an essential resource for the imaginative construction as well as implementation of actions aiming to achieve higher contextual welfare. As Durkheim (1951; p.310) famously put it:

> When the consciousness of individuals, instead of remaining isolated, becomes grouped and combined, something in the world has been altered.

Indeed, the empirical findings of this study suggest that human creativity is firmly placed as a resource at the very core of perceived processes of positive, qualitative change. If, for example, the inclusion of disadvantaged members of our society (interviewee 04) into the festival through improvised, creative endeavours is seen as a window of opportunity or a fleeting intimation of a better, more just world, then creativity emerges as a contributor to the resilience of the festival habitat and a mediator between the present challenges and a sustainable, desired future. And if the presence of an abandoned building in the centre of the village (interviewee 01) constitutes a problem – a challenge to the future of the particular festival environment, then the festival appears to be heavily dependent on that creative human capacity – participants' inspiration as well as the mental problem-solving processes – to foster greater contextual change that is coherent with the present as well as future flourishing of the broader festival system.

Within the sustainability discourse we often hear that the decisive factor for a flourishing future is creativity: creativity manifested through the experimentation and creation of new institutions, new social forms, new

cultures, new products, new tools and systems, and new lifestyles (Kagan and Hahn, 2011; Nadarajah and Yamamoto, 2007). But how do we develop these new entities? In light of the present research findings I could argue that it is particularly the realm of emergent, free-floating ideas and intuitional exploration within collective settings that elevate creativity as a facilitator and a vital substance of positive, qualitative evolutionary processes across the larger festival social context. This argument, in turn, suggests that it might be useful to further our understanding of the channels and spaces within contemporary festivals that might enable undirected creativity to emerge, and, thus, synthesise a resource that is vital for a sustainable – resilient, promising, and flourishing – festival environment.

Conceptual explorations and applications of creativity are missing from current sustainable festival research and practice. The empirical findings discussed in this section call for a need to understand creativity as one of those resources on which the festival depends and has a tangible impact. Additionally, findings implied a need to recognise creativity as a vital substance that is enabling the festival to meet its own, present and future, needs as well as make a positive contribution to the long-term welfare of its broader, yet indivisible environment. This thesis' call to include the notion of creativity into understandings and practical interventions of sustainability pertinent to the festival scene also aligns with dominant definitions of sustainability, communicated by international institutions. The Rio Declaration (UNCED, 1992), for example, states in Principle 21 that human creativity is a resource that could be mobilised to forge and ensure a better future for the entire world. It is therefore another recommendation for sustainable festival research and practice to be inclusive of creativity considerations, since creativity could be employed as a means of bridging the gap between top-to-bottom and bottom-up approaches to sustainability in this domain.

6.2.3 The Natural Environment

As it emerged from the conversations with the Music Village participants, the natural environment constitutes another set of resources that play an important role in the construction of their sustainable festival

narratives. I will discuss in this section participants' particular references to non-human nature that have been infused with appreciation and symbolism, implying complex human-nature relationships and subjective judgements determined principally by aesthetic values. I will develop the following discussion based on participants' references to the surrounding natural landscape of the area (e.g., the forest; the valley; the flora and the fauna of the area), the felt environmental conditions (e.g., odours, the quality of the air; weather conditions), as well as particular resources provided by Earth's systems (e.g., water). The following discussion will thus attempt to construct a profile of a set of resources based on participants' perspectives about their relationship with the Earth's systems within which their experience of the festival is situated.

> Of course the natural environment is an important resource for the festival that everyone should respect and not only the organisers. I heard some negative comments for example that the council's street cleaning service is not efficient during the festival or that some campers leave litter behind or that there aren't any recycling areas in the village. (…) Doesn't the natural environment deserve the highest respect? (…) I'm pleased though that the majority of people getting here are environmentally conscious (interviewee 05).

After the set of resources that constitute this theme was actively defined, analysis then aimed to explore the underlying reasons that the festival participants conceive the natural environment as a resource for the particular context. A core observation is that participants are often driven to a conceptualisation of the natural environment as an important set of resources for: i) the festival organisation; ii) the broader festival environment; and iii) participants themselves, although distinction between these overlapping themes was often difficult.

> If the festival took place elsewhere, at a distance from that magnificent nature and the imposing traditional character of the village it is certain that everything would be different. The festival gets a lot from these surroundings (interviewee 05).

First, the natural environment has been identified as a resource valued not in terms of its ability to provide critical natural resource material to the festival system (e.g., energy, water supply, food, etc.) – which is a common interpretation of natural resources within current festival research and practice – but for its immaterial, symbolic contribution to the particular festival identity. For a festival happening in an aesthetically appealing natural setting, nature seems to constitute a resource that might differentiate the festival, define its audience, and impose the way it is structured and performed.

> I believe that this nature, experiencing the festival in settings that are full of life, trees, running water, sometimes the crickets are too loud and some others we might be too loud for the crickets… this nature might be what you asked, it is an input to the festival as well as to my experience of being here (interviewee 31).

> The real village mostly marks out the area and offers a background subject. This is why people from all around Greece come here even from abroad. It [the real village] offers a direct access to all those beautiful natural elements it owns (…) like its architectural heritage, take for example this forsaken old school (…) and its natural surroundings (interviewee 17).

The host village's natural location in a dense forest of beech, olive and chestnut trees, creates the sensation of a place that has remained unchanged throughout the centuries. Previous studies within tourism research have found that environmental cues – visual and sensual – are often employed in the minds of visitors as a differential tool to perpetuate the construction of uniqueness and brand meaning, and therefore creating a competitive advantage for a particular attraction (Bonn et al., 2007). The role of the natural environment, however, as an icon for constructing the identity of a particular performing arts festival brand – hence a resource for the festival organisation – is an under researched subject although it is not unusual for festival organisers to capitalise, deliberately, on the atmospherics (Kotler, 1973) of their host natural environment. It is possible to suggest that nature

and natural resources flow towards the event organisation, symbolically, and infuse the festival with qualities, bestowing charm on it and creating a particular identity. This proposition creates a link between the festival and the conception of sustainability as the ability to endure, since it considers natural resources as contributors to the long-term survival and success of the event.

A second theme that emerged within discussions categorised under the active code natural environment relates to the interactions of this set of resources with what this research conceptualised as the "broader festival environment". Research participants recognised the natural environment as an important resource pointing to its conceptualisation as a catalyst in making positive contributions to environmental aspects beyond the bounded festival system. Namely, participants referred to their contextual understanding of nature-as-a-resource highlighting its potential to cultivate creativity and the development of cultural resources.

> The activities of this festival organisation use at their very core this beautiful medieval village on Pelion, which is literally lost in nature. There is on one hand the festival organisation and on the other the effect that it [nature] has on the village and the participants. (…) Last week it was that students' concert, I think it was called Orchestrating the nature. This is what I mean when I consider the power of the environment to create something that has value, at least for those who can understand its meaning. I remember the performance started with the performer playing live with a water bucket and also playing back sounds of the water he captured in the forest and the falls (interviewee 27).

In this excerpt, interviewee 27 is referring to a soundscape composition workshop that yielded one of the official line-up's performances. The interviewee mentions particular elements of the surrounding landscape – the flow of water, birdsong, and the falling leaves – that are inspiring artistic self-expression and through the use of sound technology eventually contributing an outcome – a live performance. Moreover, it is clear that this praxis has been interpreted as something desirable ("has value") from a broader point of

view and for a wider range of recipients of this "value". The idea that non-human nature is figuring firmly as a source of creative and cultural inspiration is not new at all. We might better associate this idea with Dewey's (1980, p.22) understanding of the "aesthetic experience":

> Experience is the result, the sign and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication.
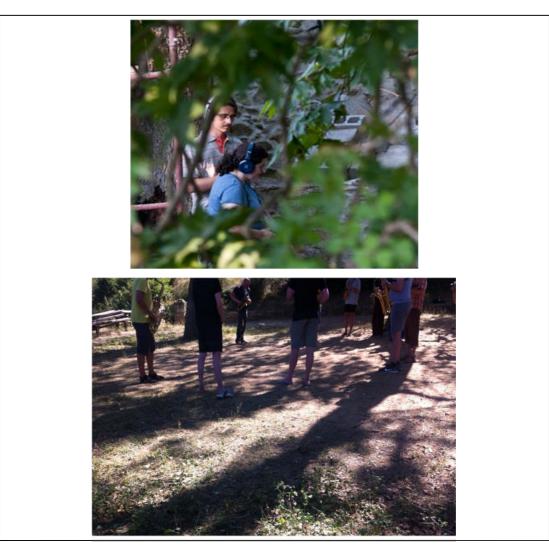

Figure 10. The natural environment consumed and transformed into other forms of meaningful assets. Top: Making music by capturing non-human nature's sounds; Bottom: Meditating in the forest while rehearsing for the performance.

The embodied minds of the festival participants – visitors, audience, performers, volunteers, students, locals – interact with elements of the surrounding natural environment and transform into action and meaning. The possibilities of imagination and creative thinking then open up. Investigations of the potential role of the natural environment in fostering creativity also constitute a recurrent theme in contemporary creativity research (McCoy and Evans, 2002).

It is also known from previous research that people with a creative inclination are responsive to aesthetically gratifying experiences and, therefore, there might be a strong correlation between a pleasing natural environment and creative behaviour (Barron, 1969). Luckman's (2009) creative industries study, for example, provided empirical evidence that Darwin's (Australia) natural environment is seen as fundamental to the creativity of locals, and argued that nature figures strongly as an inspiration for creativity. To put that into context, this section therefore suggests that the natural environment, as a set of aesthetic resources, could be perceived as being *consumed* by festival participants and, through complex sensory stimuli, is being *transformed* into other forms of assets such as creativity and intangible culture – which have been addressed previously in this chapter.

The third major line in participants' references to the natural environment-as-a-resource applies to its association with issues that the present analysis related to the notion of *subjective well-being* (Eid and Larsen, 2008). Participants often constructed the particular rural setting, where the festival is taking place, as a soothing space, which provides multiple stimuli to allow themselves connect with the goodness of their feelings. In many accounts it was the perceived beauty and the naturalness of the setting that facilitated the meditative process of experiencing positive states.

> Anything can get you elsewhere, a breeze, the drifting
> waters, these sounds do not always help you improvise, they
> might distract you, but that experience is so pleasing that
> brings out other psychological states and qualities
> (interviewee 29).

Two of the most commonly cited positive qualities that participants associated with the natural environment in the present discussion are *relaxation* and *restoration*.

> To me it is a great opportunity to conduct by myself some kind of psychic restoration, as well as to escape from all frenetic activities of daily life. Therefore, I consider that natural aura as an extremely important resource for the festival (interviewee 06).

As has been the case with the previous two main observations in this section, the benign effects that the connection of the self to nature brings on human happiness is not a new idea. "Biophilia", for example, is a term coined by Wilson (1984) to describe people's innate "urge to affiliate with other forms of life" (p.85) and address nature's impact on mental development. The notion of "biophilia" is rooted further back into ecological philosophy, which notes human beings' positive psychological inclination to all that is alive and vital (Fromm, 1964).

Previous research has also documented the psychic, restorative and relaxation, benefits of nature (Nisbet, Zelenski, and Murphy, 2010; Kaplan, 1995) associating the quality of the natural environment and time spent in it with people's subjective well-being – and thus human psychological health. Within that line of research, psychological well-being is regarded as a process that is enhanced by contact with elements of the natural environment. In the words of Hughes (2009), contact with nature can be a transformative kind of experience that "freshens, cures, and expands the human spirit" (p.159). Nevertheless, participants' quotes such as the above hint at the importance of aligning positive states and emotions of the human self, however subjective, with the notion of sustainability, which can be now re-interpreted as an on-going endeavour to model the spaces and practices that benefit all aspects of human life. If the festival's outdoor setting – a setting of perceived natural beauty in particular – is viewed as the conduit that fulfils participants' desire to temporarily escape from their non-festival worlds and enables them to re-connect with something they have lost or that has deteriorated in daily life,

then it would be interesting to investigate which particular elements of the festival's idealised world are responsible for those perceived benefits.

This section provided evidence that participants' constructions of the non-human environment of the festival are underpinned by strong aesthetic values, since narratives are pointing to the environment's *beauty*. As Lowe (2010) notes, aesthetic considerations denote the presence of something that is desirable and important. They provide a sensible manifestation of processes that are inherently *good* and worth for human individuals and communities to engage with (ibid.). I would argue for the necessity to embed such aesthetic considerations into the new theory of the sustainable festival because that conceptual development would facilitate the re-construction of participants' relationships with their socially constructed, non-human environment. Through the mediation of such considerations it would be possible to conceptualise the potential synergies that develop between the festival, sustainable or otherwise, and its physical surroundings. What I am proposing is quite oppositional to dominant understandings that regard the festival as an organisation that draws resources from its (external) natural environment – in a habitual and exploitative way – and leaves back mere waste to its environment (Brooks et al., 2007). By contrast, when the resources provided by the festival's environment are determined aesthetically, based on contextual considerations, then it will be quite unlikely for any negative flows of *matter* to occur from the festival to its surroundings. A broader philosophical suggestion here might be to question what is happening in normal, non-festival settings (e.g., daily life or work) and settings where the environment is not viewed as beautiful that prompts festival participants talk about the above transformative benefits of their festival experience.

6.2.4 The Built Environment

Analysis revealed that festival participants also drew on a number of human-made elements of the festival site environment in their attempts to construct their narratives of the sustainable festival environment. This led to the conceptualisation of the built environment as another set of resources that

play an important role in their creation of meaning, and, thus, in their envisioning of a flourishing future for the festival and its broader environment. This construct principally refers to components that could be classified as *built cultural heritage* since these have been associated, collectively, with human-made structures ascribed with particular historic or cultural value. Therefore, I included in this set of resources references to built attributes present in the particular festival site environment, which have been created from past generations, maintained in the present and are considered worthy of preservation since this would benefit future generations (Czepczyński, 2008). It may be sufficient to mention some of these elements: the kalderimia (a well-preserved network of narrow, stone cobbled streets); the old café and the old mill; the old primary school building; the churches and churchyards; the squares; the gardens; the traditional houses; the Village.

The *Music Village* festival is staged within a physical environment, which is both natural and human made. The boundaries, however, between the natural and the constructed are often unclear and this has been illustrated in participants' narratives. For example, when interviewees referred to the "Chatzini Square", which is a human intervention that imprints itself with ease upon the contours of a natural landscape, they could not specifically focus on the natural or the constructed attributes of that space in their stories. Such integration – simultaneously talking about natural and built components ascribing similar qualities to both – is evident in the following excerpt:

> You are asking me about the life-giving elements of this festival [pause] I think that everybody would agree on what I call the green factor and also the naturalness of the village as a whole, which these guys [the festival organisers] have exploited [pause] respectfully though. And that factor is not only beneficial for this event but also for visitors. For a participant, for example, walking through the kalderimia to attend a concert staged at the old café just under the huge platanus is something very special, they do appreciate these settings (interviewee 12).

Figure 11. The built environment: inspiring praxes through which the stock of intangible culture is being transformed.

That integration, in participants' narratives, of the natural (e.g., 'the green factor'; the platanus) and built (e.g., the kalderimia and the old café) components of the festival's host physical environment led to observations very similar to those expressed in the previous sub-section (6.2.3, The Natural Environment). A common theme which emerged from relevant participants' stories is the appreciation they expressed towards these human-made cultural attributes and a realisation that these serve as resources for the festival organisation, the human agents of the festival environment, as well as the broader cultural sphere – by contributing to the repository of cultural assets. This section will attempt to discuss some of the symbiotic as well as dynamic relationships that the built environment is perceived to develop with other contextual dimensions of the broader festival environment.

First, the conception of the built environment as a set of resources that flow towards the festival and are able to generate beneficial – and thus desirable – outcomes for the broader festival context, was based on narratives that highlighted the positive contribution of these assets to human creativity and the production of new, intangible cultural artefacts. This refers

to a sustainability-relevant relationship like the one discussed previously, namely the relationship between the natural environment, creativity, and cultural assets. As has been noted in previous research, the constructed landscape has "an implicit theatricality that infuses festivals with both enchanting and haunting qualities, causing emotional reactions in the festival participants" (Falconi, 2014, p.189). A taste of such "emotional" accounts is given in the following excerpt:

> There was something happening in every corner. We ended up walking the small cobbled streets of Agios Lavrentios all day, and night, looking for Chatzini Square. A place out of a storybook. The beautiful village, the high musical level, the mood, the disposition, the feast in the square and the courtyard of the Byzantine church of Agios Athanasios, gave birth to the idea of making this documentary (interviewee 26).

Interviewee 26 is a returning visitor, a creative entrepreneur by career, who is expressing in the above narrative a strong appreciation of the intrinsic value of the contextual built components of the festival's host environment. By connecting her own creativity to the particular festival experience, the above participant admits that the aesthetic dimensions of these assets have been a real source of individual inspiration that eventually yielded the production of a documentary film. Existing built heritage, artefacts left by societies' previous activities, captures the attention of festival participants, is re-interpreted, and, by inspiring contemporaries' creativity, creats new stocks of cultural assets.

This observation is also an empirical confirmation of a recent argument within cultural tourism studies, namely that cultural spaces (in particular, places that are rich in tangible heritage) are turning into "creative spaces" (Richards 2011). In creative spaces, the built environment emerges as a physical as well as symbolic affordance that provides the basis for creative development. In other words, the built environment is being approached as a significant cultural resource. From a sustainability point of view, this allows us to suggest that the intrinsic value of that built heritage acquires more meaning as the festival appears as a new mantra for creative production. Intangible cultural resources are consumed effectively and intensively, without being

negatively affected or diminished. On the contrary, these trigger the generation of new intangible cultural assets and are therefore absorbed as positive resources by the higher levels of the festival environment. This observation links, again, with the property of renewability of intangible cultural resources.

Second, participants' narratives such as the above enabled this thesis to regard the built environment as a set of resources that contribute materially to the particular festival organisation, and also, symbolically, to its identity. The festival organisation has 're-discovered' and 're-appropriated' churches and churchyards, traditional villas, and other spaces of built heritage. During the whole duration of the festival, features of the existing built environment acquire alternative and, often, innovative uses. They are used instrumentally for the staging of the event (e.g., as venues for scheduled or improvised activities), yet these resources are being infused with traditional and contemporary arts, they are being inhabited with temporary residents along with the existing ones, and eventually revealed as living spaces (Poulios, 2014).

It seems that it is particularly the enchanting qualities of that built heritage, its authenticity, and the aura of the past that are triggering participants' appreciation of these assets, which are then associated with the event's image. Using existing built structures to stage its activities, the festival is integrating the *Village* – as a larger container of built components – not only into the practical dimensions of its organisation but also into its brand. It eventually becomes the Music "Village". Being conceptualised as set of resources, the built attributes of the Village are conceived as life-giving material for the festival since they not only acquire a practical use and value for the event organisation but also because they are engendering the development of a festival imaginary that differentiates the event, define its audience and impose the way the event is structured and performed.

Another interpretation of participants' contributions regarding built features of the festival site environment brings into the fore the conceptual links of this set of resources with another identified category of resources, namely *social capital* – this will be further discussed in the following section.

Several narratives contributed by members of the local community commented on the fact that particular components of the village built heritage – and, thus, built manifestations of the local community's cultural identity – are temporarily turned by the festival into vibrant, living spaces, engendering an unfolding connectivity both with the place and with other residents. Interviewees referred both to buildings and spaces that have been abandoned and temporarily acquire an alternative use, they are being "revitalised", throughout the duration of the event. The following excerpt provides an account of the latter:

> Our school is closed now, there are not enough children in the village to justify having a teacher here but it is very important that this space is being revitalized let's say through the activities of the Music Village. And I hope this will be an incentive to be preserved as public space and as part of our collective memory. For all those people who have grown up and lived in the village (interviewee 12).

The old primary school and its courtyard are being used by the festival to stage many performances, workshops and other activities (e.g., open rehearsals). The events taking place at this venue are not linked to the particular identity or any special occasion, for example, of the host community that used these premises beforehand. Nevertheless, these performances and festival activities are re-confirming the shared experiences that the local community maintains for these buildings as spaces that once had life. Locals appreciate the fact that during the festival the classrooms of the old school are filled with temporary and creative "tenants" – both "students" and "teachers" – and also the courtyard is used to stage unique events for the visitors and for themselves.

> The school has students again while the Music Village is on. I might not understand the music they are making but I like going to their concerts, yesterday I took my grandchildren with me because my daughter participates in a workshop and we wanted to see how they are doing. It was bizarre to see again my daughter being a student in the same classroom (interviewee 19).
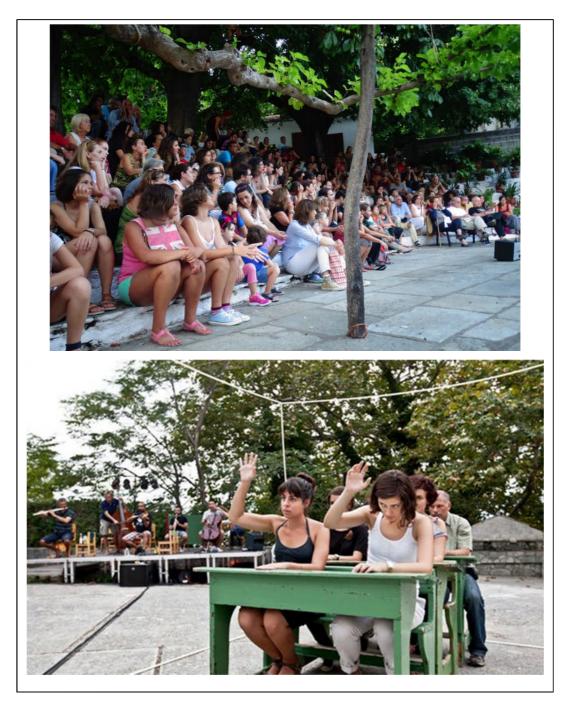
Figure 12. Performance at the old school: re-confirming the local
community's shared experiences and enriching collective memory.

They talk with nostalgia in their stories about the past vibrant life of their built

heritage, while simultaneously expressing an implicit appreciation to the

human connections present in these stories. Collective memory, the quality that both the above interviewees bring in their narratives, is an important determinant of cultural identity, as well as a social necessity (Eyerman, 2001). Falassi (1987) highlights that the social nature of the festival is strongly associated to the values that a particular community considers as essential to its physical survival, cultural identity, and historical continuity.

Contemporary research has only started to explore the complex relationship between collective memory and social capital (Puntscher et al., 2014). As Putnam (1993) argues, social capital is firmly based on the connectivity of human activity. In this particular context, components of the host built environment are used by the festival as a resource for staging events but they also become a resource for human interaction and, essentially, *reconnection* between – related or otherwise – individuals. Collective memory may not only be a catalyst for developing ties between the local community and the temporary "villagers", but also for re-establishing "bonding" connections (ibid.) within the host community, since its members are linking particular events experienced in the present, with their past. Eventually, built heritage emerges as a symbolic marker of collective memory that might, in turn, potentially trigger inter- and intra-generational transmission of cultural assets, as well as cause positive social externalities, such as the development of social capital.

By exploring participants' narratives in more depth, it became possible to elicit another implication of conceptualising the built environment as a resource that develops symbiotic relationships with the broader festival environment and has an impact on it. Namely, several built features of the festival site have been considered to impose on participants a particular kind of behaviour, one that is infused with the qualities of sociality, participation, and collaboration.

> I feel that this narrowness of the place does affect the
> behaviour of the locals and that of our guests'. Everyone
> wants, for example, to find a place to sit and watch a concert
> at the Stratonas [a community building used as a venue
> during the festival] or a table at the square after the events
> are over. However, space is always restricted and seemingly

not enough for the volume of festival-goers. The village in the
way it is set creates a necessity that drives us to learn how to
co-exist here for two weeks. Believe me, during the festival
this place is very conducive to social innovation! (interviewee
01)

Having to move a grand piano to the school through the
kalderimia [narrow, pebbled footpaths, inaccessible to any
vehicle] was a real organisers' nightmare! If it weren't for the
creativity and efforts of the people that happened to be there
at those critical moments, there would be no piano at the
venue, no concerts, no fun, no opportunity for those unique
experiences (interviewee 07).

Reading through participants' responses such as the above it became evident
that the built features of the festival site were perceived to provide a context
for facilitating genuine, improvised collaboration and collective empathy. The
proximity to one another in the particular festival is unavoidable. However,
this closeness of everyone present in the village during the event – as
imposed by its built environment – acts as a catalyst for enactments of
collaboration, as well as social responsibility and understanding. It appears
that there is indeed much scope in exploring the relationship between the built
festival environment and participants' behaviour and feelings engendered
because of their interaction with those features of the festival surroundings,
but that would exceed the initial purpose of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is
important to emphasise the significance of the above observations in
including the built environment as another dimension of the socially shaped
resources that could be relevant to an alternative theorisation of the
sustainable festival.

6.2.5 Economic resources

As presented in the fourth chapter (section 4.2.2), a major line of
research within the festival-related literature interprets sustainability as the
festival's ability to survive or endure as an organisation. Often, this

proclaimed survivability is determined by the festival's ability to maintain its incoming financial flows and, thus, its profits. Scholarly investigations that adopt this approach to festival sustainability link the festival's survivability with practices that aim to secure revenue generation from the box office or funding from private or public sponsors.

Not surprisingly, several participants identified "money" as one of those resources upon which the festival organisation depends, directly or not, for its survival and prosperity, over the long term. Hence the consideration and safeguarding of any incoming flows of financial resources is perceived to be critical for the sustainability of the festival organisation.

> We should be pragmatists. I mean for the organisation of a festival, creating an appealing line up and making up an effective team is not enough, money is needed, funds that someone must guarantee (interviewee 02).

> I know that the organisers need to pay for the guest artists, for example, their accommodation, the travel costs, perhaps renting equipment, and an awful lot of other things that might cause headaches and only the organising team is fully aware of. I believe this is the reason that as a business, never mind the content, the festival needs to secure the money it gets from us, I mean the participants, as well as from their sponsors. If this input is jeopardised then we need to forget about all the festival creates and leaves as legacy (interviewee 15).

Indeed, even in the case of events whose main purpose is not the creation of financial profit, their actual programming and staging requires the establishment of streams of financial resources flowing towards the festival organisations in order to enable the latter respond to their operational costs. This is the reason that themes such as public and corporate sponsorship, the creation of revenue flows for festivals, and event profitability have occupied a large area in the domain of festival studies (e.g., Andersson et al., 2013; Rowley and Williams, 2008; McMahon-Beattie and Yeoman, 2004).

Further to considering the vitality of economic streams that flow towards the festival, participants often referred to the importance of the additional revenue that the festival creates for the host business environment. They thus seemed to easily identify a number of outgoing capital flows from the festival that translate into increased income for residents, local businesses, as well as the people who are employed by the festival. Thus, economic resources emerge as being bidirectional in nature; they comprise an important asset that participants believe that needs to be safeguarded not only for the benefit of the festival organisation but also for the survivability and economic welfare of other systems of the broader festival environment.

> In order to keep the local community embracing it [the festival], the place needs to feel an immediate economic contribution and see the money flowing in for its [the local community's] own sake (interviewee 14).

In a world of increasing professionalisation of festival organisations and policy practice aiming to achieve economic impact (Stadler et al., 2014), it is not surprising that interviewees referred to this kind of bidirectional economic flows. This very contribution of the festival to the adjacent economic systems within which the event organisation is nested is not a new idea within festival research. For example, there are numerous economic impact studies that have investigated empirically the outgoing streams of economic resources that have been created as a result of staging festivals (e.g., Andersson et al., 2015; Carnelli, 2015; Saayman and Saayman, 2015; Davies et al., 2013; Bracalente et al., 2011; Finkel, 2010; Brown et al., 2002; O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002; Crompton and McKay, 1994; Long and Perdue, 1990). The aim of this section, however, is neither to explore the festival's reliance on revenue generated by festivalgoers or private and public sector funding sources, nor to assess the additional economic activity attributable to the particular event. Instead, the remainder of this section will attempt to provide a brief reading of participants' understandings of the complex interrelationship between economic resources and other components of the festival's contextual environment, while also trying to address the potential place of that resource category within a developing sustainable festival theory.

The fieldwork was conducted during a period of high uncertainty and vivid political debate regarding the future of the Greek economy. References to the economic recession and the challenges the latter might imply for the festival and its larger social surroundings were therefore unsurprisingly common. Identified challenges referred affordability of performing arts festivals to the general public and the festival's ability to maintain incoming streams of grants, sponsorship, and ticket sales in light of the perceived and experienced economic restructuring. References such as the following exemplify the above logic.

> I don't know though, in what way the current economic crisis might affect the audiences' personal finances and their capability to comfortably cover, for example, the travel expenses to come to the festival. I mean there are challenges that come from the still world of economics that both the organisers and the potential participants of the festival will have to face (interviewee 02).

Quite often, the economic recession was interpreted as an opportunity for the particular festival, thus considering the particular event as another product of the cultural economy and a substitute to established cultural experiences in the market:

> I expect even more financially difficult times to come that will make the festival and any festival re-think about its reliance on current sources of money. Nevertheless, the economic recession might be a positive story, for example, you know, the recession might actually bring more people here. People, especially young people, who can't afford going to expensive island destinations might see the value-for-money and the value for trying something different established let's say tourist experiences. And eventually the communities of festival-goers might grow amid the hard times (interviewee 15).

Many of the participants' stories that contained references to economic resources therefore arose out of concerns about the deteriorating economic

climate, which critically affected their projections of the future regarding many facets of the larger festival environment. Sustainability visioning itself, as a liberated process of imagining how things could desirably be, is projected upon genuine fears underpinning the need for change (Sarkissian and Hurford, 2010; Rana and Piracha, 2007). Hence participants' relevant narratives provided the present research with a wealth of information regarding the nature of economic resources.

A recurrent theme in the interviews that emerged in the fieldwork suggests that economic resources – mainly those that flow towards the festival and its adjacent business environment – tend to be *substituted* by alternative, more complex streams that provide for the possibilities of contextual flourishing despite the seemingly unfavourable changes that have been taking place within the festival's broader economic environment. The following quote, for example, points to the way that operational needs of the festival, which were formerly effected through the agency of money, have been met by the progressive intervention of the local community and festival participants.

> The [economic] developments of the past two years in the country have indeed created difficulties in the practical organisation of the event. (…) Due to the growing number of festival-goers, for example, investment to infrastructure is needed. Yet it is impossible to find corporate sponsors willing to give money for such events, not to mention public bodies. (…) If it weren't the invaluable contribution and I would say alike thinking of the people of Agios Lavrentios and the noble spirit of a number of participants I believe [the festival] would have faced a real hardship. And I'm not talking about contribution in terms of money, it's other things that do matter (interviewee 01).

Since the volume and the continuation of economic streams flowing to the festival directly (e.g., sponsorship, entry-fees, tickets) or indirectly (general level of income) is being threatened, the festival organisation as well as its host community have identified a need to adapt to changes to keep the event

alive. For instance, one of the festival organisers claimed that accommodation costs for invited artists, performers, educators, and volunteers have occupied large part of the event's budget, "a heavy load considering our shrinking income" (interviewee 07). After hosting regular open consultations with the local community – months prior to the actual summer event – to discuss the founding team's plans and challenges, many locals offered, among others, to host the festival's guests at their homes.

> Offering them [the guest artists] a room to stay costs us
> nothing, perhaps slightly increased utility bills! Instead, once
> the festival is over our guests will leave the village with
> something to remember (interviewee 21).

Similarly, members of the local community offered to help the organisation by contributing their creativity and labour, as well as through utilising their networks, for several practical tasks, including the maintenance of venues, the preparation of areas to be used as campsites, and the negotiation with authorities for essential traffic and parking management.

I interpreted those events as manifestations of a contextually desired process of substitution of economic flows by "resources" in which the principles of democracy, generosity, empathy, sociality, and hospitality are embedded. Almost urged by the broader unfavourable economic developments, instead of seeking economic resources from its external environment, the festival organisation attempted to establish a democratic forum and turn to its immediate environment to find solutions for its operational needs – without the medium of money. A seemingly volatile flux of economic inputs is being substituted with streams of resources that are perceived to be abundant and the festival can acquire with relevant ease on a self-governing basis. Economic resources have thus given their place to non-economic associations, and, perhaps, have led to several social innovations. However temporary in nature, that substitution effect is an emergent property of post-capitalist, future community economies: "ethical and political spaces of decision making in which interdependence is constructed as people transform their livelihoods and lives" (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2009, p.25). Indeed, the staging of the particular festival is perceived by the local

community to engender the transformation of a number of desired possibilities
into actualities – the elicitation of which is beyond the scope of this thesis.
Essentially, this emerging, collective desire to embed cultural and social
values to an institution that is perceived to belong to the sphere of economic
life (e.g., a contemporary performing arts festival) permits the creation of a
socially valuable economic model – one in which productive organisations are
creating partnerships with local, supportive stakeholders, thus involving them
in an interdependent, non-trading relationship where the common good is the
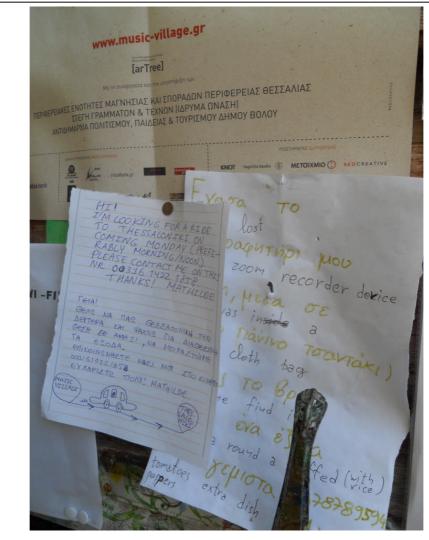driving value.

Figure 13. The substitution effect in action: financial resources being substituted with resources that are perceived to be abundant within the festival environment.

6.2.6 Social Assets

Social assets have been conceptualised to comprise the last category of resources that flow within, and beyond, the festival and its broader surrounding environment, providing for the latter's expansion of capabilities and, thus, enabling it to flourish. Hence there emerges an important social dimension that adds to the previous five constituents of the complex, festival environment and complements the construction of its meaning from the bottom-up.

Quite often, participants remarked on the value of specific structural social relationships they observed and experienced in the context of the festival. Namely, they seemed to be appreciative of qualities inhering in desired social relationships, acting both synergistically and independently to influence the well-being of both the festival and the broader festival system. This led the present analysis to explore the relationship between the perceived contextual *good* of the festival habitat and resources associated with the interconnectedness of human activity – social interconnections enabled by the event but also taking place beyond the actual festival. As one of the festival organisers stated, taking on a visionary perspective:

> The festival owes a lot to an effective yet latent network of like-minded people, which has a life on its own. Every time the festival presents itself to the public, this network grows, a large part of the audience will become Music Villagers, building a closer relationship with the festival, with other visitors, with the local community, affiliated organisations, and so on. (…) We just know that, whatever the challenges, we can rely on this informal partnership to carry on not just producing a festival, but developing an institution that promotes artistic expression and reinforces human relations (interviewee 07).

It is evident from the above excerpt that this (informal or otherwise) web of relationships, maintained by the festival but also having a "life on its own", is deemed to be a valuable asset for the festival organisation itself. There is an implicit belief that this "network" can be relied upon, serving not only as a

contributor to the continuity of the festival organisation but also as a facilitator of desired components of a flourishing society – for example, what in this excerpt is manifested as "artistic expression" and the presence of strong "human relations". The above interviewee also reports that the festival is a vehicle for enhancing that network, since various forms of social connection spring up during the event. At the same time, participation in that open, yet distinctive, network is perceived to create opportunities of individual or broader communal development. The very use of the term "music villager" – which has been a recurrent phrase– lends itself to a projected desire among participants to experience a sense of belonging and become members of a close-knit community, therefore associating the social links produced and maintained through the event with perceived benefits, contextual or otherwise.

It would be helpful to employ, at this point, the concept of *social capital*. This notion can serve as the theoretical background for a brief discussion about the nature of what this thesis theorised as *social assets*, and an exploration of the conceptual place of this resource category in a theory pertaining to the sustainable festival. I draw on the definition of social capital proposed by political scholar Putnam (1993), referring to the "features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p.36). Social capital is evidently rooted in networks of interconnected human relations, which, in turn, are perceived to play a pivotal role in helping individuals and societies to realise their potential (OECD, 2001). As Coleman (1990) argues, social capital helps members of social structures – where this form of capital is present – achieve their individual goals by making their actions more effective. At the same time, social capital is increasingly viewed as a social necessity (Arai and Pedlar, 2003), an enabler of the conditions for a flourishing civil society (Newton, 2001), and a critical facet of collective well-being (Cattell et al., 2008). It can therefore be best conceptualised as "a resource that can generate a stream of benefits for society as a whole, over time" (OECD, 2001, p.39). It has been suggested that its availability, as a resource, in society can be viewed to contribute towards greater social well-

being and, as such, it showcases the positive qualities of what the science of economics defines as "public goods" (ibid.).

By drawing on the above framework, it became possible to conceptualise a social dimension of the *Music Village's* complex environment. This construct was based, first, on participants' statements pointing to the capacity of individual members – or larger groups that comprise the complex wider network of the festival – to acquire benefits thanks to their association with the human interconnections that occurred within the social fabric of the festival. The previous statement contributed by interviewee 07 interpreted those manifestations of human interconnectedness both as resources in themselves (e.g., the value of that "network" for the survival of the event) and as interim assets that enable the broader festival system to acquire other resources (e.g., creativity – "promote artistic expression") and secure desired benefits. This thesis therefore also conceptualised those emergent social relationships both as a cumulative, self-reinforcing and socially transferable (Putnam, 1993) stock of desired resources and as a currency that facilitates a symbiotic relationship between the festival and its multi-dimensional environment. This synergistic relationship was observed, experienced, and expressed by research participants in a variety of ways, pointing to streams of benefits that flow within and across different levels of the festival's social structure and, thus, providing for its long-term development. For the purposes of this section, the discussion on social resources will concentrate on two levels of the festival's social fabric, namely the temporary community of *Music Villagers* (or the festival community), and the *place* community of the host locale.

The concept of community is ambiguous and quite complex, since it can be defined by, and stands for, a great many of things[14]. Since it has been a recurrent practice among interviewees to refer to a developing community

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[14] It would be beyond the scope of this section to provide a detailed discussion of definitions of community. For the purposes of this thesis, I need to refer the reader to the well-acknowledged work of Ferdinand Tonnies (2001) and the proposed conceptual distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* – as a way to conceptualise social relationships.

of *Music Villagers*, I tried to elicit what that affiliation involves and address briefly what might be the implications of reflecting these findings on the concept of social capital. As one of the invited artists said:

> Yes, I do feel kind of a music villager! I confirm that every
> time I hear about a new project, a new release by another
> fellow. […] I think there is an ongoing open invitation, any
> visitor will unavoidably become as such [a music villager] if
> she decides to take up a more active role in the festival, let's
> say join one of the workshops or be engaged and contribute
> to one of the open-access performances (interviewee 31).

The very *Music Village* ethic rests on an open invitation for collaboration and active participation in the co-created performances. An immediate consequence of this is that various forms of reciprocity are being developed, for example, between festival-goers and guest performers, or visitors and the community of local residents.

> During their sojourn, the temporary residents of Music Village
> will have the opportunity to participate actively or passively in
> numerous music performances that will take place in houses
> and courtyards of the village and in piazzas and forest
> clearings (Music Village, 2016).

This ethic arguably enacts horizontal social relationships among festival participants that are being manifested through a strong sense of civic engagement in the participants' imaginary temporary *village*. At the same time, the benefits of sustained membership to this fluid network – within or beyond the festival itself – are not only instrumental or self-gratifying for individual music villagers but also often refer to more abstract, collective gains (or common goods) such as the "productive exchange of ideas" (interviewee 01) and "lessons for reconnecting with people" (interviewee 24). Indeed, high levels of social collaboration, participation and reciprocity have been described as indicators of high levels of social capital, which, in turn, have been associated high increased levels of collective well-being. As put it by Putnam (1995), "life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital" (p.67). In addition, there appears to be something

meaningful in this community of music villagers, something that points to an intrinsically valuable membership to that growing social network that would be interesting to explore in the future. Quite often, participants' statements implied a nostalgic appraisal of social bonds that can be experienced within the festival world but which it is impossible to encounter in the concrete, non-festival world.

By providing opportunities to "temporarily live abreast with fellow participants in a village that [they] create together" (interviewee 16) and experience "a strong sense of community that is more open and communal one" (interviewee 22) the festival engenders bridges (Putnam, 2001) between previously unrelated festival goers and, moreover, *bridges* the real world with the imaginative – and perhaps idealised – festival world. Visitors are given the opportunity to experience how it feels to create social connections over a short and rather intense period of time – or, better, "out-of-time" (Falassi, 1987) – which, however, involves a sense of mutual obligation towards the production of desired, common goods such as those quoted above. When festival goers become bound together in relationships of cultural exchange as music villagers – and, thus, members of a "community of communion" (Willmott, 1986) – they commit themselves to offering something back to the broader social context in addition to the festival community which they form part. It is precisely that emergent communal spirit and the orientation towards a co-created "common good" (interviewees 10; 22) that enable participants to temporarily experience a different way of bonding with each other, which, in turn, is deemed to be a necessary component of a more functional society.

As Newton (1997) argued, social capital "is important because it constitutes a force that helps to bind society together by transforming individuals from self-seeking and egocentric calculators with little social conscience or sense of mutual obligation, into members of a community with shared interests, shared assumptions about social relations, and a sense of the common good" (p.576). Through the agency of social capital, the festival *leaves* a trace on its surrounding environment, in this case, by enabling the transformation of individual festival goers to members of a growing festival community, or by challenging established notions of social association. Hence

there appears to be a significant connection between social resources that are being engendered and reinforced within and beyond the festival environment and emerging forms of sociality, which develop within festival communities and are perceived to be more desired than those in the non-festival world. Since the festival space is conceptualised as a facilitator for the creation and reinforcement of a socially beneficial stock of social assets, which, in turn, can yield streams of benefits to unpredicted directions, it might be valid to suggest the centrality of the social dimension of the festival environment to a developing theory of the sustainable festival.

Additional positive and contextually desirable processes may be seen to occur at the level of the place community, that is the community of the residents of *Agios Lavrentios*. First, for several representatives of the local community, the purposeful or improvised appearance, within the event, of traditional components of *their* intangible culture was perceived to engender favourable social connections *within* their existing community.

> Honestly I was intrigued by [Th.'s] idea to stage a drama at
> Souravlou's [a church] courtyard based on a local legend.
> Since I knew what it is about I decided to give it a go! Hence I
> ended up in acting alongside my neighbours and my
> daughter[!] (interviewee 21).

The performance itself and the initiative to stage such a drama, at that place, and involving locals as actors is interpreted as sustainability praxis. There is indeed an implied feeling of community-esteem and a sense of localness in the above excerpt. Essentially, the above remark embodies a subjective feeling of positive (re)connectivity between previously related individuals, which is enabled by the event and catalysed through the agency of the larger intangible cultural environment of the festival. The synergistic relationship between local culture and the festival is deemed to strengthen notions of community-belonging and, also, to reinforce existing relationships with other people. Arguably, the space-time marked by the festival enacts alternative, coveted modes of contact between already interrelated individuals, thus offering them a temporary, participatory context to substantiate, and perhaps reorder, their social bonds. The significance of festivals for reinforcing social

ties and inspiring feelings of community-belonging has been explored by previous research (e.g., by Gibson et al., 2011; Jackson, 2008), yet it is the first time that these desired streams are suggested as necessary conceptual components of the notion of the sustainable festival.

Second, participants reported on the bridging potential of the festival, which – through its great many components (e.g., concerts and other performances; administrative or improvised processes, etc.) – provides bridges between various cultural forms and forms of sociality. The festival environment temporarily provides occasions through which various manifestations of culture, at a variety of levels, mingle with each other and bridge the place community with a wider reserve of intangible cultural assets. As a local shopkeeper noted, reflecting on a concert featuring unaccompanied sax improvisation with some "unexpected" input from a local musician:

> It was quite weird to see them [musicians] playing the saxophones while lying on the ground. It was funny and enjoyable at the same time when Apostolos [a local zourna – traditional woodwind instrument – player] joined the gig (interviewee 19).

By exposing, unintentionally, the permanent residents of the village to some alien intangible artefacts, the festival bridges the place community with unknown cultures. Moreover, such a bridging process might inevitably convey something quite tangible and, perhaps, desirable. For instance, a social association between members of the host community and the visitors or a particular behaviour engendered in response to a moment of encounter. A by-product of the social interactions enabled due to the festival refers to the bridges developed between established and experimental models of decision making.

> The festival has been an opportunity for us [interviewee speaking on behalf of the local community] to realise the potential of cooperation with people drawn here for reasons of the festival but essentially to understand the potential of

> participating with our neighbours in decisions shaping our
> future (interviewee 22).

As elicited from the above excerpt, residents' engagement with the preparation of the event, bridges the seemingly mundane activity of festival planning to a rather educational process towards active citizenship and inclusive social organisation. This might be interpreted as an indirect contribution of the festival to an emergent, context-specific form of political involvement. Such an interpretation considerably broadens the scope of theorising the social dimensions of the festival environment in the sustainable festival inquiry.
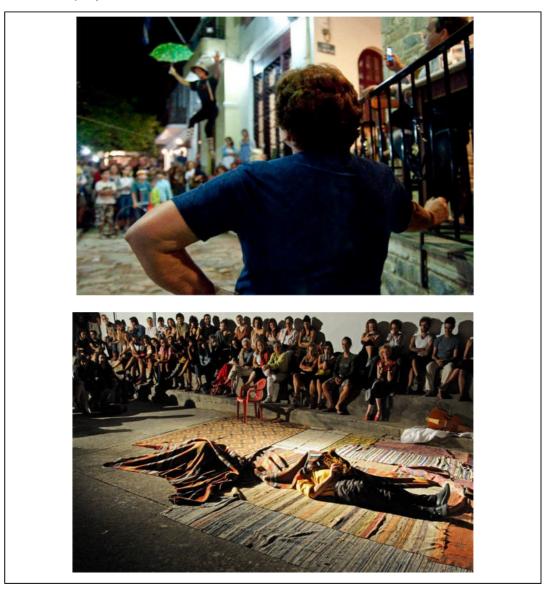

Figure 14. The bridging qualities of the festival: bridging various cultural forms with the place community.

Festival research has just started to provide readings of temporary festival communities through the lens of social capital (Stevenson, 2016; O'Grady, 2015; Richards et al., 2013), trying to explore the potential of contemporary forms of community and social interconnections, for social innovation and collective well-being. It is beyond the bounds of this study to discuss here the whole range of findings that entail conceptual implications for the notion of social capital and desired, and perhaps idealised, forms of sociality and human interconnectedness. Nevertheless, this section suggests new possibilities for the sustainable festival scholarship and creates new challenges for sustainable festival practice. This is because the notion of social capital has not been included in any previous approaches to the concept of sustainability with regards to the festival context.

6.3 A concluding note

This chapter attempted a conceptual reconstruction of the notion of the festival environment grounding discussion in the empirical data. Such a reconstruction was an important task of this thesis because the very definition of the environment lies at the core of distinguishing sustainability from green environmentalism or greenism (see 4.4.3.1). Moreover, this conceptual exercise allowed access to the intersection of institutionalised (top-down) and visionary (bottom-up) realm where the construction of sustainability actually takes place. This discussion was supported by an interim conceptual framework that considered three open-ended axioms: subjectivity, symbiosis, and change. Those principles were used to identify and explore processes and actions that were deemed – by those who experience the festival – to contribute to a desirable, flourishing future for the festival and its wider context. In other words, this chapter made an important step towards the re-appropriation of the once plastic construct of sustainability in the particular context and tried to elicit what the sustainable festival looks like for those who are directly involved in its temporary realm.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The aim of this study was trifold. First, this research intended to understand and critically explore current interpretations as well as the practice of sustainability in the context of the sustainable performing arts festival (research aim (i)). By drawing on specific conceptual frameworks developed within the emerging discipline of critical sustainability studies and by looking at the historical discursive struggle over the meaning of sustainability Chapter Two outlined the theoretical basis and revealed the principles that inform this thesis' critique of dominant understandings of sustainability. This conceptual exercise was later combined in Chapter Four with a systematic desk-based study to elicit the discursive repertoires of sustainability in this context, as those are construed and operationalised by festival organisers. Eventually, it challenged the misuse of the term 'sustainable festival' and revealed the short-sightedness, deficiencies and inherent contradictions of dominant understandings of sustainability across the performing arts festival scene.

Second, this thesis aimed to gain access to and articulate festival participants' visions and images of a desired future for the festival and its broader surrounding environment (research aim (ii)). Drawing on a conceptual reconstruction of the dimensions that constitute the festival environment it became possible to identify and explore the resources and praxes – that is, morally charged, transformative processes and actions – that were deemed to contribute to a desirable, flourishing future for the festival and its wider context. Eventually, Chapter Six made an important step towards addressing the main research question that has been guiding this thesis: what does it mean for the performing arts festival to contribute to the achievement of a desired future, that is to say, for it to be a sustainable festival?

Third, this thesis aimed to develop and suggest an alternative methodological approach to the interpretation and theorisation of sustainability pertinent to the festival (research aim (ii)). This has been achieved through the combination of interpretive-analytical (Chapter Four, 4.4) and constructivist (Chapters Five and Six) approaches – in a single research project – to the study of sustainability in this particular context.

7.1 Contributions of this thesis

This thesis adds to our understanding of the nexus of festivals and sustainability. The value of this research is therefore expanding to both bodies of knowledge, which, hitherto, have not been studied in conjunction. Namely, it makes an important contribution to scholarship by establishing the festival as an additional context for the advancement of critical perspectives on sustainability research. My argument is that sustainable performing arts festivals, like many other so-called sustainable organisational contexts across society, suffer from some fundamental contradictions inherent in the discourses of sustainability. This thesis revealed several contradictions that may have colonised the festival world and offered an institutional critique of both the research and managerial doctrine of sustainability. The critique of existing discourses that has been deployed through this thesis not only constitutes an original contribution on its own – since it renders the nexus of sustainability and festivals into a distinctive research field – but also adds to the future of sustainability research. This is because it suggests some methodological ways to tackle the field's contradictions and deficiencies, thus, may be also relevant to the whole body of critical sustainability studies. Critical approaches to the notion of sustainability have very recently appeared in literature (e.g. by Bernard, 2015; Banerjee, 2008; Palazzo and Richter, 2005; Springett, 2003) so it can be argued that this thesis adds to the academic rigour of this evolving discipline.

Importantly, this thesis advances the study of sustainability in the particular field of festival research both by developing its theoretical base, and by providing empirical support to a scholarly area that is vastly under-researched. This project offered a systematic review of the pertinent English-language research, and grey, literature, and a discourse analysis of understandings of sustainability as these are communicated by organisers of sustainable performing arts festivals. In such a way, this research may be viewed as an original contribution to festival studies, which constitute an important sub-field within event studies, and may be of particular interest to scholars in many disciplines because of the universality of festivity and the popularity of festival experiences (Getz, 2010).

Festivals "provide opportunities for the enactment of imagination" (O' Grady, 2015, p.92), enabling participants to delve in an imaginary realm where they can perform contextual evaluations and conceive the elements that contribute to coveted personal and social states. My argument is, thus, that important knowledges of sustainability – which, in turn, inform the notion of the sustainable performing arts festival – can be drawn directly from the people who experience festival worlds. This thesis revealed and critically explored some of the voices that contributed, through a kind of synergy with their context, to creating the dimensions of a meaningful festival environment and its interplay with an alternative, context-specific, emergent discourse of sustainability. The qualitative, reconstruction of the festival environment thus offered a kind of access point into subjective understandings of sustainability and provided evidence of the value of alternative knowledges that exist among festival participants. This, in turn, leaves large space for future empirical research in the field of festival and event studies so that new understandings of festival experiences might be reached.

Last, the concept of the sustainable performing arts festival is an exemplar of the lack of academic rigour in the field of arts management. About fifteen years ago, Colbert (2003) argued that arts and cultural management is hampered by a twofold legitimacy problem: "[o]n the one hand, it is viewed with suspicion by the arts world, and, on the other, it is often taken less than seriously by management scholars" (p.287). This thesis also contributes to this discipline by addressing this indifference; it provides an empirical study of a particular art world – the festival – to broaden the currently short-sighted focus of festival management practice. It therefore contributes both to the field's academic and practitioner legitimacy.

7.2 The sustainable performing arts festival: Four propositions

As a way of conclusion, this thesis will attempt to show its contribution to the body of knowledge associated with sustainability in the field of event studies. This is a direct response to Pernecky and Lück (2013), editors of a

reader on *Events, Society, and Sustainability,* who argued that existing scholarly work in event studies – driven by the sustainability discourse – is lagging behind in both breadth and volume. In their words:

> [t]here is room for expanding the conceptual scaffolding of sustainability so that more balanced, informed and well-rounded perspectives can emerge. There is also scope for more theoretical and conceptual richness of the events phenomenon and the field in general (p.3).

Their conceptual work on the future of events research is expressed through a number of propositions, which this thesis aims to progress in light of its empirical findings. To expand the theoretical "scaffolding of sustainability" (ibid) in the specific context of the festival, provide provocations to think afresh about its concept and practice, and capture the value of the present study, the following section will offer four propositions which may be of particular value to sustainable festival scholarship and practice. While these propositions are grounded on a single, instrumental case study and, therefore, may not have general applicability – given the subjective and context-specific construction of sustainability, they are of particular value to future festival and events research since they tackle the notion of the sustainable festival critically. They may also be of particular value to festival producers and relevant stakeholders who wish to re-connect the focus of sustainability to the important role that festivals have long held in societies.

Proposition 1: Sustainable festival research and practice ought to shift the focus from resources that are finite, to resources that are abundant and conceptually plastic.

Resources that are constructed socially and contextually – such as human creativity, intangible cultural heritage, social innovation and emergent forms of sociality – have several overwhelming advantages over resources that subscribe to the neoclassical assumption of scarcity (e.g., Malthus). They pose no universally accepted images of technical needs, nor structural

realities that the sustainable festival must attain. For example, Chapter Four provided evidence that the majority of current sustainable performing arts festivals largely incorporate technocratic managerial solutions in response to developments impacting resources that are limited in supply or endangered. Moreover, those sustainable events provide for the continuation of existing conventions (e.g., the effectiveness of market mechanisms; the agency of the individual) that attend to particular models of the sustainable society.

By comparison, the resources that have been defined contextually in the present study are actually the means of defining the praxes of new social possibilities, creating desired visions of a better future, as well as suggesting the tools for moving towards them. They do not point to resource-constrained societies but, instead, resource-propelled. Those resources are abundant in the social fabric of the festival; they can be shared by its human agents; their consumption is not necessarily associated with the exploitation or destruction of the festival's environment; their meaning may evolve according to what the people who experience the festival want to achieve in the first place. Eventually, the sustainable festival has the ability to sustain itself – as well as its surrounding environment – and define its future based on its own resources.

Proposition 2: Sustainable festival research and practice ought to acknowledge the centrality of intangible cultural resources. Essentially, they both ought to offer an avenue for exploring and nurturing the processes and behaviours that contribute to the continuity and enrichment of those resources.

Several of the ideas discussed in this chapter have notable relevance for an emerging theory of the sustainable festival and suggest the centrality of intangible cultural resources – immaterial cultural heritage in particular – to this theory. Analysis revealed that the festival is dependent on processes and actions that provide for the continuity of intangible cultural artefacts. This is because the festival owes its very content to that ever-evolving stock of cultural assets. In turn, that major resource reserve provides the festival with

an important reason for its existence: the conveyance of manifestations of culture – such as artworks, rituals, and traditions – between and among generations.

It has been outlined throughout section 6.2.1 that the festival facilitates the creation of desired temporal (between and among generations) associations between people and culture, therefore contributing to the renewal of the intangible cultural resources. The ability of the festival to serve as a scene for cultural preservation and evolution is largely referred to as a desired process and, therefore, a collective good. Festivals have always had cultural significance and this empirical finding provides evidence of a potential failure of the current sustainable festival research and practice to acknowledge such processes and actions within contemporary festival contexts.

Proposition 3: Sustainable festival research and practice ought to acknowledge the potential of creativity at all levels of the festival organisation. In doing so, they need to shift the focus from the realm of consumption (focus on passive consumption of the festival-product) to the realm of production (focus on its productive and transformative capabilities).

As empirical findings suggest, participants widely emphasised the potential of creativity – creativity in the form of the performing arts, educational interventions, celebration, or emergent behaviour – to generate streams of favourable spin-offs, the exact direction and impact of which is difficult to realise. It is collective manifestations of creativity, in particular, those that occur within participatory, convivial, and unanticipated settings, which are deemed to have the greatest transformational potential for the broader festival context.

Creativity emerges as a positive force and, thus, a resource, which flows within and beyond the festival environment and renders the temporary festival context into a vector of change. Through the agency of creativity,

which is being activated by festival participants and often deployed beyond the scheduled events of the festival, other environmental dimensions of the festival are *desirably* and, perhaps, organically changed. Participants of a sustainable festival that allows creativity to be operated within and beyond its context are more likely to transcend the realm of consumption – where their behaviour is determined by appropriated images of sustainability – and move towards the real of production, where they can explore and actively produce desired alternatives for their experience as well as the broader social reality in which the latter is being actualised.

Proposition 4: Relevant events scholarship and practice ought to embody a more communitarian conceptualisation of sustainable festival experience.

Chapter Four provided evidence that existing sustainable festival practice – which echoes appropriated and institutionalised images of sustainability – has largely emphasised human agency at the level of the individual. According to this approach, solutions to current problems (and thus, those that may lead to a sustainable world) are more likely to be developed within utilitarian contexts, where individuals exercise their (seemingly free) choice, albeit their very festival experience is converted into a passive experience of consumption. As a result, notions of community in sustainable festival sites have largely been neglected.

Empirical findings suggest that the sustainable performing arts festival needs to be regarded as an instance of community development. Festival participants at various levels of the event hinted at both the social bonding and bridging potential of the festival. Their temporary, yet meaningful, membership to fluid community structures is perceived to bear some innate value since it becomes a realm where desired forms of sociality – which may be absent from the non-festival world – are being experienced and their benefits tasted. Eventually, the sustainable festival, as an instance of active, un-distracted and communal celebration, may enable its participants to attain

through their temporary membership to a community of citizens what is unachievable through membership to communities of festival audiences.

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Appendix A – Summary of the literature review

Table 4.1 Interpretations of sustainability across the festival and events literature: greenism.

Publication	Notes
Mair and Laing (2012); Frost, Mair and Laing (2015)	The *sustainable* festival has a *green* agenda or incorporates *green* practices into its management and operations; confusion between the concepts *green* and *sustainable*; often *green* used as a synonym for *sustainable*.
Laing and Frost (2010)	Although they acknowledge that *sustainable* events carry much broader concerns than their environmental impact, emphasis is largely provided on the *greening* capabilities of the *sustainable* festival (e.g., carbon-neutral and zero-waste initiatives; eco-labelling or certification, etc.)
Oliver, Naar, and Harris (2015)	Attempt to address what differentiates a *sustainable* music festival from a *traditional* (meaning *non-sustainable*) one; focus on green / environmentally-friendly practices.
Kennell and Sitz (2010)	The *sustainable* performing arts festival appears committed to an *environmentalist* ethos, marketing "itself with messages of environmental responsibility" (p.1); focus on the educational potential of the *sustainable* festival (e.g., pro-environmental learning activities).
Goldblatt (2014)	Provides own definition of *sustainability*; the *sustainable* festival as an event that manages scarce natural resources with earnest respect.
Wessblad (2015);	Sustainability as a concept representing green ambitions; the *sustainable* festival is striving for an environmentally friendly profile

Publication	Notes
Cummings (2014)	Explores festival directors' role in "moving towards more sustainable festival practices" (p.169) emphasising the *greening* of the contemporary performing arts festival scene.
Brooks et al. (2007)	The *sustainable* music festival at the forefront of responding to ecological challenges. "Sustainable music festivals produce no waste, use renewable energy and transport artists and audience cleanly and efficiently." (p.10)
Johnson (2016)	Deploys a "vision for a sustainable UK festival industry" (p.34) extolling the importance of interventions aiming to minimise the negative environmental impacts of current festivals.

Table 4.2 Interpretations of sustainability across the festival and events literature: survivability.

Publication	Notes
Carlsen et al. (2009)	Use *sustainability* as a synonym to *viability* and attempt to address the contemporary challenges confronting festival directors and managers.
Song et al. (2015)	The *sustainable* festival is construed as a successful festival. High levels of festival performance and satisfaction – as reported by attendees – are regarded as key qualities of a *sustainable* festival.
Lee and Groves (2013)	The *sustainable* festival as an event that is able to *survive* in the long term. Positive, long-lasting relationships between host communities and visitors key features of *sustainable* festivals.

Publication	Notes
Larson et al. (2015)	*Sustainability* as longevity; sustainable are those festivals that achieve and maintain "institutional status and a unique niche in their community." (p.161)
Duran et al. (2014); Kruger and Saayman (2012)	*Sustainability* as longevity
Lee (2016)	Emphasises the importance of maintaining incoming financial flows towards the festival organisation; argues that festival-goers' "repeat patronage is a prerequisite for sustainable festivals." (p.187)
Palmer and Thelwall (2013)	Effective management of sponsor relationships and successful fundraising are two of the main tenets of a "sustainable festival business model".
Marschall (2006)	*Sustainability* as ability to survive; the *sustainable* festival is one that can secure sufficient and consistent funding, what her chapter defines as the property of "self-sustainability".
Ensor et al. (2011)	Empirical study of festival directors' perceptions of festival *sustainability*. As stated, "(t)he main purpose of this study is to attain a greater depth of understanding of festival leaders' attitude towards dynamics of creating and directing *sustainable* festivals." (p.315, my italics). Findings indicate directors "conceive sustainability as a matter of festival survival." (p.323)
Karlsen (2006)	This article explores the conditions that make a festival *sustainable*, meaning able to survive over the long term.
Klemow (2016)	Sustainability as organisational effectiveness. In this article a festival is characterised as sustainable based on its capacity to increase its audience; "introducing a new kind of event that may become the most sustainable festival model moving forward".

Table 4.3 Interpretations of sustainability across the festival and events literature: the triple-bottom-line.

Publication	Notes
Getz and Andersson (2009)	This study addresses the *sustainability* of festivals in the context of how they can become permanent institutions. Nevertheless, survivability is only one dimension of their understanding of the concept of the sustainable festival. In their words, "it is not merely longevity that defines sustainability. Conceivably a festival or event organization can be "permanent" and the event produced indefinitely, but it could fail to meet other elements of *triple-bottom-line* sustainability." (p.3, my italics)
Getz (2009)	Argues for the value of adopting a triple-bottom-line (TBL) approach in festival management. For Getz (2009), *sustainable* festivals are not just those that can survive for ever; "they are also those that fulfil important social, cultural, economic and environmental roles that people value." (p.70)
Gration et al. (2011)	Their interpretation of the *sustainable* festival reflects upon the principles of the TBL approach: people, natural landscape, and profit. A pronounced commitment to blended natural, human-made, and social environments – as well as a proper focus on aspects of financial stability – would make a festival *sustainable*.
Ashdown (2010)	This thesis attempts to explore a potential "sustainable future of music festivals". In conclusion, it provides recommendations for future research and practice, holding that only through the integration of the TBL values would the contemporary festival scene become more *sustainable*.
Stettler (2011)	This thesis' interpretation of the *sustainable* festival is critically grounded on the limitations of conceptualising *sustainability* as *greening*. It suggests a "more holistic meaning of sustainability", one that at least embraces "its social, economic and environmental dimensions." (p.10)

Publication	Notes
Steenbekkers (2014)	Another thesis that explores the notion of sustainability in music festivals and adopts a taken-for-granted definition of *sustainability* – as a combination of economic, environmental and social considerations.

Appendix B – Summary of conference papers

International conference: Sustainability Issues and Challenges in Tourism, 3-5 October 2013, Istanbul

Sustainability everywhere: Problematising the "Sustainable Festival" phenomenon

Author: George Zifkos

Abstract

This paper is part of a PhD study focusing on the recent introduction of the idea of "sustainability" in the festival sector. It considers "sustainable festivals" as conceptually different – although quite akin – to "green" cultural events, because sustainability should mean much more than embedding "green" or "eco-friendly" practices into festival management. It is an initial attempt to review literature on sustainable festival practice, locate sustainable performing arts festivals around the world, and elicit the way in which sustainability is interpreted in that context. Selected interpretations of sustainability in this context are quoted, and pathways for future research are recommended.

ATLAS annual conference 2014, 22-24 October, Budapest

Tourism, Travel and Leisure: Sources of Wellbeing, Happiness and Quality of Life?

Sustainability and Well-being in festivals: questioning rhetoric, imagining "sustainable" practices

Author: George Zifkos

Abstract

This paper calls for an alternative approach to "sustainable" practices that are being animated in the context of the so-called "sustainable" performing arts festivals: an approach that problematises existing rhetoric surrounding sustainable event practice and places the notions of "Well-being" and "Quality of Life" at the very centre of sustainability ideals. It is an attempt to raise the need for stepping beyond polarised models of sustainability that dominate current event-related literature and practice. It prompts us to revisit classical philosophical discussions related to *ευδαιμονία* (eudaemonia), and, eventually, introduce a focus on "transcendental" conceptions of well-being in the context of the "sustainable" festival. It is also calling for a dialogue between a set of theoretical processes – that surround the notion of Well-being – and the world of empirical information. The paper therefore aims to offer both practical reflection as well as conceptual orientation in light of the emerging "sustainable" festival phenomenon.

Desk research utilising web-based search engines revealed a total of 71 performing arts festivals which are subject to one or more of the following criteria: i) are self-proclaimed as "sustainable"; ii) have a dedicated section to "sustainability" on their website; iii) explicitly express a commitment to "sustainability"; or; iv) are regarded as "sustainable" by a third party. The vast majority of the identified "sustainable" festivals demonstrated a strong rhetorical emphasis on environmental consciousness, beholding nature as the "ultimate" resource, and, thus, attending to a "leave-no-trace to the natural environment" ethos. Contrary to those events, a number of festivals

proclaimed to embrace sustainability rather more holistically, seeking to "leave their trace" by preserving things "that matter" and by investing on humans, their culture, as well as on a wide spectrum of qualities that compose the human well-being – additionally to those qualities that are related to the natural environment.

In this paper, desk research findings are coupled with empirical evidence derived from an on-going study which employs a combination of qualitative methods. Extensive archival research, in-depth interviews with various figures involved in the "Music Village" festival, experience as a participant, as well as field observations from the – established for this longitudinal research – Sustainability "Observatory" contribute alternative notions of "sustainability" in the context of this niche within the cultural economy. What is revealed is a rather "anthropocentric", future-orientated, broad conceptualisation of sustainability; it is "sustainability" predominantly expressed in terms of qualitative development of traits that are considered to enhance human well-being. In turn, "well-being" in this context is being defined by the positive qualities of life experiences that reside in the realms of creativity, learning, participatory engagement, preservation of intangible cultural heritage, meaningful human-to-human interaction, and a flourishing collective culture.

Appendix C – Information Sheet and Consent Form

Understanding the notion of "Sustainability" in the context of the performing arts festival

School of Performance and Cultural Industries,

Faculty of Performance, Visual Arts and Communications

Information sheet / Consent form • Version 1 • 23 April 2013

Please read this information sheet carefully

This information sheet gives details of a research project set up at the University of Leeds to explore the notion of sustainability in the context of the performing arts festival.

Please take some time to read the following information carefully.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS RESEARCH ?

This study aims to explore the notion of sustainability in the context of the performing arts festival. As part of this research, we would greatly appreciate your views on a) what contributes to the long-term well-being of the wider environment (social, economic, cultural, artistic, natural, etc.) in which the Music Village festival occurs; b) what is the festival doing in order to support such flows; c) what are the dimensions of that environment that the festival might affect in a negative way; d) what does the festival get back from its wider environment; and e) what might contribute to the sustained long-living of the festival and the artistic community that is developed.

WHAT DOES TAKING PART INVOLVE ?

It is entirely your own decision to take part in this research and we want to reassure you that you can withdraw at any time without any effect. Moreover, you are free to withdraw your consent at any time until September 2014 by simply writing to G.Zifkos10@leeds.ac.uk .

As part of the study you will be asked to:

- sign a consent form.

- participate in one interview. That should take approximately 30'.

- if you wish, you might be invited to participate in a 2-hour long focus group discussion.

- if you agree, you might be contacted by email and/ or Skype to participate in rather short, follow-up discussions, or in interaction through social media (i.e. in the form of comments, etc).

We are very much looking for your collaboration in order to envisage what the "Sustainable" Festival looks like!!!

2

WILL MY DATA BE SECURE ?

Your answers will be used for academic purpose only. However, due to the ethnographic nature of the research techniques used in this study, provisional, anonymised findings may be shared with the festival organisers as well as with other participants in order to prompt further discussion. We can guarantee that your viewpoints will be kept strictly confidential; your name and contact details will not appear in any report or be given to anyone else. Direct quotations from interviewees will be anonymised and/or published into our research outputs in a processed, coded form, so that no information could reveal your identity. All research data will be securely stored at the University of Leeds premises until the completion of the overall PhD study (Sept. 2016), and will then be destroyed.

We are aware of the risks of physical loss of electronic devices or information 'leak' over digital networks, so we are doing our best in terms of digital data encryption.

The **Sustainability "Observatory"** - as advertised in the festival website [http://www.music-village.gr] - will be your contact point if you have any concerns or there is something to add. Moreover, George will be around the village from 18 August to 1 September, so it is quite probable to meet him again before you leave the 2014 festival !

THANK YOU :-)

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.

2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.

3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.

4. I understand that the study involves participating in an 30' interview about the synergy between sustainability and the festival, as outlined in the 'Information Sheet'. The researcher will be audio recording the interviews, as well as taking notes.

5. I will be happy to be invited to take part in a focus group discussion on the same topic.

6. I understand that participation involves no physical or physiological risks.

7. I understand that all research data will be securely stored at the University of Leeds premises until the completion of the overall PhD study, and will then be destroyed.

8. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

9. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.

10. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant (i.e. direct quotations will be anonymised, focus group viewpoints will be identified as general group responses).

11. I will be happy to be contacted by the researcher, by email, Skype or through social media, for short, follow-up discussions on the topic, in the future.

⬚   email address or/and social media contact

12. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw without any effect by writing to G.Zifkos10@leeds.ac.uk . However, my right to withdraw data from the study will apply until September 2014. After this date, research dissemination will have possibly occurred and it will not be possible to withdraw my data.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

⬚   I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to   this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Investigator's name: GEORGE ZIFKOS

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____