

The life cycle of a festival:  
preliminary thoughts  
IFEA, Athens, Greece

Christopher Maughan  
De Montfort University, Leicester, UK  
0044116 250 6131, [ccm@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:ccm@dmu.ac.uk)

# Key questions

- In what ways does 'management' affect sustainability?
- How might 'thinking ahead' help avoid 'failure'?
- How does 'sustainability' impact on the festivals' sector in specific countries?
- Is this experience/ story, 'international'?

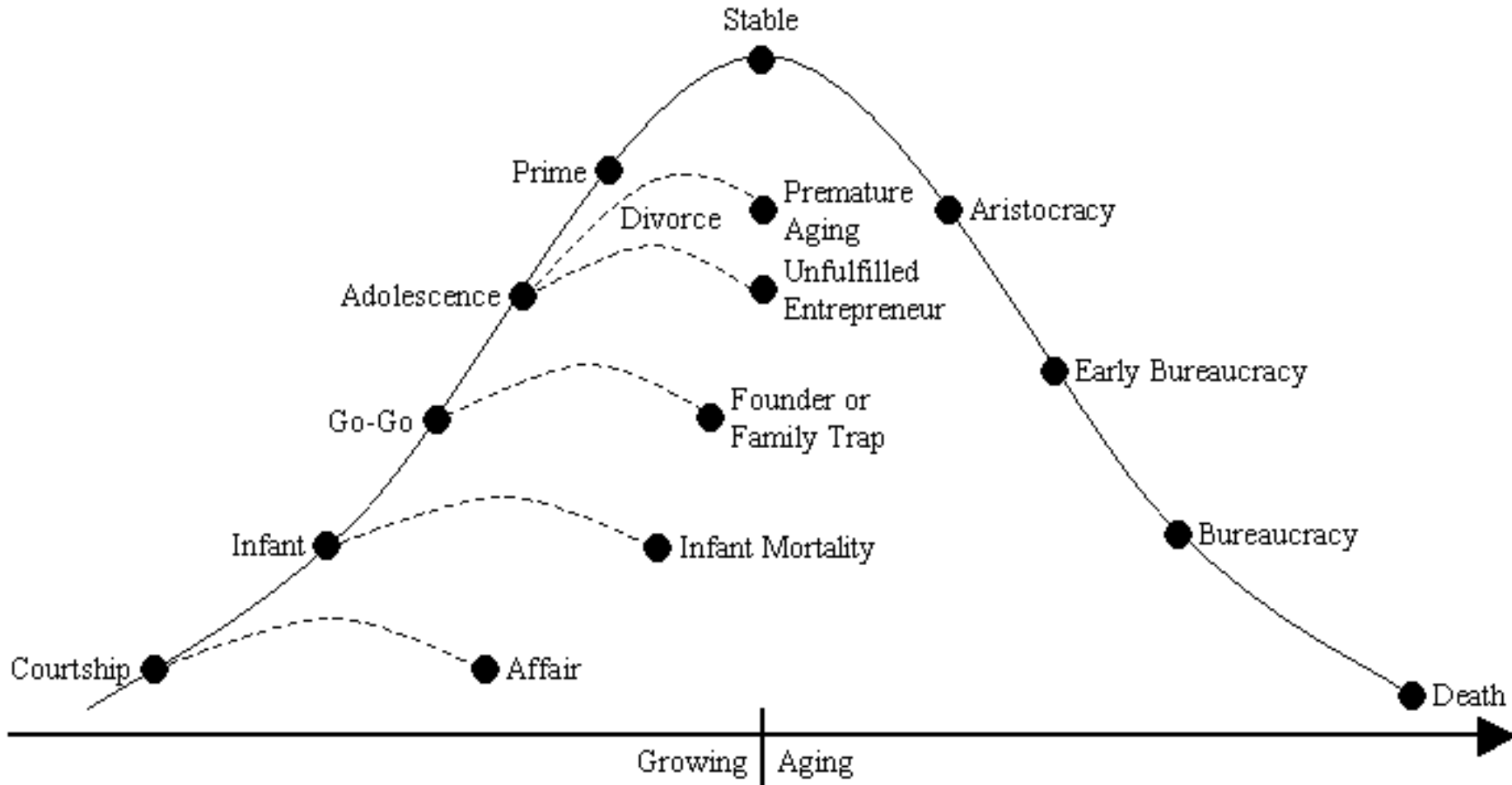
# Culture and Competence

- Legal identity
- Working structure
- Business Planning
- Management v Leadership
- Market v Product Led
- Professionalisation
- Networking

# Examples from research

- Art on the Map: Open Studios, 3-4 years, part-time coordinator, volunteer committee
- Newark on the Water Festival: free public festival in a local park, 3 years, local authority run
- Wirksworth Festival: town festival, 7 years, performing arts + Open Studios, volunteer run now employing staff
- Leicester Comedy Festival: 14 years, 4 paid staff
- Leicester Caribbean Carnival: 20 years, 1.5 staff
- Buxton Festival: opera, 27 years, 3+ staff

# "Corporate Life Cycles," Ichak Adizes



# Roles of management

- P = Producer
  - A = Administrator
  - E = Entrepreneur
  - I = Integrator
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- Ichak Adizes and others have developed a model that analyses the stages in the life cycle as a mix of PAEI. The Prime stage is described as PAEi. The warning signs are when E turns to e and A becomes dominant.

# A festival's time line?

- 0-3 euphoria, celebration, novelty effect
- 4-7 harsh times, why do we exist? Many may not make the transition to ...
- 8-12 increasing penetration into local culture
- 13+ increasing relevance to a wider range of debates, knowledge bank, competence, leading rather than being led by policy agendas

# 0-3 years

- Led by enthusiasts for the product
- Financed by local sources, voluntary labour, 'cheap' artists and infrastructure
- Euphoric that the festival has happened
- Local community is initially supportive
- Novelty effect
- Exploiting goodwill = honeymoon period



# 4-7 years

Harsh times: local support may no longer be adequate because:

- festival is no longer new
- local funding is limited
- new sources of funding not yet mobilised (will the festival survive, it has a low profile, the artists are not stars)
- new sources of funding may have strings attached
- legal and working structures not appropriate to the challenge – personal liability, volunteers etc

# 4-7 years

- Need to engage with wider range of factors in the local environment
- Voluntary nature of festival management limits engagement with these factors
- Volunteers apprehensive about employing staff
- Paid staff may find themselves between a rock and a hard place

# 8-12 years

- Market v Product
- Instrumental agendas
- Professionalisation of management culture
- Paid staff now leading the festival
- Better able to engage with external agendas
- Better able to develop opportunities within and without the festival period for work and income

# 13+ years

- Leading the agendas
- Mature culture and structure – more robust, staff/board relationship, clarity of vision/purpose, skills/knowledge base
- Able to refresh the above and its artistic vision
- May have a programme that is more 365 than 14 days
- Has a clearer idea of where it is going

# 13 + years

- Baseline support from followers (may be more visitors than locals) gives it strength such that it may not be obliged to do everything according to policy context
- Also may have earned respect from its artistic community through longevity, established relationships, quality of its programmes, media coverage and knowledge bank

# Modern Cultural Festivals in Greece & Barriers to their Development

Julia Paraskevopoulou

MSc Cultural Management & Policy

Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh, UK

0030 6977212237, [julia@gala.gr](mailto:julia@gala.gr)

# The Festival Sector in Greece

- The study recorded 137 cultural festivals which represent a variety in scale, type, duration and theme.
- Festival booming during the '90s: Municipal Companies of Development
- Festivals as random events and not as an integrated sector of cultural activity

# Barriers to the Greek Festivals Development

- The problem of definitions: Festival failure? Festival development?
- Barriers derive both from the external and internal environment of the Greek festivals:
  1. Cultural Policy in Greece
  2. Festival Management Practices in Greece
  3. Perceptions on Culture



# Barriers to the Greek Festivals Development

What Greek festival managers think....

1. Funding
2. Inflation/ Higher prices
3. Bureaucracy
4. Infrastructure
5. Weather
6. Inadequate promotion/  
Marketing
7. Geographical access
8. Lack of skilled staff
9. Large number of organising  
bodies
10. Legislation
11. Competition of neighbour  
festivals
12. Not renewed artistic  
programme
13. Competition of concurrent  
festivals
14. Limited audience interest
15. Public Relations
16. Language
17. Censorship
18. Cancellation of performances
19. Trade Unions

# Relevant Research

## Greece

1. Funding
2. Inflation/ Higher prices
3. Bureaucracy
4. Infrastructure
5. Weather

## Canada

1. Lack of corporate sponsorship
2. Weather
3. Overreliance on one source of money
4. Inadequate marketing or Promotion
5. Lack of strategic planning

# Cultural/Festival Policy in Greece

- Official documents:  
Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic A', article 33, p.2251,  
Presidential Decree 191/2003.
- State subsidies
- Sponsorship legislation
- Promotion of the Greek festivals (Hellenic Culture Organisation)
- Festival Tourism

# Festival Management in Greece

- Legal status of the festival organisations
- Lack of personnel
- Lack of fundraising strategies (Overreliance to one source, corporate sponsorship, inflation)
- Inadequate marketing tools
- Lack of strategic management
- Low networking
- Festivals as celebration and not as a business

# Future Perspectives for Greek Festivals

## A. Greek Festivals Organisations

- Changes in attitudes
- Clear mission
- Strategic orientation and planning
- Marketing strategies
- Audience engagement
- Focused and innovative programme
- Professionalisation
- Networking (local and international)

# Future Perspectives for Greek Festivals

## B. Cultural Policy in Greece

- Awareness of the potential of the festival sector in Greece
- Long-term planning and strategy
- Funding policy
- Strategic promotion of Greek festivals
- Cultural tourism
- Focus on modern culture
- Educational and research programmes

# Future work

- Hypothesis: that there is a direct correlation between the culture and structure of a festival in its early years and its ability to navigate its way through the inevitable, difficult years.
- It will become sustainable if the 'right dynamic' is established at the start.
- Obvious? But the fact that only a minority appear to become sustainable implies that there are lessons to be learnt from those that have made it.
- Hence the proposed development of 'a tool kit'.

# Key questions/issues to be addressed?

- What are the internal qualities and features of a festival that must be prioritised for attention?
- How can a festival achieve a balance between artistic/cultural issues on one hand and bureaucratic requirements on the other?



# What should be in a 'tool kit'?

- Why do we need festivals?
- What roles do festivals perform?
- The festival scene across Europe: who is who? What is what?
- Surviving the stages: changing culture whilst retaining 'cutting edge'
- Product v market – is it possible to develop both equally?
- Pluralism and funding – how to attract and sustain support from public/private/charitable sources
- Professionalisation

# More for the 'tool-kit'?

- Building an effective board
- From local to international: how to manage the change
- Culture v structure: what/where is a festival's power source
- Competition
- From networks to clusters
- Communication: from print to PR to the web
- Measuring the impact of a festival – economic; social; cultural; environmental
- Festivals as a melting pot for new discourses about the arts and new artistic practices

Thank you