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Large Festivals – Great Struggles

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Introduction

Contemporary music festivals in late modern European culture have different histories, focuses, missions and geographical conditions. This chapter calls for deeper analysis of the development of festivals that is rooted in cultural anthropology, sociology and the sciences – a multidisciplinary approach. Without this, festivals will simply be known as recurring celebrations, thematic ritual events reflecting the basic values and the worldview shared by the participants that are the basis of their social identity. However, nowadays, the economic importance of festivals has become even more rigorously evaluated, whilst complicated ways to measure cultural impact are often left out, even from detailed reports.

Most studies emphasise the difference between Eastern and Western European festivals (Newbold et al. 2015), however, the life cycle of a festival is influenced by factors that are similar wherever they take place: marketing, promotions, sales, audience development and quality, improvement challenges etc. As the size of the festival market has grown, new questions are being asked about economic efficiency. In this study I will search for similarities in the development of five major Eastern and Western European festivals, namely *Glastonbury Festival* (United Kingdom), *Roskilde Festival* (Denmark), *Sziget Festival* (Hungary), *Exit Festival* (Serbia), and *Woodstock Festival Poland* (Poland). I will also analyse the *Sziget Festival's* life cycle in detail in order to go deeper into the issues and discuss ways to further research music festivals.

In analysing these festivals, the main selection criterion was what they have in common: they attract more than 100,000 visitors yearly, but readers might also recognise that all of them follow the message of the original *Woodstock Music and Art Fair* – commonly called *Woodstock Festival* and labelled as ‘An Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace and Music’, in Bethel, New York, 15 – 18 August, 1969. The primary reason for choosing this topic was not just intellectual interest, but also the fact that these festivals are competitors in the festival business market. Cultural managers usually try to avoid overlapping dates with their competitors, as these festivals do in most cases:

- ◆ *Glastonbury Festival* (GB): 24 – 28 June 2015
- ◆ *Roskilde Festival* (DK): 27 June – 4 July 2015