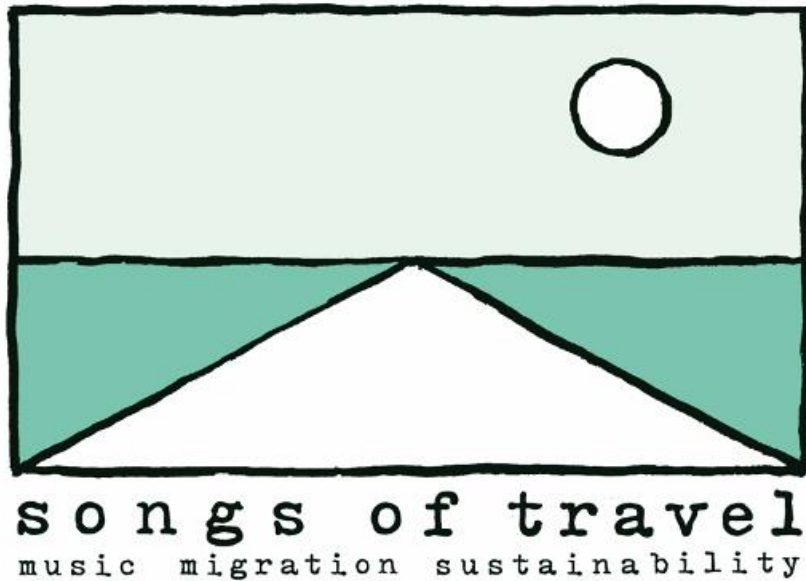




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# Songs of Travel: Research

# Final Report

31.07.2025

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## Executive Summary

The most recent IPCC report indicates that climate change is placing increasing pressure on our planet, and immediate, rapid, large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are required to curb irreversible, catastrophic warming. Achieving this emission reduction requires global mobilisation, calling all sectors of society to join in solidarity and action against climate change. Uniting in a shared goal will require empathetic leadership to draw up effective, achievable targets and policies that are tailored to the local places and communities that are required to act.

The arts have a pivotal role to play in social change. Increasingly, artists are joining the climate movement, shining a light on the complex issues surrounding climate change, and encouraging climate action, often acting as role models, lighting the way to a more sustainable way of living. While there are many studies on the adverse environmental impacts associated with large-scale music festivals, there are relatively limited studies on the environmental impacts of small-scale festivals.

The international Songs of Travel project brought together four regional classical music festivals across Europe with a shared aim to raise awareness and to foster empathy for climate change and migration through music, while developing a sustainable operational model for classical music festivals by co-designing a Green Policy between festival partners, academic advisors and interested parties, and quantitatively assessing the emissions generated by each festival to set a benchmark for future emission reduction efforts.

Here, we report on the success of the project in developing a sustainable operational model and in communicating the themes of climate change and migration to audiences and festival attendees and inspiring sustainable practices in audiences.

The research was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team in the University of Galway, spanning the fields of climate science, environmental engineering and behaviour psychology. Data was collected by disseminating comprehensive surveys to accurately model the greenhouse gas emissions that were generated at each festival.



The success of the festivals in terms of communication of festival themes to audiences was investigated by designing a rigorous evaluation workshop protocol, underpinned by the COM-B behaviour model.

Results indicate that by consistent, universal commitment to the Green Policy, festivals could significantly cut emissions. Themes were well received by audiences, and the audiences appreciated the commitment and leadership to sustainability demonstrated by Songs of Travel partners.

- Themes were well received by audiences
- The commitment to global sustainability goals was shown through successful efforts to embed sustainable practices at a local level

Based on what was learned as part of this project, we provide a document to provide guidance to future festivals to minimise their climate and environmental footprint. This includes recommendations for staged implementation of sustainable procedures at various stages in the festival lifetime:

### **Before the festival: Setting the Sustainable foundation**

- Aligning sustainable values between partners and among festival teams early in the planning process
- Setting achievable, impactful targets
- Designing clear communication plans
- Training and empowering volunteers
- Engaging the artists and partners in sustainability goals, leveraging the capacity of the artist to influence the public, ripple effect of engaging partners and adding creative energy to the initiative

### **During the festival: Turning Policy into Practice**

- During the festival, messaging around sustainability should be consistent, accessible and clear, explaining choices to attendees via signage, volunteers and social media
- While foregrounding sustainability, festival logistics should be flexible, inclusive and reflexive to audience needs, utilising opt-in mechanisms, incentives and accessibility measures
- Showcase the sustainable actions of the artists, who act as cultural role models



- Design events so sustainable choices are made easy and clear for audience members
- Provide support channels for staff and volunteers as they handle logistics, queries and potentially complaints related to sustainability measures

### **After the festival: Reflection, Learning and Ongoing Change**

- Evaluate and invite extensive feedback, making space for all interested parties to share their reflections, stories and lived experience, as well as quantitative data on engagement, footfall and environmental footprint, refining tools for data collection based on lessons learned
- Share reflections and evaluation with festival team and audience via social media and relevant community opportunities
- Based on gained experience, iterate on festival policies, procedures and goals
- Leverage festival voice and role as civic and cultural leaders to lobby for change with local authority and partner organisations

This guide can serve as a blueprint for festivals to embed sustainability into their planning, programming and practices, adopting an empathetic approach, and leading by example rather than issuing directives. The potential impact is amplified considering the role of artists as cultural leaders and the role of festivals in regional cultural identity, as economic generators and civic actors for change.



## Research Team

### Jakob Koranyi



Jakob is the co-artistic director of Fairplay Chamber Music (together with Peter and producer Magda) and Professor of cello at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm and is the driving force behind the research component of Songs Of Travel. Entirely committed to reducing carbon footprint in his own practice as a travelling artist, he refuses to fly and adheres to a plant-based diet. He seeks to encourage others to move towards pro-environmental behaviour - both as an artist and as festival organiser. His actions have already prompted collective climate action by inspiring both the [sustainable orchestral season for the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra](#), and the Songs of Travel project. In the research component of SOT, Jakob oversaw the research coordination and facilitated data collection required to underpin impact assessment and to underpin efforts to making festivals more sustainable. He also co-curates a course in sustainable music life at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

### Dr. Liz Coleman

Liz is a lecturer and researcher in the Physics, School of Natural Sciences, University of Galway. She specialises in atmospheric physics, climate modelling & air quality forecasting and more recently, has focussed on broad scientific collaboration for the protection of the environment and effective science communication regarding environmental issues. She has led a number of events engaging diverse communities in the west of Ireland with complex issues related to environmental change - from the local to global scales, combining scientific knowledge and data with storytelling and music.



She also promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and science public engagement, bringing the climate conversation to the communities, especially those marginalised and often omitted from the discourse. Liz also has a keen interest in music as a method of



communication, knowledge transfer and storytelling, being a traditional fiddle player and music teacher, often participating in musical events and gatherings in Galway and beyond.

## Prof. Eoghan Clifford



Professor and Head of Civil Engineering, University of Galway, Eoghan specialises in water/wastewater engineering, transport and life cycle assessment. His research also focuses on the measurement and modelling of lifecycle impacts

His group has developed a number of patented technologies to date with various commercial licences and a spin-out company. Eoghan is a co-founder of Vortech Water Solutions Ltd. which manufactures and sells patented technology and computational services to the wastewater sector. Eoghan acts

as an advocate of active travel and mobility for those with disabilities and serves on the board a national disability organisation and is chairperson of a local active travel community cooperative. Eoghan is also a keen cyclist and 4-time para cycling world champion.

## Dr. Denis O'Hora

Dr. Denis O'Hora is a psychologist in the School of Psychology at the University of Galway. Originally a research scientist working on learning and decision making, he has spent the last 10 years working on supporting enhanced decision making in real-world settings. He is particularly interested in facilitating behaviours that underpin a sustainable future and has investigated decisions with respect to water quality, climate change adaptation and household electricity usage.



Denis also works with policy-makers to enact human-centred solutions to societal challenges. He provides expertise to the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (FSPAC), an Advisory Committee to the Health and Safety Authority, and is a member of the International Energy Agency Wind Energy Technical Collaboration Programme (IEA Wind TCP) Task 39 focused on Quiet wind turbine technology.





## Leasha Garvey - Researcher

Leasha is currently studying at the University of Manchester and is completing her Bachelor of Science in Physics. She has developed a strong foundation in scientific research and methodology; with hands-on experience in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Leasha is not only passionate about music as an art form, but also about its role in promoting more sustainable practices and contributing to a more environmentally conscious future.



## Owen Hannon - Researcher

Owen has a strong academic background in Psychology and the Humanities, having graduated with a degree and higher diploma in psychology from the University of Galway. His principal research lies at the intersection of psychology, art, and sustainability, driven by a core interest in how creative expression can influence environmental attitudes and behaviours. In his work, Owen explores how psychological principles can be leveraged through art to inspire sustainable practices and cultivate environmental awareness.

## Laura Leshar - Research Intern

Laura is a third-year Chemical Engineering student with a minor in Material Science Engineering at Lehigh University, PA, USA. Her research interests focus on renewable energy and sustainability. Her work includes aiding in the fabrication and testing of organic field effect transistors (OFETS).

## Linda Breslin - MSc Student

Linda Breslin holds a first-class honours MSc in Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security, with a focus in sustainability. Passionate about environmental protection, Linda is interested in sustainable development practices and innovative solutions to global challenges. Linda is dedicated to applying academic research to contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world. Her MSc research project was titled "Measurement and Mitigation of the Environmental Footprint of Music Events".



## Background

It is unequivocal that our climate is changing, and meeting our national and international climate targets requires an urgent, societal-wide mobilisation where each member of society contributes towards climate solutions. The arts have a substantial role to play in promoting societal transformation for sustainability (Rodríguez-Labajos et al., 2022). In recent years, there has been considerable effort in terms of greening the music industry. The power of the music industry to spread awareness and initiate action has been harnessed in the partnership between the United Nations Environment and nonprofit REVERB which commit to taking climate action by working with musicians to educate music fans on environmental issues and mitigate negative environmental behaviour (UNEP, 2019).

*Music moves people to feel, to care, and moves us to action*

*(Adam Gardner, Musician Co-Founder of REVERB)*

There has been considerable effort made in reducing the emissions of large events (>10,000 attendees), with significant success stories. The 2022 PRIDE LGBTQ+ Festival in Dublin, Ireland transitioned to 100% biofuel, saving an estimated 1.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (Failte Ireland, 2023). Internationally, Coldplay reduced their touring greenhouse gas emissions by 59% during the first two years of their Music of the Spheres tour by implementing eco-initiatives.

While there are many studies on the adverse environmental impacts associated with large-scale music festivals, there are relatively limited studies on the environmental impacts of smaller festivals. Thousands of small-scale festivals are held across Europe annually, and there is currently little quantitative data available regarding their carbon footprint and potential benefits of implementing a range of pro-environmental measures in organising and running festivals. This represents an unutilised resource for emission reduction and highlights a need for further research on the environmental impact of small-scale festivals.

As a partnership between four music organisations across Europe, Songs of Travel aims to raise awareness and foster empathy for climate change and migration through four small-



scale (<5000 attendees) contemporary classical music festivals. Empathy was at the forefront of the project approach to the theme. The festivals served as interventions to enable the festival community to act sustainably with a focus on raising awareness by communication, education, and enacting a set of “Green Commitments”. The project aimed to generate empathy for those affected by migration and climate change, and to facilitate change towards more sustainable choices rather than employing restrictive, directive, or coercive measures to reduce festival emissions.

## The Festivals

| Name                   | Location                         | Organisation                                          | Dates                    |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cellissimo             | Galway, Ireland                  | Music for Galway                                      | May 18 - 26, 2024        |
| Fairplay Chamber Music | Jarna, Sweden                    | Fairplay Chamber Music                                | June 14 - 18, 2024       |
| Valdres Sommersymfoni  | Valdres, Norway                  | Norsk Ressurssenter for Klassisk Musikk Nord Aural KF | June 21 - 25, 2024       |
| Piano Biennale         | Arnhem and Nijmegen, Netherlands | Keys to Music Foundation                              | March 26 - April 6, 2025 |

We have created a research programme to determine the potential role of the arts, specifically classical music festivals, in promoting fundamental sustainable values and driving transformation for sustainable futures across scales.

## Research Programme

The research programme leverages the expertise of the multidisciplinary team. There were four components to the research programme:

1. Development a scientifically robust Green Policy for each festival



2. Establish a robust methodology for collecting data
3. Evaluate the success of the green policy:
  - a. In collecting data
  - b. In reducing environmental impact of the festival (quantitative analysis)
  - c. In inspiring pro-environmental behaviour in attendees and festival partners (behaviour change workshops)
4. Create a blueprint for similar festivals to promote reduction of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the festival, targeting biggest emitters, underpinned by data collected from the Songs of Travel festivals.

The Green Policy should exist as a living, dynamic document, adapting to the needs and infrastructure unique to each festival, and updating after evaluation of each event.



## Green Policy

The Green Policy lives as a set of commitments taken by each festival organisation team. It was developed in partnership with each festival organisation team, underpinned by the scientific expertise of the University of Galway research team. Setting out and publicising the Green Policy prior to the festivals acted as a declaration of intent to uphold values of sustainability before and during the festival, and allowed the theme of the festival to be introduced to attendees before events.

The Green Policy was posted on each festival website and included in festival booklets (when printed), introducing the theme of the festival to potential attendees in advance of events.

The following is a list of actions and considerations to be taken by the festivals collaborating under the Songs of Travel umbrella in 2024-2025.

## Travel/Transport

1. Avoid flights for artists and students.
2. Avoid fossil fuelled cars for artists and students. Use electric cars instead.
3. Use electric vans and trucks for material transportation when possible.
4. Prefer public transport over individual car travel.
5. Encourage active travel (walking, cycling) when feasible.
6. When organising venues, consider the emissions from attendees and prioritise locations that are easily accessible by public transport or active travel.

## Energy

1. Minimise electricity usage.
2. Choose venues with solar panels or other renewable energy sources.
3. Opt for more energy-efficient buildings when possible (although it might be challenging to obtain specific information).



## Food

1. Promote vegan and vegetarian dishes.
2. Reduce meat, fish, poultry and cheese, especially red meat.
3. Ensure suitable portion sizes to minimise food waste.
4. Use local suppliers where possible

## Waste

1. Limit opportunities for waste generation.
2. Recycle as much as local waste collection services allow.
3. Avoid one-off plastics and biodegradable materials.
4. Select/encourage food suppliers to minimise packaging.
5. Ensure that food and drink materials are recyclable.
6. Separate waste properly, considering both venue and food-related waste.

## Accommodation

1. Avoid hotels with energy-intensive features like swimming pools and 24/7 saunas.
2. Ask for reduced cleaning services, twice per week can often suffice.
3. Be cautious with high-end hotels, as they usually have higher emissions; however, assess individual hotels for efficiency.

## Festival Materials

1. Minimise the printing of materials like posters, banners, and program books.
2. Make sure banners and other reusables are printed without edition specific dates or names. Alternatively buy materials where you can reuse frames, stands etc.
3. Use projections instead of program leaflets.
4. Reduce the use of high data emails, online advertisements, and online long-term storage of videos.
5. Be mindful of the emissions associated with digital communications.
6. Consider the environmental impact of materials used for festival items such as pens, mugs, t-shirts etc. We don't need to hand out merchandise automatically to all artists/students/audiences



## Data Collection

1. Travel: Send out survey obtained from University of Galway to assess artist and audiences' travel patterns and attitudes relating to our climate and environment.
2. Energy: Electricity, gas, oil, water metre readings for the period of the festival and for each venue
3. Food: Number of meals served, % vegetarian, vegan and meat (% red meat meals separated if possible)
4. Accommodation: Star rating of hotels used and bed-nights during festival plus (if available) sustainability reports from hotel groups
5. Print and merchandise: What (e.g. t-shirts, pens etc) and how many produced and material where possible (e.g. clothing cotton, bamboo etc).
6. Internet usage: Make use of most environmentally responsible digital platforms



## Emissions Data Collection

To measure the environmental impact of each festival and assess the benefit of adopting the Green Policy, it is necessary to employ a robust method for harmonised data collection across each partner festival. An electronic travel survey was designed by Prof. Eoghan Clifford to capture data associated with audience travel, and a data collection sheet was issued to each partner festival to capture the emissions generated in festival preparation and execution.

### Survey Design

The travel survey was initially designed bespoke to Cellissimo Festival and Galway but each festival was given access to the survey to replicate in their own locality, mindful of any specific changes that needed to be made (e.g. venues, accommodation options etc). Each festival was responsible for data collection and storage, translation and transfer of anonymised data to the University of Galway research team.

Short surveys have been shown to be more effective and reliable than longer surveys (Kost and de Rosa, 2018), so questions were kept to a minimum to ensure survey completion time was roughly 5 minutes. Logic conditions were implemented in the survey to ensure respondents only answered relevant questions.

The surveys were open to audience members, festival team and artists and captured data on:

- travel methods to the festival venue
- accommodation type for the duration of the festival
- potential acceptable alternative travel methods
- reasons for choosing a particular mode of transport
- Barriers and facilitators to adopting sustainable travel practices
- demographics

The surveys also prompted respondents to make a commitment to travel sustainability to a future festival event, and captured data regarding the likelihood of adopting pro-environmental behaviours using the COM-B framework (Michie et al., 2011).





## Survey Response

Levels of survey response varied across festivals.

|                   |                 |                       |                    |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Cellissimo</b> | Attendees: 5135 | Surveys Complete: 421 | Response rate - 8% |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|

Cellissimo recruited a set of dedicated volunteers to promote the research aspect in the lead-up to the festival - the “Green Volunteers Team” and to encourage concert participants to complete travel surveys. Green Volunteer induction began at the initial operational festival meetings, where the Green Policy was used to discuss festival themes and operations with all team members.

During the festival, the team leveraged existing partnerships by borrowing digital devices from IT suppliers used by the festival. With the dedicated volunteers and technology onsite, there was a sizable attendee response to the survey, with 10% of attendees completing a survey, demographics of survey respondents shown in Figure 1. There is a significantly higher female representation in survey response, in accordance with the gender bias in survey response rate that has been discussed in literature (Smith, 2008). There is a higher representation of older respondents, with relatively few respondents under 40.

|                               |                |                      |                    |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Fairplay Chamber Music</b> | Attendees:1055 | Surveys Complete: 30 | Response rate - 3% |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|

Translation to Swedish and adaptation of survey to suit the local festival was not optimal, hence there is little data from the side of the audience or student artists in the festivals. This will be addressed in planning for future festivals, see Research Insight 1.



|                                       |                |                       |                    |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Valdres<br/>Sommersym<br/>foni</b> | Attendees:2600 | Surveys Complete: 148 | Response rate - 5% |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|

Adaptation of the survey to suit the local festival was not optimal, so the survey does not correspond to the data collected by Cellisimo. There is no data regarding the distances travelled by audience members so estimation of audience emissions will be challenging. Again, this will be addressed in planning for data collection at future festivals.

|                           |                |                       |                   |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Piano<br/>Biennale</b> | Attendees:5005 | Surveys Complete: 113 | Response rate -2% |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|

**Piano Biennale** collected 113 general survey responses from a population of 5005 attendees, but with very few respondents to specifics related to SOT travel survey, hence it was not possible to model attendee emissions.

Even though the survey results can't be used to quantitatively determine festival greenhouse gas emissions, data gained is useful in terms of gaining feedback on festival communication, organisation, infrastructure and themes, that can be used to shape future festival planning and input into local governance, communication and implementation.

For example, the response from the Valdres Sommerfonni survey regarding suggestions for incentivising sustainable travel is shown in Figure 2. The N/A categories refers to the number of festival attendees that travelled to the festival via sustainable means. The remaining categories represent the factors that would encourage attendees to travel to the festival via sustainable methods, the most prevalent being an increased frequency in bus/trains. This data can be used to support facilitation of more sustainable travel options at the level of the municipality.

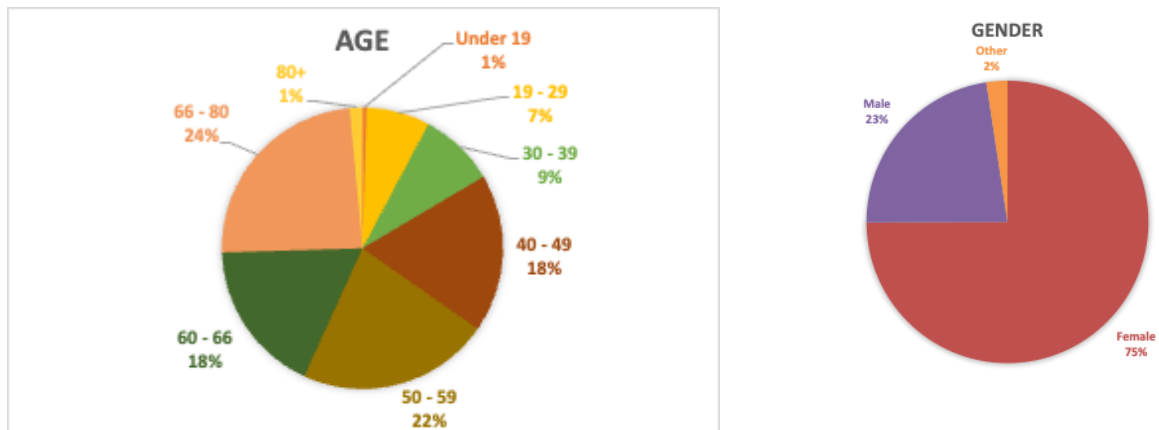


Figure 1 - Gender & Age Breakdown of Survey Respondents at Cellissimo 2024

### Suggestions for incentivising sustainable travel (%)

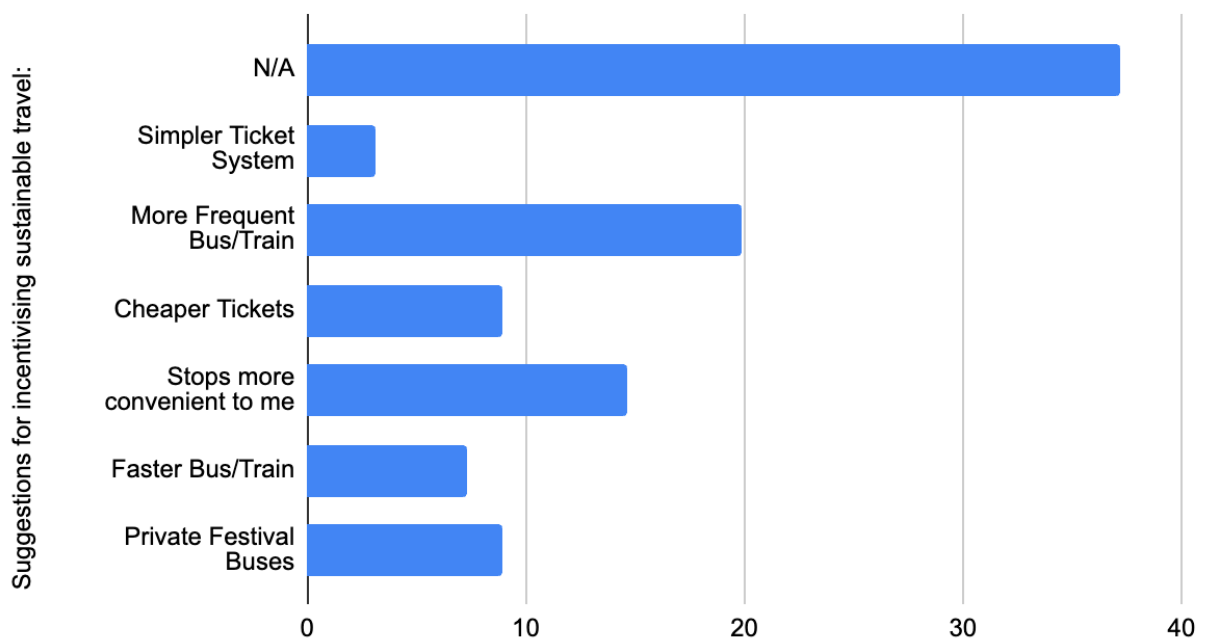


Figure 2 - Suggestions for incentivising sustainable travel, taken from the Valdres Sommerfoni festival



## Festival Emission Collection: Organisation & Operations

Estimation of total emissions from festival organisation and execution. This includes consideration of emissions from:

- Office work related to festival
- Travel related to festival organisation for festival employees, organisers and volunteers
- Printing of programs, posters
- Digital Media Campaigns
- Electricity usage at festival venues
- Meals provided for volunteers, staff and artists
- Travel and Accommodation for invited artists

This data was collected via distribution of spreadsheets to festival organisation teams. The spreadsheet was based on work done by regional-scale Galway Jazz Festival, 2019, a festival similar in scale to the Songs of Travel partner festivals, attracting an audience of 3000 to 55 events performed across 20 venues throughout Galway city. The festival program included local, national and international artists. Festival director, Ciaran Ryan labelled the 2019 festival as the Sustainability Edition, and stated that the festival had an aim to alert the arts sector to its potential in becoming more climate aware and to deliver a message detailing the changes required to meet climate goals (Breslin, 2023). In its efforts to reduce climate impact, the festival reduced flight travel by 30% and deployed hundreds of surveys to festival attendees to measure emissions.



## Emissions Modelling

Greenhouse Gas emissions from audience travel were estimated using the Eco-invent 3.10 database and software Simapro 9.6 to yield an emission factor per km travelled for each transport method.

Simapro represents the state-of-the-art in terms of modelling emissions. Developed by PRé Sustainability in the Netherlands, Simapro is a software tool designed for conducting life-cycle assessments and sustainability analysis, helping organisations determine the environmental impact of products and processes. The software includes extensive databases allowing for access to life cycle inventory data for a large range of materials, processes and products. One of the key databases integrated into Simapro is the ecoinvent database, renowned for its high-quality, transparent, and comprehensive data. Ecoinvent's data is contributed by a global network of experts, researchers, and institutions, providing the most up-to-date scientific consensus regarding emissions associated with various sectoral activity. The combined software and database account for regional variations in production practices, technologies, and environmental conditions.

Attendee travel survey data was extrapolated upwards to estimate the festival population size by directly scaling to festival attendee number, it's noted that the survey results should be statistically analysed by demographic and scaled accordingly, yet for the purposes of this study, we assumed the surveyed sample was representative of the festival population.

The life cycle assessment (LCA) method is often employed to assess the "carbon footprint" of a product, or in this case, an event. LCA is a sophisticated method for compiling and evaluating the inputs, outputs, and potential climate impacts of a product system throughout its life cycle, essentially serving as a method to assess event organisations' multi-dimensional climate impact (ISO, 2006)



### 5.1.0.1 Transport & Accommodation

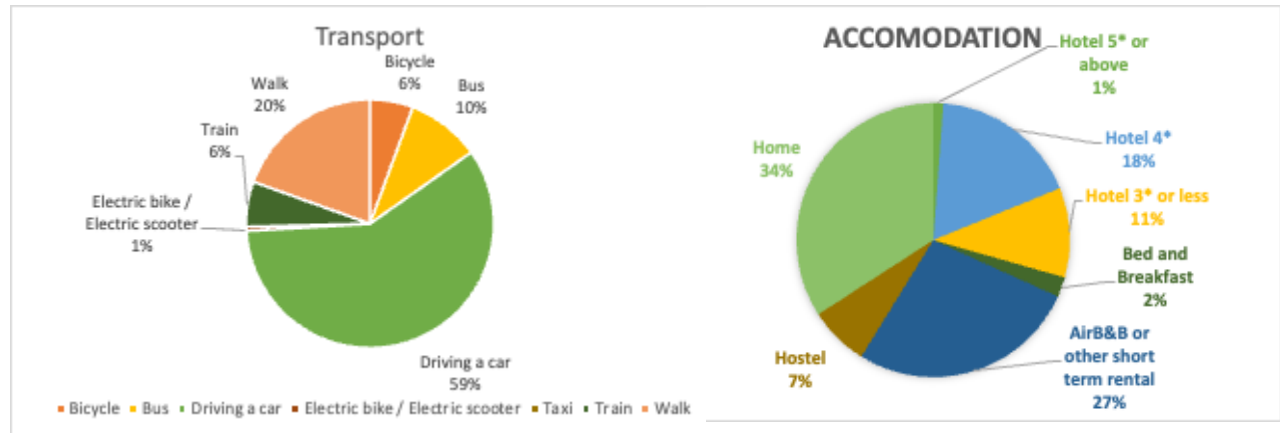


Figure 3 - Mode of transport & Accommodation for survey respondents at Cellissimo 2024

## Cellissimo Festival

A robust dataset was collected from the Cellissimo festival, which had a significant response to the issued travel survey, allowing researchers to assess emissions due to attendee travel and accommodation, in addition to emissions related to festival organisation and operations. The mode of transport and accommodation options for surveyed attendees is represented in Figure 3.

Modelling results estimate the **emissions associated with the festival as 52 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-eq** considering the life-cycle analysis of all emission sources. Breakdown of the contributing sources is shown in Figure 4.

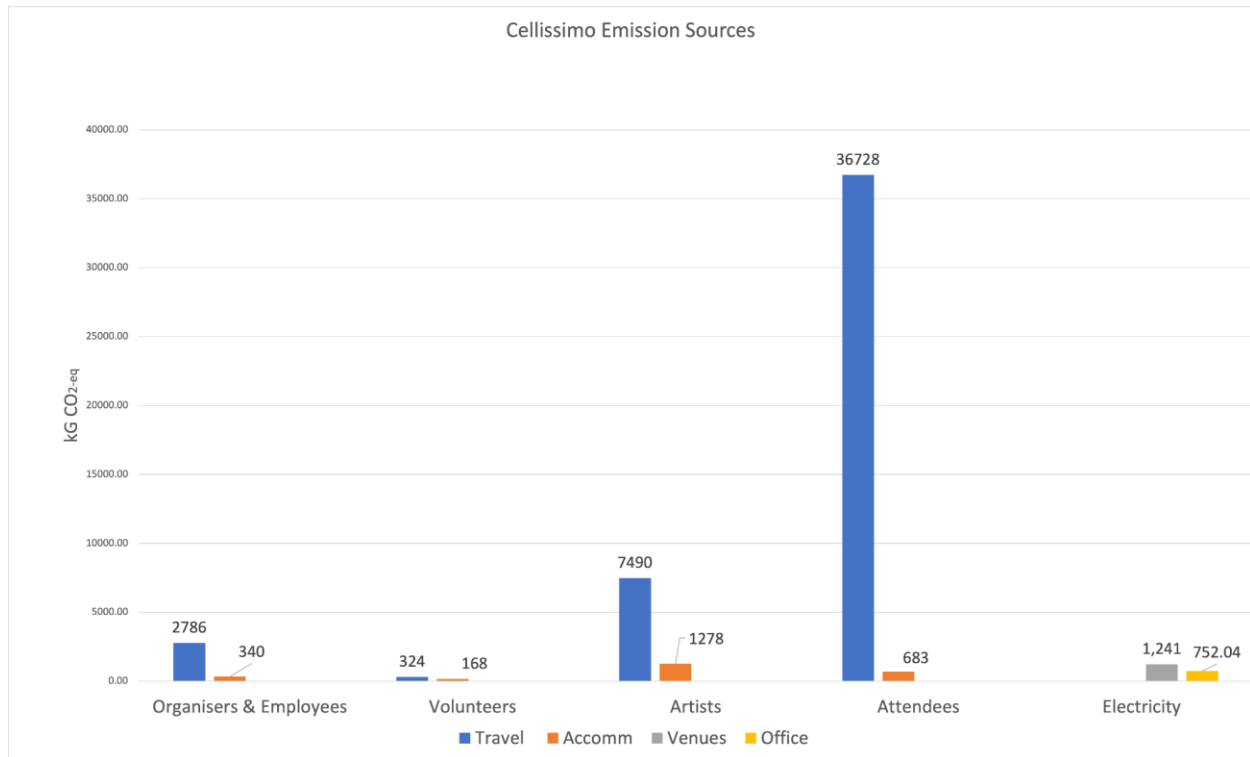


Figure 4 Total emissions modelled from Cellissimo festival, considering the life cycle assessment of emission sources.

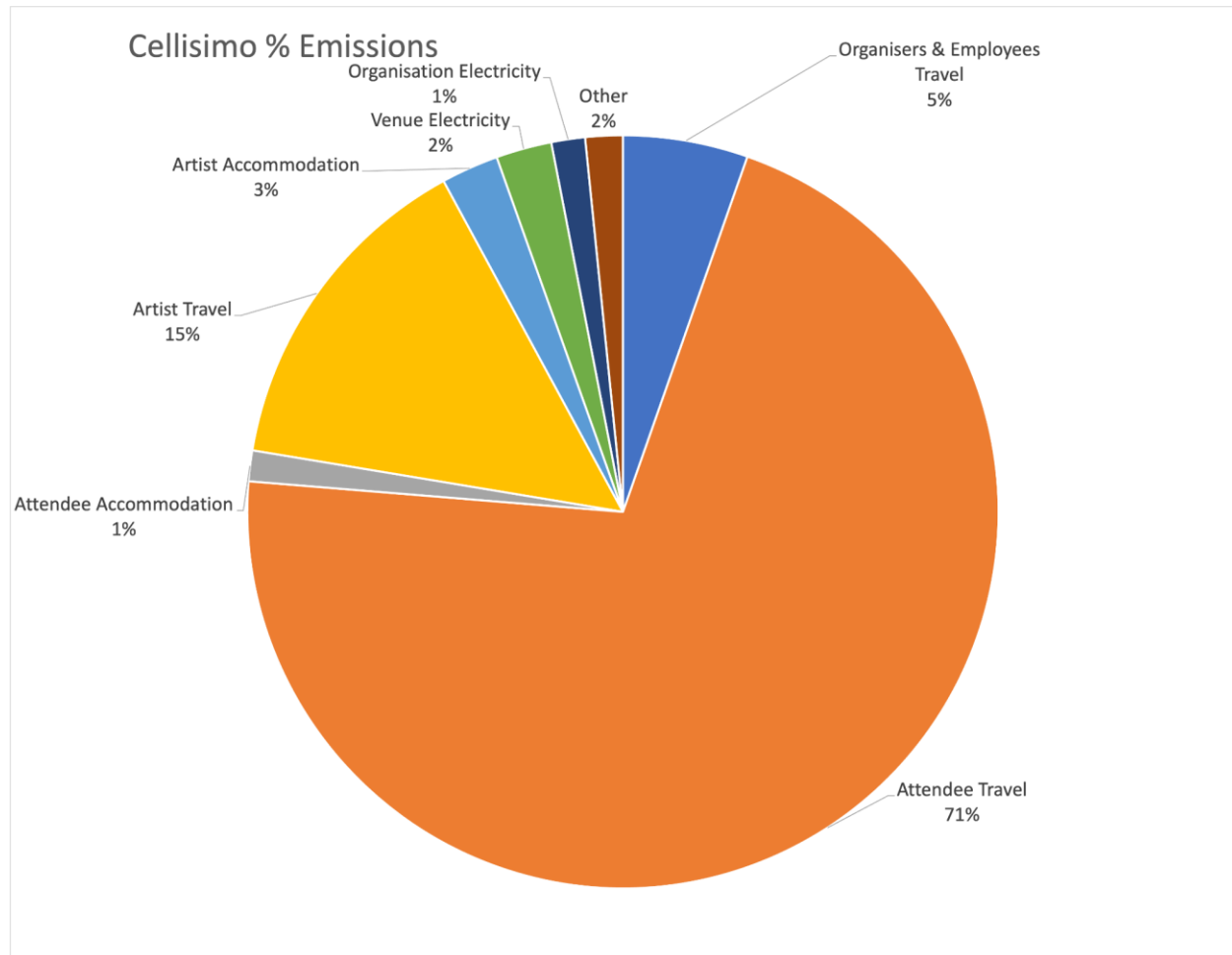


Figure 5 Percentage life cycle analysis emissions from various sources associated with the Cellissimo festival.

From Figure 5, it is obvious that attendee travel represents the predominant source (71%) of emissions - representing local short-trips, predominantly in cars. Artist (including artist students) travel accounts for the next largest emissions source, followed by organisers & employee travel.

It is noted that there was a commitment to reducing travel emissions in the festival organisation and operations, specifically encouraging artists to avoid air travel, with six of the international artists travelling by sea rather than by air. To estimate the impact of this commitment to travel sustainability, we compare the potential emissions associated with international travel from the scheduled 2020 Cellissimo festival that was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the international travel emissions in the 2024 Cellissimo





festival. Results are shown in Figure 6. **Prioritisation of slow-travel for the 19 international artists that participated in the 2024 Cellissimo festival saved 10 Tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-eq, reducing artist emissions by 66% and overall festival emissions by 21%.**

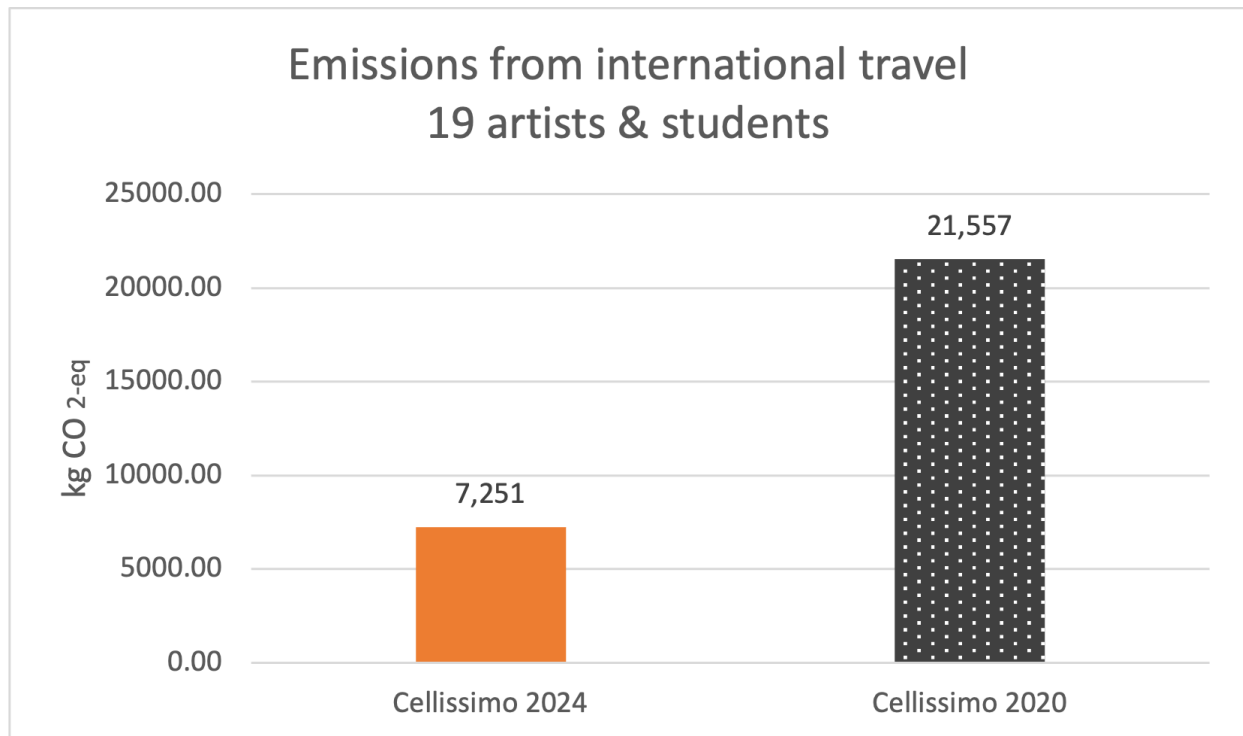


Figure 6: Life Cycle emissions associated with artist international travel for the 2024 festival compared to the scheduled 2020 festival that was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also noted that single actors can significantly impact emissions. A single festival employee accounted for 61% of organisational emissions due to their working commute working in preparation for Cellissimo, representing a sizable 3% of total festival emissions.



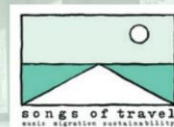
## Qualitative Data Collection

Evaluation workshops were held to interrogate the success of the festivals. These workshops

1. Explored audience members' experiences of Songs of Travel and its themes.
2. Exploring the experiences of the festival team in implementing the Green Policy.

The workshops were designed by behavioural psychologist Dr. Denis O'Hora, in close

**Songs of Travel  
Evaluation Workshop**  
SATURDAY 25 MAY, 11AM-12.30PM  
SIOBHAN MCKENNA THEATRE,  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Tickets: FREE

With Songs of Travel we have set ourselves clear aims: through the presentation of co-commissioned music we want to raise the empathy of all stakeholders towards the environment and towards people who are forced to migrate. Did we reach our goal?

We are looking for a group of fifteen audience members who have attended at least two of the five Songs of Travel events (see pages 11,12,21,24,27) to join us for this workshop, led by Dr. Denis O'Hora, a psychologist at the University of Galway. With the help of Dr. O'Hora, you will explore your experiences of Cellissimo and themes of migration and climate change to help us evaluate our approach.

As a thank you, each participant will receive a pair of tickets to the Cellissimo Spectacular (see page 34).



Free of charge. Places are limited, and must be reserved in advance. If you are interested in joining, please contact [sot@musicforgalway.ie](mailto:sot@musicforgalway.ie)

consultation with the Songs of Travel team

## GREEN COMMITMENTS

### Green Commitments



Co-funded by  
the European Union

The following is a list of actions and considerations to be taken by the festivals collaborating under the Songs of Travel umbrella in 2024-2025.

#### Travel/Transport:

1. No flights for artists, staff and students included in the SOT programme.
2. Choose public transport over individual car travel.
3. We commit to renting at least one electric vehicle for the full festival period with the view to getting first-hand experience regarding the feasibility of such alternatives.
4. Use electric vans and trucks for material transportation if available.
5. Encourage active travel (walking, cycling) when feasible.
6. Avoid using fossil fueled cars when possible.
7. Always ask suppliers and partners to use electric transportation. If they can't comply, always offer your own electric transportation if available.
8. Drive slowly to conserve emissions/energy.
9. When organizing venues, consider the emissions from attendees and prioritize locations that are easily accessible by public transport or active travel.

#### Energy:

1. Minimize electricity usage.
2. Choose venues with solar panels or other renewable energy sources when possible.
3. Opt for more energy-efficient buildings when possible.
4. Choose a renewable energy subscription when possible. Discuss with the venues to change their energy plan!

#### Food:

1. Only serve (or pay for) vegan or vegetarian dishes to artists, staff and students.
2. Try to reduce cheese, fish, poultry, meat and especially red meat served at the festival locations.
3. Ensure suitable portion sizes to minimize food waste.

#### Waste:

1. Limit opportunities for waste generation.
2. No provision of one-off plastics or biodegradable materials.
3. Ensure that food and drink materials are recyclable e.g. paper rather than plastics etc.
4. Separate waste properly, considering both venue and food-related waste.
5. Recycle as much as local waste collection services allow.
6. Select/encourage food suppliers to minimize packaging.

#### Accommodation:

1. Demand reduced cleaning services, twice per week is a maximum.
2. Choose accommodation within walking distance from the main venues.
3. Be cautious with high-end hotels, as they usually have higher emissions; however, assess individual hotels for efficiency.
4. Avoid hotels with energy-intensive features like swimming pools and 24/7 saunas.

#### Festival Materials and communications:

1. Minimize the printing of materials like posters, banners, and program books.
2. We will not send out physical promotion letters/leaflets to audiences.
3. Seek alternative methods for program communication to replace program leaflets, for example wall projections in the hall.
4. Make sure banners and other reusables are printed without specific dates or names. Alternatively buy materials where you can reuse frames, stands etc and switch the fabric/poster.
5. Reduce the use of high data emails.
6. Only record performances when necessary and minimize online and offline long-term storage of videos.
7. Be mindful of the emissions associated with digital communications. Turn off your camera in digital meetings when possible.
8. Consider the environmental impact of materials used for festival items such as pens, mugs, t-shirts etc. We don't need to hand out merch automatically to all artists/students/audiences.

#### Data Collection:

1. Travel: Send out survey obtained from University of Galway to assess artist and audiences' travel patterns.
2. Ask audiences to put a pea in a jar to represent their mode of transportation. This raises audience awareness in a fun and visual way.
3. Energy: Electricity, gas, oil, water meter readings for the period of the festival and for each venue.
4. Food: Number of meals served, % vegetarian, vegan and meat (% red meat meals separated if possible).
5. Accommodation: Star rating of hotels used and bed-nights during festival plus (if available) sustainability reports from hotel groups.
6. Print and merchandise: What (e.g. t-shirts, pens etc) and how many produced and material where possible (e.g. clothing cotton, bamboo etc).

#### List of stakeholders:

1. Festival Staff
2. Artists
3. Students
4. Volunteers
5. Audiences
6. Partners
7. Suppliers
8. Donors and financial supporters

This document was created by:





## Data Analysis

A qualitative approach was taken to analyse the data collected from the workshops. This was done to capture how the Songs of Travel festivals and their themes of sustainability, empathy, and migration, as well as their commitment to sustainable and inclusionary practice, were experienced by audience members, festival organisers, and the wider festival community. The research team focused on capturing authentic participant perspectives and avoiding imposed theoretical frameworks, instead letting themes emerge directly from what workshop attendees said. This approach allows for insights that are grounded, supporting more effective, aligned, and inclusive planning in future editions of Songs of Travel.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps for thematic analysis, a widely used and rigorous analysis framework, were used to analyse the qualitative data. These steps provide a structured approach to identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within the data.

These steps include:

1. Familiarisation with the data through repeated reading and note-taking to identify initial ideas and patterns.
2. Identifying and labelling data with codes that capture key concepts, patterns, or features. These codes are the building blocks for identifying potential themes.
3. Grouping codes into potential themes, looking for overarching patterns.
4. Reviewing the identified themes by refining, combining, or discarding them based on their relevance.
5. Developing a clear definition for each theme to ensure they are distinct and accurately reflect the data they represent.
6. Writing up the analysis: presenting the findings in a clear and coherent manner.

Moreover, the following key principles were used to guide the analysis:

1. Inductive and Data-Led: Themes emerged from participant language, not pre-set frameworks.
2. Participant-Centred: The analysis valued what attendees identified as successes, frustrations, or hopes.



3. Comparative: The analysis recognised that different participants bring different experiences.
4. Practical: The analysis sought actionable insights that can inform real planning decisions.

## Audience Workshop

The analysis drew on three audience workshops from Cellissimo, Fairplay Chamber Music Festival, and Piano Biennale, respectively. Valdres Sommersymfoni did not hold workshops. Having said this, the workshops that did take place effectively captured different perspectives of Songs of Travel, enabling a comparative, multi-voice analysis.

The initial workshop was held as part of Cellissimo, led by Dr. O'Hora and the University of Galway research team. Project members from the other Songs of Travel festivals were scheduled to observe the workshop to emulate the process at the other festivals. The workshop protocol was distributed in advance of the initial workshop occurring so that partner festivals could follow the same research protocol.

Participation in the workshops was open to all who interacted with Songs of Travel. An invitation to participate was widely publicised, and potential workshop participants were incentivised by an offer of free tickets to festival events. Participation in the workshop was free. The workshops, with participants consent, were recorded and then transcribed. Participant names were anonymised, and any identifying or personal information was removed.

## Workshop Participants

Demographics related to workshop participants are displayed in Figure 5. As in the case of the travel survey, there is bias towards female representation, and there is a lack of youth voice. There should be an effort for more representation across the age spectrum in future iterations of the workshop.

## Workshop Format

The workshops were designed to include 10-15 participants in a focus group over a duration of 1.5 to 2 hours. Partner festival members were invited to join over Zoom to



observe the process but not directly participate. The workshops guided attendees through a structured conversation that covered

- Their experiences of Songs of Travel.
- The success of Songs of Travel in communicating themes of migration and climate change.
- The barriers and facilitators to sustainable behaviour.
- Applying the COM-B model of behaviour change to sustainable behaviours (Michie et al., 2011)

## Emerging themes from Audience Workshops

### 1. Sustainability Only Works If It's Doable

Attendees viewed sustainable actions through the lens of their daily experiences, suggesting that sustainable actions should be inclusive, low-friction, and accessible to be effective. When this alignment occurred, attendees described it as motivating and inspiring. When it did not, frustration and disengagement followed.

For instance, attendees consistently described food interventions as one of the most successful aspects of Songs of Travel's sustainability efforts. This was attributed to the way in which vegan and plant-based meals were offered by default but with flexibility and without judgement.

*"Serving vegan food feels seamless and cost-effective... We've let people pay extra for meat, making it a choice without forcing a vegan stance."*

Attendees framed the success of this intervention not just in environmental or sustainable terms but in terms of its design; it worked because it preserved individual agency, reduced confrontation or conflict with Songs of Travel's ethos, and offered a sense of shared direction without moral pressure. This shows that audiences are not unwilling to change; rather, they respond best when change is nudged rather than mandated, as it allows for more flexibility in aligning with their daily experiences.



Conversely, some workshop attendees commented on how some sustainability efforts can fall short when they fail to account for context or audience constraints. For example, digital formats were introduced for festival literature to reduce paper waste, but this led to feelings of exclusion amongst some audience members.

*There can be “issues with older audiences who aren’t as tech-savvy. They want physical posters or programs.”*

*“The festival should be more in Swedish and a bit more adapted for non-technicals. We want printed programs.”*

This highlights how audience members predominantly experience and think about sustainability in relation to their daily lives; they do not tend to think about it in a conceptual or abstract manner. This also underlines that when sustainable actions misalign with the audience’s daily experiences, it can lead to some frustration and disengagement. Moreover, well-intentioned actions can unintentionally exclude some audience members by not accounting for context or constraints such as digital, generational, or linguistic divides. These tensions highlight the need for a human-centred approach to sustainable change, one that foregrounds equity and inclusion.

Attendees were also frustrated by real-world barriers outside of Songs of Travel’s control. Transport infrastructure was repeatedly cited as a major barrier, with safety, distance, age, and ability all shaping whether people could make green travel choices.

*“There’s no way to get to the venues without a car.”*

*“It’s not safe to cycle, especially if you’re older or with children.”*

In this instance, audiences’ sustainability choices were shaped by external conditions rather than personal values or daily experiences. Yet it also demonstrates again that sustainable actions should be inclusive, low-friction, and accessible to be effective.

## 2. Music and Storytelling Changed How People Felt

Attendees found storytelling, whether spoken, sung, or embedded in Songs of Travel’s themes, greatly enhanced the interpretive power of the artist performances;



it helped connect issues, such as climate change and migration, to real human experiences. As well as this, certain musical pieces were singled out as particularly moving, not just for their aesthetic quality but for the emotional vulnerability they revealed and evoked.

*"The strongest impression for me was 'Every minute opens a door.' I was very touched and very impressed by the soprano."*

*"The violinist's voice broke, and it really touched me. I wasn't expecting to be so moved."*

These responses refer to a sort of emotional pedagogy where the music and the performances helped audience members understand the artists, not through explanation but through the experience. Integrating these performances with the Songs of Travel's themes helped to focus the audience's emotional attention and foster their reflecting on the themes.

This suggests that Songs of Travel can generate support for migration and sustainability efforts by not only influencing behaviour but also by activating empathy, reflection, and ethical awareness through artistic experiences. Moreover, comments from the audience workshops highlight how music can be and is a shared emotional language; it allows audiences from diverse backgrounds to feel together. This shared experience serves as a means of community-building and collective meaning-making.

However, some attendees commented that this type of emotional messaging was only effective when it was clear and consistent.

*"Most of the group wanted more information or storytelling about why these pieces were chosen. They asked for deeper information."*

This underlines that while musical performances can evoke emotion, which can serve as a precondition to action, they are more impactful when they are carefully curated and contextualised to create a space in which audiences are implicitly guided through an aesthetic and narrative immersion to create what might be called an empathic readiness to change their attitudes and behaviours. This makes action more possible.





### 3. Thematic Integration was Powerful but Inconsistent

This theme highlights how Songs of Travel's curatorial strategy functioned as both the artistic and ethical infrastructure of the festivals. It was the glue that linked individual performances to the broader narratives of care and responsibility. When there was an absence of or uneven display of curatorial signals, audiences struggled to fully appreciate and integrate the Songs of Travel themes, and the emotional and ethical impact of Songs of Travel became fragmented.

Several workshop attendees lamented what they viewed as a lack of a more consistent and clear curatorial strategy or threadline through the festivals.

*"Some events were clearly thematic, but others felt random or unconnected."*

These remarks illustrate a perceived gap between the intent of Songs of Travel and its artists and the experience of audience members and highlight that whilst curators and artists may design with thematic intent, the effectiveness of the message they want to send depends on its translatability.

Audiences need narrative anchors to act as grounding points for what Songs of Travel is trying to accomplish, helping them understand its direction and purpose and how each element fits within the whole. This requires narrative architecture: ways of communicating why a particular piece matters, how it relates to Songs of Travel's themes, and what it invites the audience to consider. This could be done through the program notes, the artists' introductions of their pieces, or through curatorial storytelling explaining how a particular item relates to the overarching themes.

Attendees also critiqued instances where they felt the thematic delivery or use of themes was too forced or vague, and the message became diluted. This suggests that the integration must be both meaningful and contextually appropriate.

*"It was as if they were talking to children and reading from a script."*

*"The other concerts could have been more related to the theme. One might have wanted to see more related music, such as music created in concentration camps."*

This highlights two ways in which thematic integration can break down: tone and delivery and the relevance of the theme/message being delivered. If the tone and delivery of a theme feel overly simplified or misaligned with the audience, it can undermine the





credibility of the message and of Songs of Travel. Moreover, if the relevance of a theme is not apparent or if it appears disconnected from the overall message, it can weaken the strength and cohesion of the Songs of Travel narrative.

Despite these inconsistencies, workshop attendees expressed deep appreciation for the performances that clearly embodied Songs of Travel's themes, particularly those exploring displacement, vulnerability, and resilience. The potential of these moments was widely acknowledged.

*"The refugee stories were very strong. Presenting it in this way, linked to classical music, reaches a different audience."*

#### 4. People Notice When the Message Doesn't Match the Action

Workshop attendees saw the Songs of Travel themes not just as a set of goals but as a moral and cultural position that must be reflected across the full spectrum of a festival's activities. This creates accountability; if Songs of Travel foregrounds sustainability and migration empathy as part of its identity, it is held to this standard by its audience. What audiences perceive as inconsistencies, no matter how minor, can undermine their trust in a festival's messaging and weaken its ability to inspire change.

*"The message didn't come through consistently."*

Consistency builds credibility. Every touchpoint, programme content, communication, and audience experience must align to create a sense of trust and integrity with the audience. These operational decisions, even the small ones, either reinforce or contradict Songs of Travel's values.

Audiences expect transparency and honesty. Participants were not demanding perfection, but they expected honesty and clarity. Even when sustainability goals could not be fully achieved (e.g., limited travel options or digital access), attendees were more forgiving when there was transparent communication about trade-offs.



## 5. Empathy Needs to Lead to Action

Workshop attendees saw music and storytelling as powerful emotional conduits, capable of generating empathy and reflection. However, they also articulated a desire for a follow-through to turn their feelings of empathy into action. The lack of clear pathways to do this left some attendees feeling uncertain as to how to respond to the music, storytelling, and themes beyond the moment.

*“Empathy without action is frustrating.”*

However, when the emotional impact of the music, storytelling, and themes is paired with pathways to action through visible role-modelling, such as artist travel choices, it can catalyse reflection, change, and action.

*“When artists and students see that we take sustainability seriously, they start thinking about their own travel and habits.”*

This illustrates that generating empathy should be a means, not an end. Festivals that use music, storytelling, and performance to generate empathy must also design for what happens next. Audiences need opportunities to process, discuss, and decide how to turn emotional insight into real-world action or lifestyle change. This should be scaffolded. Audiences benefit from practical tools, reflective spaces, and suggestions for action (e.g., post-concert discussions). Following through on this builds integrity and impact and helps move people from a felt connection to an embodied commitment. When emotional resonance is followed by action, through artist behaviour, organisational commitments, or audience pathways, audiences feel that their engagement is meaningful and reciprocated.

## 6. Audience Members see Festivals as Potential Civic Leaders

In audience workshops, Songs of Travel was positioned as a trusted and value-driven space with a unique ability to influence behaviour through example, inspiration, and symbolic power. This reflects a belief in the soft authority of culture: its capacity to make values visible, give form to complex ideas, and nurture community-level



change. Participants indicated that cultural organisations like Songs of Travel have an opportunity, and perhaps an obligation, to step into this role.

*"All this work spreads like ripples in the water and inspires."*

Here, Songs of Travel's practices were not just viewed as being confined in-house but as public signals that radiate influence beyond Songs of Travel's boundaries. The ripple metaphor evokes a model in which local, visible action by cultural institutions can catalyse broader transformation.

Attendees also noted that sustainability practices enacted by Songs of Travel, such as food choices, served as norm-setting interventions. They shaped not only the festivals' identity but also attendees' personal perceptions of what is possible.

*"I actually think it's nice when a festival leads by example... when I see that, it inspires me and I make sure to mention it in my feedback to them"*

*"The festival just validates and encourages [sustainable behaviour]."*

These quotes illustrate how festivals can become educational ecosystems in which sustainability is not taught through instruction but communicated through shared culture, observed choices, and collective mood. Importantly, audiences notice and are inspired by practical action, not just rhetoric.

Several attendees also pointed to the need for cultural festivals to be proactive rather than simply reflective of current values. Rather than following trends or mirroring public discourse, festivals were expected to take risks, set agendas, and challenge assumptions. While this was sometimes articulated as a desire for more thematic clarity or bolder curatorial decisions, it also surfaced in conversations about broader leadership potential:

*"If we can show it's part of a bigger vision, to create a better society together, I think people will buy into it more."*

This sentiment underscores a belief that visionary cultural institutions can help shape collective ethics, inspiring both imagination and action.



## Comparative Analysis of Workshops

It's important to outline the similarities and discrepancies between the three respective workshops from Cellissimo, Fairplay Chamber Music Festival, and Piano Biennale. The following themes consistently appeared in all three workshops:

- The emotional power of music to generate empathy and reflection.
- Audiences support sustainability in principle.
- The value of visible green actions (biking, eco-products, etc).
- Concerns about thematic inconsistency in festival programming.

The following did not appear in all three workshops:

### 1. Sustainable Food as an Entry Point

Participants in the Cellissimo workshop made no reference to catering as meals were not provide to attendees, but catering choices were a central discussion point in the Fairplay Chamber and Piano Biennale workshops, significantly linked to choice architecture and inclusivity.

### 2. Digital Exclusion and Printed Materials

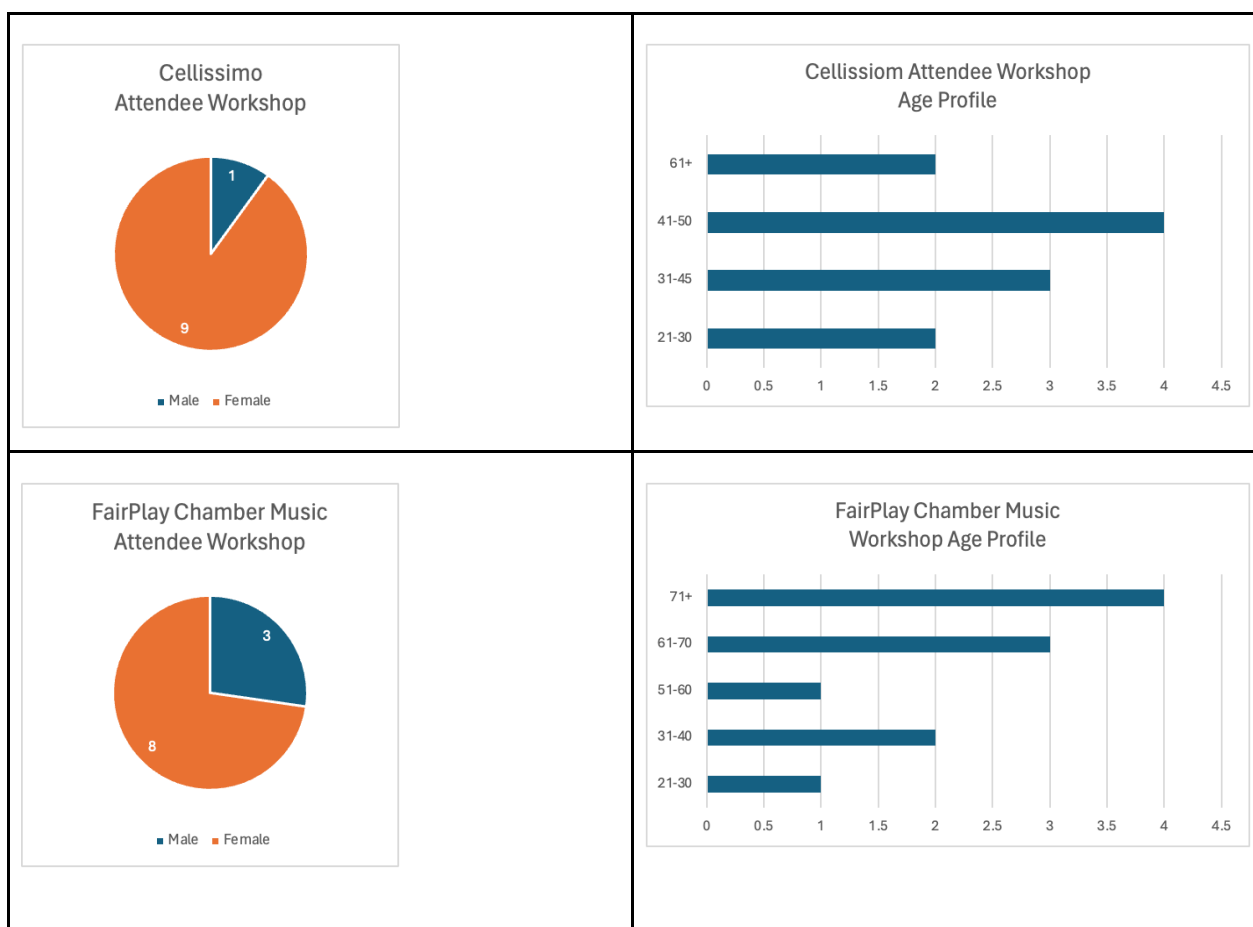
Printed programs, QR codes, and accessibility concerns related to technology were not raised explicitly in the Cellissimo workshop. The Fairplay Chamber and Piano Biennale workshops addressed these in more detail, especially in relation to older audience members. This could reflect the different age demographics represented in each workshop, or there was less emphasis on communication tools in the Cellissimo workshop.

### 3. Festival as a Civic/Cultural Actor

The idea that Songs of Travel festivals can act as a public leader in sustainability and social change emerged most clearly in the Fairplay Chamber and Piano Biennale workshops. In the Cellissimo workshop, this was implied but not explicitly articulated.



These similarities and discrepancies imply that audiences share core values and concerns, but some emerged more strongly in workshops adhering to a more rigorous structure. This highlights the importance of prompting, facilitation and adhering to a well-defined protocol during workshops to explore values and concerns in depth with consistency. Some important themes may go undiscussed and unexplored otherwise. However, it's also important that workshop facilitators are aware that not all audience members are the same and that careful facilitation is needed to draw out deeper themes.



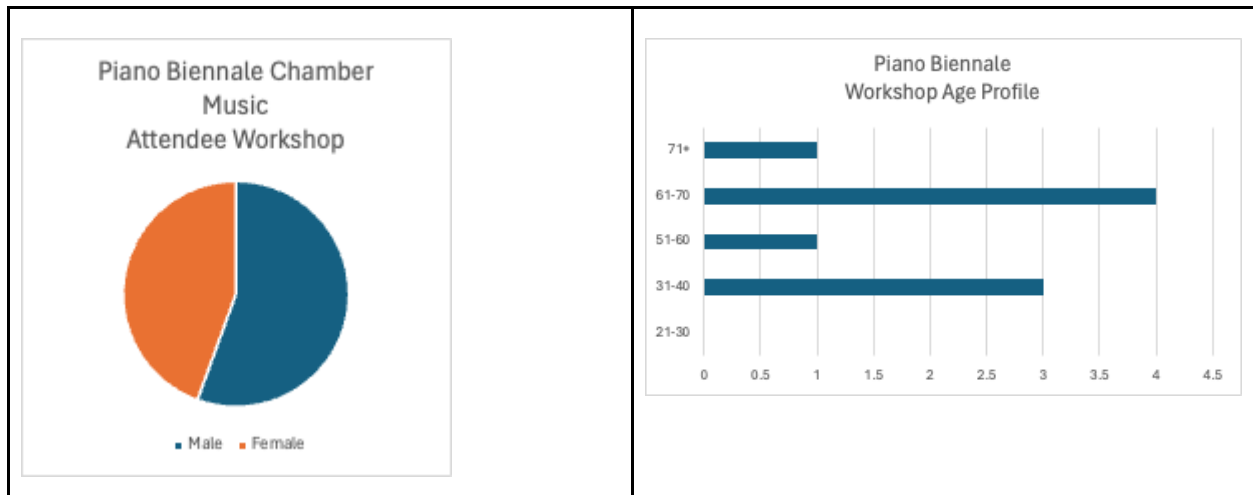


Figure 5. Demographics from attendee workshops held as part of Cellissimo, Fairplay Chamber Music Festival & Piano Biennale.

## Project Partner Workshop

Workshops were also held with Songs of Travel festival organisers and partners to explore their experiences and the practicalities of implementing the Green Policy. The workshop was designed by Dr. O' Hora in close consultation with the Songs of Travel project team. Workshops were scheduled to occur at all of the partner festivals but only occurred at Cellissimo and at Fairplay Chamber Music Festival. Piano Biennale and Valdres Sommersymfoni did not provide transcripts from workshops. As such, the analysis drew solely on the Cellissimo and Fairplay workshops, with protocol designed by Dr. O'Hora and the University of Galway research team. Similar to the audience workshop, partners from the other Songs of Travel festivals were scheduled to observe the workshop to emulate the process at their respective festivals. The workshop protocol was distributed in advance of the initial workshop occurring so that partner festivals could follow the same protocol. The workshops, with participants consent, were recorded and then transcribed. Participant names were anonymised, and any identifying or personal information was removed.

## Invitees

Any and all festival partners that directly or indirectly influenced the festival were invited to participate in the workshop. This included:

- Organisers



- Volunteers
- Liaisons
- Venue managers
- Artists
- Festival partners (catering, suppliers, accommodation partners, transport hire, printers)
- Production companies
- Local authority representatives

## Workshop Format

Those that attended the workshop included festival CEO, artistic director, organisation administrator, volunteer coordinator, and the festival's printing partner. This was a hybrid event, with some joining online. Partners from the other Songs of Travel festivals were invited to join online to observe the process but not directly participate. Prior to the workshop, participants were encouraged to familiarise themselves with Cellissimo's green policy. The workshop was structured to guide participants to reflect on:

- Their experiences of Songs of Travel.
- The success of Songs of Travel in communicating its themes.
- The barriers and facilitators to sustainable behaviour.
- The challenges and successes in implementing the green policy.

These reflections were discussed through the lens of the COM-B behaviour change model. Following the conclusion of the workshop, participants had further opportunity to comment on the challenges and successes of implementing the green policy via an online survey.

## Emerging themes from Partner Workshop

### 1. Make Sustainability a Core Part of the Festival

Partners frequently emphasised the need for sustainability to be visible and embodied in Cellissimo's delivery. Rather than adding on green or sustainability commitments to the existing structures of the festival, organisers sought to infuse sustainability into decision-



making at every level, from travel and printing choices to artist engagement and volunteer training.

*"We were already trying to be as green as possible."*

*"The policy being apparent in every part of the festival was a talking point."*

*"We don't have programme notes, and the explanation highlights our values, and it highlights the values of the festival."*

*"I think we should be clear about why we make certain choices, like serving vegan food or encouraging trains. If we can show it's part of a bigger vision—to create a better society together—I think people will buy into it more"*

This embedded approach often involved changing standard practices, such as eliminating printed programs, promoting public and shared transport, and incorporating green themes into artist introductions and performances. Cellissimo organisers viewed these actions as both practical and symbolic: they reduced environmental impact while simultaneously reinforcing the festival's green identity.

*"Then we decided not to print any programs at all."*

*"We were an example to the other artists."*

By doing this, Cellissimo signalled its values to attendees, volunteers, and anyone who interacted with the festival, not just through stated policies but through everyday choices that reflect a consistent commitment to sustainability. As explored in the audience workshop, these decisions often became points of conversation that extended beyond Cellissimo.

## 2. Challenges and Confusion About What 'Green' Really Meant

A recurring issue identified by organisers was that not everyone who interacted with the festival, such as artists, audiences, and project partners, fully understood its sustainability goals or the reasoning behind specific green policies, such as artists having to slow travel or a reduced amount of printed materials at events. This was despite detailed documentation, statements, and verbal explanations of why these steps were being taken; the message did not always "land."

*"I think the information was given, but it wasn't taken in."*





*"It became very clear that to the very, very end, they didn't understand the project."*

*"Some people just picked the bit that appeals to them and didn't look at the whole."*

Even with the information being available in multiple formats, some individuals choose to selectively engage with the green commitments of Cellissimo; only engaging with what made sense to them or ignoring the more demanding aspects of the commitments. The notion that people "picked the bits that appealed to them" also shows that if participants don't feel a sense of ownership or alignment with the message, they may ignore it, resist it, or misunderstand it.

One way in which this manifested was an apparent gap emerging between what festival organisers intended with the green commitments and how they were interpreted by those who interacted with the festival. For example, the slow travel policy for performers, intended as a meaningful commitment to low-carbon practices, was interpreted by some performers as an impractical demand.

*"Friction came from practicalities of slow travel."*

*"Transportation is a major challenge, especially for the audience"*

These findings illustrate that even if a festival has a clear policy and values, it does not mean that all involved will interpret them in the same manner. Sustainability, especially in the cultural sector, is a context-sensitive concept, which requires time, dialogue, and cultural translation to have the same meaning for all.

### 3. People Are More Likely to Act When They See Others Doing It

Organisers repeatedly described how sustainable behaviours, such as carpooling or cycling, were reinforced not just by policy but by people seeing peers, artists, or volunteers engage in these actions. This type of modelling created a sense of shared purpose and made sustainable behaviour feel normal, rather than exceptional.

*"If you see a whole body of people like you doing it, it changes things."*

The value of peer visibility extended beyond organisers themselves. Artists who were initially hesitant or unaware of the sustainability goals were described as becoming more open once they saw others adhering to green practices:



*“Even the artists who weren’t officially travelling green or doing those things were influenced by what we were doing in the Songs of Travel program.”*

This subtle form of influence was especially effective because it avoided overt enforcement. Rather than being told what to do, participants were gently guided through example and immersion. This led to sustainable actions being experienced not as a burden but as a source of meaning and pride, especially when it felt shared and visible:

*“Not only did I engage in the music, but I was also part of this positive impact.”*

This connection between personal identity and collective action reinforces the idea that environmental behaviours are not just rational decisions but symbolic acts of belonging and values alignment.

These examples align with a growing body of environmental psychology literature showing that behavioural norms and social identity are among the most effective drivers of sustainability-related behaviour change (Cialdini et al., 1990). When people perceive that others like them are adopting a behaviour and that it reflects shared values, they are more likely to internalise that behaviour themselves. At festivals, which are temporary communities with strong social dynamics, these effects can be particularly pronounced. The “festival bubble” creates a space where new norms can be rapidly constructed and performed, especially when those norms are made visible and reinforced by peers.

Importantly, this illustrates that behaviour change does not have to rely on top-down enforcement or detailed rules. Organisers reported success through softer strategies: leading by example, showcasing success stories, and trusting that people will follow suit when they feel part of a movement. In creative settings like festivals, it appears that participation and identity are stronger motivators than regulation.

Encouraging certain pro-environmental behaviours by example, rather than by directive fosters the sense of collective motivation without challenging autonomy:

*“I’m also thinking about communication around this. We don’t want to come across as forcing people to make certain choices, as that risks alienating them.”*

However, there’s also a caution here: social modelling can cut both ways. If influential individuals ignore sustainability guidelines, that behaviour too may spread. Organisers



noted that some participants only adopted parts of the sustainability agenda that felt convenient. This suggests that selective uptake can become a new norm if not carefully curated. While social modelling is powerful, it needs to be underpinned by consistent messaging and values alignment across all festival participants, from staff and artists to audiences.

#### 4. Real-World Changes Came From Small, Practical Actions

One of the strongest findings from the workshop was that meaningful change did not always come from big, top-down policies but rather from small, achievable actions taken during Cellissimo. These everyday practices, like carpooling, reducing printed materials, and offering vegan meals, served both functional and symbolic roles and were effective in building engagement.

*"Carpooling was flagged in the attendee session as a positive part of the festival."*

These changes were often easy to implement, but they had a considerable effect on participants' perceptions of the festival's values. They gave organisers and attendees a sense of practical agency, showing that sustainable choices could be integrated into everyday operations.

*"We had this issue with plastic cups in the Black Box... On the earlier afternoon show they had all these plastic cups, and it was awful. But in the evening time, they had switched to glass."*

*"It's a learning within the project."*

Several organisers also reflected that these actions opened space for dialogue and learning, prompting conversations during performances and among volunteers, reinforcing the idea that sustainability was a shared responsibility.

*"Not producing booklet meant talking about Songs of Travel."*

*"It really was interesting how it started conversations for them around what they're going to do"*

This experiential, grassroots form of sustainability helped ground the festival's broader policy goals. By connecting behaviour with values, organisers created opportunities for reflection, resonance, and reinforcement, three key ingredients for meaningful cultural change.



This theme reflects a fundamental principle in sustainability transitions: change is more likely to stick when it is concrete, contextual, and collective. While strategic planning and high-level goals remain important, the practices that people remember, talk about, and replicate are often small in scale but rich in meaning. From a behavioural perspective, these practical actions function as entry points (Nash et al., 2019); once participants try something manageable, like not taking a printed program or carpooling, they may become open to other, more demanding sustainability behaviours in the future. These actions also model the feasibility of change, showing that sustainability does not have to be disruptive or difficult.

In this sense, small sustainable practices are not just green choices; they are cultural signals. They communicate what Cellissimo stands for, how it wants to be seen, and how it invites others to participate. This interpretive power was especially important given that some of the festival's other policies, such as slow travel, were less visible or harder to implement.

This theme also underscores the educational potential of festivals: when sustainable behaviour is experienced directly, rather than explained, it is more likely to resonate emotionally and stay in people's minds.

## 5. Volunteers Are Theme Conduits and a Key Communication Channel

Organisers frequently praised volunteers for their enthusiasm and alignment with Cellissimo's values, particularly sustainable practices. In actuality, implementing these practices often heavily relies on volunteers. For instance, volunteers served as the first point of contact between the audience and the festival's sustainability efforts. Whether clarifying why no printed programmes were available, or directing people to compost bins, their role went beyond practical assistance, they shaped how audiences perceived the festival's values and authenticity. This suggests that they are key partners whose capacity and clarity of purpose directly affect a festival's ability to realise its values in practice.

Training and resourcing volunteers should be treated as core to a festival's sustainability strategy. With this support in place, the impact of volunteers can be significantly amplified. Their enthusiasm, personal connection to the festival, and trust from audiences make them uniquely effective in delivering complex messages in an approachable and genuine way. In



this sense, volunteers are not just an operational layer; they are conduits of cultural and environmental values.

## 6. Social Media Didn't Create the Conversations Organisers Hoped For

Organisers voiced concern that while social media was a necessary tool for visibility, it did not generate the kind of back-and-forth conversation they had hoped would accompany their sustainability messaging.

*"No back and forth on social media."*

*"I, personally, didn't feel an exchange on this."*

Rather than fostering two-way dialogue about Cellissimo and its commitments, organisers felt that social media functioned more like a newsletter, failing to spark curiosity, debate, or collective meaning-making around sustainability. Some felt that social media failed to reflect the depth and complexity of the sustainability work happening behind the scenes or in person.

*"Social media didn't represent the concert."*

*"Social media was like a report—it didn't create food for thought."*

It was also observed that the demographic differences between platform users shaped what could be communicated effectively. For example, the older audiences were more active on Facebook, where engagement tended to be limited to likes and shares, while visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok favoured image-based promotion over reflective discussion.

*"Part of Facebook is elderly people... so there were less videos."*

*"Instagram and TikTok were just the same—it wasn't like a huge difference."*

There was also an awareness that the intimate and thoughtful conversations about sustainability happened offline in live settings: at performances, during volunteer training, or in informal interactions.

*"It was more a community in person... not online."*

*"There was no dialogue [online]. But when we talked face-to-face, people were really into it."*



This reveals a disconnect between the intended function of social media and its actuality. Organisers hoped digital platforms could extend or mirror the festival's sustainability ethos, but this was not the case. This aligns with broader critiques of digital sustainability communication. Research has shown that while social media excels at visibility and reach, it often fails at depth and deliberation, particularly when dealing with complex topics like climate change and migration (Corner & Clarke, 2017).

This suggests a mismatch between the medium and the message. Environmental themes often require nuance, narrative, and emotional engagement, qualities that are hard to capture in platforms designed for speed, brevity, and visual appeal. This connects to earlier findings in that sustainability gains traction when it is embodied, relational, and visible in practice, rather than when it is simply presented or announced.

## High-level Organisers Meeting

Following the completion of the audience and organiser workshops, a High-Level Organisers Meeting was convened to reflect on the insights garnered from the workshops and to review Songs of Travel's festival design and delivery. This meeting brought together senior representatives from Cellissimo, Fairplay Chamber Music Festival, Piano Biennale, Valdres Sommersymfoni and Causa Creations to engage in discussion focused on accountability, learning, and future planning.

The meeting served not simply to evaluate whether the festivals had succeeded in meeting its sustainability goals, but to assess how values were translated into practice, and where further alignment and support structures might be needed. It functioned as a collective reflection forum, ensuring that the lessons emerging from the workshops would directly inform future editions of the festival.

## Meeting Format

### Presentation of Evaluation Findings

#### Presentation of Quantified Festival Emissions

- Overview of emissions data from each festival
- Highlight key sources (e.g. travel, food, energy use)



## Presentation of Qualitative Data

- Summary of key themes from audience and organiser workshops
- Include quotes and insights that illuminate lived experiences

## Methodology and Reflection

### Reflection on Festival Emissions Data Collection

- Discuss challenges and inconsistencies in measuring emissions
- Share any missing data or difficulties from local partners

### Review of the Travel Survey

- Evaluate response rates and data quality
- Identify how the survey should be adapted for each local context

### Reflection on Behaviour Change Workshops

- What worked well, what was missing, how to improve delivery
- Consider cultural differences and regional variation

### Reflection on Green Policy Implementation

- Were commitments met in practice?
- Identify gaps between intention and delivery

### Review Green Policy and List of Commitments

- Discuss how the current Green Policy aligns with outcomes
- Consider regional adaptation while keeping core values intact

## Planning for Future Implementation

### Discussion on Methodology for Embedding Sustainability into Future Festivals

- How should sustainability be integrated from the start of planning?
- Role of communication, artists, volunteers, and audience in co-delivery

### Discussion on the Need for Homogeneous Data Collection

- Agree on core data points, logic models, and shared survey tools

- Set a goal for consistency across partners without losing local nuance

### Operational and Strategic Planning

#### Content, Timing, Logistics, and Venues

- Discuss lessons learned from past editions
- Identify changes needed to better align with sustainability and inclusion goals

#### How to Improve Representation, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Address demographic gaps in audience, artist, or volunteer participation
- Share strategies to create a more welcoming and equitable festival environment

### **Key Areas of Focus**

#### 1. Revisiting the Green Policy in Practice

Partners reviewed how the agreed sustainability principles had been implemented during the festival, using real-world data and testimonials from organisers, artists, volunteers, and audience members. This included transport choices, food systems, material use and communication strategies

#### 2. Aligning Values with Operations

Drawing on workshop reflections, organisers discussed where there were gaps between intention and execution, for instance, where sustainability practices were unevenly applied or misunderstood by audiences. The discussion focused on the importance of building shared understanding early in the planning process and providing clearer guidance to all team members.

#### 3. Volunteer Experience and Capacity

Building on the theme that volunteers were essential to delivering the festival's values, the review examined how volunteer roles could be better integrated into future sustainability planning, including training, communication materials, and on-site support.

#### 4. Audience and Artist Engagement



Partners reviewed how sustainability messaging had been received by audiences and artists, noting both successes and moments of tension. They emphasised the importance of values-based framing and the need for consistent, inclusive messaging that welcomes rather than alienates.

## 5. Commitment to Iterative Design

A key outcome of the meeting was the affirmation that the festival should be treated as a learning environment. Rather than aiming for perfection, the focus would be on building momentum through incremental, evidence-based improvements, guided by feedback and anchored in the festival's long-term values.

## Emergent Themes from Meeting

### 1. Planning for Sustainability Is Logistically Complex

Organisers were unanimous in acknowledging the gap between sustainability ambitions and what is logistically possible during festival delivery. This tension was most pronounced in relation to artist travel, rehearsal schedules, and remote venues.

*"It's extremely hard to plan a sustainable festival. You're dealing with lots of moving parts and artists who may be coming from all over."*

The operational reality often constrains idealistic planning, especially in international settings with limited local infrastructure. While commitment to low-emission travel was high, participants felt constrained by real-world limitations outside their direct control.

The willingness to act sustainably is present, but systemic and logistical barriers must be addressed, possibly through cross-partner coordination, longer lead times, and alternative scheduling models that support environmentally preferable transport.

### 2. Emotional Labour and Uneven Commitment

Several organisers expressed emotional fatigue from acting as internal sustainability champions, often feeling isolated or unsupported in their efforts. The challenge was compounded when actions were met with external criticism.

*"It's hard to stay motivated when you feel like you're the only one pushing for change."*



This theme reflects both a psychological burden and a structural one: the pressure on individual organisers to lead change without shared institutional responsibility creates the risk of burnout. A lack of collective ownership has potential to weaken morale and threaten sustainability consistency across festival partners.

Leadership in sustainability often falls on passionate individuals. To avoid burnout and improve outcomes, responsibility must be distributed across teams, with shared accountability and reinforcement from leadership at all levels.

### 3. Balancing Symbolic Action with Structural Impact

Organisers openly acknowledged the tension between visible sustainability measures (like signage, eliminating plastic, or providing vegan food) and invisible but more impactful actions (such as changing artist rider expectations or reducing carbon-intensive travel). They described the need to do both, even while recognising that symbolic gestures may not always result in meaningful change.

*“Sometimes we spend a lot of time on small changes that don’t move the needle much. But we do them because they’re visible.”*

This points to a delicate communications challenge: visible actions build credibility and public trust, but meaningful sustainability often requires less-visible, systemic changes that lack the same performative impact.

Festivals must balance optics with outcomes. A clear communication strategy is needed to help audiences understand the value of behind-the-scenes actions while maintaining visible symbols that signal commitment.

### 4. Data Collection Needs Coordination and Consistency

Another issue raised was the inconsistency in how sustainability data, particularly travel emissions, was collected and reported across festival partners. Organisers noted that while some festivals collected detailed travel information and conducted emissions calculations, others lacked the resources or tools to do so systematically. These discrepancies limit the ability of partners to assess the overall impact of their sustainability policies or identify meaningful progress.



Without a standardised data collection framework, it becomes difficult to evaluate, iterate, or communicate sustainability performance. Investing in shared tools, survey formats, and agreed indicators is essential for tracking long-term impact.

## 5. The Need for Policy Flexibility Across Contexts

Organisers expressed a need to interpret or adapt certain commitments depending on regional, cultural, or infrastructural realities. This tension emerged particularly around travel, volunteer capacity, and venue-related practices.

This suggests a need for the Green Policy to act as a values framework rather than a rigid checklist, allowing flexibility in implementation while maintaining coherence in intent.

Sustainability policies must be both principled and adaptable. A flexible framework with clear values and shared minimum standards allows festivals in diverse contexts to work towards common goals while being responsive to local needs.



## Key Insights from SOT

### Potential to influence Audience Behaviour

One of the main objectives of this report is to investigate the capacity of festival communities for generating change. To this end, the themes and insights from the audience and partner workshops were interpreted through the lens of the COM-B behaviour change model (Michie et al, 2011).

The COM-B model is a framework used to understand and change behaviour by identifying three key components: capability, opportunity, and motivation. It suggests that for a behaviour to occur, an individual must have the psychological and physical ability (capability), be in an environment that supports the behaviour (opportunity), and be driven to perform the behaviour (motivation). In the context of COM-B:

- **Capability** refers to whether we have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage in a behaviour. This comprises psychological capability, including mental states, knowledge, and skills, as well as physical capability. For example, to make an individual feel capable of performing a behaviour or achieving an outcome, implementing a training session to help support learning may boost feelings of capability.
- **Opportunity** refers to external factors that make the execution of a behaviour possible. Physical opportunity, opportunities provided by the environment, and social opportunity are all valid components. For example, to create the opportunity to begin performing a behaviour like adopting new dietary patterns, free nutrition classes might help.
- **Motivation** refers to the internal processes that influence decision-making and behaviour. According to the model, two main components are reflective motivation (the reflective process involved in making plans) and automatic motivation (automatic processes such as impulses and inhibition). For example, to improve motivation, it may be helpful to turn a desired behaviour from something one needs to do to something one wants to do, encouraging reflection on the benefits of performing that behaviour.

By analysing these three components, the COM-B model helps to identify the factors that are either enabling or hindering a specific behaviour. This understanding can then be used to design targeted interventions to promote desired behaviour changes.



## COM-B and Insights from Songs of Travel

### 1. Sustainability Only Works If It's Doable

This theme reflects the practical and systemic barriers to sustainability. Audiences and organisers supported sustainability in principle but often struggled with the real-world logistics of enacting it, especially where infrastructure was lacking or expectations felt unrealistic.

- Capability: Some attendees or artists lacked the information, tools or physical ability to make sustainable choices
- Opportunity: There were external barriers such as travel infrastructure or venue location that limited sustainable options.

Implication: Festivals must improve both the knowledge base (capability) and physical resources or systems (opportunity) to support sustainable choices.

### 2. Music and Storytelling Changed How People Felt

This theme clearly aligns with reflective and emotional motivation. Music and personal stories moved audiences emotionally and led to deeper engagement with migration and climate change.

- Motivation: Performances stirred empathy and reflection, increasing psychological readiness for change.

Implication: While emotional engagement creates motivation, it must be paired with clear pathways to action, or this motivational energy may dissipate.

### 3. Thematic Integration Was Powerful but Inconsistent

Audiences valued programming that tied clearly into sustainability themes but felt some concerts lacked coherence. This reduced the potential for sustained emotional or cognitive engagement.

- Motivation: Inconsistent themes weakened the emotional and reflective impact of the festival.

- Capability: Audiences requested more interpretive framing, suggesting that thematic clarity boosts understanding and engagement.

Implication: Programming must be curated with intentionality and continuity to build audience motivation and understanding over time.

#### 4. People Notice When the Message Doesn't Match the Action

Perceived contradictions between values and actions, such as poor communication or inaccessible delivery, undermined audience trust and engagement.

- Motivation: Misalignment eroded trust, reducing the likelihood of audiences adopting sustainable behaviours.
- Opportunity: Lack of visible follow-through diminished social or environmental cues that support behavioural change.

Implication: For motivation to convert into action, audiences need to see credibility and consistency in the festival's values and operations.

#### 5. Empathy Needs to Lead to Action

Participants were emotionally engaged by festival content but wanted more support in turning that emotion into behaviour through information, role-modelling, or guidance.

- Motivation: Attendees felt strongly, but emotional impact alone did not always lead to change.
- Capability: Attendees wanted tools and frameworks to guide decisions.

Implication: Motivation must be scaffolded with practical knowledge and confidence to act.

#### 6. Festivals as Potential Civic Leaders

Audiences expected festivals to lead by example, not just by reducing emissions but by inspiring change through ethical leadership, creative vision, and visible modelling of values.

- Opportunity: Festivals were seen as social environments that could normalise sustainable behaviour.



- Motivation: Seeing leaders (festivals and artists) act with integrity inspired participants to do the same.

Implication: Festivals can shape social norms and set motivational examples that encourage collective behaviour change.

## 7. Volunteers as Key Sustainability Enablers

Volunteers played a central role in communicating and enacting the festival's sustainability goals. They were the first point of contact between audiences and the festival's values.

- Capability: Volunteers often had to explain sustainability measures. Clear and concise training can enhance this capability.
- Opportunity: Though motivated, festivals should provide volunteers with consistent messaging, signage, and guidance so they're not left to manage change alone.
- Motivation: Volunteers believed in the festival's mission, but recognising volunteers and involving them in sustainability planning helps keep motivation high.

Implication: Festivals must strengthen all three COM-B domains for volunteers if they are to act as trusted facilitators of sustainability.

## Implications for Incorporating the COM-B Model into Future Songs of Travel Festivals

### 1. Build Capability Through Knowledge and Clarity

Many participants, audience members, artists, and volunteers expressed interest in adopting more sustainable behaviours but lacked the information, confidence, or tools to follow through.

- Provide simple, visible information (e.g. carbon footprint labels on meals, low-emissions travel guides).
- Offer orientation sessions or pre-festival briefings for artists, staff, and volunteers about key sustainability efforts.
- Use clear signage and narrative framing during concerts to explain why certain choices (e.g. vegan meals, train travel) matter.



Capability is not just about knowing what to do; it's about knowing why and how in a way that feels empowering, not overwhelming.

## 2. Create Opportunities by Designing for Access and Inclusivity

Sustainable behaviours only take root when people feel they have the means and permission to act. This includes removing structural barriers, ensuring inclusivity, and making the sustainable choice the default or easiest option.

- Ensure public transport connections, bike access, and shuttles are well-promoted and easy to use.
- Make sustainability features visible and normalised, not hidden (e.g. showcasing artists who travelled by train).
- Offer limited printed materials for those who cannot easily use digital platforms (especially older attendees), while offering digital formats as the default.

Opportunity means more than offering a green choice, it means creating an environment where that choice is easy, comfortable, and supported.

## 3. Harness Motivation Through Emotion and Role Modelling

The festival's strongest impact came when music and storytelling inspired emotional engagement and reflection. But motivation was sometimes lost when people didn't know how to act on those feelings, or when festival actions didn't align with its message.

- Curate programs with strong narrative arcs that clearly connect artistic content to sustainability and social themes.
- Ensure consistency between message and action; avoid symbolic gestures that aren't followed through.
- Feature artist testimonials or stories about sustainable practices as part of the public-facing program.

Motivation must be stirred, sustained, and supported by emotionally resonant content, visible leadership, and clear next steps.





#### 4. Support Volunteers as Agents of Behaviour Change

Volunteers often became the face of the festival, serving as the first point of contact between the audience and the festival's sustainability efforts by answering questions and helping model the event's values. Training and resourcing volunteers should be treated as core to a festival's sustainability strategy. With this support in place, the impact of volunteers can be significantly amplified. This could be done by:

- Giving volunteers clear scripts, toolkits, and the autonomy to refer questions upward if needed.
- Acknowledge their work in sustainability delivery.
- Create spaces for volunteer reflection and feedback.

Volunteers are not just helpers; they are behaviour change facilitators. Supporting them is a key part of COM-B-aligned sustainability.

#### 5. Design Feedback Loops and 'Next Steps' for Audiences

Attendees wanted the emotional and ethical experience of the festival to continue after the final concert but needed help connecting that to everyday action.

- Offer clear next steps: local groups to join, follow-up events, reading lists, or small behavioural pledges.
- Use post-festival surveys to gauge what behaviours audiences adopted, and reflect that data back to them in newsletters or podcasts.
- Explore festival-branded behaviour change campaigns (e.g. "I Took the Train to SOT") that create identity and continuity.

Sparking motivation is important, but maintaining it requires ongoing opportunities to act, reflect, and be seen.

For Songs of Travel, adopting a COM-B-informed design doesn't mean making the festival more complicated; it means making sustainability more possible. By aligning emotional impact with clear actions, removing barriers, and treating volunteers and audiences as partners in change, the festival can serve not just as a model event but as a model for behaviour change in cultural and civic life.



## Research Insights and Limitations

### Insights

#### Festival Organisation & Survey Design

The process of designing and deploying the audience travel survey revealed challenges related to linguistic, cultural, and geographical translation. Terms such as “low-emission travel” or “sustainable options” were not universally understood or easily translated across different partner contexts. These inconsistencies impacted data quality and comparability. Additionally, the format and logic of some surveys were not aligned with qualitative methods, making it difficult to draw reliable conclusions across the project. This highlights the need for a shared, co-designed survey structure that is clear, culturally sensitive, and methodologically compatible across all partners.

#### Data Collection and Post-Festival Dissemination

Data collection efforts often focused heavily on the live delivery of the festival, with limited planning for post-festival follow-up or dissemination. This meant that valuable insights, such as changes in audience behaviour or reflections on sustainability messaging, were sometimes missed or collected too late. Developing a structured post-festival data collection and communication phase would allow festivals to close the loop, share learnings more effectively, and build longer-term engagement with audiences, artists, and stakeholders.

#### Survey Design and Data Collection

Attendees expressed a strong willingness to provide feedback but showed signs of fatigue when faced with long, repetitive, or overly detailed surveys. To maintain engagement and response quality, surveys should be short, relevant, and clearly connected to the values and themes of the festival. Questions must be targeted, easy to understand, and avoid duplication. Building trust by explaining how the data will be used can also improve response rates. This calls for a design principle of “efficient depth”; capturing meaningful insight without overburdening participants.



Surveys need to be rigorously tested prior to deployment:

- Respondents should be restricted in terms of data entry (increased use of drop down/tick box answers)
- Structured section for open-survey items to obtain richer qualitative data
- Survey format should be homogenous across all festivals to ensure coherent dataset from which one can draw intercomparisons. This may require an allocated budget for translation and adaptation of the survey for each local festival.
- Demographics of ticket buyers should be captured to allow accurate extrapolation of survey data to the general audience.
- Survey should include incentive (e.g. responding to the survey in full will allow respondent discounted access to a festival event), and survey respondents should have the option to sign up to participate in focus groups/further research.

#### Mixed Methods Data Collection Enhances Understanding of Festival Impact

The Songs of Travel project employed a blended approach to data collection, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture a fuller picture of how sustainability practices were experienced, understood, and acted upon by different festival participants. This mixed-methods approach allowed the research to go beyond basic metrics, offering deeper insight into emotional responses, barriers to participation, and ideas for future development.

#### Quantitative Data Collection:

The project gathered structured, numerical data to track festival performance and audience behaviour using a combination of surveys, questionnaires, and observational reporting. This included:

- Likert-scale responses to gauge attitudes toward sustainability, enjoyment of performances, or agreement with messaging.
- Transport data, identifying how attendees travelled to and from the festival (e.g. train, car, bus).
- Event attendance records, providing insights into engagement levels across various concerts or sessions.



- Catering data, detailing the number and types of meals and drinks provided, helping estimate carbon footprints associated with food choices.

This data was valuable for producing comparable figures across festival locations, assessing progress against sustainability targets, and communicating tangible results to stakeholders.

### Qualitative Data Collection

To complement the quantitative data, the project also captured rich narrative and reflective data through more open and creative methods. These included:

- Post-festival interviews and focus groups, providing space for deeper discussion around what worked, what didn't, and how participants experienced the festival's sustainability efforts.

Future iterations of Songs of Travel could further enrich the data collected by employing:

- Reflection cards that are distributed during or after the festival, allowing participants to share short personal impressions, feelings, or reactions to specific events.
- Creative reflective workshops, where participants use storytelling, drawing, or group dialogue to process their experiences in non-traditional formats.

The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods surfaced a wide range of insights, including:

- Barriers and facilitators to making sustainable choices at the festival (e.g. infrastructure issues, social norms).
- Suggestions for future iterations, offering practical ideas grounded in real attendee experiences.
- Emotional responses to festival themes which could not have been captured through structured surveys alone.

Furthermore, this mixed-methods approach allowed researchers to triangulate data, cross-checking findings between different formats and capturing both breadth (e.g. how many people used low-emission transport) and depth (e.g. why certain travel choices were harder

or more meaningful). Notably, the qualitative tools helped uncover unexpected insights that quantitative methods alone might have missed.

## Festival Organisation & Communication

The Green Policy is not just a planning tool, it is also a crucial part of the festival's communications strategy. When clearly articulated and visible to audiences, artists, and staff, the policy serves as a reference point that helps explain festival decisions and actions (e.g. food choices, travel planning, printed materials). However, when left implicit or poorly communicated, it can create confusion or undermine trust. Embedding the Green Policy into public messaging, staff briefings, and artist onboarding strengthens both transparency and credibility.

## Sustainable Operations

While overall emissions tracking is useful, the data revealed that individual decisions, particularly around travel, can disproportionately shape the festival's carbon footprint. A single long-distance flight can outweigh the impact of dozens of smaller, local changes. This underscores the need for critical reflection on individual actions, not just aggregate impact. Sustainability policies should include guidance for organisers, artists and suppliers, helping them consider alternatives where possible and reinforcing a shared sense of responsibility across all contributors.

## Festival Organisation & Robust Data Collection

In addition to audience and travel data, there is a need for more systematic collection of operational and organisational data, such as pre-festival resource use, organiser travel, volunteer logistics, and energy use in venues. Without this information, it is difficult to assess how well sustainability goals are being implemented in practice. Establishing a core set of data points to be collected by all festival partners would help create a more complete picture of impact and areas for improvement.



## Messaging and Festival Operations

Audience members expressed a clear expectation that festival operations should align with stated sustainability values. When discrepancies arise, such as encouraging low-emission travel while offering no clear alternatives, or promoting inclusion while removing accessibility features, audiences notice, and trust in the festival's message can erode. Ensuring operational coherence with ethical messaging is essential for maintaining credibility and deepening audience engagement with sustainability themes.

## Limitations and Methodological Considerations

The research and analysis associated with Songs of Travel sought to employ a qualitative approach, in particular committing to inductive, participant-led thematic analysis. While this provides valuable insights into how Songs of Travel's themes were understood and experienced, several limitations in the data collection process should be acknowledged. These factors do not invalidate the findings, but they do shape the scope, depth, and comparability of the analysis.

### 1. Variation in Data Format and Depth

The main sources of qualitative data, the audience workshops, the partner workshop, and the post-partner workshop survey, differed significantly in format. The audience workshops were rich in personal reflection and emotional content, whilst the post-partner workshop survey yielded shorter, bullet-point-style responses. The partner workshop fell somewhere in between. These differences influenced how easily themes could be developed across the datasets, with some perspectives expressed in more depth than others.

When qualitative data varies in richness, certain voices, especially those given more space to reflect, may be more prominent in the thematic analysis, potentially skewing the balance of interpretation.



## 2. Differences in the Questions Asked

Audience workshop participants were invited to reflect on feelings, values, and personal experiences, whilst partner workshop participants were more often asked about logistics, challenges, or operational decisions. This inconsistency meant that the datasets did not always explore the same kinds of issues, limiting the opportunities for direct comparison between audience and partner perspectives.

For a fair and balanced thematic analysis, all participants should be asked similar types of questions, especially when exploring values, perceptions, and behavioural change.

## 3. Unclear Participant Roles in Group Settings

In the partner workshop, participants often spoke from different perspectives, such as that of an organiser, artist, or volunteer, without always explicitly stating what perspective they were speaking from. This made it difficult to understand whose perspective was being represented at different moments in the conversation.

In qualitative research, understanding a speaker's role helps interpret their statements within the right social and organisational context. Without that clarity, some responses may be misattributed or overgeneralised.

## 4. Survey Format Not Ideal for Deep Reflection

The post-partner workshop survey provided useful factual and procedural information, but its structure (short-answer and checklist format) did not encourage the same depth of narrative, reflection, or complexity found in workshop settings.

Thematic analysis relies on detailed, nuanced data, and whilst surveys can capture general trends, they are less effective at revealing emotional tensions, ethical dilemmas, or personal interpretations.



## 5. Limited Follow-Up or Clarification

In an interview, focus group, or workshop setting, researchers can follow up on unclear statements and ask participants to elaborate on what they said. However, employing a survey does not offer opportunities for this kind of clarification.

Without the possibility of following up on a statement, potentially rich insights may remain underdeveloped or misunderstood, and contradictions between the datasets cannot be explored in depth.

These limitations highlight the importance of aligning data collection methods with the goals of inductive, participant-led thematic analysis. In future research, it is recommended that more consistent qualitative methods be used across all groups from which data is collected. These methods could be interviews or facilitated group discussions, but it is important there is a structure and throughline through each for the data collected to be properly compared and contrasted. It is also important that all participants are invited to reflect on not just what they do, but how they feel and why they act. This will help ensure that all perspectives are represented fairly, that themes emerge from a shared conceptual base, and that comparisons between groups are valid and meaningful.



## Guide for implementing Green Policy in Small-Scale Festivals

This guide is based on insights from the Songs of Travel project and works to support festival teams in planning, delivering, and reflecting on green commitments and sustainability practices. It draws directly from lived experiences and lessons shared by organisers, audience members, and volunteers during the evaluation of the Songs of Travel festival series.

### BEFORE THE FESTIVAL: Setting the Sustainable Foundation

Sustainability starts long before the first ticket is sold or the first note is played. The decisions made in the early planning stages shape not only environmental outcomes but also the sense of shared ownership and coherence that festival participants experience. The Songs of Travel organisers reflected that much of the success (and stress) around green policies could be traced back to early-stage planning.

#### 1. Build Internal Alignment Early

If organisers, artists, production teams, and volunteers are not on the same page from the beginning, sustainability efforts can feel scattered and inconsistent. Internal tensions may also emerge when some team members feel overburdened or unclear about expectations.

Recommendations:

- Host an early planning session that focuses specifically on the festival's environmental and social values.
- Use open dialogue to surface different views and comfort levels. This is particularly important when international or freelance artists are involved, as their expectations and constraints may differ.
- Identify 2–3 shared sustainability priorities that everyone agrees to uphold.
- Prioritise sustainable travel for organisers and artists, and where possible, organise infrastructure to provide accessible sustainable travel options for attendees. This may require liaison with local authorities and travel companies.



- Include evaluation, feedback and de-briefing sessions in the festival programme with relevant parties (audience, festival team, partners, local authorities and associate partners) to reflect on festival successes, lessons learned and up-scaling. These sessions should be rigorously planned and adhere to research-informed workshop protocol to evaluate potential behaviour change.

## 2. Set Feasible and Context-Aware Targets

A well-intentioned plan can collapse under the weight of unrealistic goals, especially when resources are limited. Songs of Travel participants emphasised that goals should stretch ambition but also recognise the constraints of venue location, transport availability, artist touring schedules, and team capacity.

Recommendations:

- Use the “ideal vs achievable” model: What would your dream look like, and what’s a credible step toward it?
- Focus on high-impact, visible changes first.
  - Commit to green travel, avoiding air travel and minimising private car use.
  - Provide vegetarian food from a local business
  - Avoid waste by avoiding single use items, and programmes
  - Only partner with businesses and organisations that are committed to sustainable practices
- Tailor sustainability targets to your festival's scale and environment. Consider the limits of your venue, location, and infrastructure. For example, a rural festival may not eliminate driving but could promote carpooling; a coastal venue may focus on eliminating plastic rather than printed materials if mobile coverage is poor.
- Build flexibility into your green policy, e.g., offering alternative solutions rather than rigid bans. This could mean having vegan or plant-based meals as the set norm for the festival but having an option for people to add meat for a premium.
- Consider mobility issues when planning venues and travel logistics



### 3. Design Clear, Inclusive Communication Plans

Sustainability efforts lose their power when people don't understand the "why" behind them. Moreover, if messaging is not concise and clear, or overly technical, it can alienate some audiences. Good communication builds trust, understanding, and a sense of shared purpose.

Recommendations:

- Create a set of 3–5 simple key messages that can be repeated across the website, signage, programs, and staff briefings.
- Focus messaging on shared values such as fairness, community, and well-being.
- Translate messages into relevant languages and formats. Consider the needs of multilingual, older, or neurodivergent audiences.
- Involve artists in pre-festival briefings about sustainability goals.

### 4. Prepare and Empower Volunteers

Volunteers often serve as the public face of the festival's sustainability strategy, explaining policies, directing audiences, and modelling behaviours. Yet without proper training and preparation, volunteers can feel unprepared or emotionally stretched, especially when asked about green decisions that they didn't make or might not understand what they entail.

Recommendations:

- Provide simple training materials: a 2-page sustainability summary, short video briefings, or an FAQ sheet.
- Clarify expectations around audience interaction.
- Assign a dedicated volunteer sustainability coordinator or set up a "green support team" who can help field difficult questions.
- Involve volunteers in sustainability planning early, so they understand the reasoning and feel ownership over the policies.



## 5. Engage Artists and Partners in Sustainability Goals

Artists and collaborators bring creative energy and public influence to a festival. If they understand and support your green commitments, they can amplify them meaningfully. But if they do not fully understand or comprehend what these commitments entail or feel constrained by them, it can lead to resistance.

Recommendations:

- Start coordinating and engaging partners early in the process. Partners should meet to discuss and collaborate on a refined, festival-specific Green Policy, using the Songs of Travel Green Commitments as a blueprint.
- Festival organisers should engage with local business partners and neighbouring festivals on the subject of sustainability, creating a green inter-festival network with the purpose of:
  - Knowledge transfer & sharing insights
  - Coordinate programming, making travel more efficient
  - Share resources
  - Unified voice to push for infrastructural change and initiatives with local authorities

This engagement should take place early in the planning process to ensure smooth planning and execution of operations.

Partners could include:

- Local researchers/sustainability experts. The researchers should link in with international networks and research on best practices in festival planning, but with site-specific knowledge to guide adaptation of the green commitments to the festival's locality
  - Researchers/sustainability experts should also engage extensively with the festival partners, with special consideration to the volunteers. The rationale of each commitment should be discussed between partners.
  - The researchers should also provide guidance on data collection, ensuring surveys are relevant to the locality, and test surveys rigorously prior to deployment.



- Local authorities to discuss support for festival transport (discounted tickets, bespoke group transport options)
- Supply partners and venues, including provisioners of high-quality, local vegetarian food produce for festival catering.

## DURING THE FESTIVAL: Turning Policy into Practice

This stage is where values become actions and sustainability becomes a lived experience. The way organisers, volunteers, artists, and audiences interact with green policies in real time determines whether sustainability feels meaningful, performative, or burdensome. The Songs of Travel festivals showed that even simple, visible actions could have a lasting emotional and behavioural impact if they were communicated clearly and executed thoughtfully.

### 1. Make Sustainability Visible and Understandable

Audience members at the Songs of Travel festivals consistently said they noticed and appreciated sustainable practices, especially when these were explained. Clear communication helped audiences feel part of the solution rather than confused or excluded.

Recommendations:

- Use signage, spoken announcements, or short program notes to explain sustainability choices: Why is the food vegan? Why are there no printed flyers?
- Assign volunteers or staff members to gently share the reasoning behind changes in transport, food, or waste systems.
- Share a few “behind-the-scenes” stories on social media (e.g., how artists travelled by boat or by train) to reinforce the values of the festival.
- Create a culture of shared responsibility.



## 2. Balance Ideals with Flexibility and Inclusion

The Songs of Travel data revealed that when sustainability measures felt imposed or rigid, some participants disengaged. But when audiences were offered informed choices, they were far more likely to cooperate, even enthusiastically.

Recommendations:

- Offer opt-in models rather than strict bans (e.g., vegan food by default, meat available by request).
- Provide alternatives for people with accessibility needs (e.g., printed materials for those who struggle with digital formats).
- Create multilingual or visual communications to engage broader audiences, especially in diverse or international contexts.

## 3. Let Artists Model the Festival's Values

Artists are often seen as cultural role models. When they openly reflect on sustainability through performance choices, travel decisions, or personal stories, it can reinforce the festival's messages in a human, inspiring way.

Recommendations:

- Encourage artists to briefly mention their sustainability choices during stage introductions or post-concert conversations.
- Include artist reflections on sustainability in programs, signage, or social media.
- Share stories of effort and compromise (e.g., long-distance train journeys) to show what sustainability looks like in practice.

## 4. Design the Audience Experience to Support Sustainable Behaviour

People want to do the right thing, but infrastructure, cues, and convenience shape whether they can follow through. The Songs of Travel audiences made strong efforts, like choosing public transport, but they needed enabling conditions.

Recommendations:

- Ensure waste sorting stations are clearly marked and visible.



- Provide maps, instructions, or incentives for public transport, walking, or cycling routes.
- Offer reusable cup or container systems, and make it easy to return them.

## 5. Support Staff and Volunteers in Real Time

Festival staff and volunteers are often the ones who have to respond to questions, complaints, or confusion. If they're not supported during the event, they may feel stressed, isolated, or ineffective.

Recommendations:

- Appoint a sustainability coordinator or buddy who volunteers can check in with.
- Offer quiet spaces or breaks for volunteers doing emotionally demanding work.
- Provide a real-time WhatsApp channel for fast updates and mutual support.

## AFTER THE FESTIVAL: Reflection, Learning, and Ongoing Change

The end of the festival is not the end of the work. In fact, it's a critical time to reflect, consolidate progress, and plan for improvement. One of the key lessons from Songs of Travel was that post-festival practices, such as open reflection and sharing lessons, strengthen the credibility of sustainability efforts and help shift mindsets from short-term action to long-term cultural change.

### 1. Evaluate Honestly and Invite Feedback

Participants across roles, audience members, organisers, and artists, said they appreciated transparency more than perfection. Honest evaluation builds trust, reveals what really worked, and highlights areas to develop. Without it, mistakes may be repeated, and progress can stall.

Recommendations:



- Host a debrief meeting with staff, volunteers, and artists to reflect on successes, frustrations, and surprises.
- Conduct post-festival workshops to garner feedback and insight from audiences on the logistics of sustainable actions as well as what values they took from the festival. (e.g. “Did the festival make you think differently about sustainability?”).
- Track and review environmental data such as emissions, food waste, and transport choices.

## 2. Celebrate Small Wins and Make Progress Visible

Festivals often set ambitious sustainability goals. But even partial progress can have symbolic and motivational value, especially when it’s shared with the community. Highlighting small wins shows that change is possible and invites others to join the journey.

Recommendations:

- Create a post-festival impact summary; this could be a 1-page PDF, social media post, or short video.
- Share key statistics (“80% of the audience used low-emission transport”) alongside personal stories (“We heard that the vegan meals inspired people to change their habits at home”).
- Make clear where things didn’t go to plan and what will change next time.

## 3. Plan for Iteration, Not Perfection

One festival cannot solve climate change or achieve total circularity. But festivals can become powerful learning laboratories, places where new behaviours and systems are tested, refined, and shared. Recognising this helps shift mindsets from “success/failure” to “growth over time.”

Recommendations:

- Update your Green Policy after each edition of the festival, reflecting real experiences and capacities.





- Build a “living document” approach, where sustainability planning is seen as evolving, responsive, and co-created with your team and community.
- Set 2–3 clear sustainability goals for next year and communicate them early.

#### 4. Use Festivals as Seeds for Broader Change

Audience members said they saw festivals as more than entertainment; they saw them as potential civic leaders, spaces where new norms could be modelled and scaled. But for this to happen, the learning from each event needs to be shared.

Recommendations:

- Run a community forum or artist roundtable to share findings and hear others' views.
- Offer to speak or write about your sustainability journey in local media, arts networks, or green platforms.
- Connect with other small festivals to share resources, tools, and templates.

### What This Means

Sustainability in festivals is no longer a luxury or an afterthought; it is a shared responsibility and an opportunity for cultural leadership. As this guide has shown, small-scale festivals have the power to lead by example, shaping new behaviours and values through the decisions they make, the stories they tell, and the experiences they create.

Three key insights have emerged:

1. **Sustainability only works if it's doable.** Ambition must be matched with practical planning, context awareness, and clear communication. A values-led approach that still allows for flexibility is essential.
2. **People are ready to engage, but they need support.** Audiences, volunteers, and artists all expressed a willingness to change habits and behaviours, provided they understand the why and have the tools to participate meaningfully.



3. **Reflection is part of the work.** Honest evaluation, shared learning, and a willingness to adapt over time are what distinguish performative efforts from truly embedded, evolving sustainability practices.

The guiding mindset for festivals looking to implement green commitments and sustainable practices should be:

**“What We Build This Year Should Help Someone Next Year”**

After each festival, ask:

- What have we learnt about how people engage with sustainability?
- Where did our actions align (or misalign) with our values?
- What would make it easier, clearer, or more inspiring next time?

The key is to see each edition not as a finished product but as a stepping stone toward more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally conscious cultural practice.



## Tools/ Outputs

Green Policy

Travel Survey

Emissions Spreadsheet (updated to include data on ferry travel - if travel with car)

Behaviour Change Workshop Protocols

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