

TRANSGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AND HOW TO BE 'ORANGE TOGETHER' AT ROSKILDE FESTIVAL



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GENDERLAB - COLLABORATION BETWEEN COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL AND KVINFO

This case was written for Copenhagen Business School. It is based on quantitative and qualitative research on the issue. However, to ensure anonymity of the study participants, some parts have been adapted. The case is intended to be used as the basis for discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of situations of gender issues. No part of this case may be copied, stored, transmitted, reproduced, or distributed in any form or medium whatsoever without the permission of the authors.

Introduction and problem identification

Roskilde Festival is the largest music and arts festival in Northern Europe and dates back to 1971 where it was created in the image of Woodstock as an alternative to capitalist society. It is non-profit, and has since the beginning depended on volunteers to handle everything from security, to building stages and serving food. Today, the festival attracts 130,000 people, of which some 30,000 are volunteers, all living together in tent camps and partying at the festival site for a whole week in July where the festival becomes the fourth largest city in Denmark. At the end of each festival all proceeds are donated to charity.

Putting the technicalities aside for a second, Roskilde Festival is so much more than just a music festival. It is a place where you go to bed in a freezing cold tent, only to wake up gasping for air in a sauna, cursing over the neighbouring camp that has played 'Skud ud' since 7am. It is a place where you promised yourself you'd save money and only eat mackerel in tomato sauce but somehow find yourself chasing the food trucks as soon as the festival site opens. It is a place to return to year after year, and where you can be who you really are or become someone new. Roskilde Festival is a space where you are free to explore the best sides to yourself and to be curious about others, because Roskilde Festival is a free space.

Sometimes, however, the free space is misused to not only push own boundaries, but also to transgress those of others. According to a survey conducted by Roskilde Festival, sexual harassment and sexism are two of the things that festival-goers are concerned about the most. In 2017, one out of five women experienced unwanted attention at the festival. Such unwanted attention ranges from getting rated for your looks when passing by a camp, to getting an uninvited slap on your ass and being sexually assaulted or raped. Further, in 2014, 2017 and 2018 the police arrested three men for having photographed or filmed women when peeing by the fences. The spokes person for Roskilde Festival says that 'the fact that Roskilde Festival is a free space is not a free ticket to treat others disrespectfully' and that 'we won't accept that comments like "but hey, it's Roskilde" are used as excuses to transgress other people's boundaries'. Roskilde Festival acknowledges that with a free space, where people have different personal boundaries, comes many grey areas with the risk of transgressing someone else's boundaries - sometimes unintentionally. The problem with

transgressive behaviour is not unique to Roskilde Festival. In fact, the phenomenon doesn't occur to a higher degree during the festival than in urban nightlife in general. Yet, Roskilde Festival wants to take responsibility and a way forward should secure that everyone's boundaries are recognized and respected while still making sure that no one feels like their free space is limited or restricted. How can we create a space together where everyone is able to feel free *and* safe at Roskilde Festival?

Perspective 1: Roskilde without consent

It was Saturday night. Nicoline and her friends were getting ready for the ecstatic culmination of a whole week of partying at Roskilde Festival before returning to their daily lives in the 'real' world. Nicoline was initially not planning on going to the festival but her friends had convinced her to join last minute. Now, as she was sitting in one of the few chairs that were not broken, sipping on a lukewarm beer, she felt grateful for her stubborn friends. There was something about Roskilde that made her feel carefree, happy, and jolly – all at once. Maybe it was the feeling of being able to test her boundaries a bit, or maybe she had just caught a bit of that 'orange feeling', a sense of freedom that she kept seeing advertised all over the festival. She was abruptly woken up from her line of thought as her friends handed her another can of beer. Their favourite band was playing later this evening. They had been looking forward to this all week.

She had been working as a volunteer during the festival and earlier that day, at her last shift, a group of guys approached her to ask if she and her friends wanted to come to a party at their camp later that night. She instantly recognised them from the campsite, as their camp was just a couple of tents down the aisle from her own camp. She was reluctant at first, as she thought they were a bit loud and remembered how they had been rating her and her friends as they were walking past the camp a couple of days back. Nicoline wasn't sure how she felt about being rated at first, but her friends were really annoyed by the comments. They didn't think it was okay, especially as they were just walking by a random camp and all of a sudden some guys rated them on their looks. 'It just makes me feel uncomfortable', she remembered one of her friends saying. Nicoline confronted the guys about it, and one of the guys laughed her off and replied 'calm down, it's just Roskilde, and anyways, you and your friends are clearly all scoring top grades'. Were her friends overreacting? She laughed a bit, gave them her number and thought to herself that maybe it was really just a compliment. Nonetheless, she really enjoyed meeting new people.

Back in the camp after her shift, her friends were not very eager to party with her newfound friends, so they decided to throw one last girl-power pre-party in the camp and head over to the concert on their own. As it was the last festival night, they were all a bit tired and got drunk faster than usual so they decided to head back to the camp after the concert. On their way, as they passed the guys' camp, the guy that Nicoline gave her number to stopped her and asked why they never came to their party. Her friends kept walking, but there was something about this guy that made Nicoline feel intrigued, so she told her friends to go ahead and joined the guy in his camp. He gave her a beer as they started chatting about the festival and all the fun stuff that had happened the past week. There were no free chairs, so he offered her to sit on his lap and she did. All of a sudden, he leaned in to kiss her and she felt how his hands were moving their way up her skirt. 'No, stop! I don't want to', she said, and removed his hands. He looked at her and laughed. He leaned in a second time, and this time he was more rough as his hand grabbed her underwear. 'Stop, I don't want to!' she yelled at him. She could hear how his friends were laughing, and turned around just to see how one of them were filming. She managed to pull him away and ran towards her camp. Their laughs were fading as she ran further away but she could still hear how one of them yelled stupid slut after her.

How could I have been so stupid?, she thought to herself. She didn't even know this guy, so why did she stop to speak with him and why did she sit on his lap? She slowed down and began walking to gather her thoughts. Should she tell her friends? They already told her before that these guys were annoying. But she really thought that he seemed like a nice guy, and was definitely not expecting this from him. Besides, what to tell? He didn't force her to join him in their camp and he didn't force her to sit down on his lap. She could still hear them laughing and it made her spine shiver. Should she report them? But, she thought to herself, does this even count as sexual harassment? After all, she was at Roskilde. Isn't that what you should expect at a festival? She didn't know what to do, but as she returned to the camp she went straight to bed instead of joining her friends' party that was still going strong. Her night was ruined and she couldn't help but feel how maybe she shouldn't have gone to Roskilde after all.

Perspective 2: Orange Together

Roskilde Festival was right around the corner, and the main office building, which is located in walking distance from the festival site, was buzzing with life from all the volunteers that as one

worked non-stop to get all the pieces in place in time for the festival. Roskilde Festival is a bumblebee that doesn't know it can't fly, they told each other. There were only 60 full-time employees to help coordinating the collective efforts of more than 30,000 volunteers. This morning, everyone was gathered in the main hall to learn about a new campaign named Orange Together. For the past three years, the festival had gathered data on transgressive behaviour that mostly affected female festival-goers at Roskilde. The data were gathered to lay a foundation for the Orange Together campaign; an initiative launched for the first time in 2018 to tackle issues with transgressive behaviour. Not that the festival hadn't paid attention to these issues before. In cases of sexual assault and rape like with the stories in the article series *Roskilde uden samtykke* (Roskilde without consent) there's nothing to discuss. But ahead of such transgressions are often many grey areas where festival participants have to negotiate together what's acceptable behaviour and what's not. There's no golden standard to follow because everyone has different subjective limits, which should be respected. Roskilde Festival believe they can make a difference in initiating conversation around grey areas to foster better understanding and mutual respect among festival-goers.

Beatrice, the campaign coordinator of Orange Together, caught everyone's attention as she went to the front of the hall, facing all the eager listeners. 'Roskilde Festival is a fantastic free space with a lot of love, openness and respect for each other and the community,' she said, continuing: 'But that space can also be difficult to navigate in and, unfortunately, we experience that people's boundaries are exceeded at the festival - sometimes using the free space as a bad excuse.' She paused and locked eyes with some of the volunteers from the partner organisations that had been involved in developing the campaign. Then she went on: 'We are here to celebrate the launch of the Orange Together where we intend to explore lols, love, lust & limits, focusing on a variety of grey areas that can occur in such a free space. To initiate a dialogue about this, we have created a card game that volunteers will play together with the festival guests.' Beatrice sensed a bit of confusion in the room, as some started to mumble so she immediately explained, 'the card game consists of 36 dilemmas and 18 possible answers that will get the festival-goers to discuss and reflect over scenarios they are, or can be, met with at the festival. With this approach, we are focusing on grey areas and working with them in a preventive manner, through initiating a dialogue based on situations where it can be difficult to read each other's boundaries.'

The mumbling in the room was replaced with energy and excitement, as Beatrice shared the motivation for the campaign: 'We believe that where we, as a festival, can make a difference, is in

the dialogue around the culture of transgressive behaviour.’ As she opened the floor for questions and comments, a volunteer from one of the partner organisations added that ‘the goal for Roskilde Festival must be to focus on an important discussion that affects the world outside of Roskilde as well, but to take on a humble approach as we can see that this is important. However, we cannot necessarily approach it from all angles at once so we invite others to join us in that dialogue.’ Beatrice thanked for the comment as she split people up into smaller groups. She then handed out a deck of cards at each table for everyone to get affiliated with the game. Interesting, she thought to herself, how something as simple as playing card can get people to talk about things they don’t otherwise talk about. In that sense, the campaign was already successful, since it made the issue of transgressive behaviour very explicit and much more tangible, which after all is a good first step. She couldn’t help wondering, though, if Roskilde Festival could do more to address this issue, and in that case, what?

Concluding discussion and further perspectives

Sexism and rape have, historically, been reported to the police during festivals. However, the way in which these issues are perceived by festival organisers is changing. In the past, they were seen as incidents of criminal acts and treated as such. Today, they’ve developed into a safety concern, not least in the wake of major events such as the 2015 New Year celebration in Cologne, Germany where 100+ women reported sexual assaults by young men. The question is, if transgressive behaviours, sexism and rape cannot be explained away with incidental acts of ‘lone wolves’ but are actually a shared problem, how can a festival like Roskilde Festival ensure that its guests are safe?

List of references, inspiration, and appendices

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*You can download the Orange Together card game (in Danish) via the link below:
[https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/media/1510/orange-together kortspil.pdf](https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/media/1510/orange-together_kortspil.pdf)