

## UNBLACKBOXING THE ORANGE FEELING

Established in 1971, Roskilde Festival has grown into a reputable international outdoor music event, attracting over 100.000 visitors every year. For several years, the essence of Roskilde Festival has been articulated as “The Orange Feeling”, which both refers to the largest (Orange) scene appearing on the festival logo, but also signifies values embraced in the formative 1970ies. Values such as solidarity, community, rebelliousness, liberal attitudes to sex and boundary-crossing festivities are today manifested in cyclically returning festival rituals (entailing, among others, the iconic Naked Run, the non-profit organizational setup or the donation of surplus consumables to marginalised groups). Hence, the festival is commonly treated as an Woodstock-like “Gathering of the Year on a Field” with a homogeneous fan culture.

The ‘love, peace and harmony’-ideology underlying the Orange Feeling is however subject to heated debates in the virtual fan community. *Szilvia Gyimóthy* and *Mia Larson* applied fantasy theme analysis to the festival’s Facebook wall in order to map contemporary fissures shaping its rhetorical vision. In contrast with egalitarian group dynamics, the unfolding dialogue on the virtual forum is not void of conflict, power negotiations and even symbolic expulsion. The fan community often disagrees in their opinions regarding the “appropriate” event strategy, music style or desired attendee behaviour, which is illustrated by enunciating the Orange Feeling as orthodox value statements about what Roskilde Festival should or should not be or who should or should not be excluded. As such, there exists not one, but several Orange Feelings and the virtual community is far from being a monolithic entity.

Paradoxically, arguments pertaining to both for and against opposing rhetorical visions take departure in contextualised interpretations of Roskilde Festival’s ideological heritage – either as a respected and sacred relic or as a faded and obsolete legacy. When it is referred to being legendary rock music with related negativistic and provocative attitudes, pro-environmentalist activities are interpreted as anomalies. When the kinship with Woodstock’s legacy is emphasised (love message, peace, harmony and tolerance), the call for more rigorous measures against organised theft are deemed racist. When the management launches a new concept triggering reflections and debate, it is dismissed as being elitist. With other words, the festival’s established values (solidarity, charity, tolerance, artistic freedom, creativity and community) are contested and conditioned, which may indicate a mid-life identity crisis of the festival.

Our case also indicates that even festival social media platforms may be appropriated by fans to discuss complex issues of contemporary European democracies. The ideological conflicts in the virtual Orange Feeling-community reflect larger debates in society, such as those pertaining to welfare, integration politics, taste cultures and subjectification through consumption. The values of the 1970ies flower-power generation are being mainstreamed by national political agendas and by the Danish middle-class, hence they have become hegemonic symbols of the neatly streamlined welfare state. Ironically enough, as a rock festival community often defines itself as rebellious, refusing to comply with the rules; the symbolic community is crumbling from within, when some members get into conflict with the very ideology that grounded the festival in the first place.

The case also illustrates the linkages between sense making processes taking place in the physical and virtual fan community bearing important implications for practitioners. Community dynamics (convergence and disagreement upon the dominant ideology and endorsed values of a festival) have

existed long before the emergence of social media. The decline and terminus of the rhetorical vision and the disintegration of a fan community may be one of the likely causes behind the collapse of festivals with a long tradition. However, such tribal disputes have been so far concentrated within the temporal confinements of the event. The online platform does not only enable to extend the temporal dimensions of tribal co-enactment, allowing fans to exchange consumption knowledge and socialize. It simultaneously provides festival managers to tap into tribal discussions and take the “temperature” of the community. As demonstrated above, the online communication behavior of Roskilde Festival may contribute critically to the sustainment of the symbolic community, which may not only include the facilitation of virtual tribal gatherings, but also the mediation of democratic debates and citizen conflicts.

