

**The use of accounting in managing the institutional complexities of a festival organisation  
pursuing financial and social objectives**

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

This paper explores the use of accounting when managing the institutional complexities of a festival organisation pursuing financial and social objectives. Specifically it focuses on how accounting can be implicated in handling a festival's multiple and potentially conflicting logics. Also, through mobilising the concept of institutional work, the following builds on our knowledge of the importance of what people do, in managing an organisation's institutional complexity.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

The empirical research is grounded in a qualitative case study, for which the primary data derives from interviews, plus examination of internal documents and information in the public domain.

### **Findings**

The festival studied is commercially successful, though ultimately one of its main organisational goals is to maximise donations to charitable causes. Other goals include: offering an alternative community through music, particularly to the young; fostering new and innovative artistry, and; nurturing a festival family that is rooted to a large extent in its army of volunteers. The paper reveals how seeking such goals simultaneously requires the handling of logics that potentially can pull in opposite directions. Moreover, it highlights the efforts of festival organisers to maintain coexistence between the different logics, including the utilisation of accounting, accounts and accountability to facilitate this.

### **Originality/value**

There are three main contributions of the paper. First, it offers new insight into how accounting can be purposefully used to mediate between potentially opposing logics in a complex organisational setting. Second, the paper extends our knowledge of the use of accounting specifically within a popular culture context. Third, the following adds to recent attempts use of the concept of institutional work to understand why and how people utilise accounting to handle institutional complexity in organisational settings.

### **Keywords**

Accounting, popular culture, festivals, institutional work, logics, accounts, accountability, complexity, conflict

# **The use of accounting in managing the institutional complexities of a festival organisation pursuing financial and social objectives**

## **Introduction**

This paper explores the use of accounting in managing the complexities faced by an international festival organisation pursuing financial and social objectives. Festivals are an important part of the growing significance of popular culture in contemporary society. How such events are managed, including their accounting, is an area that warrants more research (Jeacle, 2012, 2017). The aim is investigation into the use of accounting in a setting that is unlike many others, a complex ‘messy reality’ (Empson *et al.*, 2013) that comprises multiple logics<sup>1</sup>. In so doing, there is particular focus on what individuals do, in attempting to navigate the complexity. So, for instance, how is accounting used when festival managers purposively handle the myriad of logics which a festival entails? Moreover, does accounting exacerbate tensions between different logics, and how is this approached? Or, can accounting actually assist the coexistence of, and mediate between, multiple logics?

For this research, accounting is broadly defined as the process of constructing an account, being any artefact that comprises and is used to convey information from one party to another (Jollands, 2016). Such broad definition permits varied uses of accounting, as well as consistency in analysing the artefacts. Specifically, it allows for a perspective that is not confined just to a financial orientation, but highlights additional consequences of constructing accounts.

Festivals are extremely interesting organisations, not least because their output (i.e., the festival event) occurs over a relatively short space of time, and because financial viability is for much part shrouded in uncertainty. They are “major actors in the diversity of cultural markets” (Knardal and Pettersen, 2015, p. 679), carrying considerable and varied significance. A study of festivals’ economic significance in 2013, covering 390 European festivals that year, found that the total budget for these festivals was approximately 335 million Euro (Négrier *et al.*, 2013). And, in relation to their social significance, the same study revealed that more than 11 million people attended these festivals. Also, from the perspective of artists, festivals and concerts have nowadays become a critical source of income<sup>2,3</sup>.

However, there are also numerous instances where the financial viability of festivals has been questioned and critiqued (Bergamin Barbato and Mio, 2007; Carlsen *et al.*, 2010). More recently there has been the bizarre case of the ‘Fyre Festival’ about which a Netflix documentary was made<sup>4</sup>, where for instance there were multiple problems in relation to the security, food, accommodation, medical

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<sup>1</sup> Logics are a link between institutions and organisational action (ter Bogt and Scapens, 2019). This definition is extended in the theory section (later).

<sup>2</sup>It is reported, for instance, that Taylor Swift’s 2018 tour of only 48 shows earned gross income of \$315 million.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hughmcintyre/2018/12/06/these-are-the-10-highest-grossing-tours-of-2018/#7862fdc0298f> (accessed 22.10.2019).

<sup>4</sup> Fyre: the greatest party that never happened: <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/81035279>

services and artist relations. As a consequence, the festival was abandoned with huge financial losses, and its organisers became subjects of numerous lawsuits. The usual dilemma that festival organisers face is balancing between, and potential inability to synchronise, the desire for creativity and staying within unpredictable financial capabilities (Knardal and Pettersen, 2015). Thus, financial astuteness and sound financial management are essential in festival management, and there have been some, albeit a relatively small number of, previous case studies (Bergamin Barbato and Mio, 2007), that focus on how this balancing between creativity and financial demands is handled.

The case study is the annual Roskilde Festival (hereafter 'RF'), one of the oldest and largest art and music festivals in Northern Europe, first held in 1971. It has a core group of full-time staff, plus a bank of around 30k volunteers during festival events, who all embrace the festival's identity and core values. There is common appreciation of commercial needs, but in an interesting way that is different to many other large festivals. Specifically, RF endeavours to maximise its financial surplus from each event, but it is a non-profit organisation with an explicit and fundamental objective to donate maximum surpluses to charitable causes.

It is an ongoing challenge, however, for RF to succeed commercially while at the same time preserving other core values. This is a challenge that requires staff to balance between commercial values and other festival values, and particularly to avoid the former 'crowding-out' the latter (Sandel, 2013). The following explores how the 'RF family'<sup>5</sup> has managed this challenge with relative success during the 49 years since its inaugural event. Purposeful 'work' by staff and volunteers is highlighted and, in particular, close attention is given to the utilisation of accounting to assist in balancing between different objectives. Thus, it is seen how important the use of accounting is, not only for ensuring the festival's commercial viability but also for maintaining other (potentially opposing) logics. In so doing, logics are taken to be unfolding, endogenously dynamic, and continuously coexisting and/or changing over time (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2009, Thornton and Ocasio, 2008), rather than separate, 'given', or necessarily always in conflict. Moreover, logics are assumed to be organisational dynamics which actors could influence but at the same time they may need handling through, say, compromise, (re-)negotiation, and/or coercion. In attempting to understand the purposeful behaviour which aims to influence organisational logics over time, an institutional work theoretical approach is adopted (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, Lawrence *et al.*, 2009), more details about which is given later.

The research offers three main contributions. First, the following presents new insight into how accounting might be implicated in the mediation of opposing logics within complex organisational settings (Goretzki *et al.*, 2013; Lounsbury, 2008). Second, the paper adds to a growing literature that explores the use of accounting in popular culture and 'everyday' contexts (Hopwood, 1994; Jeacle, 2012). Third, the research extends recent adoption of the institutional work concept to explore the

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<sup>5</sup> 'RF family' is a commonly-used term within the organisation.

importance of individuals' mobilisation of accounting to handle complex and multi-logic organisational settings<sup>6</sup>.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: below is a literature review, followed then by a brief description of the research design. Next, there is a description of the institutional theoretical approach, then a case study analysis, and finally some concluding remarks.

### **Popular culture, festivals and accounting**

The topic of popular culture is relatively new to the accounting literature. According to Jeacle (2009), it has remained relatively unexplored although it has been more than two decades since Hopwood (1994) called for accounting researchers to focus more on accounting 'in everyday life'. In recent years, however, there has been small but increasing interest in studying the use of accounting in different arenas across popular culture (Jeacle, 2017), including: fashion retailing (Jeacle *et al.*, 2012); the film industry (Jeacle, 2014); television productions (Maier, 2017); West End musicals (Lapsley and Rekers, 2017); sports events (Carlsson-Wall *et al.*, 2017), and; football organisations (Cooper and Johnston, 2012, Carlsson-Wall *et al.*, 2016). Common to these arenas is that they represent examples of experience-based goods. Such goods are rooted in subjective meaning, and bought for reasons other than utility, for example as aesthetic goods that are "consumed in an act of interpretation" (Lapsley and Rekers, 2017).

Accounting research in the context of popular culture is of relevance not just because of a need to better understand the engagement of accounting in everyday life (Hopwood, 1994), but also because popular culture is nowadays 'big business' (Jeacle, 2017). For instance, the *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) is argued to be the highest grossing film of all time, with a world-wide box-office gross of \$2.8 billion, not including home video and television income<sup>7</sup>. Geographical areas, nations even, can be partly defined by their popular culture (just think of the 'West End' in London, 'Old Trafford' in Manchester, or the 'All Blacks' in New Zealand). So, it would seem important to increase knowledge around the use of accounting in this domain.

One usual characteristic of popular culture is its dependence on a creative process, the unfolding of which may be challenged by a control-oriented environment (Amabile *et al.*, 1996, Adler and Chen, 2011). However, it is common in popular culture to see navigation across terrains comprising both control and creativity, and there are examples showing that it is possible to adopt rule-like control (or accounting) practices while at the same time engaging in creative processes (Adler and Chen, 2011,

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<sup>6</sup> Such past research, though not of popular culture context, include: Goretzki *et al.* (2013); Hayne & Free (2014); Järvinen (2016), and; Nyland *et al.* (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=marvel2019.ht> (accessed 02.10.2019).

Knardal and Pettersen, 2015, Maier, 2017). Related to this, Townley *et al.* (2009) claim that a form of discipline is sometimes imbued into creative practices, and argue for a more nuanced view of the possible tensions inherent in popular culture settings. Maier (2017) also argues that there is still much to learn about the use of accounting in the provision of cultural goods and services.

In a study of UK high street retail fashion, Jeacle *et al.* (2012) investigated the role of accounting for mediating the pressures of control on the one hand and creativity on the other. It was concluded that the industry relies on linking creativity with commercialisation, and that accounting is central to this relationship. In particular, budgets were deemed to be technologies, though sometimes used outside of typical domains, referring to Burns & Scapens' (1996) notion of the "decentring of accounting knowledge".

Similarly, Maier (2017) explored the use of a budget as a calculative practice in a TV drama production, and articulated its intertwinement with the creative process. Different forms of calculations were employed, not only by accountants but also by the artists who managed the different creative departments. Maier (2017) contends that in project-based cultural organisations there is not only a prevailing cultural norm to deliver "on budget", but that this is one of the criteria underlying 'project success'. The budgeting calculative practice, therefore, was a mediating instrument that had a balancing effect on creativity and control. Also in the entertainments industry, Lapsley and Rekers (2017) studied strategic management accounting in the selection and launching of musical theatre productions. Based on a premise that the accounting literature has under-explored strategic decisions for the launch of new shows, they found only a secondary role for accounting, involving traditional accounting tasks such as pricing and recording annual financial results, whereas costing practices were not particularly invasive to the creative process.

In relation to sports, Carlsson-Wall *et al.* (2017) conducted a multiple case study of six sports event organisations. Their focus is on the 'pulsating' nature of events, which requires balancing between the often competing demands of structure and flexibility. This study reveals how detailed planning is of crucial importance, connecting non-financial measures with budgets, policies and procedures. Also, in their study of a professional football club, Carlsson-Wall *et al.* (2016) highlight the importance of performance measurement systems in managing co-existence between different institutional logics, specifically how such systems help reach compromises between sports and business logics.

There are relatively few studies on accounting and festivals, although some can be mentioned. Bergamin Barbato and Mio (2007) described the development of control systems in the Venice Biennale festival, as the festival changed from being structurally and functionally linked to the Municipality of Venice, to a self-governing body. The occasion became more complex, in terms of the absolute number of events, the number of multidisciplinary events, and the number of events co-produced with other organisations. When resources were decreased, the Venice festival was still expected to offer the same

number of events, and to reach the usual artistic standards. This demanded additional accounting information, and an increased focus on management controls. For instance, the festival introduced cost centres, for the purpose of developing budgets for individual events. Though complex, these developments gave festival organisers opportunity to better analyse costs at event-level, as well as pass on responsibility for an event's costs to budget holders. Similarly, Knardal and Pettersen's (2015) study of a large Norwegian festival found that the budget was an integrated and much-used accounting tool. Specifically, it dovetailed with the festival's idiosyncratic characteristics, and was generally perceived as both creating stability in changing conditions and as mediating between creativity and control.

In sum, extant research contributions in the nexus between accounting and popular culture highlight both challenges and opportunities, in the context of the field's social and economic significance (Jeacle, 2017). Importantly, by locating within the domain of popular culture, these studies engage with the use of accounting in 'everyday life' (Hopwood, 1994), in relation to broader contexts, and with a view to understanding accounting outside conventional business views (Jeacle, 2012). A common curiosity for all such studies is how accounting might become implicated in the unfolding of such complex organisational settings.

Next, and preceding analysis of the RF case study, is a description of the research design, followed by a brief introduction to the concept of institutional work.

## **Research design**

This paper presents a qualitative case study, with primary data derived from a combination of twelve interviews, considerable internal documentation, and publicly-available information from (e.g.) organisational webpages, media releases and the internet. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in 2017, with the principal aim being to speak to people who could relate to the 'messy reality' (Empson *et al.*, 2013) of a festival organisation. Accordingly, the interviewees represent multiple functions, as well as being positioned at different seniority levels. From the administration, the CEO, the CFO, a Finance Manager and the Programme Manager were interviewed. These provided information on how accounting is implicated in the daily operations. However, the Programme Manager also used to be a festival volunteer, hence she also provided insight into this aspect, as well as a historic perspective from many years' involvement with the festival. Two interviews were conducted with a senior volunteer who had many years' experience in that role. The former CEO worked for more than forty years with the RF, first as a volunteer, later in different roles, and for many years as CEO. Other interviews were conducted with the festival's lawyer, who had a long history of working with the festival. Another former employee was interviewed, employed at RF for 15 years, and who had worked with the contents and perspectives of the festival. Finally, the chairman of one of the festival group's entities was

interviewed, a position that s/he held as a volunteer. All interviewees (see Table 1 for a summary) contributed towards a deep understanding of the use of accounting in the RF festival setting.

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Interviewee 1	Programme Manager, organisational development	Offices Roskilde Festival	58m
Interviewee 2	Finance Manager	Offices Roskilde Festival	1h 10m
Interviewee 3	Senior volunteer	Offices Roskilde Festival	57m
Interviewee 4	Former employee	Respondent's office - Copenhagen	1h 23m
Interviewee 5	Chair in one of the Roskilde Group's entities	Respondent's office - Copenhagen	1h 33m
Interviewee 6	Senior volunteer	Offices Roskilde Festival	57m
Interviewee 7 (interview 1)	Lawyer	Respondent's office - Copenhagen	1h 12m
Interviewee 7 (interview 2)	Lawyer	Skype	25m
Interviewee 8	Ex CEO	Café in Roskilde	1h 17m
Interviewee 9 (interview 1)	CFO	Skype	17m
Interviewee 9 (interview 2)	CFO	Telephone	25m
Interviewee 10	Current CEO	Skype	1h 1m

*Table 1: Summary of interviews*

The researchers' interview guide comprised two main sections. The first was concerned with RF's primary objectives, and what is deemed critical to achieve. The aim here was also to generate an understanding of what interviewees perceived as being the festival's key values. The second section of the interview guide focused more specifically on the use of accounting in dealing with a festival's complexity.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed in full, before then being imported into NVivo software for qualitative analysis. This data analysis followed three main steps. First, transcripts were read, which resulted in initial interpretations and the construction of themes. Then, using other supporting data it was possible to give more meaning to these identified themes. Second, key values were identified from further analysis of the themes, specifically relating to logics of charity, volunteerism, community and artistry. Third, the data was analysed further in relation to these four logics.



## **Logics, and the concept of institutional work**

Much of the extant research that investigates the use of accounting from an institutional theoretical perspective places a great deal of emphasis on opposing logics (Järvinen, 2016, Lounsbury, 2008, Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, Besharov and Smith, 2014). Logics connect institutions to organisational action, rather like belief systems which guide agency over time. They exemplify institutions, and define relevant or proper activity (Friedland and Alford, 1991). They can be both a barrier and/or a source of organisational change (Reay and Hinings, 2009).

Although some consideration has been given to multiple and complex logic situations in previous accounting research (Lounsbury, 2008), many studies make an explicit and somewhat simplified distinction between business logics and professional logics. This approach for example occurs in the literature on accounting within hospitals, where a popular focus is on tension between business and clinical logics (Nyland *et al.*, 2017, Pettersen and Solstad, 2014). Some studies claim a ‘coupling’ towards business logics (Kraus *et al.*, 2017), where accounting assumes an important enabling role. Other studies, on the other hand, reveal strong professional logics which drive ‘loose coupling’ or ‘decoupling’ of actual behaviour from business-like expectations (Canning and O’Dwyer, 2016).

Much of the extant knowledge in this area derives from research that adopts a rationalistic view of logics (Quattrone, 2015), whereby one particular logic is assumed to eventually dominate an organisation. The present research, however, sees logics as endogenously dynamic, coexisting and/or changing over time (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2009, Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Organisational actors can potentially impact logics, but logics usually need to be continuously handled. This handling has recently received attention in relation to the purposeful (institutional) work of agents, aimed at creating, disrupting and/or maintaining logics over time (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

The ‘institutional work’ concept is particularly useful for conceptualising how and why people act in complex, multi-logic settings. It differs from early neo-institutional theory that assumes ‘given’ logics, and from which the “emergence, instantiation, and change within the everyday practices of organizations and their actors is inadequately explained” (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2009, p.286). Institutional work also avoids the ‘heroic’ agency tendencies of the institutional entrepreneurship theoretical approach (Battilana *et al.*, 2009). Rather, an institutional work approach focuses on the practical actions aimed at handling institutional complexity in different organisational settings (Lawrence *et al.*, 2009). Importantly, in this research there is particular focus on how accounting might be used, and implicated, in the actions of organisational agents.

In their seminal paper, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) propose a taxonomy of three main categories of institutional work, namely: (1) *creating*, (2) *disrupting*, and (3) *maintaining*. For each main category, they also propose various sub-categories or ‘forms of’ institutional work (see Table 2 for a summary of Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) taxonomy). In relation to the main categories, first, creating is where

organisational agents impact the emergence and embedding of logics, by (e.g.) politicising, the reconfiguration of belief systems or changing belief system boundaries (ibid.). Disrupting is where logics stop meeting the interests of actors who have an ability to undermine them, e.g., if rewards or sanctions are removed from existing rule systems, procedures and technologies, where a logic’s moral foundations are challenged, and when taken-for-granted assumptions are destabilised (ibid.). Maintaining describes how logics are reproduced in everyday practices, persisting over time (ibid.), via adherence to rule systems and the reproduction of norms and belief systems (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2009). The notion of maintaining logics is particularly pertinent for this paper, since the purposeful maintaining of numerous, yet potentially opposing, logics is an important characteristic of the RF case study. Reproduction of institutions cannot be taken for granted, but requires active engagement (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Indeed, Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2009) argued that continuously maintaining even the most stable institutions in a multi-logics organisation is paramount “in order to avoid being dominated by other competing logics” (ibid., p.287).

<b>Creating institutions</b>	
Advocacy	The mobilisation of political and regulatory support through direct and deliberate techniques of social suasion.
Defining	The construction of rule systems that confer status or identity, define boundaries of membership or create status hierarchies within a field.
Vesting	The creation of rule structures that confer property rights.
Constructing identities	Defining the relationship between an actor and the field in which that actor operates.
Changing normative associations	Re-making the connection between sets of practices and the moral and cultural foundations for those practices.
Constructing normative networks	Constructing of interorganisational connections through which practices become normatively sanctioned and which form the relevant peer group with respect to compliance, monitoring and evaluation.
Mimicry	Associating new practices with existing sets of taken-for-granted practices, technologies and rules in order to ease adoption.
Theorising	The development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect.
Educating	The educating of actors in skills and knowledge necessary to support the new institution.
<b>Maintaining institutions</b>	
Enabling work	The creation of rules that facilitate, supplement and support institutions, such as the creation of authorising agents or diverting resources.
Policing	Ensuring compliance through enforcement, auditing and monitoring.
Deterring	Establishing coercive barriers to institutional change.
Valourising and demonising	Providing for public consumption positive and negative examples that illustrate the normative foundations of an institution.
Mythologising	Preserving the normative underpinnings of an institution by creating and sustaining myths regarding its history.
Embedding and routinising	Actively infusing the normative foundations of an institution into the participants’ day to day routines and organisational practices.
<b>Disrupting institutions</b>	
Disconnecting sanctions	Working through state apparatus to disconnect rewards and sanctions from some set of practices, technologies or rules.
Disassociating moral foundations	Disassociating the practice, rule or technology from its moral foundation as appropriate within a specific cultural context.
Undermining assumptions/beliefs	Decreasing the perceived risks of innovation and differentiation by undermining core assumptions and beliefs.

Table 2: adapted from Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) taxonomy of institutional work

The categories, and sub-categories, of institutional work suggested by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), see Table 2, will be utilised in this paper to make sense of the RF case study, in particular for understanding why and how people connected with the organisation use accounting in trying to handle the complexities of a multi-logics setting. The taxonomy of Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) is an analytically useful tool, though the reality of institutional work in organisations is usually rather “messy” (Empson *et al.*, 2013; Canning and O’Dwyer, 2016), and involves non-linear ‘work’ that emerges, disappears and re-appears over time (Hayne and Free, 2014). Particular emphasis in the RF case is placed on maintaining institutions, which is a reflection of the embeddedness of its core values and logics. Though, reference will also be made to how festival institutions and common beliefs were originally created in the early 1970s, and also highlighting the occasional situation of temporary disrupting towards this embeddedness.

### **Case analysis**

This case study highlights how accounting is purposefully used to manage the complexities of a large festival, and thereby assists the festival to continuously reach its various goals. The relevant organisational logics, as mentioned above, are: charity, volunteerism, community and artistry. There are several ways that conflict and tension ‘could’ potentially emerge from such an array of logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, Besharov and Smith, 2014, Lounsbury, 2008). However, the aim of this paper is not to discuss the tensions and conflicts per se, or struggles where one logic dominates in the end, but rather to explore how accounting is implicated when festival managers handle this multitude of logics. The remainder of this section considers the institutional work, and the use of accounting in maintaining the coexistence of different logics (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2009, Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

#### *The Roskilde festival – background information*

In 1971 the RF was held for the first time, organised by two students whose desire was to create a free space, and an alternative to norm society, especially for the younger person. These original aims have remained to the present day, supplemented over time by other objectives. Further it is not difficult to see how such important early ideals formed part of the creating of institutions and logics that embody beliefs around community and artistry, in particular. Unofficially it was dubbed as a ‘festival for hippies’. Its original title was ‘the Sound Festival’, inspired by past festivals like Woodstock. The first event lasted two days, involving around twenty bands, mainly covering genres of jazz, rock, folk and pop. Since then, RF has grown to become Northern Europe's largest cultural and music festival<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/about/the-festival/> (accessed 03.10.2019).

Nowadays the festival is organised every year<sup>9</sup>, for eight days at the end of June and the beginning of July, held at the Roskilde Dyrskueplads. During the festival, its area constitutes the equivalent to Denmark's fourth largest city, with a population of 130,000 participants, including 30,000 volunteers<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the festival also has a large camping area which stretches over 2.5 million square meters (*ibid.*), and where participants can buy pretty much anything they need during a festival.

A central feature of the RF is its non-profit objective, whereby all financial surpluses are donated to charitable causes. The festival is formally organised by the Roskilde Festival Charity Society, the official aim of which is to “support humanitarian, other charitable, non-profit and cultural work with special focus on children and young people”<sup>11</sup>. The Charity Society supports both local and international projects, and has over the years donated more than 340 million Danish kroner (DKK), approximately 46 million euros<sup>12</sup>, for charitable purposes<sup>9</sup>. Just in 2017, the RF earned surpluses exceeding DKK 24 million (i.e., about 3.2 million euros<sup>13</sup>), all of which was donated to charity<sup>9</sup>. The 30,000 volunteers associated with the festival are its backbone, a deep-rooted characteristic of the festival’s identity. Particularly through its charitable purpose, and the immense efforts of an army of volunteers, the RF festival has grown into a sizeable organisation. Premised on strong ideological fundamentals, a long tradition and a deep-rooted sense of community, RF has ability to make a positive impact, both locally and further afield. Over the years, some of the biggest artists within the music industry have played at the festival, such as U2, Metallica, Bruce Springsteen, Nick Cave and the Bed Seeds, Kanye West, Oasis and the Rolling Stones. However, it is also an important goal for the festival to be innovative and promote tomorrow’s musical talent, so they have a team of people who are continuously travelling around the world to listen to new artists. In line with this ambition to continuously promote artistry, 75% of the artists at the 2017 festival had never previously played at the RF.

In 2011, senior festival staff began the process of devising a strategy, principally targeted at survival in a fast-evolving market, but importantly this was also a galvanising of core values (and logics) that had evolved over the years since the festival’s inauguration. One interviewee claimed that until this point, the RF had never really shown much strategic intent, adding that there had never been an inner competence to do so. However, a turning point in this regard was the employment of a new deputy CEO in 2013, specifically brought in to develop the festival’s strategy, and who became the CEO in 2016. This is consistent with the view of others that careful and purposeful recruitment is important for

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<sup>9</sup> The 2020 event did not happen due to COVID-19.

<sup>10</sup> Source: [https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/media/1207/rf\\_a-rsskrift\\_2017.pdf](https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/media/1207/rf_a-rsskrift_2017.pdf) (accessed 28.05.2020).

<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/da/om-os/> (accessed 03.10.2019).

<sup>12</sup> Exchange rate 27.05.2020:

[https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

<sup>13</sup> Exchange rate 27.05.2020:

[https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

creating and maintaining institutions (Angus, 1993; Zilber, 2009). The new strategy actually took a while coming, but in 2016 five strategic initiatives were formulated, as listed below (see Table 3).

We create socially engaged communities around the activities that we develop and are involved in.
We improve Roskilde Festivals as an independent and progressive music and cultural festival and strengthen its position internationally.
We commit to a sustainable development and leave a lasting mark on the world.
We are a platform for knowledge, experiments and growth layers as an open organisation.
We develop new businesses and innovative solutions that support and move the Roskilde Festival further.

Table 3: Strategic initiatives<sup>14</sup>

Focused on the longer-term aims of the festival, these five strategic initiatives target effects that will impact at regional, national and international levels. They embrace logics that guide the actions of the RF family, but the potentially opposing nature of which needs continuous handling. Further, as is developed below, part of this handling of multiple and potentially opposing logics involves the mediating use of accounting. These logics - charity, volunteerism, community, and artistry – and their implications for the use of accounting in RF, are now discussed in more detail.

### Charity

The charity logic is deeply embedded within RF: “We are 100% non-profit. We donate *everything* to charity after each festival. We have done that every year since 1972, and we will keep doing it”<sup>15</sup>. It steers staff and volunteers to act in ways that benefit not only the festival per se in relation to its strategic aims, but also makes a difference to many others:

Non-profit for me means earning as much money as you can, and use it in a proper way. There are some who believe that non-profit means zero profit and that there should be zero in profit. No, it shouldn't. It should as much profit as it can. *But the money should be earned in the right way and it should be used for the right things. And that is what we always have stood for.* This is how to do it (Ex CEO).

Charitable objectives therefore constitute a key aspect of the RF’s branding. It is a central feature of the festival’s web pages, and a well-used part of their logos, appearing on such things as advertising posters and merchandise (“Non-profit since 1972”). The 2018 festival earned profits of €2.57 million – all

<sup>14</sup> Source: [https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/media/1223/2018-rfg-strategi\\_januar\\_uk.pdf](https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/media/1223/2018-rfg-strategi_januar_uk.pdf) (accessed 28.5.2020).

<sup>15</sup> Source: <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/about/non-profit/> (accessed 26.05.20).

donated to charitable causes; and over €52 million has been donated since 1972<sup>16</sup>. One interviewee eloquently stressed the importance of RF's charity logic for influencing what staff and volunteers do:

It is not necessarily a big commercial thing about being "non-profit". That is not necessarily what people think about when they are doing this or that – it's more that it affects the way one works (Finance manager).

The festival's donation policy is premised on a mission statement "to support initiatives benefitting children and young people humanitarian and cultural work"<sup>17</sup>, often involving schemes and initiatives which challenge society. There are strict requirements for donations to be made, consistent with other logics and objectives. Though not an exhaustive list, these include: curiosity and challenging the outside world; showing and create new spaces; volunteerism and communities; creating positive effects beyond the donation itself; considerations for any impacts on the environment; and making a difference for the donation recipient(s). Compliance to these requirements and more is accounted for, and monitored by senior staff, an illustration of 'enabling' institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), but also with an element of 'self-policing' work too (*ibid.*). In 2017, the festival donated in excess of DKK 24 million (3.2 million euros<sup>18</sup>) to more than 100 different initiatives, including: a platform for female hip-hop artists in the Netherlands, an 'Everyday Sexism Project' in Denmark, an 'African Youth Panel', a cycling project for young mental health sufferers, a 'Fuck U Multiple Sclerosis' group (Germany), a 'Doctors Without Borders' scheme, and a LGBTQ film festival called 'Mix Copenhagen'<sup>19</sup>.

Danish legislation offers VAT exemption to an organisation that has a charitable purpose. Thus, the festival has traditionally been exempted from VAT, though certain government demands must be followed. In order to gain maximum benefit from this situation, RF's senior staff have mobilised several aspects of its organisation to enable its charitable purpose. This process of attempting to maximise its charitable contributions began in the 1990s, coinciding with growth in the festival's size and income-generation. However, as a consequence, Danish tax authorities also began to more closely examine the operations and economy of RF. They chose not to recognise all RF's charitable distributions, arguing that some deductions were being made for ineligible expenses. So, in agreement with the tax authorities and drawing on his skills for advocacy and defining work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), RF's lawyer established new legal boundaries for the festival. Effectively the festival's activities were split into two entities, only one of which would be exempt from VAT (i.e., the entity which organises the festival) and the other that would not be VAT-exempt. This other 'supporting' entity sold drinks and cigarettes

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<sup>16</sup> Source: <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/years/2019/news/saadan-donerede-vi-overskuddet-fra-roskilde-festival-2018/> (accessed 26.05.20).

<sup>17</sup> Source: <https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/da/hvordan-stoetter-vi/> (accessed 25.01.2019).

<sup>18</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

<sup>19</sup> Source: [https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/media/1209/frf-2017\\_donationsoverblik.pdf](https://roskildefestivalgruppen.dk/media/1209/frf-2017_donationsoverblik.pdf) (accessed 28.05.2020).

during events, for example. It still shared a purpose to maximise benefits for charitable causes, but did not donate all of its revenues, instead building up equity. One interviewee described the legal separation of these two entities as the start of an “extensive professionalisation” of RF’s organisational structure.

A few years following this restructuring, however, the new situation turned out not to be ideal (for strategic purpose), though for rather unpredictable reasons. In 2000, during an act by the band Pearl Jam, there was an excessive build-up of fans, following which nine festival participants were crushed to death<sup>20</sup>. This horrific occurrence incited festival senior staff to invest around DKK 10 million (1.3 million euros<sup>21</sup>) on upgrades for events-security and safety. Also, probably not surprisingly, ticket sales took a considerable hit in 2001, which resulted in a financial deficit of DKK 12 million (1.6 euros<sup>22</sup>) for that year. It is, however, worthwhile noting that this is the only time that an annual RF event has finished with a deficit.

The financial deficit in itself was not a huge problem for the festival, because there were sufficient funds in the supporting entity to cover it, so the plan was to put in place a rescue contribution. However, the supporting entity still shared the same public-interest charitable purpose as the organising entity. Further, since covering a deficit does not constitute non-profit business, the supporting entity was legally not in a position to donate funds to the organising association, much to everyone’s frustration:

We had this deficit of 12 million (DKK) in 2001. So, we go to the support entity and say “good day, I am short of 12 million Danish kroners and I would like to have it”. But then we sit down with the lawyers and they say you cannot have it. What?!! There is money in the support association, but we cannot have it? The association cannot distribute funds to cover a deficit, although that’s why it was created! (Ex CEO).

The problem, again prompted further organisational re-structuring, again dealt with by the festival lawyer through his skills in advocacy and defining work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). The supporting association was replaced by a fund entity, the ‘Fund Roskilde Festival’, a legal entity that would pay tax and VAT. In addition, the festival-organising entity changed its title, to the ‘Association Roskilde Festival’, which would remain exempt from tax and VAT. Consequently, the RF at that point resonated more of a group entity. A further sticking point, however, was that being VAT-exempt, the Association Roskilde Festival would not be permitted to have employees. Thus, in 2004, another new corporation, ‘Roskilde Cultural Services’, was established, a subsidiary of the Fund Roskilde Festival, to which all of the latter’s employees were legally transferred. In sum, the Roskilde Cultural Services provides

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<sup>20</sup> Source: <https://www.nrk.no/kultur/10-ar-siden-roskilde-tragedien-1.7190689> (accessed 28.5.2020).

<sup>21</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

<sup>22</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

personnel to the Festival Group’s projects, the Association organises the festival, and the entire surplus can then be donated to charitable purposes. The Fund, meanwhile, sells consumables at events, which are subject to VAT, and is available to financially support the association when necessary. Together the three entities of The Fund Roskilde Festival, The Association Roskilde Festival and Roskilde Cultural Services constitute the ‘Roskilde Festival Group’, as depicted in figure 1. In 2018, the Fund donated DKK 5 million (670,000 euros<sup>23</sup>), the result after tax was DKK 14.2 million (1.9 million euros<sup>24</sup>) and the equity was DKK 68.5 million (9.2 million euros<sup>25</sup>).

In institutional theoretical terms, this tax-related occurrence had threatened to disrupt the charity donation goals of RF. However it was purposeful advocacy and defining work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) by the festival lawyer, effectively making alterations to accountability relationships between new and existing RF entities and the tax authorities, which averted disruption to its full effect. Then, further enabling work (*ibid.*) to create a new Fund organisation ultimately maintained the desired ability to earn sizeable charity donations.



Figure 1: The Roskilde Festival Group structure<sup>26</sup>

Following the tax authority’s intervention over twenty years ago, the RF’s purposeful re-branding to ‘non-profit since 1972’ and fundamental organisational restructuring has reinforced charity logics.

<sup>23</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

<sup>24</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

<sup>25</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

<sup>26</sup> Source: [https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/media/1747/rf\\_aarsskrift\\_2018.pdf](https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/media/1747/rf_aarsskrift_2018.pdf) (accessed 28.05.2020).



Driven by senior festival staff, in particular the lawyer, these actions were, and continue to be, critical in preserving their normative underpinnings (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), openly demonstrating what is commonly regarded to be ‘right’ for the festival. Indeed, the tax authority intervention was deemed such a threat to one of the festival’s core objectives, and associated logic, that it actually strengthened the focus on maximising charitable gains. Accounting, in its broad sense, including the construction of new accounts, hence stabilised RF’s identity and long-term aims by reifying the logic of charity. Such identity is important internally as it provides staff and volunteers with a reason to engage with RF. Moreover, the festival’s identity is also important externally, particularly in relation to its legitimacy in society, including towards the national tax authorities.

### *Volunteerism*

The RF is the world’s largest volunteer-organised event, and the volunteerism logic is deeply-rooted across all parts of the organisation. Around 1,200 of the 30,000 (total) volunteers give their time on a full-year basis. They are not confined to menial tasks but can have a variety of responsibilities, in very senior positions, including the booking of artists. Consistent with this, all boards within the group include volunteers, and the notion of ‘volunteerism’ is consistently presented as a part of the festival’s DNA<sup>26</sup>. The numbers, seniority, responsibility and inclusivity of the volunteers epitomises a continual maintaining of the volunteerism logic (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). The festival’s web-site emphasises that “we are who we are because of the volunteers”<sup>27</sup> (Roskilde Festival, 2019e), and one interviewee expressed similar undertones:

This is not an organisation that manages and controls volunteers. The Roskilde Festival is initiated, established, developed, managed and run by volunteers (CEO).

Another interviewee claimed that if the festival had been sold to private investors, it probably would have failed and disappeared. S/he added that a greater profit orientation (i.e., profits to retain rather than donate to charity) would likely disrupt volunteerism logics which, in turn, would probably have an adverse impact on the surpluses earned. Volunteerism logics were, argued several interviewees, a significant reason for why the festival is enabled to earn financial surpluses that could then be donated for charitable purposes. Indeed, the logic was something that festival staff (and volunteers) intentionally worked at, promoting and protecting. One interviewee suggested that the common use of the term ‘volunteers’ had previously been compromised by the use of the term ‘employee’, but that this did not last long and ‘volunteer’ remained a symbolic aspect of the festival life and its ongoing narrative work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006):

When working within some frames (volunteerism), based on the idea that a word is *creating action*, it matters if you then use the word ‘employee’ in a specific context, for a particular

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<sup>27</sup> Source: <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/about/volunteering/> (accessed 25.1.2019).

relationship. For instance, what does the use of this word do in terms of the voluntary engagement? It matters (Programme manager).

Maintaining a volunteerism logic involved staging forum groups (in person, via the internet, and through other correspondence), illustrations of what Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) termed as educating work but also possibly an element of mythologizing in this case. At such events or through various narratives, the importance of volunteerism to the festival (past, present and future) would be continuously stressed, and also how being a volunteer is different from being an employee. This also incorporated the use of two accounting tools: (1) a volunteer manifesto, and (2) a participative budget. A volunteers' survey, effectively an accounts artefact, had been conducted for many years after each event, to measure volunteers' satisfaction with their festival experience. Then, in 2016, a volunteer manifesto was established, with its aim being to strengthen the thousands of volunteers' commitment, well-being and motivation towards the festival and its core objectives<sup>28</sup>. Prepared by representatives of the volunteers, the manifesto was an expression of 'good experience' as a volunteer, rooted in measurements for five key values, as shown in table 4:

You are welcome
You are the heart
You get experiences
You make a positive imprint
We are there for each other

Table 4: The 5 key values of the volunteer manifesto<sup>27</sup>

In 2017 the volunteers' survey and manifesto were coupled, translating the latter's five key values into the survey's satisfaction measures (Frydkjær *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the festival had created a means with which to account for, and benchmark, volunteers' experiences against its objectives, plus highlight where improvements might be needed. This is not so dissimilar to Carlsson-Wall *et al.*'s (2017) research on how sports events organisations facilitate a balancing of competing demands through the connected and ongoing use of budgets and various performance measures. Moreover, this process reinforced the volunteerism logic in RF, including normative beliefs concerning volunteerism within its 'family'.

Participative budgeting was another accounting tool that was implicated in the reinforcement of the RF's volunteerism logic. The festival's overall budget is considerably decentralised, with responsibility for around 200 sub-budgets given to volunteers. One interviewee claimed that approximately 95% of

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<sup>28</sup> Source: <http://www.roskildeny.dk/2017/06/frivilligmanifest-er-et-fundament-for-frivillighed/> (accessed 24.01.2019)

the total budget each year is prepared by the volunteers, a situation that she added brought a sense of belonging and ownership to the volunteers.

The festival's finance department develops a budgetary frame, rooted in the previous year's figures. Then, sub-budgets are finalised with respective budget-holders, it becomes the responsibility of (mostly) volunteer teams to manage their particular budget. Such responsibility comes with a high degree of freedom, autonomy, and trust. But budget holders must still stay within their individual (localised) budgets, and adhere always to festival objectives and core values. One volunteer, a senior budget holder with a variety of sub-budgets, highlighted the challenge that this created:

I am supposed to have sort of an overall control, but without too much interference. So, you feel like you want to exercise some authority, but I should also somehow have a sense of how things are going. So, we work a lot with freedom *within* the responsibility. This is really important to get people motivated, to get their effort, but also to be able to trust that they can manage the responsibility which they have been given (Ex CEO).

There are risks in giving volunteers such financial freedom, described by one senior staff interviewee as: “a really difficult *balancing* act, between how much to ‘go in’ and make their decisions, and how much to let them decide themselves” (CFO – emphasis added). One such challenge was encountered prior to the 2018 festival. Volunteer teams had independently decided to install water-flushing toilets around the festival area. Festival participants were promised these toilets in the advertising of tickets, and advanced agreements had been made over their supply with the Roskilde Municipality. However, nearer to the actual event, the price of loaning these toilets was considerably higher than had originally been budgeted for. In turn, this information had not been passed on to the senior staff until just three months prior to the festival, by which time the decision was irreversible. Importantly, this would also have significant budgetary consequences for other parts of the organisation.

However, this occurrence is quite rare, and several interviewees were keen to stress that balance, compromise and coping mechanisms were usually at hand, to avoid complete break down between different logics and objectives. More specifically, it was frequently accounting (e.g., budgets, performance measures, other accounting reports) that provided such balance, an observation that is consistent, for example, with the findings of Carlsson-Wall *et al.* (2016) in their study of how performance measurement systems alleviate tensions between sports and business logics, respectively, in a professional football club.

### *Community*

Another of RF's core values is a belief in, and commitment to, people and community. On an official webpage that advertises the 2021 festival, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it says the following:

RF is more than music, art, food and parties. Much more. It's also *a week-long celebration of togetherness and community* – that's something we want to encourage all year, through donations and cooperation with organisations working for a more equal society (emphasis added)<sup>29</sup>.

This community logic can be traced back to the inaugural festival in 1971, when the two founders aimed to create 'an alternative community through music'. The organisation has held on to this aim ever since, its embeddedness clear from the words of one interviewee:

We have stuck to that idea and that we don't want to grow old with our audience. We hold on to trying to create a free space and an alternative community to society. I think that this has helped to maintain the success, because it is what young people are looking for. Therefore, it is about holding on to some values, even though both values and music have changed over time (Programme manager).

Accounting, in its broader sense, is implicated in strengthening the community logic over time. The first such community-rooted initiative is the charity and donations policy, as discussed above. But there are additional accounting initiatives which continuously reinforce the logic of community. First, accounting is used to maintain, mainly through measurement and monitoring, the community-minded focus on being environmentally and socially sustainable. The festival's approach to sustainability is as follows:

Sustainability at Roskilde Festival is balancing environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability when we create and develop Roskilde Festival. The environmental aspects include our consumption of resources and emissions, for example what we purchase, water and electricity. The social aspects include ethical, social and interpersonal relationships, for example ensuring safety and equality for people involved in activities at Roskilde Festival and in the world around us<sup>30</sup>.

The approach to sustainability is a useful illustration of the inter-connectedness and co-existence of different festival logics. That is, being sustainable is assumed to be important for economic performance, which not only creates ability to make donations, but also allows for continuation of artistry:

The economic aspects include investments, stability and balance, e.g. long term investments in sustainable development projects and creating a yearly profit that we donate in full to charity.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/> (accessed 27.05.20).

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/about/sustainability/> (accessed 27.05.20).

Being a large cultural institution that works with culture and art as a catalyst for change, we view artistic and cultural sustainability as part of our understanding of sustainability<sup>31</sup>.

A designated team, the Roskilde Social Responsibility Team, is responsible for ensuring that the festival audience, partners and the RF organisation itself remains environmentally and socially sustainable in respective activities. They use sustainability-related measures, to which the RF is ultimately the accountable entity, and which actively aims to monitor and maintain good practices. These measures relate, for instance, to: a percentage amount of organic foodstuffs used by food stalls; the amount of waste mass for recycling; and (non-drinking) water consumption.

Another accounting-rooted initiative that reinforces community logics is the RF's ongoing promotion of equality issues, though this was also specifically the festival's main theme from 2016 to 2018. As mentioned already, the community logic is rooted in belief and respect of people and humanity, embracing that everyone is equally worthwhile and has rights to equal opportunities:

We believe equality between people is essential for a socially sustainable and democratic society of the world [...] A lack of understanding for humans as equals and people with the same rights to freedom and dignity is one of the reasons behind many of the challenges the world is facing today. This is the case for violation of women and minorities, the flow of refugees, freedom of speech and the right to kiss the one you love [...] Experiences with harassment and discrimination based on sexuality, gender, religion, ethnicity and cultural background is everyday life for many people in the world<sup>32</sup>.

The festival themes are essentially about giving an account, or more specifically *visibility*, to an important world issue. Such accounts might be viewed as similar to what others have called narrative acts, or organisational storytelling, and where the maintaining of institutions is the skilful (and often politicised) working of a "series of narrative acts" (Zilber, 2009, pp.229-230). In RF's themes over the years it is possible to see local contextualisation of higher-level meta-narratives such as equality, human rights and sustainability. In collaboration with its participants, artists and partners, the RF aims to nurture awareness on, debate, and engage in key matters. So, the theme for a particular year will filter through different aspects of the event, including the music and art on show, exhibitions, special invited speakers, forums and public debates, and the recipients of donations. For instance, in the 2018 festival, Chelsea Manning gave a speech to the RF audience. Manning, an American whistle-blower who leaked nearly 750 000 classified or sensitive military and diplomatic documents to WikiLeaks, but also someone who has had gender transition surgery, spoke about transgender rights and public transparency in a digitalised world. Continuing this notion of the festival providing a powerful means to give accounts in relation to important world matters, also in 2018 there was an artistic performance by two German

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/about/solidarity/equality/equality-2016-2018/> (accessed 27.05.20).

guests who drove white limousines around the festival area and invited a few select participants for a ride<sup>33</sup>. Their account was meant to illustrate differences in having access to privileges, and not.

### *Artistry*

The RF is one of the world's biggest music festivals, nowadays with around 200 bands or individual artists playing every year. It has seen performances by some of the biggest artists, and line-up expectations are extremely high. The size and reputation makes putting together the next event a considerable challenge, particularly in relation to maintaining different core values. One interviewee said:

We try as best we can, but there is no doubt that our big challenge is that we need to be razor-sharp on content every year (CFO).

A long-established aim of the festival is to book some of the world's biggest artists, but obviously they normally cost the most, thereby putting strain on the charity donations target. But also, it has consistently been a key aim of the RF to be innovative in its choice of performers, and to promote tomorrow's new talents. These challenges have been made harder by recent industry developments. The number of festivals has increased considerably over the last few decades, both nationally and internationally, in turn raising competition for (and the asking price of) popular artists. With this in mind, RF has taken several measures to meet this challenge over artistry, some of which involves the use of accounting. First, a 'Content Division' is responsible for the festival's artistic content, comprised of music bookers, people who continuously listen to new artists and music, and an analytical team which recommends artists based on their analyses of audience satisfaction surveys. Following each festival, a survey is sent by mail to all attendees. One section in this survey asks questions specifically about satisfaction towards the festival's musical content, including whether it has nurtured interest in previously unseen artists. This survey, effectively an accounting (or calculative) exercise, provides proxy data not only on audience preferences but also on the extent to which festival goers view the event as promoting new music for young people. This not only reinforces the artistry logic but also community.

Achieving a balance between artistry and costs, thus preserving healthy surpluses for charitable donations also relies considerably on the use of budgeting techniques. This resonates with Jeacle *et al.*'s (2012) study of UK high street fashion retail, in which they highlighted how accounting can mediate possible tensions between accounting and creativity (see also: Knardal and Pettersen, 2015; Maier, 2017 for similar issues raised). Although, in the RF case, this relationship between the financials and creativity was rather more due to the underlying uncertainties connected to the festivals business. It was stressed in interviews how important it is to try to book popular artists, and it was conceded by some

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<sup>33</sup> Source: <http://dieselworm.info/> (accessed 03.10.2019).

that budgets could occasionally be adjusted if an unexpected opportunity arose to book a big artist. As calculative approximation, the festival's content division normally books between five and eight 'big' acts, to try to assure a financial net surplus. A rule-of-thumb accounting score is that 80% of targeted ticket sales will achieve break-even for the festival, and from this point organisers can then base their plans on expected surpluses. However, something else which further complicates the process is uncertainty surrounding the actual cost of artists. Booking artists nowadays usually take place at auctions, where competition between different events pushes up the price. That said, one interviewee suggested that there was "always a possibility" to tweak the budgets to a certain extent, if this meant securing a big artist:

Sometimes we estimate that 1,000 festival tickets provides an income of approximately DKK 2 million (270,000 euros<sup>34</sup>). So if we can sell 5,000 festival tickets only on one artist's name, this artist can carry DKK 10 million (1,3 million euros) beyond the budget we have in advance (Ex CEO).

The booking of artists is one of the main areas where tensions can arise between logics, specifically (though not exclusively) between artistry and charity logics. That is, the greater the price of an artist, highly likely the more adverse impact on donations. But the semi-flexible and rather nuanced budgeting practices, described, offer some degree of balancing between the commissioning of big artists and still earning substantial financial surpluses for charitable donations. Alongside this is the use of informal accounting rules that have developed amongst the RF staff and senior volunteers, such as that reaching around 80% of the targeted ticket sales will more or less assure financial break-even for the festival. This rule of thumb accounting calculation has proved very useful (and been trusted) over many years, and is a particularly important aspect of how accounting is implicated in handling potentially opposing logics and maintaining achievement of multiple objectives. It provides further evidence of how accounting and creativity can coexist through time, without significant detrimental effect on outputs (Adler and Chen, 2011). And the RF case, particularly in regards to artistry, also reinforces the ideas of Maier (2017) that delivering 'on budget' can become an acceptable norm, and even form part of what defines 'success', because it bolsters opportunity for success in terms of charitable donations.

### **Concluding remarks**

The paper provides three important contributions. The first contribution is new knowledge about the purposeful use of accounting in a complex organisational setting to assist in simultaneously maintaining different and potentially opposing goals and logics (Goretzki *et al.*, 2013, Lounsbury, 2008). The

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<sup>34</sup> Exchange rate 27.5.2020, [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-dkk.en.html)

festival case study revealed how accounting could be utilised for short and long-term objectives, but also support and maintain the four central logics of charity, volunteerism, community and artistry.

Second, the research extends a small but growing literature that explores the use of accounting in 'everyday life' situations (Hopwood, 1994). More specifically, the present work has added new insight into the significance of accounting in popular culture (Jeacle, 2012), including a rather nuanced view of how accounting can become implicated in mediating tensions between accounting and creativity (Knardal and Pettersen, 2015).

The third contribution is additional use of the institutional work concept to understand why and how organisational participants mobilise accounting to handle the 'messy reality' (Empson *et al.*, 2013) of complex and multi-logic organisations. The RF case study illuminated how, notwithstanding the analytical usefulness of Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) original taxonomy, different forms of institutional work become intertwined over time, and their mobilisation is often more mutual and fluid than independent and sequential (see also Hayne and Free, 2014).

This research carries the usual caveats associated with undertaking a single case study, though generalisation of the findings was not a specific aim. While a relatively modest effort, it is hoped that the paper encourages further and related investigations in the future.



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