

Festival Footprints:  
Sustainability Efforts at International Film Festival Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

Over the last ten years, an increasing number of film festivals have started investing time and resources into implementing environmentally sustainable initiatives. Film festivals impact the environment negatively through their energy consumption, waste production, and the transportation methods used by guests. In order to facilitate the sustainable transition of film festivals it is essential to understand the motivations driving sustainable change and investigate the barriers hindering this process. While several studies have focused on the relationship between cultural events and sustainability, which highlight the difficulties of implementing sustainable practices in these fields, there is limited research specifically on film festivals and focused on industry professionals. This research uses International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) as a case study to address the following question: How are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving film festival professionals to implement sustainability practices? Importantly, the research also investigates the factors hindering the implementation of sustainable practices. Thematic analysis of interviews with seven film festival professionals and one sustainability expert revealed intrinsic motivators, such as personal and organizational values, to be essential drivers of change. The strongest extrinsic motivators include the responsibility to raise awareness and the festival's public image. Among the significant barriers are the need for support by policymakers, external organizations, and sustainability experts. In addition, IFFR was unanimously recognized as inherently unsustainable, complicating further its sustainable transition. As film screenings and international travel inevitably emit greenhouse gases into the environment, finding sustainable solutions is challenging. The findings emphasize the need for increased resources allocated to sustainability efforts, and more importantly, the need for clear guidelines and standardized regulation to facilitate the implementation of sustainable practices for festival organizers. The research highlights the importance of gradual implementation of sustainability initiatives to ensure effective long-term implementation and limit negative audience reception. By investigating the complex landscape of sustainability in film festivals, this research provides insights into the most common drivers and hindering barriers to implementing sustainability practices. These insights contribute to the broader literature on this topic and serve as a foundation to understand how best to implement these practices and overcome barriers to sustainability through strategic planning.

**KEYWORDS:** *Film Festivals, Environmental Sustainability, Motivation, Barriers, International Film Festival Rotterdam*

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## 1. Introduction

Since November 2023, 230 cultural organizations have signed the “Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn” (“To Be or Not to Be”, in English) statement to declare a climate emergency and commit to taking action against climate change. The document states: “Art and culture alone cannot save the world, but we believe: without them, it will certainly not succeed”. (“Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn”, 2023, p.1). A significant part of cultural organizations revolves around film, and the most common type of events where films are showcased are film festivals, which tend to be multi-day events that attract local and international audiences to engage with cinema (de Valck, 2016, p.4). There are more than 6,000 film festivals in the world every year (de Valck and Zielinski, 2022, p.284), and the climate crisis has impacted these events as much as all other cultural organizations whose practices harm the environment (Dodds et al., 2020, p.1). An increasing number of film festivals have started investing more resources in implementing environmentally sustainable initiatives (de Valck and Zielinski, 2023, p.309), such as reusing materials and reducing waste (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.22).

Environmental sustainability can be defined as “the strategies, processes, measures, and initiatives of an organization to reduce its negative and increase its positive impact on the natural environment” (Isensee et al., 2020, p.2). In the context of film festivals, this can be understood through the adoption of practices aimed at lowering greenhouse emissions (GHG) (de Valck and Zielinski, 2023, p.308). These GHG emissions can be attributed to different sources; the number of visitors who travel to the festival, their method of transport, and the energy required to host a multi-day event in several locations (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.9). Despite a multitude of articles that have addressed the need for film festivals to decrease their environmental impact (Cesaro, 2022, p.83; Mair and Smith, 2022, p.2; Dickson & Arcodia, 2010, p.233; Dodds et al., 2020, p.1; de Valck and Zielinski, 2023, p.307), there is a lack of research regarding how this can effectively be translated into practice. The implementation of environmentally sustainable initiatives remains a challenge for festival organizers, for example, due to time or money constraints (Dodds et al., 2020 p.18; “European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022 p.2). To understand how these initiatives can be implemented more efficiently, it is necessary to investigate why sustainability efforts are undertaken by festival professionals while simultaneously understanding which obstacles are encountered (Dodds et al., 2020, p.2). Therefore, by considering International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) as a case study, this research aims to answer the following question: How are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving film

festival professionals to implement sustainability practices? What are the perceived barriers to the effective implementation of sustainable initiatives? In this context, intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in activities driven by personal or organizational values, while extrinsic motivation refers to being driven by external pressures or incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55).

### **1.1 Relevance of the Research**

Understanding the motivations that drive change is essential to improve the way sustainability transition happens within film festivals. To effectively improve this process, it is also necessary to investigate the barriers encountered. The result of investing resources in more sustainable processes is a decrease in the amount of GHG emissions that can be attributed to the film festival. For example, by reducing waste, introducing reusable materials, and suggesting traveling by train instead of by flight, a festival can significantly decrease its GHG emissions (Energy 5, 2023, para.2; “European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.3). Film festivals can also have an impact on their guests; As film festivals host large numbers of visitors (de Valck and Zielinski, 2022, p.276) they can serve as a place to educate audiences on sustainability issues (Cummings, 2016, p.169; Cesaro, 2022, p. 84). There are two ways in which festivals can influence their audiences; through the content of the program or the logistics of the festival. When the films showcased at the festival involve themes of sustainability, it might inspire viewers to take personal and political action (Cesaro, 2022, p.86). Additionally, the introduction of sustainable initiatives and the promotion of environmentally sustainable values can be used by festival organizers to attempt to change attendees’ attitudes towards the environment (Cummings, 2016, p.171). Therefore, by incorporating sustainable practices and initiatives, festivals can influence and educate their audiences (Energy 5, 2023; Cesaro, 2022, p. 84; Cummings, 2016, p.173).

Research is needed to investigate established film festivals, focusing on the measures they have adopted and the motivations behind these actions. As all organizations will soon need to adapt their practices to be more sustainable, understanding these drivers is crucial (Dodds et al., 2020, p.1). Making this process as straightforward as possible is essential to ensure long-lasting sustainability (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.3) Moreover, it is important to investigate the perspectives of the professionals working at these film festivals as festivals that have implemented sustainable practices have been found to have in their team professionals who feel strongly about environmental issues (Mary & Laing, 2012, 688).

As festival organizers can face many obstacles when trying to trade existing practices for more sustainable ones, such as budget limitation and lack of support (Dodds et al., 2020, p.1; Mary & Laing, 2012, p. 684), it is necessary to fully investigate what motivates the professionals working at a festival to start being more environmentally conscious and what the most encountered obstacles in this process are. Understanding these factors can provide insights into how to best adapt and implement sustainable changes (Dodds et al., 2020, p.2) and can “further encourage those events which have yet to fully engage with the sustainability agenda” (Mary & Laing, 2012, p.684).

Lastly, this research contributes to the small body of literature addressing film festivals and sustainability by focusing specifically on one film festival and investigating the perspective of industry professionals. This study provides insights into the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that drive sustainable initiatives while also investigating the barriers that are most frequently encountered. This information is important as it can help the development of future strategies for the sustainable transition of film festivals, which is the process of evolving into a more sustainable organization.

## **1.2. Structure of the Thesis**

Following the introduction to the topic of this thesis, the theoretical framework describes theories and literature that are relevant to answering the research questions of this research. Subsequently, the methodology section outlines the data collection and data analysis procedures and an overview of the participants. The methodology section also outlines how the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) will be used as part of the analysis. The main body of the thesis is the fourth section, namely the results, which discusses the main findings and themes discovered in the analysis and connects these findings to the theories discussed in the theoretical framework. Lastly, the conclusion highlights the key findings with the purpose of answering the research question and discusses the practical and theoretical implications of the findings. The conclusion is rounded up by identifying limitations to the research and reflecting on what further research could focus on to build on the findings of this research.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This theoretical framework will discuss the relevant literature that has informed this research in terms of methodology and analysis, providing a contextual understanding of the relationship between film festivals and sustainability. Most research addressing these topics tends to focus on proving the importance of implementing sustainable initiatives, and less on what motivated these sustainability efforts and what obstacles were found in the process (Cesaro, 2022, p.84; de Valck & Zielinski, 2023, p.307; Tölkes and Butzmann, 2018, p.1; Dodds et al., 2020, p.2). It is important to discuss what drives these implementations and what barriers are encountered as often sustainability efforts of event organizers can be faced with “failure to meet expectations raised or promises made in connection with green issues” (Laing, & Frost, 2010, p.262). Implementing sustainability initiatives can be challenging for event organizers, as “greening” an event means adopting a lot of different initiatives, such as advising green ways of transport to guests, handling waste management, and creative promotional material that highlights the green focus of the event (Laing, & Frost, 2010, p.263; Dodds et al., 2020, p.18; Mair & Laing, 2012, p.683). To solve these challenges and ensure that promises made are kept, it is important to understand what motivates this change towards more sustainable measures, as different drivers might be impacting the success or failure of these sustainability efforts (Dodds et al., 2020, p.18).

### **2.1 Film Festivals Over the Years and IFFR**

The first film festival recorded in history was the Venice International Film Festival in 1932 (Ouray International Film Festival, 2024, para.2). Over the years, more film festivals were established, suggesting that “somewhere in the world a film festival opens every thirty-six hours” (Archibald & Miller, 2011, p. 249), and they have evolved from strictly being places where films were showcased to now being cultural hubs for networking and discovering emerging talent (Ouray International Film Festival, 2024, para.2). Film festivals can be easily distinguished among each other based on the amount of film showcased, number of visitors, and their outreach (de Valck, 2016, p.2). In the Netherlands, the Netherlands Film Festival (NFF), the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) and the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) can currently be identified as the biggest and most important (Beroepkunstenaar, 2024, para. 2). Something that differentiates these festivals is their outreach (de Valck, 2016, p.2) as IFFR and IDFA attract a more international audience compared to NFF and they also include a variety of international films in their programming, while NFF focuses solely on Dutch productions.



IFFR is a multi-day film festival established in 1971, that takes place every year at the end of January and showcases more than 400 films (IFFR, 2024a, para.1). In 2023 alone, the festival recorded almost 300.000 visitors. IFFR has been awarded a Climate Conscious Certification in 2022 for its effort in terms of sustainability. However, while the requirements for this certificate are not elaborated on the website (IFFR, 2024b, para.2), many goals for the future are mentioned, such as wanting to reduce European air travel by 30% by 2026 and food waste by 20% in 2025 (IFFR, 2024a, para.7). IDFA has also addressed its sustainability efforts on their website under the “social responsibility” page (IDFA, 2024, para.1). . However, the details shared regarding these efforts remain vague, such as mentioning a want to decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and “shaping a more sustainable industry” (IDFA, 2024, para.8). In contrast, NFF does not address the topic of sustainability on their website. When addressing sustainability efforts, it is common to mention wanting to decrease GHG Gas emissions or CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## **2.2. The Environmental Impact of a Film Festival**

Environmental impact is commonly measured in GHG emissions, which in the context of film festivals accounts for all aspects behind the organization of the event, such as the location rented, merchandise, marketing, and transport to the festival. GHGs are all the gasses that trap heat in the atmosphere, the main ones include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide (EPA, 2024, para.1). However, CO<sub>2</sub> is the primary GHG emitted through human activities (EPA, 2024, para.7) and the total amount of GHGs caused by an organization are referred to as one’s carbon footprint (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.9). Film festivals can emit CO<sub>2</sub> by, for example, utilizing fossil fuel-powered vehicles and generators, and food and beverage production (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.6). However, factors such as external locations, energy consumption, and the transportation method used by attendees to reach the festival are taken into account as they impact the total GHG measurement. It is important for events to acquire such measurements to:

“Identify and prioritize activities which have the most impact, and plan carbon reduction initiatives accordingly: such as providing options for access via sustainable transport, using renewable energy to power the event and considering local, low carbon food and beverage suppliers” (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.9).

The GHG Protocol system is the most commonly used tool to measure emissions. This protocol divides sources into three main emissions categories according to where the emissions occur, referred to as Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3. These scopes are also commonly used in tools developed to help festivals in their sustainability efforts (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.8; Canva, 2024, p.8). More specifically, Scope 1 refers to all direct GHG emissions caused by the festival. For example, the emissions caused by production. Scope 2 refers to all indirect GHG emissions, such as the rented locations for a film festival or the cars hired. Lastly, Scope 3 refers to all indirect sources such as the production and consumption of goods and services. In the case of film festivals, an example of this can be the emissions from waste disposal (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.8).

Throughout this research, the terms GHG emissions and carbon footprint will be used interchangeably as they both refer to the actions taken by festivals and their impact, in terms of gas emissions, on the environment. The term “greening” will be used to refer to attempts to decrease GHG emissions.

### **2.3. Sustainable Film Festivals**

Many festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival and Locarno Festival have been focusing on how to reduce their carbon footprint in the past few years (Locarno Film Festival, 2024 para.1; Festival de Cannes, 2024, para.1). For example, Locarno mentions how it has succeeded in reducing the amount of waste produced (Locarno Film Festival, 2024, para.4) and the Cannes Film Festival mentions both its partnership with a provider of 100% electric cars and its investment in funding sustainable projects (Festival de Cannes, 2024, para.2). In the Netherlands, NFF, IDFA, and IFFR do not include their sustainability achievements in their annual report, and it is therefore harder to evaluate whether they have achieved similar results. However, IFFR addresses on its website its achievements and goals for the future, such as having reduced its car service by over 50% and wanting to reduce flights within Europe by 30% in 2026 (IFFR, 2024b, para.4). It is mentioned that they have chosen to specifically focus on “travel and transport” and “materials and waste” but the page does not specifically address how these goals will be achieved (IFFR, 2024b, para.5).

In contrast, some film festivals that were established to be environmentally sustainable have built their festival around sustainability values. For example, The Small Five Media Festival is a film festival whose programming is specifically focused on environmental sustainability and was founded in 2020 to raise awareness of the high carbon footprint of streaming media (Marks et al., 2020, p.48). At the Small Five Media Festival,

only movies smaller than five megabytes are accepted, as they stream online with minimal carbon output (Marks et al., 2020, p.47). The festival aims to challenge filmmakers to rethink the way film is produced (Marks et al., 2020, p.48). However, this film festival was established as a response to the climate crisis and is not a realistic standard that can be held for all types of film productions, as films submitted to IFFR and other major festivals tend to be feature-length and would not be able to be compressed to under five megabytes and maintain the same style of content. However, there are some practices that can be adopted from these festivals, and resources that can help already established festivals achieve their sustainability goals.

#### **2.4. The Benefits of “Greening” Film Festival and the Lack of Guidance**

Green Festivals (2024), a project aimed at encouraging festival organizers to adopt more environmental initiatives, mentions on their website how making an event more sustainable can save money (para. 2). For example, reducing the amount of waste reduces the costs of waste disposal, and reducing energy can decrease the energy costs (Green Festivals, 2024, para.3). The website states: “use your sustainable event to your advantage and have a positive impact while doing it!” (Green Festivals, 2024, para.1). Another benefit of becoming a more sustainable festival is the public image that derives from it, and this image can also be used to “gain a competitive advantage over other festivals” (Mair & Laing, 2012, p.13). However, when too much attention is focused on the image that derives from being a sustainable festival, it can be possible to run into the risk of “greenwashing”. Greenwashing can be defined as “symbolic communications of environmental issues without substantially addressing them in actions” (Dodds et al., 2020, p.5). Therefore, if festivals are not transparent about their sustainability achievements and make misleading claims, they could damage their public image.

Festivals have been shown to play an important role as “sites for raising public awareness and education of eco-political issues” (Cummings, 2016, p.169), as research focusing on audience reception of green events reveals that sustainability initiatives significantly influence the attitudes and behaviors of attendees (Tölkes and Butzmann, 2018, p.1). However, Tölkes and Butzmann (2018) only found significant results for attendees already inclined towards sustainability (p.13), suggesting that it is necessary for events to adopt sustainable practices, as to not only involve sustainable-minded visitors, but also non-conscious visitors (Cesaro, 2022, p.84). These types of research serve as evidence that if film festivals were to implement more environmentally sustainable practices, they could provide a place for educating audiences and raising awareness. This need for raising

awareness about environmental issues has been “growing among both festival organizers and visitors as concerns about climate change and the environmental crisis are gaining weight” (Valck & Zielinski, 2022, p.309). However, the absence of policies monitoring sustainable practices (Dickson and Arcodia, 2010, p.233; “European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.8) can make it harder to adopt initiatives that can raise awareness.

## **2.5. Lack of Guidelines in Europe and the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands there is no legislation concerning sustainable behavior and specifically directed at film festivals, however, the Environmental Act (*Omgevingswet*) that came into action on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 condensed 26 existing laws and numerous sustainability regulations. These regulations include requirements that must be adhered to by festival organizers, such as waste and energy management, emissions reduction, and transportation recommendation (*Omgevingswet*, 2024, para.1). This Act can be seen as a direct consequence of the multiple European directives that address sustainability issues and require EU member states to adhere to these regulations, such as waste management (“European Parliament, & Council of the European Union”, 2008, para.1), single-use plastic ban (“European Parliament, & Council of the European Union”, 2019, para.1), and water management (“European Parliament, & Council of the European Union”, 2000, para.1) This research posed more attention to the European directives as they are accessible in English and therefore easier to access than the Dutch governmental websites, and they also guide the legislation in the Netherlands (*Omgevingswet*, 2024, para.1).

Due to a lack of formal guidelines tailored to film festivals, the motivation to adopt more sustainable practices can decrease, as external pressures have been found to drive the implementation of more environmentally conscious initiatives (Dodds et al., 2020, p.12). While the literature provides theoretical guidelines to organize and plan a sustainable event, and a lot of film festivals have published information regarding their efforts to lower their carbon emissions., Research has not specifically focused on how these goals have been achieved practically and integrated within an already established festival, and the information available online on how festivals have lowered their carbon emission tends to be vague (IFFR, 2024b, para.1; IDFA, 2024, para.1).

To deal with this lack of guidelines regarding establishing a standard for cultural events in terms of sustainability, a statement was launched in November 2023 and signed by 230 Dutch cultural organizations (Sustainability expert, personal communication, April 29, 2024). This statement is called “Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn” (“to be or not to be”, in English) and states that the art and culture sector can have an impact in three ways: on stage, behind

the scenes, and as social drivers. These three ways need to be used to act for social change, for example, there is a mention of reusing material during production, reducing travel, and placing climate change in the spotlight (“Te Zijn of Niet te Zijn”, 2023). Another reaction to this lack of standardized guidelines is the emergence of several tools that festival organizers can use to become a more sustainable organization (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.1; “Green Festival Guide”, 2022, p.1; Canva, 2024, p.1)

## **2.6. Tools to Support Festival Organizers**

Documents such as the European Green Festival Roadmap (2023) the RoadMap Canvas (Canva, 2024), and the Green Festival Guide (2022) have been developed to help festival organizers by suggesting useful initiatives that can be adapted to become more environmentally sustainable (“Green Festival Guide”, 2022, p.3; European Green Festival Roadmap, 2023, p.2; Valck & Zielinski, 2023, p.307). The Green Festival Guide is a protocol that was created in 2021 by the Association of Italian Film Festivals (AFIC) to develop guidelines to reduce the environmental impact of events. For example, it addresses how carbon emissions can be reduced, through sustainable mobility and guest management, and how marketing materials and gadget production can be made more sustainably by using recycled material and producing useful and reusable gadgets (“Green Festival Guide”, 2022, p.8). The protocol discusses a lot of practices and initiatives regarding the logistics of film festivals that can also be found on the websites of multiple film festivals that have implemented them (Locarno Film Festival, 2024, para.1; Festival de Cannes, 2024, para.1) and other publications (de Valck & Zielinski, 2023, p.307; Cummings, 2016, p.169; Cesaro, 2022, p.84).

With a similar objective, the European Green Festival Roadmap (2023, p.4-5) addresses the lack of guidelines for festivals in the European Green Deal and attempts to make up for this gap by providing a guide to action and a “comprehensive framework for the ambitious sustainable improvement of cultural events, from management structures to concrete technical measures in the various action fields of the creation and production process” (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.5). In the context of the Netherlands, festival producer Rob Van Wegen has been assisting and supporting organizations in the cultural sector in their sustainable transitions (personal communication, April 29, 2024). He has developed a RoadMap Canvas to help organizations develop a multi-year plan and choose which areas they would like to focus their efforts first. According to the RoadMap Canvas, the six different focus areas are transport, food and drinks, energy, materials, water and sanitation, and nature and environment (Canva, 2024, p.10). Festivals such as IFFR, IDFA,

and NFF have all worked with Rob Van Wegen and used the RoadMap Canvas as a tool (personal communication, April 29, 2024).

As all of these documents address how the biggest way in which festivals impact the environment is the GHG emissions caused by their production, it could be assumed that these emissions could be eliminated by just transferring film festivals online (de Valck and Zielinski, 2023, p.320). However, online streaming also entails significant energy consumption, and the carbon footprint for one screening is substantially less than that of multiple individuals streaming the same media on their own devices (Marks et al., 2020 p.50). Therefore, “Everything comes at an environmental cost and it [is] a matter of weighing and measuring the various components of festival organization in a holistic way” (de Valck and Zielinski, 2023, p.321). It is also important to mention that film festivals need to first understand what influences their environmental impact, to then focus on adopting practices that will lower their carbon footprints (de Valck & Zielinski, 2023, p.307). However, there is currently no standardized tool available for film festivals to measure their carbon emission, while comparable tools exist for film production (de Valck & Zielinski, 2023, p.310), and as there is no literature quantifying in detail the impact of film festivals, it is difficult for festival organizers to identify the factors that specifically influence the environmental impact of a film festival.

The situation regarding tools to help festival organizers is slightly different in similar cultural industries. For example, the Theatre Green Book is a collective that started in the UK and has now expanded worldwide, and it is a “free resource for all theatre-makers, working at all scales” aimed at creating a common standard for making theatre sustainable (The Theatre Green Book, 2024, para. 4). Similarly, the Green Deal Circular Festivals is a cooperation of the Dutch government and a community of European festivals, who have “pulled together to speed up the transition towards circular and climate neutral festivals” (Circular Festivals, 2024, para.1)

An important document not directly aimed at cultural events is the European Green Deal, which was first proposed in 2019 and states that by 2030 European GHG emissions are aimed to be reduced by at least 55% (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.2). The publication of this document motivated the European Green Festival Roadmap (p.2) and can be therefore understood as an incentive for change. Even though the European Green Deal does not specifically address festivals, if the cultural sector “takes responsibility with efficient climate and environmental measures - it will benefit everyone in our society” (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.2).

## **2.7. Motivations Behind Sustainable Efforts Within Film Festivals**

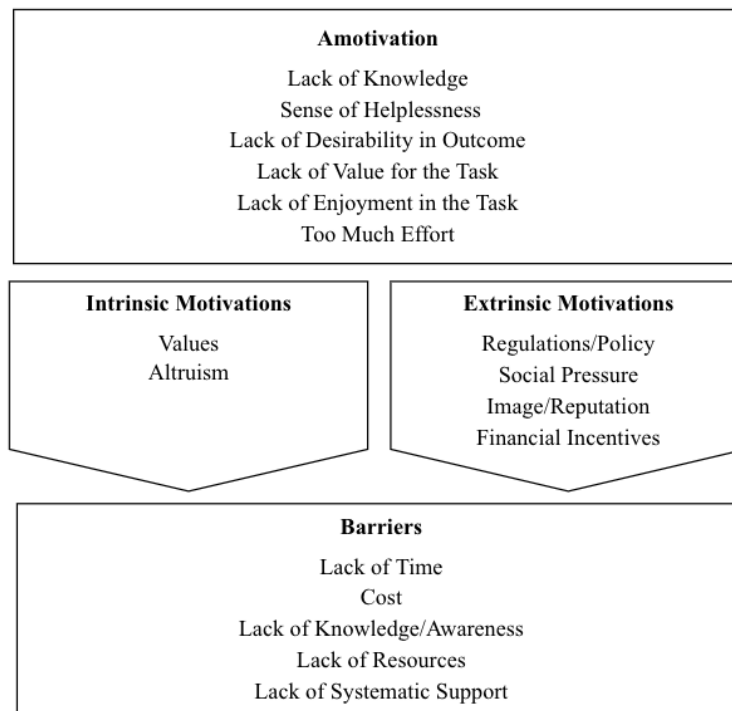
To investigate sustainable initiatives at film festivals it is also important to discuss what motivates these sustainable efforts (Dodds et al., 2020, p.4). The ‘Drivers of Sustainability framework’ was first utilized by Dodds et al. (2013) to investigate the motivations and barriers behind the implementation of sustainability practices within wineries. In 2020, the framework was adopted to investigate multiple types of Canadian festivals from the perspective of their organizers (See Figure 1). The framework was used to determine intrinsic and extrinsic motivations along with barriers towards the implementation of sustainability practices, as “understanding intrinsic and extrinsic motivations help explain why individuals as well as organizations are motivated to practice or implement sustainable behavior” (Dodds et al., 2020, p.2). This is one of the only frameworks that allows investigation of the drivers of sustainability efforts and not only their perception. Mair and Laing (2012) developed a similar framework to investigate drivers and barriers concerning “greening” Australian music festivals. However, the primary objective of the research was to investigate the importance of greening festivals to their organizers (p.9). As film festival research often tends not to focus on festival organizers (Tölkes and Butzmann, 2018, p.1; Cesaro, 2022, p.84), it is even harder to find research that specifically looks into motivations behind the implementation of sustainable practices (Dodds et al., 2020, p.6) specifically as the primary objective (Mair & Laing, 2012, p.9).

The ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) identifies four categories: Amotivation, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Barriers.

Amotivation can be defined as “the state of lacking an intention to act” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 61). Amotivation was found in festival organizers when a lack of interest in taking on the effort required to implement sustainable practices was identified. On the other hand, being motivated can be defined as “being moved to do something” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54), and motivation can be distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Intrinsic motivation refers to “the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence” (p. 56), while extrinsic motivation pertains to the doing of an activity to “attain some separable outcome” (p. 60). Canadian festivals that pursued sustainability efforts were found to be guided by intrinsically motivated individuals (Dodds et al., 2020, p.18). It is common to investigate barriers when investigating drivers (Dodds et al., 2020 p.1; Mair & Laing, 2012, p.9), as together their understanding can shed light on elements that are essential for the implementation of sustainable practices.

**Figure 1**

*The 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27)*



Note. This figure portrays the Canadian Festival Industry Drivers of Sustainability Framework adapted from Dodds et al., (2020, p.27). During the research, all the themes concerning Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation were identified, while for Amotivation only 'lack of value for the task' and 'lack of effort' were identified, and for Barriers 'lack of time' was not identified.

## 2.8. The Importance of Investigating Barriers

It is necessary to investigate the barriers encountered when implementing sustainability practices at film festivals as they are “activity specific” and strategies can only be developed after “a particular activity’s barriers” have been identified (Cesaro, 2022, p.85). Studies that were conducted to investigate drivers and barriers in order to improve implementation strategies have had many different focuses, ranging from higher education (Hueske & Guenther, 2021, p.1) to general event planning (Li & Liu, 2020, p.1934). Hueske and Guenthe demonstrated (2021) that multilevel barrier and driver analysis improves implementation strategies (p.1), proving that investigating drivers and barriers can provide useful insights for the future of an organization. Barriers can be understood as the factors that delay or block innovation, which in this context refers to barriers to integrating sustainability (Hueske & Guenther, 2021, p.5). Common barriers that have been identified in previous research include the cost of implementing sustainable initiatives, lack of resources, in terms of staff of the festival, and lack of support from external partners (Dodds et al., 2020, p.13; Mair & Laing, 2012, p.21).



As this research investigates both drivers and barriers, it is important to define the relationship between the two. According to Hueske and Guenthe (2021):

“Drivers are factors that facilitate the implementation of change by providing an understanding of the need for change [...] drivers are also more than strategies to overcome barriers; they can contribute, but are not necessary for success. Vice versa, barriers are more than a lack of drivers - they might prevail, but can be bypassed” (Hueske & Guenther, 2021, p.2).

The authors argue that drivers are important but are not the only tool necessary to overcome barriers. This suggests that it is necessary to investigate both drivers and barriers as they are not opposite of each other. For example, in a film festival context, a driver might be that a funding body requires a green certification to provide the funds, but wanting a certificate is not enough to achieve it. Resources, such as time and money, have to be invested to overcome this barrier.

### **3. Methodology**

To investigate the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving film festival professionals to implement sustainability practices, a qualitative approach was employed, utilizing semi-structured expert interviews to explore the intersection between film festivals and sustainability, specifically focusing on IFFR and the drivers of and barriers to their environmental efforts. Eight semi-structured expert interviews were conducted. Six participants are part of the Green Team at IFFR among their other responsibilities, one participant is part of the Green Team at Nederland Film Festival (NFF), and the last participant is a sustainability expert who helps festivals achieve their sustainability goals through the implementation of a step-by-step multi-year plan. The IFFR Green Team is a committee responsible for the continuous implementation of sustainable practices at IFFR.

The sampling method was a mix between purposive sampling method and snowball sampling, as the first interviewee was selected based on their role with IFFR and the connections of the researcher as the contact with the participants was made at an event organized by the University. The other seven participants were recruited through this first interview. The participants were selected based on their role within IFFR, but the selection was not impacted by age, gender, or nationality.

A qualitative approach was chosen for this method as semi-structured interviews are considered an appropriate tool to gain insights into the views and perspectives of each individual involved in the research (Adams, 2015, p.496; Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.80). Individual interviews can shed light on personal motivations impacting sustainability efforts and different perspectives coming from different departments within IFFR, as for example the marketing department and the guest services department might have different priorities. Moreover, these interviews provide contextual information to understand the feasibility of practices and initiatives mentioned in the literature combined with an understanding of the structure of IFFR and how the festival is planned and organized. Qualitative research methods are well suited to uncover the meaning-making process and explore the underlying meaning behind a particular topic or phenomenon in its natural setting (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p.1358). Therefore, interviews were considered an appropriate method to investigate processes at IFFR. This study focuses on individual motivation as professionals' values have been shown to impact sustainable efforts implemented by a festival (Dodds et al., 2020, p.4). The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that a topic guide with questions was prepared to ensure relevant topics were discussed during the interview, but the guide only provided a structure and the conversation was tailored for each unique interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p.1359).

### **3.1 Participants and Data Collection**

In total the group of interviewees consisted of eight participants, two male and six female. The majority of participants have more than 3 years of experience working in film festivals, with the highest being 15 and the lowest 1 (See Appendix C for an overview of participants). The participants of this study are considered experts as they have “technical, process and interpretative knowledge that refers to a specific field of action” (Bogner & Menz, 2009, p.55), in this context this field of action is film festivals.

Six out of eight participants are IFFR professionals who are part of the Green Team, which is the reason why they were selected to take part in the research. All six IFFR professionals are working in different departments of the organization, namely the Communications and Audience Reach, Program Operations and International Relations, Content, Operations, and Pro departments (See Appendix C for a complete overview of participants). The other two participants were respectively a sustainability expert and a professional working at NFF, a Dutch film festival that has taken place every year in September since 1980 (NFF, 2024a, para.1). The sustainability expert was interviewed to gain contextual knowledge and a deeper understanding of how film festivals adapt to more sustainable initiatives and what are the most common obstacles in the Netherlands that are shared by different cultural events, as the expert works with all types of festivals, ranging from film to music. The professional working at NFF was interviewed as a comparison to the IFFR case, to understand differences and similarities with other film festivals as they are also involved with the sustainability team of their organization. The diversity of roles among the interviewees ensured a thorough understanding of the current logistics of IFFR and the different motivations for adopting more environmentally sustainable practices and initiatives.

The participants were all contacted by email and were asked for an interview. The interviews took place during April and May 2024. Due to time constraints of the respondents, five out of eight interviews were conducted over Zoom instead of in person. The in-person interviews were conducted at the IFFR office. Online interviews can differ from in-person interviews as the respondents can feel more distant from the researcher and there is a lack of non-verbal cues (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014, p.611). On the other hand, the possibility of conducting an online interview can save time for the respondent as they do not need to travel to the place of the interview (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014, p.602). As online interviews still allowed the researcher to reach target participants and gather insightful results, they were deemed appropriate for this research.

The participants received the consent form (see Appendix D) upon confirmation of the interview time and date and the content of the form was discussed before the interview began. All the interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. Despite the shorter duration of some interviews, the content was still considered rich and exhaustive.

The Green Team consists of IFFR employees who focus on how to integrate more sustainable practices within IFFR and are currently working a long-term sustainability strategy and roadmap for IFFR (IFFR, 2024b, para.2). The interviews with IFFR professionals focused on addressing the initiatives already in place, the efforts IFFR is planning to make in the future to further reduce its environmental impact (IFFR, 2024b, para.1), the drivers behind the implementation of these initiatives, and the obstacles encountered. The interview questions were deductively based on the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) to understand what motivated the sustainability efforts and what are the most common barriers. The interview was divided into four parts (as can be seen in Appendix A). Firstly, a few questions regarding the interviewee's role and experience were asked and served as icebreakers. The second part of the interview investigated the Green Team and the perspective of the interviewee, in terms of motivation to join the team and perceived motivation to implement new practices. The third part of the interview focused more on the interviewee's department if relevant and discussed more concrete sustainability initiatives and the reason why they are easier or more difficult to implement. The interviews with members of the Communications and Audience reach department discussed current marketing strategies and how these can be adapted to a more sustainable approach, for example by implementing locally sourced items or using recycled materials (Festival de Cannes, 2024, para.1; "Green Festival Guide", 2022, p.1) and also discussed the importance of acknowledging the journey towards a more sustainable festival publicly and which initiatives could be implemented in this field ("Green Festival Guide", 2022, p.1; de Valck & Zielinski, 2023, p.307). The interviews with the Program Operations and International Relations department discussed what steps have been taken towards reducing the carbon emissions of the travels of guests to the festivals and the reception of these initiatives.

The last part of the interviews discussed the future of sustainability at IFFR and the interviewee's personal opinions on what the most urgent areas to be "greened" are and why. The interviews with the professional from NFF followed the same structure as the interviews with IFFR, while the interview with the sustainability expert (as can be seen in Appendix C) was more focused on the process of helping a festival improve on their sustainability efforts and the observations made by collaborating with different cultural events. The interview

with the NFF professional (Interview 7) and the sustainability expert (Interview 8) also had a section dedicated to understanding the contextual information, respectively related to NFF as a festival and the Roadmap Canvas designed by the sustainability expert to help the sustainable transition of festivals (Canva, 2024, p.1). During the interviews, non-verbal cues and tone of voice were also noted to be considered when performing the analysis.

The interviews were also informed by the IFFR website for contextual information and by research discussing possible sustainability initiatives, such as the 'Green Festival Guide' (2022) and de Valck and Zielinski's (2023) chapter concerning strategies for greening film festivals. The interview questions kept evolving as more interviews were conducted and the knowledge regarding IFFR practices increased.

### **3.2. Data Analysis and Operationalization**

All the interviews were held in English and were audio recorded and manually transcribed in Dovetail. The copies of the transcripts used for coding were anonymized but maintained a note of the interviewee's department at IFFR, while a copy of the original transcripts including the names of the participants was kept by the researcher.

The thematic analysis was performed using Dovetail and the transcript of the interviews were coded following the procedure explained by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.80). Firstly, the interview transcriptions were read carefully, and open coding was performed by adding general initial codes to the data. Secondly, similar codes were merged and placed in larger categories, to create initial themes. These larger categories included but were not limited to, 'values', 'altruism', 'regulations', 'social pressure', 'image and reputation', 'financial incentive', 'lack of time', and 'lack of resources' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.18). The data analysis was conducted deductively following the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' utilized and defined by Dodds et al. in 2020 (See Appendix B for the complete framework). Therefore, the majority of the themes correspond with the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27). All of the interviews were combined to create a code tree containing all themes and codes from all of the interviews. Finally, these initial themes were revised and clearly defined, and the most insightful examples were selected to be mentioned as exemplifiers in the results section.

The themes present in the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) were used as guidance, but more themes were identified, and some themes from the framework were not found and thus not included. According to the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) all the themes were grouped in one of the following three categories: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and barriers. The detailed

operationalization of each category and theme, as can be found in the literature, was summarized in the table below (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Operationalization of Categories and Themes based on the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27).*

Categories	Themes	Assessment
<b>Intrinsic motivation:</b> This category refers to all the motivators that can be attributed to values, both relating to the individual and the organization		
	Values	Values as motivators are measured by assessing what are the festival professional personal values and whether they align with sustainability values
	Altruism	Altruism as a motivator is measured by assessing whether the festival mission and core values align with sustainability values
<b>Extrinsic Motivation:</b> This category refers to all external factors that impact the decision of the festival to implement sustainable practices and it is measured in terms of the influence regulations, the image of the festival, pressure from stakeholders, and financial incentives have on festival professionals		
	Regulations / Policy	Regulations are considered motivators if festival organizers are motivated and influenced by regulations and guidelines in their decisions regarding the implementation of sustainable practices.
	Social pressure	Social pressure is assessed by investigating whether festival organizers perceive pressure from external partners or audiences
	Image /Reputation	Image and reputation are considered motivators if festival organizers are motivated to implement sustainable practices because they feel they might benefit the public image and reputation of the festival
	Financial Incentive	Whether financial incentive is considered a motivator depends on whether festival organizers implement sustainable practices because they foresee possible cost savings or increased funding
<b>Barriers:</b> This category refers to all the barriers and challenges that are considered to be complicating the process of implementation of sustainable practices. The barriers are measured by determining whether professionals feel they influence the implementation of sustainable practices and in what way they perceive them as barriers.		
	Lack of time	Lack of time is assessed by determining whether festival organizers feel that there is not enough time to dedicate to sustainable initiatives
	Cost	Cost is assessed by determining whether festival organizers feel that implementing sustainable initiatives is too expensive
	Lack of Knowledge	Lack of knowledge is assessed by determining whether festival organizers feel that professionals working at festivals do not have enough knowledge to implement sustainability initiatives

Lack of Support	Lack of support is assessed by determining whether festival organizers feel that they struggle to maintain sustainability efforts because of lacking systematic support, for example, from the government, suppliers, and their community
Lack of Resources	Lack of resources is assessed by determining whether festival professionals believed resources such as workers, sustainable suppliers, and technology are not sufficient to implement sustainable practices effectively.

### 3.3. Research credibility

As qualitative research involves an interpretive nature and can be strongly influenced by the respondents and the researcher, multiple steps were undertaken to ensure this study's validity and credibility. Semi-structured interviews were used to guarantee that the key topics were consistently covered in all the interviews (Adam, 2015, p.494). Being transparent about the research process is essential to avoid biases, which was the objective of this methodology in explaining each step involved in data collection and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). To preserve the nuances of each conversation the interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview was conducted.

To confirm the contextual information provided by the respondents, interview data was cross-references with secondary sources such as the IFFR website, the European Green Festival Roadmap, (2023, p.1), and de Valck & Zielinski's research (2023, p.267). This process helped validate the findings and provided more contextual information. In addition, two coding phases were employed during the data analysis to ensure reliability and thoroughness and enhance the consistency of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81). Consent forms were obtained from all participants, ensuring ethical standards were maintained and respondents were aware of what information was going to be used in the research (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p.1362).

Lastly, it is important to mention for the credibility of this research that although all the interviews were conducted in English, the majority of respondents were not native English speakers and this could have resulted in misunderstandings and less nuanced responses (Smith, Chen, & Liu, 2008, p.2). However, during the interviews, questions were phrased in multiple ways to ensure the respondent understood the question posed, and all respondents showed a high English proficiency.

## **4. Results**

To explore how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation drive film festival professionals to implement sustainable practices at IFFR, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted. Three categories were identified during the thematic analysis: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and barriers. All of these categories originate from the ‘Driver of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27). Within these categories, fifteen themes were identified, such as ‘values’, ‘regulations’, and ‘social pressure’. This section will discuss each theme that has emerged from the thematic analysis and provide examples of the most insightful results. Ten of the themes originated from the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27), while the other six emerged inductively from the thematic analysis. The first two categories, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, regard the drivers behind the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices at IFFR. The last category concerns the most common barriers encountered when implementing these practices.

### **4.2. Intrinsic Motivation Influences the Bigger Picture**

During the interviews, all professionals working at film festivals (Respondents 1-7) were asked why they joined the Green Team and why they think a Green Team exists in their organization. These questions were posed to investigate respondent’s personal values and perceived intrinsic motivation within the organization.

#### **4.2.1. Values**

The IFFR Green Team has tried to include at least one professional from each department of the organization in the Green Team. The professionals interviewed for this research were part of Communications and Audience Reach, Program Operations and International Relations, Content, Operations, Pro, and Festival Agency. However, this is not to imply that individuals do not actively choose to commit to the Green Team. When asked about why they joined the team, four out of seven respondents mentioned that they joined the Green Team because it aligned with their personal values. For example, respondent 3 commented:

“I wanted it because I really care about the environment, and I like to think about company processes and how to improve them. And so, this is a nice combination of both” (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional).

Similarly, respondent 5 also mentioned the relationship between their personal values and their professional role:



“For me, [it] had to do with the fact that sustainability and reducing our impact on the environment, I personally find very important. And for me, it only made sense to sort of carry that on professionally” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

Regarding the motivations behind the entirety of the Green Team at NFF and the commitment to implement sustainable practices, respondent 7 (NFF) commented:

“Internally we do really have a big desire to become more sustainable because I think there's just a lot of people in the organization that it's important to, and who want to set aside the time to take those steps.” (Respondent 7, Festival Agency, NFF professional).

These three quotes all exemplify the shared values that drive a professional to join the Green Team. These perspectives fit into the findings of Dodds et al. (2020) when researching Canadian festival organizers and their motivators. Dodds et al. (2020) found that most festivals that have applied some form of sustainable practices stem from intrinsic motivation within their organization (p.10), suggesting that for an organization to implement sustainability practices it is essential that some professionals share sustainability values. Furthermore, similarly to Dodds et al., (2020), the findings reveal that some respondents' values were shaped by their past experiences. For Instance, Respondent 2 stated: “That’s always been a topic of interest, like an ethical thing in my life” (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional)

On the other hand, Respondents 4 and 6 main motivators for joining the Green Team were related to their department. Respondent 4 joined the team as their college was leaving and someone from their department needed to be part of the Green Team, while respondent 6 expressed that they felt someone from their department should be involved:

“We thought that it was necessary to have someone from that team involved into the overall strategy that the festival is implementing in terms of sustainability. This being because we are very much in contact with all the guests and people attending the festival. So, it felt that the activity that we are implementing for them in terms of content should also have a much more concrete aspect in terms of sustainability.” (Respondent 6, Pro, IFFR professional).

These differences in the reasoning behind joining the Green Team align with what was discussed in the interview with the sustainability expert when highlighting the importance of an external figure in discussing sustainability matters. The interviewee mentioned that it is

not unlikely for only a portion of individuals to be personally interested in environmental sustainability and strongly motivated to change while the rest of the team might just want to improve their sustainability efforts because they know it will benefit them in the future. It is in these situations that an expert can be of help as an external professional. The sustainability expert explained that having an external person in the organization who strictly focuses on sustainability might be a reminder for everyone to be more conscious about the choices they make within their departments:

“Because as an external person or as a person in the organization that just has this focus [...] I can say ‘we are gonna talk about this’ [...] So when I walk in people are like: ‘oh but we hired this guy, so if we don't make use of him..’. That's a very big difference from someone internally saying: ‘I think we should talk about this’.”  
(Interview 8, Sustainability Expert).

These findings illustrate that personal values can be considered drivers of change, suggesting that festival professionals need to be made aware of the importance of these issues so that sustainability efforts can be undertaken. This highlights the necessity to discuss sustainability with festivals that have not yet considered implementing sustainability initiatives, to guarantee that sustainability issues are taken into consideration and can become part of the “core operations” (Interview 8, Sustainability Expert). In addition, even when a festival has decided to increase its sustainability effort only a part of the professional may be personally motivated to implement sustainability practices. In these cases, an external individual might help redirect the attention and guarantee that sustainability issues are discussed.

#### **4.2.2. Altruism**

In the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.1) the theme of “altruism” is attributed to the organization as a whole, its mission, and whether the values prioritized by the organization align with environmental sustainability values (Dodds et al., 2020, p. 3). According to the IFFR website: “IFFR creates opportunities for the independent filmmaking community from across the globe, to reach broad and diverse audiences” (IFFR, 2024A, para.3). Regarding the relationship between IFFR and sustainability, Respondent 4 commented: “[sustainability] it's not ever the core, our core is programming international film and showing it as much as possible throughout the Netherlands” (Respondent 4, Operations, IFFR professional). The IFFR mission statement alone lacks a direct mention of sustainability, therefore suggesting that the values of the organization do not align with the

values of environmental sustainability. However, IFFR has a dedicated page on its website discussing its sustainability vision in which it states: “At IFFR, we embrace our responsibility to address the pressing climate and ecological emergencies, recognizing the urgent need to reduce our ecological footprint and transition into a more sustainable festival. We aim to lead by example, drive positive change and establish ourselves as a frontrunner in the film festival landscape. To achieve this, we are committed to better defining our footprint and setting comprehensive sustainability targets that go beyond just CO<sub>2</sub> emissions” (IFFRb, 2024, para.1).

During the interviews, the motivation to implement specific sustainability practices was also discussed, and respondent 5 mentioned a concern when evaluating measures to implement on whether the initiative “fit in with our identity as a festival as well” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). This comment highlights the importance of choosing initiatives that align with the values of the festival. Even when choosing to commit to prioritize environmental sustainability there are still a lot of diverse initiatives that can be adopted and that need to be chosen from, and it is easier to start from areas of comfort, “within the boundaries of what is possible” (Canva, 2024, p.4,15). The RoadMap Canvas (2024) developed to help cultural organizations on their sustainability transition recommends focusing on one or two main areas of action, such as transport, waste, or material (Canva, 2024, p.15)

#### **4.2.3. Personal Benefit**

A theme that emerged from the interviews but is not present in the framework is how these sustainable initiatives could provide personal benefit to the individuals who choose to implement them. Four out of six IFFR professionals (R2, R3, R4, R5) mentioned how one of the first things they would invest in if they had the means would be “greening” the IFFR office, suggesting renovating the space to make it more energy efficient. The drive for these changes seems to stem from personal values regarding sustainability, however, it also links to the idea that before embarking on a total sustainable transition to eliminate any GHG emissions, it is necessary to focus on the core of the organization. In this regard, Respondent 2 mentioned:

“We're also trying to think about it internally in the way the office is. I think it's also important that it's not just outside facing, I think in, in general, in society, a lot of the changes start within ourselves, you know, like our own practices. And I think it's also important to say that IFFR tries to do that internally as well”. (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional)

This perspective highlights the need to first work internally to be able to successfully impact externally, for example by first working on a goal and achieving significant results, and then deciding how to communicate it to the target audience (Canva, 2024,p.23).

#### **4.2.4. Intrinsic Motivation as a Driver**

When investigating intrinsic motivations driving film festival professionals to implement sustainable initiatives three themes were found: values, altruism, and personal benefit. Most professionals interviewed were found to have a personal interest in sustainability which led them to invest time and effort in the sustainability transition of their organization. This result is in accordance with the literature that found that when professionals are personally motivated towards sustainability, they influence positive change within their organization (Mary & Laing, 2012, p.688). In addition, although IFFR's mission statement does not directly align with sustainability values, its dedicated webpage discussing its sustainability efforts seems to suggest that these types of values are shared at an organizational level and intertwined in the festival planning. Lastly, respondents believe that change starts internally, and to achieve their sustainable goals set for the future, sustainability needs to be implemented in the choices they make within their office and their departments even if they do not directly influence their bigger sustainability goals, in accordance with the sustainability expert stating that sustainability should become the core of organization (personal communication, April 29, 2024).

### **4.3. Extrinsic Motivation is Driven by Social Responsibility**

Even though personal motivations are often at the root of driving institutional change, external pressures and incentives might also contribute to this drive and influence whether certain initiatives are implemented. This section will discuss which external factors might be influencing IFFR's motivation to become more sustainable as an organization. Within this category three themes stemmed from the 'Drivers of Sustainability Framework' (Dodds et al., 2020, p,27), namely regulations, social pressure, and image and reputation, while the theme awareness emerged from the thematic analysis.

#### **4.3.1. Regulations**

There are no specific regulations concerning film festivals and which standards they should hold in terms of sustainability in Europe ("Green Festival Guide", 2022, p.5). However, respondents mentioned how Dutch legislations concerning sustainability, such as the Environmental Act include general guidance that can be adopted by film festivals as well, for example in terms of waste management and transport suggestions as an

organization. The only specific legislation that was mentioned by respondents is a ban on single-use plastic that was introduced in January 2024 in the Netherlands (Wedia, 2020, para.1). This legislation has influenced all types of events that have had to adapt to this new regulation if they had not already. When discussing this new legislation, respondent 1 commented on how regulations like this can impact the priorities of the Green Team as they require immediate attention: “This [ban] is something that we have to work on, and we're obliged to work with this”. (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). It was a shared feeling amongst respondents that attention needs to be placed on making sure to check all regulations that could apply to them: “There's, of course, a lot of legislation and initiatives and guidelines that either are already obligatory to follow or, like, strongly advised to follow. So, we need to make sure that we are in line with those (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional).

In contrast to these perspectives that portray regulations as something that add pressure and workload, respondent 5 commented on the benefit of having such regulations: “It is actually nice then that you have that backing of this pressure that does help.” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). Respondents seem to agree as there are no specific regulations set to guide film festivals on their sustainable transition, those do not directly impact the Green Teams’ agenda. However, when there are specific regulations, such as the single-plastic ban, that can be applied to film festivals attention needs to be dedicated to adhering to those. These results are similar to those found in Dodds et al., (2020), who discuss how festivals might feel inclined to partake in certain initiatives because they are mandated by certain regulations, and they might have to pay a fine if they do not comply (p.4). The absence of European guidelines and regulations has emerged in several interviews and will be addressed when discussing barriers in terms of lack of support in section 4.4.4.

#### **4.3.2. Social pressure**

In the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) the theme of social pressure refers to wanting to implement sustainable initiatives because of social influence from other festivals or wanting to adhere to a sense of social responsibility as a festival. During the interviews, there was not a lot of mention of feeling social pressure from stakeholders or similar festivals. However, external partners were often referred to when mentioning a barrier, which will be discussed in section 4.4.5.. In terms of other film festivals, interviewees tended to mention that communication between festivals should be improved as “everyone is facing sustainability issues everywhere” (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional), and establishing a regular

exchange of information between festivals regarding which initiatives they have implemented and how they have done so, could support other festivals in doing the same. Most interviewees mention that they tend to pay attention to other festivals and what initiatives they are implementing as “there is no point for all of us to re-invent the wheel in our corner” (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional).

Similarly, Dodds et al. (2020) noted that festival organizers felt the need for a benchmark to compare to other festivals and understand whether their own festival was doing enough, and how this can be considered as an extrinsic organizational motivation (p. 18). This suggests that the creation of a network between festivals is necessary to improve and implement the most effective sustainable initiatives. de Valck and Zielinski (2020) proved the effectiveness of bringing together film festival professionals by publishing a roundtable where multiple film festival organizers and scholars were brought together to “compare notes on the general impact of film festivals on the environment and to anticipate future directions for greening the sector” (p.1) and provided a space for knowledge exchange about sustainable practices.

#### **4.3.3. Image and Reputation**

A consequence of investing time and effort in sustainability as a film festival is the reputation and image that derive from making these ethical choices. If film festivals implement sustainable practices, they might as well use their sustainable event to their advantage and “have a positive impact while doing it!” (Green Festivals, 2024, para.1). IFFR professionals seem to have a similar perspective on the matter, seeing an impact on the festival’s reputation as a positive consequence. Respondent 2 stated:

“In the long run, if we become more green, that's something that we want to put to the outside world. To actually say like, “Hey, we are actually making efforts”, but that's not gonna be the priority. I mean, it's a positive consequence. But it's truly because there is a belief internally that it's really important and that we need to rethink the way we've been doing things generally”. (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional)

This comment emphasizes how being part of an organization that has so much visibility also comes with a certain degree of responsibility, as taking action only because of image purposes is seen as superficial, and public image can only be taken into account when there is a true motivation to be sustainable internally. Regarding visibility, respondent 1

mentioned the social responsibility that comes with being a cultural organization that attracts media attention:

“We think that as a cultural institution, we are so visible and so public that we kind of feel the need to say something and to put it somewhat on the agenda uh because it is important and we feel like with the cultural sector, you kind of have to say something about it.” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

This same sense of social responsibility felt by respondent 1 is shared in the “Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn” document and IFFR sustainability statement (*Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn*, 2023, p.1; IFFR, 2024, para.1). Both of these statements mention the social responsibility of being a cultural organization and therefore imply that the image and reputation that come with it, are just a positive consequence of their actions. A lot of these perspectives were identified to fit both into the “image and reputation” theme as well as in “awareness”. As public image is seen as a secondary consequence, it seems that these actions are firstly meant to bring awareness to the guests and audiences of the festival.

Another factor that can impact the reputation of a festival is the risk of greenwashing (Cesaro, 2022, p.91). Dodds et al., (2020) mention that organizations should avoid greenwashing as it can have negative effects on the reputation of the organization (p.5). In accordance with this, respondent 1 raised the issue of the risk of falling into greenwashing when explaining that they have reduced the size of the program in the past year:

“Less international guests came and filmmakers, cast, and crew. Premiers were a bit less because we had a smaller program. And then you, of course, can say: “Hey, we did really well decreasing our international flights”. But then you're speaking of greenwashing because you can't say we did really well in lessening international flights, but we also had a small program because it goes hand in hand” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

This also relates to the need for common guidelines as standards, as when it is easy to pay to acquire a green certificate (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional) it is easy to hide whether an organization truly wants to be more sustainable or only want the reputation that comes with it. Receiving a sustainability award can impact the reputation of a festival, however, obtaining a certificate can sometimes be a challenge, and this aspect will therefore be discussed in section 4.4.4.

#### 4.3.4. Awareness

A theme that has emerged from the interviews but is not present in the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) concerns the idea that film festivals can serve as places to educate and bring awareness regarding sustainability issues. The “Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn” statement mentions how art and cultural organization can use their “special position” to start discussions concerning social change and issues within the creative industries (*Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn*, 2023, para.1). In regard to this, respondent 4 mentioned that has a festival there is a responsibility to show the importance of environmental sustainability, by stating: “You're in a position of example to show the world. I think if you do events like these, such international events, then it's just really important to show that we should do better” (Respondent 4, Operations, IFFR professional). This perspective links back to the topic of visibility, as IFFR is in a very “visible” position in the Netherlands and has a certain social responsibility. When discussing the IFFR initiatives of suggesting train travel instead of air travel for journeys shorter than seven hours and how sustainable choices can be advocated to guests, respondent 5 mentioned:

“It's also about a way of communicating to your guests and sort of saying, this is, for us, a reason why we would prefer you to take a train rather than flying. We know it takes an awful lot more time, but this is a commitment that we're making as a festival, and we stand by it.” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

This newly emerged theme is aligned with the findings from Mair and Laing (2012), who investigated the motivations of music festival organizers to implement sustainable practices and found a new driver from their original framework regarding the “desire to educate” (p.25). They mention how this driver was not predicated by the literature, but it appears to play a significant role in the decision to green festivals by their organizers (p.25).

It seems that this sense of social responsibility is not included in the small amount of literature investigating drivers of sustainable change in festivals, but it is present in all documents and statements arguing why film festivals should become more sustainable. For example, both the Green Festival Guide (2021) and the European Green Festival Roadmap (2023, p.3) mention this sense of social responsibility as a motivator to increase sustainability efforts.



#### **4.3.5. Extrinsic Motivation as a Driver**

Following analysis of extrinsic motivations among film festival professionals, four themes were revealed: regulations, social pressure, image and reputation, and awareness. The findings revealed that film festival professionals are found to be primarily extrinsically motivated by a sense of social responsibility, both in regards to wanting to educate their audience and wanting to be perceived as an ethical organization. In concordance with previous research, respondents expressed the desire to know if their organization is implementing as many practices as other film festivals, as to be “doing enough” (Dodds et al., 2020, p.18) on their journey to a sustainable transition.

The theme “financial incentive” from the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) did not emerge from the interviews, but this can be attributed to the currently vacant position of head of finance at IFFR which meant no member of the finance department at IFFR was interviewed for this research. However, during the interviews, respondents mentioned financial incentives as an additional motivation to implement sustainable practices, but not as the main driving force. Even though previous studies investigating different types of festivals mention a “positive financial payoff” in implementing sustainable practices within an organization (Dodds et al., 2020, p.5), this motivator did not emerge in the current research.

#### **4.4. Barriers That Can and Cannot Be Overcome**

During the interviews, there was a lot of emphasis on how difficult it can be to implement long-lasting sustainable practices. This section will discuss seven barriers, of which four originated from the framework (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27), and three emerged solely from the thematic analysis. One theme that will be discussed at the end of this section concerns the perspective of respondents on how these barriers can be overcome. Similarly to previous research, none of these barriers were found to have prevented the festival from engaging in sustainable behavior, but they did however limit the extent to which these behaviors could be executed (Mair and Laing, 2012, p.20).

##### **4.4.1. Lack of Time**

All of the respondents mentioned how time tends to be an issue when trying to research and implement sustainability initiatives in an often very hectic and high-stress environment (R1, R2, R3, R4, R7, R8). Especially as the respondents need to allocate time to dedicate to the Green Team within their working day. For instance, Respondent 2 commented:

“It's difficult to really implement certain things right away due to like the amount of work we have to do [...] there is only so much time we have, sometime, to properly think about solutions. Because we try to think green in our own roles, but sometimes you would need even more time to properly find solutions,” (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional).

Similarly, respondent 3 commented on the unique challenges of working in a high-stress fast-paced environment in which most workload is focused on only ten days in which the festival is happening:

“We are a project-based organization. We do work year-round but with a very small team. And work pressure in the festival sector as a whole isn't exactly low. So, it's finding the time to think plans through and sort of see, okay, this is a longer-term project, but this is a step that we can take now”. (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional)

It is interesting to note that even though the original ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2013, p.164) that investigated wineries found “lack of time” to be a barrier, the framework adopted by Dodds et al., (2020) research on Canadian festival did not include “lack of time” as a theme in their findings, suggesting that this theme was not identified as a barrier by the festival organizers. This difference could be due to the different participants sample between the current research and Dodds et al. (2020) research, as the interviewees in this research are all part of Green Teams committed to investing time in sustainability efforts and therefore think about how much time they can or cannot dedicate to this cause more often. However, this difference could also allude to the fact that once sustainability efforts are made it is hard to maintain the same level of effort as you may not always have much time when working at a festival (de Valck & Zielinski, 2022, p.271).

Another issue that emerged during the interviews with festival professionals and was later confirmed by the sustainability expert is that often it is hard to prioritize sustainability: “A lot of people find sustainability important but not that many people find it urgent” (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert). IFFR professionals have confirmed how hard it is to prioritize sustainability when they already have a lot of tasks to fulfill (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6). Respondent 4 mentioned that often Green Team members cancel on the team’s meetings when: “Other deadlines come closer and priorities shift”. (Respondent 4, Operations, IFFR professional). When discussing how high sustainability is on the priority list at IFFR, respondent 3 stated: “It's not the last, last, maybe, but it's just not as high as like, delivering

the festival. It's further down the line.” (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional). This difficulty in prioritizing sustainability seems to be a commonly shared obstacle between festivals in Europe, as the European Green Festival Roadmap (2023) mentions that “Sustainability must remain on the agenda throughout all management meetings, otherwise the work will not get done” (p.15). Therefore, the only way to maintain long-term sustainable solutions is to integrate these practices into the daily processes at film festivals, to make sure sustainability issues are addressed.

#### **4.4.2. Cost**

By far the biggest barrier that emerged during the interviews was the lack of budget to implement sustainable practices, this is in line with the findings of Dodds et al. (2020, p. 12). For instance, respondent 2 stated: “The thing that is more problematic is money, because sometimes sustainable options are more expensive” (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional). Similarly, respondent 5 commented on these challenges and the decision-making process to allocate budget to sustainable initiatives:

“And then the other thing is really, is money. Money drives a lot [...] It's really an investment going greener, which I don't feel should be a hinder. It's just a decision that you make as an organization, that you put more budget towards being more sustainable, being a greener festival.” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

In comparison with the literature mentioning how sustainable options can save money long-term festival professionals seemed to believe that the investment is not worth the long-term results as the budget is very limited (Green Festivals, 2024, para.2). A reason why this might be, is also because IFFR has experienced budget cuts that have impacted sustainable initiatives, such as changing merchandise partners. Respondent 1 explained that although they were collaborating with a merchandising partner that “was quite sustainable” and could help them achieve their sustainability goals, because of a price increase they had to find a new partner and start from scratch again, which was quite a significant setback (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). This situation might strengthen the perception that sustainable options are more expensive and therefore out of reach.

On the other hand, when discussing budget limitations, two respondents (R1, R3) also mentioned that money is not always the solution to all problems. For example,

respondent 3 commented: “Because some things you just can't fix with only having an infinite budget.” (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional). It is important to account for these perspectives as well as often it may seem like acquiring higher funds would solve all sustainability issues as more initiatives would be able to be implemented. However, the next few paragraphs will elaborate on other barriers that are still considered significant obstacles in the implementation of sustainable practices but do not revolve around money.

#### **4.4.3. Lack of Knowledge – Lack of Expertise**

During the interviews, it often emerged that the Green Team is formed by volunteers among the professionals already working at the festival, and as they do not have an academic background in environmental sustainability, it might feel that they lack in knowledge or expertise to successfully identify and implement green practices. However, this lack of expertise was not perceived as a barrier to achieving sustainability goals. For instance, respondent 3 mentioned: “None of us studied a master's in sustainability or have a very technical background. But still, we kind of go places with it, so that is good” (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional). Similarly, the sustainability expert felt that film festival professionals have enough knowledge to realize what they can and cannot implement, but also commented on how impactful it is to hire an external person to be responsible for sustainability and guide the festival professionals:

“If you're not that far ahead, you need someone who has the hat of sustainability on. And if I step in, people think sustainability, only that, and that then even without me doing something, I'm already doing something, because people see me and they think, hey, sustainability” (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert).

These findings highlight that to implement green practices it is more important to know the festival field than to know about sustainability (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert), however a sustainability expert can be useful to guide festivals in the right direction and invest the small amount of time they have available in an effective matter. The sustainability expert mentioned that they were a festival producer for fifteen years before beginning to focus on sustainability, and this is why they know how to effectively help and support other festivals, as they understand the process of organizing a film festival and the challenges that come with it.

#### **4.4.4. Lack of Support**

The lack of European guidelines has been identified by the majority of respondents as a barrier (R1, R3, R5, R6, R7, R8), as not having to invest as much time in research,

could save them time to invest in actively implementing sustainability practices (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional). The lack of guidelines also contributed to a lack of “uniform sustainability strategies across all big festivals” (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.) and a lack of guidance in knowing how to calculate GHG emissions produced by a film festival, which has been argued to be the first step any festival should take in their sustainable transition (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2023, p.3). All respondents also agreed that calculating emissions is the first step to being able to start implementing green practices. Respondent 1 addressed how when they joined the team the main goal was to have a “zero measurement” of what they emit (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional) and respondent 7 discussed how NFF, as a smaller festival, is still trying to calculate their carbon emissions before making a detailed multi-year plan:

“So, we've been trying to hire a company to do such a measurement for us, and that's a little bit more complex and also a bit more expensive. But we feel like that is something that is important to prioritize because then, you know where you're at and that's a way more efficient way to actually start to make improvements instead of just kind of doing it, you know, by feeling.” (Respondent 7, Festival Agency, NFF professional).

Without guidelines, it is hard to know which certificate to get, as many different companies provide this service and calculate GHG emissions in different ways. This makes it also harder to compare with other festivals to know how much you have achieved in comparison to similar events. On this topic respondent 1 mentioned:

“You have to have a standard that you can measure yourself against, because let's say we have the Coolset label that says we're ‘climate conscious’. And another film festival works with a different company, and they say they are ‘emission free’. But what is it based on? so yeah, transparency is there, when you have a European standard” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

This necessity for guidelines is also highlighted in the literature. Firstly, documents such as “Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn” and the European Green Festival Roadmap were published as a response to this lack of guidance. Moreover, Dodds et al., (2020) also found that almost half of Canadian festival organizers interviewed felt the need for formal legislation or regulation regarding sustainability practices (p.15). In addition to this, Respondent 3 commented on how having a sustainable certificate was a requirement to receive funding, but it was not specified which type of certificate was necessary:

“So, you're looking for something and you just hope it's right, which is not the most comfortable position to be in, in that sense, because you want to be really sure because it. There's a lot of money on the line”. (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional).

Therefore, this lack of support for film festivals is posing a risk of investing money in something that will not be recognized or appropriate, and also making it harder to implement sustainable practices.

#### **4.4.5. External factors**

In the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) there are a lot of factors influencing extrinsic motivation, however, a lot of these aspects have been found to be barriers in the context of IFFR. For example, IFFR locations are rented only for the duration of the festivals, which is around ten days, and it is hard to control GHG emissions and reduce them when someone else is in charge (R1, R4). Respondent 4 for example, when discussing reducing the heating at external festival venues, mentioned: “And we are depending, like, we cannot decide on how high they put the heating or how low. Well, like a little, but they will probably do their own thing anyway” (Respondent 4, Operations, IFFR professional). These findings align with Mair and Laing’s (2012) finding regarding a lack of support from external venues (p.21). The interviewed festival organizers from the study noted that when working with many different locations it is difficult to uphold a standard of behavior regarding sustainability (p.21). This applies to IFFR as well as the festival locations are often spread around Rotterdam and respondent 1 mentioned that some locations can be more “open to dialogue” than others (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). Regarding this communication between the festival organizers and the locations, Respondent 1 commented on the ability to suggest greener initiatives to these venues:

“We don't also feel the agency to actually say, ‘Hey, this is what we want’. We can say some stuff, but it's really difficult because it's not our locations, it's external partners. So, it's always on us to somewhat make the best of it” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

A solution to this barrier would be for the festival to have its own venues, as respondent 4 mentioned that since recently IDFA has their own building with a theater, and therefore more control. However, this entails a large money investment, and as film festivals only last a few weeks it might not be an optimal solution. Therefore, this barrier is hard to

overcome as a lot of professionals from different organizations are involved and often not on the same page regarding sustainability (Mair & Laing, 2012, p.21).

Respondent 1 also mentioned how a few years ago the trains in Germany were striking during the week of the festival, so guests had to book flights in order to attend. This is another example of how external circumstances can impact the sustainability efforts made by IFFR. However, Respondent 1 stated that IFFR has tried to “set up a policy step by step to somewhat accommodate unprecedented things” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

#### **4.4.6. Audience reception**

Another theme that links to extrinsic motivation from the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27) relates to the reputation and public image of the festivals and how the festival is perceived by its guests and audience. Interviewees mentioned how often there needs to be consideration into reoccurring audiences and their expectation regarding how the event will occur:

“[it] is a concern because it sort of affects people's experience of the festival. Sort of what they have been able to expect for however many years they've been coming to the festival. And they're all used to sort of scheduling their trip in a certain way. So that's something to be conscious of. But I think, one of the difficult things is finding the balance.” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

Similarly, respondent 1 mentioned how the way in which attendees can take part and vote in the audience award changed from paper to digital after the COVID-19 pandemic, and “It took a little bit to actually get used to it for audiences” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). This uncertainty in audience reception is also found in previous literature; Dodds et al., (2020) found that some festival organizers indicated an “issue related to support from attendees” and a specific interviewee mentioned that it takes at least two years for guests to embrace change. (p.13). Respondent 1 also mentioned that IFFR tries not to make specific choices based on audience reception because “otherwise, you can’t really change” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). This perspective also highlights how the festival chooses to prioritize certain initiatives over others and what factors influence those choices. Audience reception cannot be considered as strong a barrier as budget and time constraints, but it still influences the

sustainability transition of IFFR, although the festival professionals try not to let it dictate too many aspects of their sustainable transition.

#### **4.4.7. The Inherent Nature of International Film Festivals**

A less concrete barrier which was mentioned in all of the interviews and did not emerge from the literature, relates to the fact that IFFR is an international film festival that needs to maintain certain practices to remain as such. International film festivals are by nature a place where people travel to collectively enjoy multiple screenings. The essence of an international film festival can hardly ever be completely sustainable as by definition it involves international traveling, food catering, and film screenings (de Valck & Zielinski, 2022, p.275). Although this barrier did not emerge in previous research on film festivals, literature does confirm that if film festivals advertise themselves as international events, “they cater not only to local or national audiences, but specifically aim to attract international visitors and guests” (de Valck, 2016, p.2).

From the interviews, it has emerged that how IFFR deals with these barriers is by transforming practices slowly to allow audiences to have enough time to get acquainted with the newer initiatives and to slowly increase the presence of sustainability in more and more aspects of the festival (R1, R2, R3). For example, while IFFR cannot control how guests travel to the festival, it can advise them to prefer train travel over flights if they are traveling from Europe. Respondent 3 commented on the need for the festival to invite international guests and how this practice cannot just simply be eliminated: “We need the international guests to stay relevant. So we bring in a lot of guests, and it is a lot of travel, and it is a lot of flights” (Respondent 3, Content, IFFR professional).

The way in which film screenings are shown, and the amount of energy that has to be invested in running an event for ten days, cannot be completely carbon neutral, as energy will more likely always be needed to some extent, and energy use causes GHG emissions. However, these practices can be reorganized throughout the year planning of the festival to strategize and reduce emissions as low as possible:

“In that sense, we can never be 100% green, which I think in general is impossible anyway. But we can make sure that we reduce it as much as possible in our consciousness of what we do and that we do not do things unnecessarily”  
(Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

Respondent 2 commented on a further factor that influences how these barriers can never truly be overcome, as the first priority of IFFR remains to showcase international films:



“I think the limits are just the nature of our event because there is only so many changes we can make. But for example, if we were to completely stop flying people in, then the whole nature of the festival changes. So I think the limitations are also like all things in life, there is the ideal goal and what we would all wish to reach which would be a fully sustainable festival with zero emissions. [...] But then, that wouldn't have the social impact that our festival have. So there is also a bit of a tradeoff, which is very difficult to accept as a person that is really wishing for as much sustainability as possible. (Respondent 2, Program Operations and International Relations, IFFR professional)

When discussing how to compromise between the core nature of the festival and sustainability efforts, the sustainability expert (Respondent 8) mentioned why it is so important to discuss the mission of the festival during the workshops they host with festival professionals:

“The first thing I ask is ‘What's the mission of the festival?’ Cause if you're an international film festival, it will be very weird to say, ‘Yeah you, you're not allowed to get international people so fuck off, you don't do that.’ So even if it's the biggest impact maker it doesn't always mean that they can reduce their impact” (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert)

During the workshops to implement the RoadMap Canvas at festivals, the sustainability expert emphasizes that all of the decisions are made by the festival professionals as they “know their own organization the best” (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert). These findings highlight how it is important to keep working on sustainability even when it is impossible to become completely carbon neutral (de Valck & Zielinski, 2022, p.270), as reducing one's environmental impact is already better than not investing any effort in sustainability practice.

#### **4.4.8. Solutions and Finding the Right Compromise**

While discussing barriers with IFFR professionals it often emerged how they think some of these barriers can be overcome. For example, to make sure guests do not have a negative reaction to new practices, as they might have been attending the festival for multiple years, it is necessary to change practices slowly and “step by step” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). Respondent 1 discussed how when they met with the sustainability expert to establish the multi-year trajectory plan for the sustainable transition of IFFR it was mentioned that it is necessary to “move within an

area of comfort or slightly outside of it” (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional), suggesting that festivals should identify areas in which they believe it to be more feasible to implement sustainable changes

“You can’t move too fast because otherwise it’s really uncomfortable for a number of people. We try to move in smaller circles. It’s like, ok, small step, now that’s doable. And then next year we do the next step”. (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

In terms of the long-term journey of meeting significant sustainability goals, respondent 8 (sustainability expert) mentioned how setting up a trajectory is just the first step of a long process that needs to be I every so often to understand what is working and what is not:

“I always say the program that I do with people is a Kickstarter. It’s not your final solution. It’s setting a base for a plan, it’s setting a base for a long-term commitment, but it’s not the complete plan because you have to keep working on it, keep developing it.” (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert).

It is important to understand that even when talking about the ‘sustainability transition’ of an organization, it does not mean that once all the goals are achieved there is no more work to do, “sustainability is an ongoing process” (Respondent 8, Sustainability expert). IFFR professionals seem to have a clear idea of what factors are challenging their sustainable transition and how they can be overcome, however, sometimes issues of time and budget cannot be overcome as easily as learning more about sustainability to implement green practices more effectively.

Another topic that was discussed in all the interviews was that the best way to handle these practices is to find a compromise between the existing practices and the sustainable practices to be implemented. For example, if money is allocated to obtain a sustainability certificate, then there will need to be time until there is enough budget to invest in sustainable merchandising. Compromise was also a key element when discussing how the core nature of the festival impacts sustainability efforts, as the harder a barrier is to overcome the more compromises have to be made to be both consistent with a sustainable vision and maintain the core essence of the festival (Respondent 1, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional). For instance, respondent 5 mentioned how you can compromise having to invite international guests by reducing the number of guests and asking: “Do we really need this person to be physically here? Is it really contributing to our

program, or is it more valuable to have this other person here perhaps that is also living much closer” (Respondent 5, Communications and Audience Reach, IFFR professional).

#### **4.4.9. How Barriers are Preventing the Implementation of Sustainable Practices**

The analysis of barriers encountered when implementing sustainability practices has revealed eight themes: lack of time, cost, lack of knowledge, lack of support, audience reception, the inherent nature of international film festivals, and solutions. The findings revealed that film festival professionals feel the need for a common sustainability standard among similar events, to guarantee transparency and ease their sustainable transition. This need is highlighted by the perspective of the sustainable expert, who mentions that there is a significant disparity between the “front runners” and other festivals, suggesting that establishing a channel of communication between these festivals could help narrow this gap and guarantee all festivals can establish long-term sustainable initiatives. Time and budget limitations were found to increase the difficulty of implementing sustainable initiatives amidst other barriers. If professionals cannot dedicate time to research and cannot invest money to explore whether a solution is feasible, barriers become harder to overcome. In addition, many barriers perceived by film festival professionals, such as the collaboration with external partners and the participation of international guests, do not seem to have a straightforward solution. The discussion on whether film festivals can ever become carbon neutral sparked similar responses from all respondents: although it seems impossible to eliminate GHG emissions there are still a lot of actions that can be taken to reduce these emissions. Therefore, often eliminating GHG emissions is not the goal, but it is possible to try and find practices that are less harmful to the environment, for example by advocating for train travel instead of flights.

#### **4.5. Differences from the Adopted Framework**

The ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ by Dodds et al. (2020, p.1) includes seventeen themes, of which only nine were found in the current research. In contrast with both previous studies utilizing the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2013, p.164; Dodds et al., 2020, p.27), themes of amotivation did not emerge from the interviews in this research. The only mention regarding one of the subthemes included in this category was on the great amount of effort that needs to be invested in implementing sustainability initiatives (the corresponding theme is “too much effort”). A reason why the data might not have provided as many insights into amotivation to implement sustainable practices could be because all interviews were conducted with individuals who are actively

involved in sustainability, as seven professionals working at film festivals are part of the Green Team and the eighth participant is a sustainability expert. The original research using this framework did not select participants based on their involvement with sustainability, which may have led to interviewing a higher number of participants who had never been involved with or aware of possible sustainability practices. A few respondents (R1, R2, R7) have made comments during the interviews that refer to how often implementing sustainable practices might seem like “too much effort”, also one of the themes identified by the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.27). However, there was not enough data concerning this to be identified as a theme in the analysis as most respondents only quickly mentioned this aspect and also expressed intrinsic motivation in their other responses, suggesting they do have motivation to be more environmentally sustainable.

Other themes that were not identified were ‘financial incentive’ as an extrinsic motivator and ‘lack of resources’ as a barrier. As already mentioned, the absence of ‘financial incentive’ as a theme could be because none of the professionals interviewed were part of the financial department at IFFR and therefore focused on managing the festival’s budget. While respondents did not directly mention that the lack of resources was impacting the implementation of sustainability initiatives, they did mention that the IFFR team year-round is significantly smaller than during the festival, and since most sustainable initiatives need to be planned far in advance of the weeks leading up to the festival, this could be acting as a barrier. Overall, the current research proved that the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.1) can be applied to film festivals as well and it guides the thematic analysis to find insightful results.

## 5. Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the motivations behind implementing sustainable practices at film festivals and the obstacles encountered in this process, specifically focusing on IFFR. To this end, the following research questions were formulated: How are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations driving film festival professionals to implement sustainability practices? What are the perceived barriers to the effective implementation of sustainable initiatives?

The data consisted of eight, semi-structured, expert interviews with film festival professionals, six currently working at IFFR and involved in the Green Team, one currently working at NFF and involved in the Green Team, and one sustainability expert who supports festivals in setting and achieving sustainability goals.

### 5.1. Key Findings

The analysis of these interviews revealed three categories, with each exhibiting 15 themes. The themes identified, in combination with the previously published literature, provide valuable insights in answering the research question and reveal that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play significant roles in driving sustainability initiatives.

The key findings regarding intrinsic motivators demonstrate an alignment between personal values and the responsibility of being an international film festival. Respondents who held strong personal values regarding environmental sustainability also expressed the desire to inspire social change as an organization. This sense of social responsibility has been identified both as an intrinsic and extrinsic motivator as the consequence can be seen as an extrinsic motivator as it contributes to the image of the festival and the sense of responsibility can be seen as an intrinsic motivator. This sense of social responsibility aligns with most of the protocols that have been published to help film festivals achieve sustainable goals (“Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn”, 2023, p.1; “European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.2; “Green Festival Guide”, 2022, p.3), as often it is mentioned that cultural organizations have an impact as “social drivers” (“Te Zijn of Niet Te Zijn”, 2023, p.1). Moreover, respondents were found to care deeply about starting a movement of change internally, to then express it externally. An example of this process can be investing in a greener workspace environment. These findings suggest that strong intrinsic motivations are necessary to generate change in an organization, in accordance with the findings of Dodds et al., (2020, p.18) when investigating drivers of Canadian festival organizers.

Extrinsic motivators such as social pressure and audience awareness also had a significant impact on the adoption of sustainable practices. The absence of clear regulations

concerning film festivals in Europe highlights the need for more systematic support in terms of environmental sustainability. Respondents emphasized the benefits of having clear guidelines to follow as it would ease the sustainable transition of their organization. Social pressure acts as a motivator when festival organizers want to ensure they hold to the same level as similar festivals and maintain a positive image and reputation within the industry (Dodds et al., 2020, p.18). Lastly, as already mentioned for intrinsic motivation, a strong motivator for change was the sense of social responsibility that comes from being an international film festival, and wanting to bring awareness to the guests and attendees of the festival. This motivator highlights how the impact that sustainable practices can have, is not only limited to the festival and its organizers (Cummings, 2016, p.180).

The thematic analysis revealed several challenges that impact these sustainability efforts. Even though lack of time and unaffordable cost were mentioned most often as barriers to achieving sustainable practice, the most impactful barrier that was not solvable by just receiving more funding or devoting a specific team to address sustainability challenges, is the lack of systematic support. The absence of European guidelines and clear legislation regarding sustainability practices at film festivals creates uncertainty and obstructs progress (“European Green Festival Roadmap”, 2022, p.2). The analysis revealed a need for regulations and guidance to help festival organizers navigate the challenging process of investing time and effort in sustainability.

Another new barrier that was not present in previous studies but was discussed by festival professionals in the round-table organized by de Valck and Zielinski (2022) is the inherently unsustainable nature of an international film festival. Regardless of how many sustainable initiatives are implemented by IFFR, the festival is based on showcasing films from all over the world which requires the attendance of guests from all over the world. As international travel is necessary (de Valck, 2016, p.2), there is always going to be an aspect of international film festivals that harms the environment. However, as the sustainability expert mentioned, even though the biggest polluter might not be able to be addressed this should not impact the sustainability efforts of an organization, as change can still be performed, and the impact of these changes can still be significant.

## **5.2. Practical and Theoretical Implications**

Several practical and theoretical implications emerge from the findings of this research, as an existing framework was applied to a novel environment to discover consistent, although nuanced, results. In terms of practical implication, the analysis of barriers to the implementation of sustainability practices revealed a need to support festival

organizers from policymakers. Given the role of regulations in driving sustainability efforts as drivers, there is a need for policymakers to establish an environmental standard through clear guidelines and incentives, specifically on a European level, as also discussed by de Valck and Zielinski, (2022, p.272). The establishment of such standards can positively contribute to easing the rest of the barriers encountered during the process of adopting sustainable initiatives, such as a lack of collaboration with external partners. For example, clear guidelines could influence external locations that film festivals collaborate with, making it easier for a festival to uphold higher sustainability standards. Moreover, transparent standards would help film festival organizers navigate within the many sustainability initiatives, decreasing the impact of their lack of knowledge in the specific subject. The interviews with film festival professionals also highlight a need for effective communication and collaboration between multiple film festivals. Establishing networks and places for knowledge sharing can facilitate the implementation of best environmentally sustainable practices. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that when the interviews with the NFF professional took place in May 2024, the NFF website did not have a dedicated sustainability page on their website to discuss their sustainable achievements and goals. However, in June 2024 a dedicated webpage was added (NFF, 2024b, para.1). The IFFR website was also updated since the time of the interviews (IFFR, 2024a, para.1). These changes prove the increased attention that is being posed on sustainability issues by film festival professionals and highlight the importance of discussing sustainability issues with individuals who have the power to drive change.

In terms of theoretical implications, this research has applied the ‘Drivers of Sustainability Framework’ (Dodds et al., 2020, p.1) to a singular film festival, establishing the validity of this framework also to this type of sample and not only when used to compare different festivals across one geographical area. This study also contributed to the body of research that investigates film festivals specifically, and the challenges encountered when embarking on a journey to become a more sustainable organization. This study revealed how international film festivals, in particular, struggle to balance the want to become more sustainable and the need for international guests and visitors to maintain the core of the festival intact.

### **5.3. Limitations and Further Research**

During the research process, some limitations were encountered. Firstly, the research focused on IFFR as a case study, which implies that the findings might not be universally applicable to all film festivals. It would be interesting to conduct further research with a

different case study, both in terms of location and size of the festival, to compare the results and investigate whether the findings of this research are specific to international film festivals, or film festivals located in the Netherlands.

Moreover, while the sample size of eight interviewees provided in-depth insights, it is a relatively small sample and may not have captured the full diversity of perspectives within the film festival industry. The difficulties in finding participants also contributed to this limitation. For instance, multiple interviews were canceled by the respondents due to busy schedules and some interview requests via email were only answered after several weeks. If the data collection period was extended and more participants with different experiences had been involved, the findings might vary and further contribute to closing the gap in the literature regarding drivers and barriers in implementing sustainability initiatives.

Lastly, this research chose to only focus on environmental sustainability for simplicity and due to the framework, that was chosen to guide the analysis. However, investigating sustainability in its broader meaning, also including social and economic sustainability, could provide additional findings to contribute to the long-term effective implementation of sustainability practices.



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## Appendix A Code Book

**Table 1**

*Categories and Themes Emerged from the Thematic Analysis*

Categories	Themes	Definition in Context of this Research	Example Quote
<b>Intrinsic motivation:</b> This main category refers to all the factors mentioned by the participants that can be attributed to personal motivators, both relating to the individual and to the organization			
	Values	This code refers to mentions of personal values that drive the implementation of sustainable practices	“That’s always been a topic of interest, like an ethical thing in my life” (R2)
	Altruism	This code refers to IFFR core values that drive the implementation of sustainable practices	“And does it fit in with our identity as a festival?” (R5)
	Personal Benefit	This code refers to mentions of personal benefit as a consequence of the implementation of sustainable practices	“I would for sure immediately regreen this entire office space” (R3)
<b>Extrinsic Motivation:</b> This main category refers to all the external factors mentioned by the participants that can be attributed to external motivators, both relating to guidelines and legislation that have to be followed and to perceived social pressures			
	Regulations / Policy	This code refers to regulations and guidelines that impact decisions regarding the implementation of sustainable practices	“There's of course a lot of legislations and initiatives that are either obligatory to follow or strongly advised” (R3)
	Social Pressure	This code refers to how the perception of other festivals impacts decisions regarding the implementation of sustainable practices	“We’re trying to be very conscious of what initiatives are being put into place” (R2)
	Image /Reputation	This code refers to the implementation of sustainable practices impacted by the reputation that is affiliated with these actions	“We also thought that would be a good outward sign” (R7)
	Awareness	This code refers to believing film festivals have a social responsibility to educate audiences	“It’s also about a way to communicating to your guests, and saying this is a reason why we would prefer if you could take the train” (R5)

**Barriers:** This main category refers to all the barriers and challenges mentioned by the participants that are considered to be complicating the process of implementation of sustainable practices

Lack of time	This code refers to mentions of the fact that there is not enough time to dedicate to sustainable initiatives	“Everyone is really busy, so there no more time” (R8)
Cost	This code refers to mentions of the fact that sustainable initiatives are too expensive	“Money is always also an issue” (R3)
Lack of Knowledge	This code refers to mentions of the fact that members of the Green Team are not experts on sustainability	“None of us has a master’s in sustainability or has a very theoretical background in it” (R3)
Lack of Support	This code refers to the lack of European guidelines for sustainability at film festivals	“It would be really nice because then you have a certain framework you can work in” (R1)
External Factors	This code refers to mentions of how external partners act independently of the film festival	“And we are depending, we cannot decide how high they put their heating” (R4)
Audience Reception	This code refers to mentions of how the perception of the audience might be a barrier to the implementation of sustainable initiatives	“Returning audiences, they are used to seeing certain things, getting certain things” (R5)
Nature of the Event	This code refers to mentions to the fact that international film festivals involve international travel	“But we need our international guests to stay relevant, so we bring in a lot of guests, and it’s a lot of travel, and it’s a lot of flights” (R3)
Solutions	This code refers to mentions of how these barriers can be overcome	“We try to move in smaller circles, like small step now and then next year we do the next” (R1)

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## Appendix B Participants

**Table 2**  
*List of interviewees*

Interviewee	Occupation	Department	Experience in Current Occupation	Green Team Experience	Type of interview
Respondent 1	IFFR	Communications and Audience Reach	5.5 years	4 years	In-person
Respondent 2	IFFR	Program Operations and International Relations	1.5 years	1.5 years	Online
Respondent 3	IFFR	Content	5 years	2 years	Online
Respondent 4	IFFR	Operations	10 months	3 weeks	In-person
Respondent 5	IFFR	Communications and Audience Reach	7 years	2 years	In-person
Respondent 6	IFFR	Pro	10+ years	2 years	Online
Respondent 7	NFF	Festival Agency	1 year	10 months	Online
Respondent 8	Sustainability Expert	/	5 years working with IFFR	/	Online

## Appendix C Interview Guide

*All of the interviews started with an explanation of the master's thesis and a conversation about the consent form and what it entails.*

### **Introduction:**

- Defining the role and main responsibilities
- Previous experience
- Experience in the Green Team
- Perception change: between not being on the Green Team and being on it

### **IFFR practices:**

- Current IFFR practice
- The process of implementing these practices
- Factors that impact priorities
- External pressure to implement certain initiatives
- Motivators behind most initiatives

### **IFFR obstacles:**

- Most encountered obstacles
- Most challenging initiative to implement

### **Future of IFFR:**

- Future of sustainability at IFFR
- Issues that need imminent attention
- If the Green Team had an infinite budget

### ***(For sustainability expert only)***

- What is the Roadmap Canvas you designed?
- Most common factors to influence priority on the Roadmap Canvas
- “Trends” of barriers within different cultural events
- Why is it hard to overcome these barriers?
- “Trends” of motivators within different cultural events
- Most difficult type of festival to “green”
- Why do festivals start their “sustainability journey”?
- How do you deal with events whose nature is inherently unsustainable
- Opinion on the lack of guidelines in Europe/The Netherlands
- Festival social responsibility to bring awareness

*At the end of every interview, participants were asked if there was something that was not asked, or discussed in the interviews that they thought would be important to discuss or could generate an interesting perspective in the research.*



## Appendix D Sample Consent Form

### **Information and consent form**

#### *Sustainability practices at International Film Festival Rotterdam*

##### **Introduction**

I am Marta Morosi, and I am completing my master's in media and creative industries at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I am conducting my thesis on the implementation of sustainable practices at Film Festivals in the Netherlands.

I will explain the study below. If you have any questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark parts of the text that are unclear to you.

If you want to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

##### **Why this research?**

The purpose of this research is to understand how sustainable practices are implemented at film festivals and what is the process surrounding this implementation.

##### **What can you expect?**

*The interview will last around 45/60 minutes.* If you do not want to answer a question during the interview, you are not required to do so. I will make an audio recording of the conversation.

At the end of the interview/discussion, you will have the opportunity to comment on your answers. If you disagree with my notes or if I misunderstood you, you can ask to have parts of them amended or deleted.

##### **You decide whether to participate**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation.

##### **What are the potential risks and discomforts?**

We do not anticipate any risks or discomforts while participating in this study.

##### **What data will I ask you to provide?**

During the interview the following personal data will be collected from you: Name, Age, years of experience in the field, audio recordings, occupation, and opinions about sustainable practices at film festivals.

##### **Who can see your data?**

- I store all your data securely.
- Audio Recordings are transcribed. Your name is replaced with a made-up name.
- Direct personal data will be stored separately from your answers.
- We may use your specific answers in the article. If your answer can be traced to you or we would like to mention your name, we will ask your permission first.

##### **How long will your personal data be stored?**

Your data will be retained for a minimum of 10 years. We retain the data so that other researchers have the opportunity to verify that the research was conducted correctly.

##### **What happens with the results of the study?**

You may indicate whether you would like to receive the results of the study.

##### **Do you have questions about the study?**

If you have any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me.

Name: Marta Morosi

Phone number: +39 3395942148

Email: 579761mm@eur.nl

Do you have a complaint or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit [www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl](http://www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl). (T: 088 - 1805250)

### **Do you regret your participation?**

You may regret your participation. Even after participating, you can still stop. Please indicate this by contacting me and I will delete your data. Sometimes we need to keep your data so that, for example, the integrity of the study can be checked.

### **Declaration of Consent**

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered. I know that I am allowed to stop at any time.

By signing this form, I

1. consent to participate in this research.
2. consent to the use of my personal data;
3. confirm that I am at least 18 years old<sup>1</sup>.
4. understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that I can stop at any time; and
5. understand that my data will be anonymized for publication, educational purposes, and further research.

**Check the boxes below if you consent to this.**

#### **Data**

I consent to the researcher's collection, use, and retention of the following data:  
genetic data, occupation, years of experience

☐

#### **Audio recording**

I consent to [the interview] being audio recorded.

☐

#### **Use for educational purposes**

I hereby consent to have my personal data, namely occupation and years of experience stored and used for educational purposes.

☐

#### **New research**

I give permission to be contacted again for new research.

☐

**You will receive a copy of the complete information and consent form.**

**Name of participant:**

**Participant's signature:**

**Date:**

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<sup>1</sup> GDPR permits 16 years old in the EEA to consent. From an ethics perspective, holding on to the age people become an adult may be preferable. Different countries may handle a different age for becoming an adult.