

Theme 5: Events

Event management in sport and outdoor recreation

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Learning group: Sustainable events (4 practitioners, 5 researchers).

Sport and outdoor activities have seen an impressive rise in the event context, thanks to a growing demand for unique and immersive experiences, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. However, it also introduces challenges related to environmental sustainability. Research in theme 5 is dedicated to fostering more environmentally sustainable events in the SOD sectors and big efforts have been put into the work with external relations and the learning group. The overall question was: *How can we create environmentally sustainable events in sport and outdoor recreation?* Large focus has been on external relations and communication, where one of the main outreach activities was the webinar organized in 2022, where results and reflections were presented in a produced and streamed “live-show” with the learning group.

Because of the large effect from the Covid-19 on events, researchers in theme 5 studied impacts and sustainability strategies during the pandemic. A survey sent out in association with Swedish Sport Association showed that environmental issues were given lower priority compared to economic and social issues during the pandemic. The study underscores the heavy reliance of these clubs on their events, suggesting that diversifying event portfolios could enhance economic and, therefore, environmental, resilience during crises.

How can we create environmentally sustainable events in sport and outdoor recreation?

Theme 3 and theme 5 have a shared full-time PhD-student. The student’s work consists of four planned articles that employ qualitative research to examine four different actor groups in Jämtland: The County Administration Board, residents living near event venues, event participants, and event organisers. The PhD investigates how physical impacts on the natural environment resulting from nature-based events and organized outdoor activities, such as trail marathons, mountain bike races or orienteering, are perceived. These physical impacts, including trail and soil disturbances, reveal that the County Administration Board, participants, and event management tend to view the events as isolated occurrences, failing to connect them to the broader context of tourism and recreation in the region. Consequently, these actors do not recognize impacts as integral to development, leading them to disclaim responsibility for behavioural or managerial changes. The responsibility for nature protection

The learning group gathered at the webinar about sustainable events.



Table 3. Consumption patterns among participants of Göteborgsvarvet 2022.

Category	New products	Recycled products	SEK /participant
Training shoes	67 %	1 %	1594
Training clothes	48 %	1 %	692
Nutritional supplements	29 %	n.a.	256
Electronic devices	14 %	1 %	400
Water belt/bag	11 %	0 %	58
Headlamp	6 %	0 %	47
Training trips (domestic)	2 %	n.a.	127

instead falls upon those residing in proximity to the event locations, who must engage with their knowledge to address these issues.

At the initial phase of Mistra Sport & Outdoors, research revealed that participating in events fosters a sense of identity, comprehension, and enjoyment among attendees. Such events serve as social arenas where participants converge, learn, and share experiences. These gatherings are also viewed as significant contributors to participants' happiness and well-being, offering social, psychological, and physical benefits. However, research within theme 5 highlights that the consumption of leisure-related products and transportation are two crucial areas where sports and outdoors event practices generate considerable environmental impact. Using the running event Göteborgsvarvet 2022 as a case study, showcases the consumption patterns and notably highlights the almost complete absence of second-hand markets for runners (table 3). This suggests that while the spending associated with these events constitutes

business opportunities, the environmental footprint from such consumption is significant. These impacts will be analyzed further in an upcoming publication analyzing the climate impacts of the consumption.

Given that sports in Sweden are still rather non-commercialized in comparison to other markets, it is anticipated that a commercialization trend, along with the associated consumption, will grow in the future. Moreover, transportation emerges as a key climate concern, especially during events where participants travel extensively. This challenge is prevalent not just during training but is even more pronounced for events requiring significant travel. In conclusion, both event participants and organizers need to be aware of the environmental impacts of sports and outdoor activities and address them in a holistic and well-planned manner. It is also imperative for all involved parties to proactively work towards minimizing their environmental impacts by influencing participant behaviors.

During the last year of phase 1 researchers in theme 5 identified the orienteering event O-Ringen as a good case in the intersection between sport and outdoors. It is one of the largest orienteering events in the world with around 15 000 participants running for five days. Two broader perspectives were studied during the 2023 event O-Ringen: i) sustainable and local perceptions during event planning, and ii) transports during the event. Studying sustainable and local perceptions offered vital insights into the event's connection with environmental sustainability. The research at O-Ringen aimed to explore how the event adapts to its setting and disseminates local knowledge during pre-event preparations. Initially, interviews were conducted with O-Ringen's project leaders, followed by interviews with municipal employees involved in the event setup. These discussions shed light on their sustainability goals, their

The O-Ringen orienteering event 2023.



approach to sustainability, and the eco-friendly solutions they prioritized. Furthermore, the fieldwork included several weeks of participant observations during the pre-event setup at different locations. It revealed how local insights influenced planning and the event's sustainability promotion. During the event itself, observations and conversations with volunteers and participants provided insights into their perceptions of the event's impacts. This comprehensive fieldwork highlighted the prioritization of sustainability from various organizational perspectives, not just from those directly involved. The study unveiled a recurring sustainability narrative within the organization and among volunteers, offering a unique perspective on sustainability in event management.

The other study of O-Ringen was based on surveys to participants before and after the event. The aim was to explore different strategies for initiating a change towards more pro-environmental behaviors by participants. The primary objective was to look at travel behaviors, but other consumption behaviors were also included (food and waste). The preliminary results of the study (analysis underway) show that it is difficult to initiate changes in behaviors. However, we find that it is important to address participants' sense of community, their identity as participants at O-Ringen and/or environmental consciousness, and their perceived

ability to make an impact (i.e. self-efficacy). Long-term commitment to address pro-environmental behavior is necessary to initiate change, both during the event itself, but also before and after the event so that these behaviors are put at the fore. Orienteering events have shown to be a relevant study object combining sport and outdoors why these events are fruitful to continue study in phase 2.

