

Innovation and Creativity in Festival Organizations

MIA LARSON

*Centre for Tourism, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg,
Gothenburg, Sweden*

This study contributes to understanding processes of innovation and creativity in festival organizations. The focus is on the internal work of renewing the festival. Three case studies of Swedish festival organizations demonstrate how festival workers attempt to renew the festival product. Processes of renewal include various ways of encouraging new ideas and creative solutions, such as brainstorming, imitation of similar products, and influences from the external environment. Two main processes of renewal were identified: institutionalized and emergent. The study further elaborated on the emergent process of renewal, thus identifying incremental and improvised renewal. Different factors contributing to or hindering innovations were distinguished; the demands of potential visitors, the management's view on renewal, the team's view on renewal, the organizational culture, and change of managers and staff.

KEYWORDS *Festival management, innovation, institutionalized innovation, emergent innovation, improvisation*

INTRODUCTION

Many Swedish festivals are established, having been in existence for 10 to 30 years. They go through what is called a product life cycle—that is, introduction, growth, maturity, and finally decline and stagnation or new growth (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell, & Harris, 2000). Organizing a festival that has already been held several times before involves a set of problems of another

Address correspondence to Mia Larson, PhD, Centre for Tourism, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg, Box 610, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden. E-mail: mia.larson@handels.gu.se

form than those of a festival that is being arranged for the first time. In the beginning it is often happy amateurs and enthusiasts for the festival's theme who play the primary roles. As the festival matures, a professionalization takes place in which specialized persons are engaged for marketing, finance, and composing the program. There occurs an institutionalization of the festival in which the festival's value and existence no longer need to be justified; it is accepted and regarded by the surrounding community as natural and in many cases indispensable (Edström, Beckérus, & Larsson, 2003). Once the festival is seen as an institution, its audience and stakeholders have clear notions about what the festival stands for, and this means that changing its direction becomes more difficult. Stability and continuity are maintained, then, at the cost of a lower inclination to change (Edström et al., 2003).

Consequently, how the recurring festival can be reinvented in order to get visitors to return and to attract new visitors is an important question. Forestalling a decline in attendance requires development and reinvention of the festival product, a process in which new and creative ideas are generated in the festival organization in parallel with adaptations to social trends (Larson, 2003). How this innovation take place is the focus of this article.

The primary questions are the following:

- How does innovation work take place in a festival organization?
- What factors contribute to and counteract innovation?

Material from three case studies of three festivals—the Great Lake Festival (*Storsjöyran*), the Malmö Festival (*Malmöfestivalen*), and the Göteborg Party (*Göteborgskalaset*) will be examined to shed light on these questions. The festivals are all annual city festivals that have existed for at least a decade.

PROJECTS AND INNOVATION

Unique and Repetitive Tasks

Lundin and Söderholm (1995) see unique and repetitive tasks as representing two fundamentally different types of tasks that involve specific conceptions of how and why actions in temporary organizations are performed. Table 1 displays how Lundin and Söderholm characterise unique and repetitive tasks.

When repetitive tasks are being performed the actors know what is to be done, why they are to be done, and who is to do them. The people in the work group have similar experiences, since they have performed similar tasks previously and will be repeating the tasks in the future. For this reason the work group shares a common interpretation of the situation (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Tasks in a recurring project tend to become increasingly

TABLE 1 Unique and Repetitive Tasks (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 441)

	Repetitive tasks	Unique tasks
Goal	Immediate, specified	Visionary, abstract
Experience	Own or codified by professions	Others' or none
Competence	In codes and tacit knowledge	Diverse or unknown, requires flexibility and creativity
Leadership/Owner of temporary org.	Low or middle managers	Top management
Development process	Reversible	Irreversible
Evaluation	Result oriented	Utility oriented
Learning	Refinement	Renewal

“scripted”¹ (or coded) and assume an increasingly automatic course, since situations are interpreted stereotypically by the work group to an increasing degree (cf., Gioia & Poole, 1984). The situation looks different in a recurring project in which the work group (or a single individual) has been replaced, because the task is new (unique) for the new work group (or individual).

When unique tasks are being performed no one has immediate knowledge of what is to be done. Unique tasks, therefore, require entrepreneurship of a more genuine type, because predetermined actions and behaviors are absent to a great extent. What are needed here are visionary, flexible, and creative actions along with a more deliberate search in the collected experiences of other areas (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Unique, or new, tasks are performed preferably without scripts (cf., Gioia & Poole, 1984). It is primarily through unique tasks that more radical innovation occurs, while the innovation that comes about through repetitive tasks consists of refining previously accomplished work processes or products.

The Innovation Paradox in Repetitive Projects

Lundin (1998) maintained that people who work in recurring projects on a routine basis, such as in construction and building, usually have a clear image of how the project can and should be run, based on extensive experience in the specific area. It might be expected that because the project is recurring, previous knowledge and experience will generate knowledge and learning over time. It has been found, however, that perceptions of projects are often stable across certain organizational fields and are simultaneously stable over time (Lundin, 1998; Kadefors, 1995). Lundin said that despite the fact that every new project begins with new stipulations, in which people have the possibility to exploit previous experiences of how a project can be managed, these possibilities for learning often are not utilized, and the method of working is largely repeated from project to project—even mistakes tend to be repeated (cf., Winch, 2000).

The innovation paradox (see e.g., Ekstedt, Lundin, & Wirdenius, 1992; Lundin, 1998; Ekstedt, Lundin, Söderholm, & Wirdenius, 1999) thus means that despite the fact that recurring projects would seem to have the potential for developing and reinventing work processes and by this means generating innovation of the product, this does not happen. Instead, the work becomes institutionalized (Kadefors, 1995) and people largely keep to the method that worked previously. Thus, in temporary organizations built up around a repetitive task, implementation without rethinking and readjustment is often inherent in the work culture: disruptions are simply not tolerated in the work group for economic reasons. The “stick to the plans” imperative becomes institutionalized in such settings. (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 448).

The innovation paradox can be observed in various industries where projects are perceived as some form of repetition (Lundin, 1998), such as in the events industry. If the project is conceived of as repetition, the way the project is run and what the project accomplishes will tend to have the character of repetition. Innovation, thus, has to do in large part with individuals’ conceptions, ideas, and intentions (Ekstedt et al., 1992). According to the Eksteat et al. (1992), learning processes on the group level in recurring projects do not lead to innovation and development because the work processes tend to be institutionalized.

The theoretical point of departure in this section has dealt with unique and repetitive tasks. It is chiefly through unique tasks that innovation originates. This occurs through visionary, flexible and creative actions. Repetitive tasks instead result, in the best case, in the refinement of established products through institutionalized work processes. Studies have shown that recurring projects (where chiefly repetitive tasks are performed) often have difficulty transferring learning from project to project, and thus developing work processes that foster innovation. This is due to the work group’s perceiving the project as a repetition of tasks performed previously. For this reason, new methods of working are not tested in the form, for instance, of creative improvisation.

The studied festivals presented in this article are recurring projects for their operationally responsible organizations. The innovation paradox, so-called, that has been previously discussed can be expected to be highly relevant. In the summer of 2004, the 11th Göteborg Party was held and the Malmö Festival celebrated its 20-year jubilee. The first Great Lake Festival was launched in 1983. The operational work in the Great Lake Festival is led and performed largely by the same people every year. Six of the seven driving spirits who started the festival in 1983 are still involved. People in both the Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party have remained for quite a few years; on the other hand, a number of changes of directors have taken place. How the work of reinventing the festivals is done, and how the institutionalization process that may lead to the innovation paradox can be understood in the festivals, is discussed next.

THE CASE STUDIES

The Great Lake Festival

The Great Lake Festival is arranged by the Great Lake Partnership Company, which in turn is owned by the management company Dizzy Production AB. The company is a functions and production company whose activity is based mainly on producing the festival, but smaller events are produced as well at other times of year. Five people are employed full-time, while most people are employed on a project basis for about 2 to 4 months. The festival turned over 16 million Swedish kronor in 2002, of which some 75% came from ticket revenues and 25% from vendors and sponsors.

The Great Lake Festival is basically a music festival with a regional identity. In its first years, the performers were principally local and regional talents. Later on, as the festival grew larger, the organizers raised the level of ambition and increasingly contracted nationally and internationally known performers. From the festival's beginnings, the owners have had a high level of ambition that involves an endeavor to become northern Europe's best and most interesting folk festival. Every year about 50 artists perform on some nine stages. The festival evenings with performer programs go on from Thursday to Saturday and at that time admission is charged to the festival grounds. But the festival sets its mark on Östersund for 10 days, when the "restaurant row" is open and activities of all kinds are arranged. The number of paid visits to the festival has stood at about 50,000 to 59,000 since 1998. The festival week as a whole draws about 300,000 visits.

Despite the fact that many artists have performed at the Great Lake Festival several times, there is an ambition to reinvent the repertoire from year to year. The festival offers a wide variety of performers, everything from local talents to international superstars, from punk to pop ballads. There are a great many other activities as well, such as restaurants, a funfair, theatre, cultural installations, and sport competitions.

The Malmö Festival

The Malmö Festival is a nonprofit organization within the City of Malmö. The festival is organized by the Events Division, which is part of the City Environment Department of the Office of Streets. Thirteen people work with the festival. They work with other events during the year as well. The festival turned over about 18 million Swedish kronor in 2004. About 50% of festival costs are financed by the City of Malmö, while about 30% is obtained through sponsorships. The City of Malmö decides from year to year on the size of the budget the festival will have at its disposal.

The Malmö Festival began in 1984 and since then has been held in central Malmö in August every year. The festival is aimed chiefly at Malmö residents. It is meant to be accessible to everyone by being free, by reflecting

multicultural Malmö, and by offering something for all ages and tastes. The key terms for the festival are *encounters*, *diversity*, and *experiences*. The festival's current director says that the objective is not to be the best or biggest festival in the world, but to be a festival for everyone in Malmö that can be produced for a reasonable sum of money.

The festival draws about 1.4 million visits in the course of 8 days. Measurements commissioned by the Malmö Festival show that about 75% of Malmö's residents attend the festival and 95% of them want to return the following year (www.malmofestivalen.se). In all, some 6,000 people take part in working with the festival. Its local support is strongly rooted and its principal contributions come from businesses and voluntary associations.

Music is one of the foremost reasons many people visit the Malmö Festival. From some 15 stages, more than 900 hours of free entertainment is offered. The stage programs include everything from opera to hip-hop and hard rock. In addition, cultural expressions, both narrow and broad, are everywhere at the festival in film, music, theatre, performance, poetry, literature, and much else. The Malmö Festival also offers a large selection of food from different parts of the world.

Staff members experience the festival's quality as becoming increasingly better in terms of both program and production. This is a result of the festival's having been allocated more resources in recent years. All of those interviewed believed that the festival would survive for many years to come.

The Göteborg Party

The Göteborg Party is a project conducted in Göteborg & Co., which in turn is commissioned by the Municipality of Göteborg. The budget work begins in January, and each year a decision has been taken by the municipality to pay the project grant. The Göteborg Party has two people employed full-time and about nine project staff members for approximately 6 months. The festival turns over about 20 million Swedish kronor, of which the municipality contributes half. The remaining portion is paid through rentals of vending sites (about 5 million) and through sponsors (about 5 million).

The festival's breakthrough came in connection with the 1995 Athletics World Championship, when it dominated the entire centre of Göteborg. Since then the festival has worked primarily with the same form. The basic idea is to create a party for Göteborg's residents and their guests. In the course of 9 days the Göteborg Party has about 1.5–1.9 million visits, which corresponds to about 500,000 visitors.

The festival goes on at 11 different sites with different emphases—everything from dance-band music to children's parties and cultural events. *Kungstorget* (King's Square) is the meeting place for adults, where there are a great many different restaurants and food shops as well as a stage with

a comprehensive program. An abundance of activities is to be had at the festival, such as golf, Sweden's sauna championship match, a photography competition, a mini-car rally, a vintage auto exhibition, and demonstrations by cooks. Liseberg Amusement Park stays open for festival visitors and offers popular performers. The opening fireworks with music are a tradition.

The festival stirs feelings in Göteborg and has both opponents and admirers. Criticism of the lively street life in the evenings grew in the late 1990s, and for that reason there was an overhaul in 1999, with a new project director and a decision to concentrate more on activities for young people. Since 2000, the festival has developed to focus more on culture.

METHODOLOGY

The study was performed as a qualitative case study. The focus of this research method is on understanding the dynamics of a specific phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989). Gummesson (1988) differentiated between two types of case studies: drawing general conclusions from a limited number of cases or drawing specific conclusions from a single case. Merriam (1994) posited that sometimes it is only by considering a single event or a single case that we can gain a complete picture of the interaction among different factors or actors in a given situation. In this study, three cases were used to arrive at specific conclusions about how festival innovation is carried out.

Case studies are particularly suited to practical, workaday problems such as questions, situations, or difficulties that arise in connection with reinvention. Attention is directed at how groups of people manage problems of various types and make it possible to shed light on the problems from an overall perspective. One of the end products in a case study is description, meaning that the description of the studied phenomenon is dense and comprehensive (Merriam, 1994). The result is also to bring previously unknown (or unconscious) conditions and variables into focus, which may lead to a new perspective on that which is studied. In turn, this leads to the formulation of new concepts that clarify these conditions.

The case descriptions consist of descriptions of observations; direct quotations of various individuals on their experiences, attitudes, opinions, and thoughts; excerpts from the organizations' documentation; and second-hand information about the event, such as newspaper articles. These descriptions, quotations, and excerpts constitute raw data. The information plumbs the depths and yields detailed pictures.

The majority of the Great Lake Festival case study was carried out between March and July 1998, and thus primarily sheds light on the festival project that resulted in the Great Lake Festival held July 2–5, 1998. The historical retrospectives depicted stem from the informants' stories about the

evolution of the festival as they interpreted it in 1998. Further observations were performed during the 1999 festival due to the contacts established with people in the Great Lake Festival office when a study of festival attendees was performed (see Faulkner, Fredline, Larson, & Tomljenovic, 1999; Tomljenovic, Larson, & Faulkner, 2001).

The Great Lake Festival office had five members of staff in January 1998, four of them full-time. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with these individuals. Also interviewed were a member of the board who had been involved in the Great Lake Festival since its inception and three individuals who worked with ticket management, press relations, and advertising. Additional interviews were held with the managing director in 1998 and 1999. In order to update the material, yet another interview was held with the managing director (the same person as in the previous interviews) in December 2004. Documentation for the festival was also collected and participatory observations were made at meetings and in the course of day-to-day work on about 10 occasions. There were also more informal talks with members of the Great Lake Festival staff.

Six interviews of four different individuals in the core work group were held at the Malmö Festival (including two with the managing director) in 2003 and 2004. One of the interviews was conducted by students (Tamara Bubalo and Anna Nilsson) at the Graduate Business School of the Göteborg University School of Business, Economics and Law. Four interviews were held at the Göteborg Party between 2003 and 2004, with the former festival director, the current festival director and two members of staff. One staff member was interviewed by students (Roosa Anttonen, Emmi Sarrivara, and Päivi Klemm).

The interviews lasted between 60 and 150 minutes. They were recorded on tape and transcribed. Documentation from newspapers and the Internet was collected during the period the case studies were performed.

The case studies of the Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party were less extensive than the study of the Great Lake Festival. Fewer people were interviewed, which may have made the results less representative of the respective festival organizations than the results of the Great Lake Festival study. Here, the results are more oriented towards the views of festival directors on festival reinvention, as their interviews make up the bulk of the empirical material.

INNOVATION PROCESSES IN THE FESTIVAL ORGANIZATIONS

Innovation in Work Processes

The work group in the Great Lake Festival took a positive approach to changing and innovating the operational work. In connection with marketing the festival, for instance, a cooperative project with a festival in Norway

was established with the aim of sharing information about marketing channels, such as press cultivation and ticket sales. Another clear instance of innovation in marketing was a novel idea for attracting journalists to the festival.

Comprehensive strategies in the festivals have changed as well. The Great Lake Festival previously had an ideology that involved the festival's not representing commercial interests. Therefore they had sponsors to the least possible degree. This ideology changed in about 1997, and they established relationships with some sponsors, such as Spendrups (a brewery). The Malmö Festival, too, has invested more in working with sponsors in recent years and is concentrating on bringing more money in via sponsors in the future. They have engaged an agent to help them in this work.

Balance Between Unique and Repetitive Tasks

Many of the people who work in the festival organizations have worked together for many years. The work with the festival changes over time, partly because any given person gradually gains more experience of the work, but also because the festival organization and its partners accumulate more knowledge and experience over the years. Similar problems arise from year to year, which involves successive learning. Many tasks eventually become repetitive and are consequently managed with increasingly strong scripts. This incremental refinement of work processes also leads to refinement of the various elements of the festival product.

In terms of organization I go a lot by the year before. There's a lot of routine there, of course. As long as it's working well and you see that nothing's about to get out of hand so you'll have to change things. (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

When the work with the basic components of the festival, such as ticket management and toilets, is routinized, operational efficiency is generated in the work. Routinization involves the work's being institutionalized. But at the same time there was an ambition in the Great Lake Festival to reinvent the festival every year, which broke up the routine repetitive tasks to some extent.

We work hard at finding innovation. It's not easy, it's extremely hard. Partly, the performers are switched each year. But the thing we've got to be able to say to ourselves every year is that we've found something new, that we have reinvented ourselves. Then the infrastructure itself, that's the way it is, we've got the stage in the square, and it's standing there and the toilets are standing there, that's the same, of course. It's

what's actually on offer that has to be reinvented. (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

Because the staff were working consciously with developing the festival, it was not possible to routinize the work entirely. They let go of previous methods of working and embarked on new areas of which they had no experience. Consequently, some of the repetitive tasks were abandoned in favor of unique tasks. A conscious effort to reinvent the various subproducts of the festival thus meant that the work processes were being reinvented at the same time.

One instance of such reinvention is the entry of the President of Jämtland into Stortorget (the main square) to give his speech. This happens every year in a different way—some of the more spectacular entrances have been on an elephant and in a zeppelin. The project work group is thus forced to be very creative at finding new solutions every year. The festival-goers have high expectations of a spectacular entrance, and when this succeeds the festival has the chance not only to satisfy its public but also to receive a lot of media attention.

With every year, however, the staff experienced that it was becoming more difficult to find unique solutions and develop novel ideas. Back in 1998 the managing director expressed the difficulty with reinvention.

We improvised more before. A few years ago there were more big revolutionary decisions that we took under tight time constraints. Now these decisions are on a lower level and deal with less important things. The risk of course is that we get stuck in the same rut. (Managing director, Great Lake Festival)

In 2003 and 2004, the Great Lake Festival work group did not work much with innovation because they had so many other tasks over and above the festival.

During the past 2 years we have had a snag in that we've had a lot of external commissions. In that case, it's easy to do what we did last year. We've gone on like that for a couple of years. On the other hand, maybe it's not all bad if it lies fallow, since later, when you want to begin, it's really fun. But you can't have such stagnation that the market notices it. (Managing director, Great Lake Festival)

Organizational Culture

Many of the people who were working in the Great Lake Festival in 1998 had taken part previously. The driving spirits who started the festival were still

involved with it in some way, although (except for the managing director) they only had positions on the board of directors without attendant operational duties. The work group was permeated by a shared identity and a shared commitment that were based on a genuine interest in music and a feeling for the region of the country where the festival is held. These people's expectations about the work were therefore relatively similar and most had a good general sense of each other's tasks.

The individuals had thus been working together for a relatively long time and had evolved shared norms for the project work (cf., Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). An organizational culture had been developed that provided conditions for collective action. Organizational culture is an established concept in business economics and management, but it is viewed in various ways depending on whether it is seen as a metaphor or an objective phenomenon. Schein (1985), who was one of the first to use the concept, defined it as:

A pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

The shared expectations and experiences in the festival organizations created the basis for shared commitment (cf., Lundin & Söderholm, 1995; Wikström, 2000). At the same time, there was room in the work group to express differing views. These differing views gave rise to a dynamic in the work group with a great deal of discussion, which in turn fostered fresh ideas.

The members of the staff have more or less the same outlook on how the work should be carried out. . . . But we don't have it exactly, and that's a huge advantage. That's what the danger is, if everyone has exactly the same outlook and the same intentions. If so, then there's often going to be this taboo pronouncement, "We'll do it like last year." So that's not good, of course. No, but most often we'll sit and discuss things, sometimes quite loudly. Nobody needs to feel ashamed of having an opinion and nobody thinks "I'm scared to say things". (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

The work group had continual meetings in which a great deal of time was taken to develop and reinvent the festival by together trying to generate innovations. This took place through shared brainstorming.

It can take lots of meetings without us coming upon anything. We just sit and brainstorm, but in the end maybe you produce one thing. (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

Staff members in the Malmö Festival's work group also experience there being an open atmosphere for ideas, with a lot of new thinking taking place. The director works on getting the staff to think in new pathways.

You question. And you come out with other suggestions. You turn questions over. Shall we do what we did last year? Why, you ask. I see it as no more complicated than that. (Managing director, Malmö Festival)

Changes in the Work Group

CHANGE OF DIRECTOR

The managing director of the Great Lake Festival has worked with the festival since its start, one of seven friends who got the festival going. In 1997 he took over the post of director from one of these friends. There have not been many changes of director in the Great Lake Festival during the organization's history.

The Malmö Festival, on the other hand, has had many directors in recent years. The present director came in as the third director in 2003 alone. The directorship situation generated uncertainty in the organization in regard to the direction it was working towards. Staff experienced 2004 as an off year, where the new managing director was feeling out how he wanted to develop the festival. He has already had an effect on the festival, however, through a strong focus on music. The Malmö Festival's goals are experienced as changing with its director.

Kina was more of a marketing person and Per is more of a music person. She didn't have that much experience working with performers, so Per is putting a lot of time and energy into us bringing performers in properly. While Kina worked more towards sponsors, more externally directed. (Staff member, Malmö Festival)

The director of the Malmö Festival has also implemented organizational changes. One staff member pointed to five areas that have been changed in terms of organization: more structured organization, clearer division of labor, more documentation and formality, shorter meetings, and more openness. He was also perceived as bringing in more professionalization of the festival work, such as in the area of security.

The Göteborg Party's most recent director took charge in April 2004. She had been working as the festival's program coordinator for the previous

3 years. Unlike the director before her, she had a background in culture and music.

CHANGE OF STAFF MEMBERS

When new individuals come into the work group, the rules of the game change as new expectations and experiences enter. The expectations and ability of individuals are related to their previous knowledge and experience (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Thus, when new people enter a work group, new solutions to problems often appear, which in turn may yield innovation. An instance of one such piece of business in the Great Lake Festival had to do with representatives from the festival going round every year knocking on the doors of the people who lived near the festival grounds to resolve any problems the festival might cause its neighbors. Previously, it had been the festival's owners who did this. The younger co-workers took over the task.

So now they're resolving the problems in their way. And this is our way of seeing to it that rejuvenation of the festival happens. (Owner, Great Lake Festival)

The core work group of the Great Lake Festival has been composed in recent years of five people. Three of them have been in this work group for many years, while the other two have worked with the festival previously, though less intensively. The Göteborg Party employs two people full-time to work with the festival. For about half a year an additional nine people are employed on a project basis. The Malmö Festival has a similar structure, which consists of a small work group employed full-time. A number of project staff members and consultants are engaged. The staff turnover in the festival work groups is low. The majority of people stay for many years. Because the work is seasonal, however, a small number of project workers do change.

The owners of the Great Lake Festival have previously discussed the importance of letting younger people take part in the more comprehensive strategy discussions. Of the festival's visitors, 16% were younger than 31 (Tomljenovic, Larson, & Faulkner, 2001). It was particularly important, therefore, to be able to read the preferences of this group.

ANALYSIS

Proactive and Reactive Festival Innovation

The challenge for all three of the studied festivals has to do with designing the festival product to suit a broad target group. The Malmö Festival and the

Göteborg Party in particular have this goal, which can be explained by the fact that they are financed by municipal funds which all taxpayers ultimately pay. A condition for achieving the festivals' goal of reaching everyone is to reinvent the festival.

Since all of the festivals are established and have existed for a long time, there is already a well-established program structure with places for activities. Many new ideas have already been tested and implemented or discarded. For this reason, there are few radical changes of, but more incremental adjustments to, the festival. Even innovation in work processes occurs relatively slowly and in small increments. Innovation work in the Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party appears to occur relatively reactively, that is, as a response to a reaction or event coming from outside, such as adapting the program in response to a negative evaluation in a market research study or developing the security work in response to accidents at other festivals. This can be seen as a way to handle changeable and complex surroundings, that is, reducing contextual uncertainty (Christensen & Kreiner, 1997). Innovation work thus has to do with the ability to perceive tendencies in the market that has a demand for the event product, and adapting the product accordingly.

The Great Lake Festival instead has a more proactive approach to innovation in which the work of reinvention is constantly present in the work of the festival. Their ambition is to "be ahead of the market." Instead of merely adapting the event to its environment, the Great Lake Festival has the goal of reconstructing the market by achieving creative, innovative products. Thus, contextual uncertainty can be reduced both through feeling and responding to the demands of the environment and through generating an innovative and creative event product whose components and constellation are innovative, in this way giving rise to changes in the surrounding world.

Figure 1 shows how (a) individuals in the event organization perceive market trends, that is, changes in market demand, and design the festival accordingly. At the same time, the people in the event organization generate a market through creative innovation work; that is, they create experiences

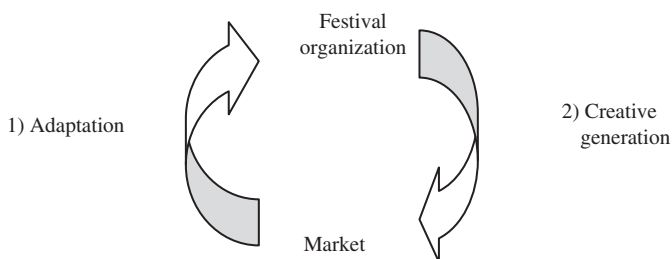


FIGURE 1 Proactive and reactive innovation work in festivals.

Adapted from Larson (2003).

for visitors and cooperating partners that they have previously been unable to imagine and have therefore not demanded.

It is important, however, to discuss whether it is relevant for all festivals to work with reinventing their product. Many festivals live on traditions that the festival-goers expect to be repeated year after year, like the October Festival. None of the studied festivals has had a permanent reduction in number of visitors, despite the fact that some years the festivals have been largely the same as they were in previous years. The Great Lake Festival has more to lose in the short term, however, if a misjudgement of the market causes them not to reinvent themselves, since they are dependent on ticket revenues. The Göteborg Party and the Malmö Festival do not encounter this immediate effect, since both are financed by municipal funds. In the long term, however, the festivals lose their legitimacy if fewer visitors come.

In contrast to innovation in the festival product, innovation in work processes can be seen as necessary for improving or maintaining the organization's internal efficacy. Increased specialization and professionalization can be discerned in all of the studied festivals.

Planned and Emergent Innovation Work

INSTITUTIONALIZED INNOVATION PROCESSES

The innovation work of the festivals is largely intentional, that is, consciously planned. The staff's conceptions of the project work, above all in the Great Lake Festival, are composed of a strong awareness of trying constantly to reinvent the product. The work is formulated in the work group's shared development of novel ideas around the festival, which occurs largely in the form of brainstorming at formal and informal meetings. The new ideas are discussed in the work group and a concrete but relatively unspecified and informal plan of action is developed for the new tasks. After this it is up to the separate individuals (and in the final stage—the small work groups) to implement the tasks.

Some of the tasks are implemented with little change in work process relative to previous years. In that case, innovation in the festival product occurs as a result of repetitive tasks, that is, a form of institutionalized innovation. The work of engaging performers and renting vending sites every year can be seen as a form of planned and institutionalized innovation that plays out in a similar way from year to year. This is due to the high degree of professionalism in the work group in connection with performing these tasks, where many years of experience in the industry helps reduce operational and contextual uncertainty, for example the uncertainty for the individuals or work group in operationally implementing the project task, and the inherent uncertainty of the environment (Christensen & Kreiner, 1997). The work of reinventing the performer line-up and vending

sites may thus be seen as a repetitive task performed in an institutionalized process.

EMERGENT INNOVATION PROCESSES

Other tasks in the innovation work are carried out to a greater degree through an emergent process. Innovation occurs in situations when the work group (or the individual) reacts to changed circumstances, such as a perceived change in audience demand or an immediate potential problem, through ad hoc decisions. The emergent innovation work is done not only reactively but also proactively, when people try to implement novel ideas with which they lack previous experience. Solutions to problems emerge here as a result of the work group (or the individual) learning more about the task.

The staffs of the festivals often proceed from a roughly defined conception of the tasks to be performed. Implementation goes through a process in which—as people learn new things, run into unexpected barriers or get new ideas about how the task should be performed—the original idea is reformulated and refined. Design and implementation of the tasks thus overlap. The following quotation illustrates the emergent work:

Then the entire time, of course, a certain degree of planning comes along with it. It goes all the way from when you start thinking about the Great Lake Festival all the way until you're done. Even on the final days you're making preparations for certain things. And when changes come, it can be, well, wham. There's a basic plan of course, and then there are changes in planning and then there's a sort of precision planning and then there's the doing of it. (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

The emergent work thus involves realizing the novel ideas that emerge in the work group. The tasks can be characterized as genuinely unique in the cases where people do not have experience of similar tasks. Tasks that have not been performed before include a degree of uncertainty, which means that the implementation of some of them does not succeed. Sometimes the new task is postponed until a future festival.

For instance, the water display in Magistrate's Park which we really want to do and the idea exists, all the contacts exist, but there's no money for it. And then we had the Water Works, which was prepared to go in and pay for it, and then later they backed out, and so then we had to shut the whole thing down again, it was fairly late in the spring. (Staff member, Malmö Festival)

The emergent work emphasizes learning in situations with uncertainty or complexity. The learning in one project (one year's festival) is transferred to later projects (festivals in subsequent years).

I experience that I'm learning new things all the time, how this works. So that there are lots of question marks and you're thinking "How's this one, and this one?" But every day when you run into a problem you're forced to find a solution and then you're learning something new. I think it's all the time. (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

The previous discussion has shown that different tasks in the innovation work of the festivals have different elements of emergent design. The project design has varying degrees of mix between planned action and instinctive reaction (cf., Rehn & Wikström, 1999). Some of the innovation work is relatively planned, but it is often emergent to a high degree. The incremental and the improvised are different forms of emergent design.

INCREMENTAL PROCESSES AND IMPROVISATION

Important features of the emergent innovation work are that it is performed under time pressure and in a turbulent environment. In this context, changes are often made in small steps that respond to emerging possibilities (Fulop & Linstead, 1999). These processes are fragmented, development-oriented, and largely intuitive (Quinn, 1978). Lindblom (1959) speaks of incremental processes as "muddling through" despite the lack of formal organization. Seen from a long-term perspective, the innovation work in the festivals can be understood as largely incremental with elements of occasional major leaps (in which radical reinvention occurs, such as the Great Lake Festival's ideological shift in the 1990s which involved initiating cooperation with sponsors, or the Göteborg Party's overhaul of the festival in 1999 when greater concentration on young people came about). Incremental processes, however, provide room for innovation in the form of refinement above all (Quinn, 1985). More radical reinvention does not occur in these processes. Moreover, changes tend to take place over time without predetermined time frames.

But from a more short-term perspective, it is more fruitful to talk about improvisation than incremental change as a means of understanding innovation work in festival organizations. This is due to the fact that the time factor is more focused in connection with improvisation. The time that the festivals had at their disposal was often perceived as very limited. The work became progressively more intense over the course of the project (cf., Packendorff, 1993). When there is next to no time for consideration, reflection and planning, the people improvise.

Organizational improvisation leads one to think about the metaphor of jazz (see e.g., *Organization Science*, 1998; Rehn & Wikström, 1999; Hatch, 1999). In jazz performances, order and control are suddenly broken and a new order created (Weick, 1998). The musicians are working with creative processes at the same time that a steady tempo is maintained. The reaction to different actions must be immediate, and the consequences are irrevocable. Improvisation handles the unforeseen and embraces action in the present

without predetermined stipulations. Accordingly, improvisation is without planning—something is created in the heat of the moment (Weick, 1998). However, the practitioners (the musicians) must learn to conjure up short- and medium-term goals at the same time the music is being played (Berliner, 1994).

Improvisation thus brings about an outcome that is unique to each creation (such as a piece of music or a festival), because processes in the improvisation give rise to new creative ideas that transform previous knowledge, creating new from the old. Weick (1998) shows clearly that spontaneity and intuition are important dimensions of improvisation. On the other hand, the improvisers are relying on their knowledge, previous experience and discipline (Berliner, 1994), something that distinguishes good improvisation from bad. Thus, good improvisation is produced by people with previous experience and with knowledge on the subject in question (cf., Moorman & Miner, 1998; Crossan, White, Lane, & Klus, 1996).

Brown and Eisenhardt (1995) maintained that product work groups with product-design processes that are more experimental and improvisational develop products more rapidly. Improvisation is thus a means to manage limited time, but also a means to manage a turbulent environment.

You have to zig-zag your way forward, between A and B, but in this, you've got room to improvise. (Staff member, Great Lake Festival)

Like jazz improvisation, innovation work takes place with narrow time frames and contextual uncertainty. The innovation and reinvention arise not just as a reaction to a change in the surrounding world but are also consciously evoked, for instance through planned brainstorming. To generate innovation, people try to think in new pathways and break up those scripts that the individuals have created. This can happen through improvisation by creative individuals with good experience and knowledge of the task.

Improvisation in connection with totally unknown situations (cf., Weick, 1993) or improvisation that is performed by inexperienced individuals, however, can be regarded as risky. Since there is nothing to relate the performance of the actions to, it is more likely that the improvisation will fail. Experiences of failure, on the other hand, are used to learn for later festivals. Activities that cannot be carried out, or fail in some other way, are sometimes adjusted and tried again at the next festival.

Improvisation can be seen as a means to manage contextual uncertainty and limited time, but also as a work form that consciously generates innovation. A work environment like the one in the Great Lake Festival's work group, which encourages and allows creative, improvisational work processes, can lead to generating creative products. All improvisation needs a positive atmosphere and an organizational culture that does not punish mistakes or criticize unnecessarily (Crossan et al., 1996). The work group in

the Great Lake Festival is prepared in the highest degree to work consciously with innovation and not stagnate. The staff have a great deal of scope for action, even at a late stage, when it comes to innovating, refining or hitting upon and carrying out completely new activities.

The emergent innovation work on the festivals can thus be characterized as more or less improvised. Through improvisation the work group manages time pressure and a turbulent environment in which unforeseen events occur. The improvised processes also give individuals and work groups scope to unleash their creativity and test novel ideas and methods of working, which may lead in the long run to reinvention of the festival.

Factors that Foster and Counteract Innovation

The previous discussion described how creative processes come about in the studied festivals. Next are various factors that could be seen in the study to foster or counteract innovation.

An exacting market that demands innovation causes the festival to have greater incentive to reinvent itself. The festivals conduct market research studies in which they evaluate how their audience experiences the festival, which provides information for development.

The commissioning agent's approach to innovation has an effect on innovation. To be able to implement major changes, the work groups in the Göteborg Party are dependent on decisions by Göteborg & Co.'s board of directors. This is sometimes experienced as taking a long time. The decision-making paths for the Great Lake Festival, which is a private company, are not as long.

The festival workers' approach to innovation has an effect on what form of innovation occurs. The Great Lake Festival's work group saw reinvention as a natural part of its work and as an important competitive strategy. The Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party also saw the importance of reinventing themselves, but emphasized that it was more a matter of cautious innovation in which tradition was maintained.

An organizational culture that fosters innovation could be seen in the Great Lake Festival. The managing director encouraged novel ideas, and in the entire evaluation process a place was provided for brainstorming and discussing new suggestions. This could be seen in the Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party as well, though not to the same extent. The new director of the Malmö Festival, however, expressed the intention to change the attitude towards innovation by getting the staff to reflect more.

Recurring festivals are developed to survive in the long term. Product development has a tendency to become increasingly organized, since the people and organizations involved tend to adopt an increasingly shared perspective through their relatively long-term relationships. When the relationships last too long, however, they may bring about stagnation and a

lack of flexibility and innovation (Nooteboom, 2001). Accordingly, balancing long-term stability with changes that lead to reinvention is a challenge for the festival organization. Replacing the festival director and people in the work group may be changes of this kind.

Changing the director can constitute a step in a new direction for the festival, as the examples of the Malmö Festival and also to some degree the Göteborg Party show. Every person brings their own experiences, interests, and competencies. In the case of the Malmö Festival, the new director brought a greater focus on the festival's musical selection, while the Göteborg Party's new director contributed a focus on culture.

Innovation can also happen through changes in staff. New staff members can contribute new ideas and knowledge as well as directors can. At one juncture, the owners of the Great Lake Festival had even thought about selling the festival to younger talents. Staff turnover in the inner work group has been low in all of the studied festivals. On the other hand, new people come in as project staff members or consultants.

CONCLUSIONS

Projects, as a work form, involve some form of innovation. The studied recurring festivals constitute examples of projects in which innovation occurs. In the Great Lake Festival innovation formed a natural part of the work in 1998. Every year the work group of the Great Lake Festival endeavored to find new ways to develop and reinvent the festival, such as new activities and new ways to decorate the festival grounds. Creativity and improvisation were important processes in the project work for the purpose of achieving innovation. A festival's innovative powers may change over time, however, due to a change in internal or external circumstances (cf., Salavou, 2004). A development of this kind could be seen in the Great Lake Festival in 2003 and 2004, when some degree of stagnation occurred. The other two studied festivals, the Göteborg Party and the Malmö Festival, saw reinvention as less important. Innovation work here has more to do with fine-tuning and slow development with preservation of traditions.

Innovation work can be described like the music-making in a jazz group. Through the fact that most of the people in the festivals' work groups had been working with their particular festival for many years, there was a great deal of experience and knowledge of the work, just as jazz musicians have many years' knowledge of music. Part of the innovation work is institutionalized and is performed in a similar way from year to year, and consequently is planned. Even as a jazz tune has a basic beat that is repeated, a festival consists of components that are refined and repeated every year. As in a jazz group, everyone knows what is to be done, and this routine work is done individually and at a steady tempo. At the same time, a

creative process breaks the routine, creating interesting and unusual components. In order to manage uncertainty, such as turbulence in the environment and time pressure, improvisation occurs. Improvisation therefore may occur proactively, for the purpose of developing new ideas. The project work can thus be seen like jamming in a jazz group; that is, a fundamental “bass beat” is blended with each member’s scope to improvise and “do their thing.” At the same time, openness exists for external actors, or new group members, to enter in and contribute for a longer or shorter period of time. In this way the festival is reinvented.

Innovation work in festivals can be characterized as ad hoc, emergent, and more or less improvised, something that facilitates and fosters innovation. This type of organizing, according to Dimmock and Tyce (2001), is assigned to the initial phases of a festival’s evolution into a professional organization (cf., Getz & Frisby, 1988; Frisby & Getz, 1989). The study suggests that this type of organizing constitutes important characteristic features in the professional organizing of a festival in all its phases.

According to previous research on repetitive projects, it appears to be simpler to do the same thing from project to project instead of rethinking matters and doing new things (cf., the discussion on the innovation paradox). March (1995) discussed a similar idea in the concept of the “success trap.” March said that when an organization succeeds, it repeats the actions that were experienced as having brought about the success whereas other good ideas or technologies are not tried. The success trap leads to the organization’s not experimenting enough.

This can lead to internal efficiency in the work (cf., Kadefors, 1995), but there is also a risk that the routine work stifles the creativity and the new thinking (cf., Westley & Mintzberg, 1989) required to reinvent the festival product for the purpose of increasing the festival’s attractiveness over time. The study of the festivals describes innovation in recurring projects. Tasks in the recurring projects have features both of standardization and of a unique and innovative character. It is possible to discern adaptation to the surroundings in the form both of the exploitation of existing ideas and knowledge through refinement and routinization (especially in the Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party) and of the experimentation with novel ideas for the purpose of finding alternatives to the old ones (especially in the Great Lake Festival; see March, 1995, discussion of exploitation and exploration). Actions and behaviors are not as highly institutionalized as studies of building projects, for instance, have shown. Learning is transferred from project to project and people work more or less actively with innovation. The results of this study thus show that the innovation paradox does not square fully with this type of recurring project. The Malmö Festival and the Göteborg Party appear closest to being able to be described with the help of the innovation paradox, since staff members were more skeptical towards innovation. In recurring projects like festivals, then, innovation occurs in the

form of creative, emergent and improvised processes, which in turn bring about reinvention of the festival product.

The innovation work of the festivals can be seen as an important strategic issue since they can be assumed to have a product life cycle, which means that they can be expected to be less popular in the future. Accordingly, staying up-to-date with market development and constantly innovating are an important survival strategy. Maintaining the entrepreneurial spirit (cf., Hjorth & Johannisson, 1997) expressed as creativity, spontaneity and commitment, which often characterize the work in a project that is being performed for the first time (or one of the first times), while the work group also maintains a strong conception of the importance of innovation, creates the conditions to counteract institutionalization processes and thus stagnation of the festival. Through improvised innovation processes people also have the possibility to respond to market changes that occur within a very narrow time frame. The project work group in the Great Lake Festival tries to avoid getting caught in situations that are too stereotypical by finding new roads to the reinvention of product and process. Traditional means of planning and evaluating project work are not aimed at. As a consequence, emphasis is not on organization and control; instead, creativity, spontaneity, and action through intuition are encouraged, that is, action-oriented improvisation that focuses on new possibilities, ideas, and innovations.

NOTE

1. A script is a scheme that is held in memory and describes events or behaviors (or sequences of events or behaviors) appropriate to a particular context (Gioia & Poole, 1984).

REFERENCES

- Allen, J., O'Toole, W., McDonnell, I., & Harris, R. (2002). *Festival and special event management* (2nd. ed.). Milton, Australia: John Wiley & Sons Australia.
- Berliner, P. F. (1994). *Thinking in jazz: The infinite art of improvisation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, S. L., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (1995). Product development: Past research, present findings, and future directions. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 343–378.
- Christensen, S., & Kreiner, K. (1997). *Projektledning—att leda och lära i en ofullkomlig värld* [Project management—to lead and learn in an imperfect world]. Lund, Sweden: Academia Acta.
- Crossan, M. M., White, R. E., Lane, H. W., & Klus, L. (1996, Spring). The improvising organization: Where planning meets opportunity. *Organizational Dynamics*, 20–35.

- Dimmock, K., & Tiyce, M. (2001). Festivals and events: Celebrating special interest tourism. In N. Douglas & R. Derret (Eds.), *Special interest tourism: Context and cases* (pp. 355–383). Brisbane, Australia: John Wiley & Sons Australia.
- Edström, A., Beckérus, Å., & Larsson, B.-E. (2003). *Evenemangsföretagande* [Managing events]. Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550.
- Ekstedt, E., Lundin, R. A., Söderholm, A., & Wirdenius, H. (1999). *Neo-industrial organising, renewal by action and knowledge formation in a project-intensive economy*. London, England: Routledge.
- Ekstedt, E., Lundin, R. A., & Wirdenius, H. (1992). Conceptions and renewal in Swedish construction companies. *European Management Journal*, 10, 202–209.
- Faulkner, B., Fredline, E., Larson, M., & Tomljenovic, R. (1999) A marketing analysis of Sweden's Storsjöyrän Festival. *Tourism Analysis*, 4, 157–171.
- Frisby, W., & Getz, D. (1989, Summer). Festival management: A case study perspective. *Journal of Travel Research*, 7–11.
- Fulop, L., & Linstead, S. (1999). *Management: A critical text*. London, England: MacMillan Press.
- Getz, D., & Frisby, W. (1988, Summer). Evaluating management effectiveness in community-run festivals. *Journal of Travel Research*, 22–27.
- Gioia, D. A., & Poole, P. P. (1984). Scripts in organizational behavior. *Academy of Management Review*, 9, 449–459.
- Gummesson, E. (1988). *Qualitative methods in management research*. Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur.
- Hatch, M. J. (1999). Exploring the empty spaces of organizing: How improvisational jazz helps redescribe organizational structure. *Organization Studies*, 20(1), 75–100.
- Hjorth, D., & Johannisson, B. (1997). Entreprenörskap som skapelseprocess och ideologi [Entrepreneurship as a process of creation and ideology] (Working Paper No. 1997:2). Available from SIRE (Scandinavian Institute for Research in Entrepreneurship).
- Kadefors, A. (1995). Institutions in building projects: Implications for flexibility and change. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11, 395–408.
- Larson, M. (2003). *Evenemangsmarknadsföringens organisering: Interaktion mellan aktörer på ett politiskt torg* [Organizing the marketing of events: Interaction between actors in a political market square]. Östersund: ETOUR Scientific.
- Lindblom, C. E. (1959). The science of “muddling through.” *Public Administration Review*, 19, 78–88.
- Lundin, R. A. (1998). Temporära organisationer—några perspektivbyten [Temporary organizations—Some shifts of perspective]. In B. Czarniawska (Ed.), *Organisationsteori på svenska* [Organization theory] (pp. 194–214). Malmö, Sweden: Liber Ekonomi.
- Lundin, R. A., & Söderholm, A. (1995). A theory of the temporary organization. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11, 437–455.
- March, J. G. (1995). The future, disposable organizations and the rigidities of imagination. *Organization*, 2, 427–440.

- Merriam, S. B. (1994). *Fallstudien som forskningsmetod* [The case study as a research method]. Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur.
- Moorman, C., & Miner, A. S. (1998, July). The convergence of planning and execution: Improvisation in new product development. *Journal of Marketing*, 62, 1–20.
- Nooteboom, B. (2001, July). Business networks. Presented at EGOS Colloquium 2001 Lyon, Subgroup Evolutionary Perspectives. Lyon, France.
- Organization Science* (1998). 9(5).
- Packendorff, J. (1995). Inquiring into the temporary organization: New directions for project management research. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11, 319–333.
- Quinn, J. B. (1985, May/June). Managing innovation: Controlled chaos. *Harvard Business Review*, 73–84.
- Rehn, A., & Wikström, K. (1999). *Kind of grey—playing the live jazz of project management* (Working Paper No. 1). Turku, Finland: Research Group for Project-Based Industry, Åbo Akademi University.
- Salavou, H. (2004). The concept of innovativeness: Should we need to focus? *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 7(1), 33–44.
- Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Tomljenovic, R., Larson, M., & Faulkner, B. (2001). Predictors of satisfaction with festival attendance: A case of Storsjöyran Music Festival. *Tourism*, 49, 123–132.
- Weick, K. E. (1993). The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 628–652.
- Weick, K. E. (1998). Improvisation as a mindset for organizational analysis. *Organization Science*, 9, 543–555.
- Westley, F., & Mintzberg, H. (1989). Visionary leadership and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 10, 17–32.
- Wikström, E. (2000). *Projekt och produktiv kommunikation—en studie om sammanhållande dynamik* [Projects and productive communication—A study on cohesive dynamics]. Göteborg, Sweden: Bokförlaget BAS.
- Winch, G. M. (2000). The management of projects as a generic business process. In R. A. Lundin & F. Hartman (Eds.), *Projects as business constituents and guiding motives* (pp. 194–214). Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Copyright of Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.