

“Much more than a song contest”

*Exploring Eurovision 2014 as Potlatch*

Petersen, Morten Krogh; Ren, Carina Bregnholm

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# **“Much More than a Song Contest”: Exploring Eurovision 2014 as Potlatch**

**Morten Krogh Petersen and Carina Ren**

## **Abstract**

As economic and budgetary scandals reached Danish front pages in 2014 over the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) held that year in Copenhagen, many bystanders questioned the sense of the event, proclaiming it a massive waste of public money. In this article, we introduce the concept of “potlatch” to explore the valuation and values of this event, seeing it as a “total social phenomenon” in which more than merely economic matters are at stake. Framing Eurovision as a cross-sectoral innovation project, we show how a wide array of actors from the public and private sector collaboratively sought to turn the event into “much more than a song contest.” This “much more” is investigated by describing the partnering actors’ arduous work to create value through different project logics. Where other valuations of the event put little work into bringing forth values which transgress the realm of the economic and quantifiable, we argue that a more caring engagement enacts non-economic event outcomes usually made invisible or, at best, perceived as “intangible.”

Key words: cross-sectoral collaboration; innovation; project logics; events; potlatch; controversy

## **Introduction: The Meaningfulness of ESC 2014**

In May 2014 the city of Copenhagen hosted the Eurovision Song Contest 2014 (ESC 2014). Held annually since 1956, the ESC is the longest running TV song competition in the world. The participants are, primarily, the member countries of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Approximately six months after the Austrian winner left

*Morten Krogh Petersen, (corresponding author), Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University Copenhagen, [mkp@learning.aau.dk](mailto:mkp@learning.aau.dk)*

*Carina Ren, Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University Copenhagen, [ren@cgs.aau.dk](mailto:ren@cgs.aau.dk).*

the stage, the official price tag put on the mega event by government auditors read €45 million. Many researchers, commentators, journalists and politicians who we have encountered and talked with during our inquiry into the organizing and valuing of ESC 2014 agree: The hosting of ESC 2014 was *very* expensive and, also, *too* expensive. As local politician Lise Müller put it: “Wow, that’s incredibly expensive—that it cost nearly €46 million for a round of glitz and glitter. It’s totally out of all proportions and decency. It violates my sense of justice.”<sup>1</sup> On top of this, the ESC 2014 also generated a budgetary scandal. While the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR)—responsible for producing the show—stayed on budget (€27 million), the Project Company responsible for preparing the venue for the show overran their budget by four times, the costs totaling €18 million.<sup>2</sup> As journalist and commentator Georg Metz asked in wonderment:

How does one get away with this, without someone waking up in the system? Is it because Eurovision, the city and DR are corrupt—or stupid? And isn’t it illegal what they have done—or rather not done? And why did politicians not react? Because there are votes to gain from this depressing crap? Or what?<sup>3</sup>

In this article, we question the dominant understanding of ESC 2014 presented in the above as a mere waste of money by exploring the potential sense of the ESC 2014. We do so by starting “in the middle” (Latour 2005, 27), as proposed by Latour, in order to query the specificities of the event as set forward by its central actors. What distinguishes the 2014 event from last time it was held in Denmark, in 2001, is how this time around it was organized and executed across traditional, sectoral borders as a public–private innovation project. Talking to the actors involved in this cross-sectoral work allowed us to appreciate how such work enabled them to create what one interlocutor described to us as “much more than a song contest.” The cross-sectoral setup, in other words, was to generate value beyond the event proper. Questions are, however, what this novel cross-sectoral setup entailed for the meaningfulness of hosting ESC 2014 and for the ability to generate and display value and values. What did this setup produce beside the show itself?

As we argue in this article, cross-sectoral innovation projects require that public administrators, event organizers, researchers and the many other stakeholders involved in the making and valuing of such activities to address, rethink or broaden the outcomes of

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Kultur/Oevrig\\_kultur/2014/10/07/170203.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Kultur/Oevrig_kultur/2014/10/07/170203.htm), accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Kultur/Oevrig\\_kultur/2014/10/07/170203.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Kultur/Oevrig_kultur/2014/10/07/170203.htm), accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.information.dk/502210>. Accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

organizing and executing events and to rethink how such outcomes might be detected and valued (Agha et al. 2012; Li and McCabe 2013). Within the events industry and tourism management at large, the rising complexity of the organizational setups of events increasingly blurs sectoral and institutional boundaries, challenging the establishment of transparency and accountability (Dredge and Whitford 2011; Jóhannesson et al. 2015). This challenge is faced not only by event planners and managers, but also more generally by actors working within cross-sectoral organizational setups, for instance within science and innovation projects (Elgaard Jensen 2012; Jespersen et al. 2012).

As stated by Kjellberg et al. 2013, one of the central avenues which can be explored through valuation studies is how “[...] macro-level trends underlie current changes concerning the ways in which value and values are produced and transformed: Such factors as neoliberalism, the rise of new public management, the spread of meritocracy, consumerism or ICT developments are evoked” (Kjellberg et al. 2013, 13). Although we do believe that the tendency to conflate value with profit within neoliberalism and new public management needs to be challenged, our goal here is not to offer a critique of a regime in which public/private collaboration is deployed as yet another tool toward efficient and streamlined governance and whose accountability tools are unable to go beyond profit as *the* outcome to be valued. Our contention is rather that “[p]ractice is larger, more complex, more messy than can be grasped within any particular logic” (Law, 2002, 32) and that bringing such messiness to the fore might be a way to engage more productively with how value and values are made present and absent (Law and Singleton 2005) in public/private collaborations and their valuation.

In the following attempt to unravel the taxing work of organizing ESC 2014 and the even more demanding work of detecting and describing its outcomes and their value, we first introduce the concept of potlatch (Mauss 1925 [2011]) as a way to explore ESC as a “messy” endeavor or, as Mauss terms it, a *total social phenomenon*. We then present the field material on which we draw and describe the challenges in working up and working with this material to show how we came to protect and care for rather than debunk ESC 2014 (Latour 2004, 232). We then proceed to the analysis, in which we explore the cross-sectoral innovation project of ESC 2014 as a total social phenomenon. In preparing a discussion of event values, we delineate three prominent project logics (cf. Law 1994), through which our empirical material has been structured and analyzed: One enacts and evaluates the project of ESC 2014 through a *business logic*, the other a *creative logic* and the last a *public logic*.

Following the notion of total social phenomenon and drawing on our fieldwork, we last discuss how the two dominant tools used for

valuing ESC—that of impact detection and that of media analysis—had difficulties with identifying other than economic values. In the official evaluations of the event in the dramatic aftermath of ESC 2014, values beyond the monetary almost disappeared, for instance in the impact analyses and media reports, reiterating the idea of anything lying outside of economy as irrelevant, worthless or, at best, “intangible.” This conflicts with the identified project logics and the related practices of valuing, which were not (only) about generating a monetary surplus but also, as mentioned, about creating “much more than a song contest.” We point to how the inability to account for different types of values may be alleviated through a more engaged and caring approach (Heuts and Mol 2013) and how different values may come to matter and interfere in new ways.

### **Forms and Functions of Exchange in ESC 2014**

The above heading paraphrases the subtitle of *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925 [2011]), first published by Mauss in 1925, in which the French sociologist explores the phenomenon of reciprocity and gift exchange in archaic societies. While the idea of exploring “forms and functions” might resonate as somewhat antiquated to contemporary social science researchers, we believe that many useful lessons may be retrieved from revisiting this classic piece when setting out to explore the organizing and valuing of ESC 2014.

In his work, Mauss explored the realm of contract and the system of economic exchange in archaic societies. According to him, archaic societies were not discrete, since in these societies “each phenomenon contains all the threads of which the social fabric is composed” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 1). As such, archaic social phenomena are *total*, meaning that “all kinds of institutions find simultaneous expression: religious, legal, moral, and economic” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 1). Empirically, Mauss analyzed gift giving and exchange as total social phenomena by way of examples from historical and “primitive” societies and was especially interested in the potlatch of North American Indians.

The potlatch refers to a ritual feast practiced by indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of Canada and the United States, which as a locus of gift giving also functioned as the primary economic system. Potlatch, originally meaning “to nourish” or “to consume” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 3) is the practice of *prestation*, in which “things or series of things are given freely or obligatorily as a gift or in exchange; and includes services, entertainment, etc. as well as material things” (Mauss 1925 [2011], xi).

At first glance, the potlatch with its conspicuous consumption and mass destruction of wealth resembles a meaningless ritual and hence, its sense and value was severely challenged by outside (Western)

bystanders. By seeing it as a total social phenomenon, Mauss was able to identify a range of intricate internal and situated logics and negotiations of exchange, status, power and domination. Before him, the potlatch had been studied as a specific kind of contract, but to Mauss it is more than a legal phenomenon. It is also religious, mythological, shamanistic, aesthetic, economic, etc. Most importantly, the potlatch inscribes itself into a continuous circuit of contract, exchange and reciprocity in which status, credit (in both meanings of the word), “face” and honor are established, maintained or lost.

Mauss’s novel understanding of exchange institutions as forming one of the bases of social life does not limit itself to archaic or primitive societies. To him, “the same morality and economy are at work, albeit less noticeable, in our own societies” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 2). As an analytical resource, the potlatch is therefore suitable for probing the “forms and functions” of the ESC 2014 and also invites us to take with us a few lessons. The *first lesson* is how ESC 2014 can be studied as a *total social phenomenon* or, to quote Mauss, as an example of “fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 3). By digging into the event and its cross-sectoral setup, ESC 2014 can be explored as a hybrid collaboration, which requires and is based on exchange. The *second lesson* tells us that as a contract of reciprocal commitment between several social actors, ESC is realized through *different and intersecting logics*. This, we argue, lead to it becoming “much more than a song contest”, but also makes it difficult to organize and as shown further on, to value—at least with the existing tools. Here, we can also gain a *third lesson* from Mauss, in his insistence that even today “there are a series of institutions and economic events *not* governed by the rationalism which past [utilitarian, eds.] theory so readily took for granted” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 73, emphasis added). By looking at an event such as ESC 2014 as a total social phenomenon, we are forced to address “the complex notion that inspires the economic actions we have described, a notion neither of purely free and gratuitous *prestation*, nor of purely interested and utilitarian production and exchange; it is a kind of hybrid” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 70). Later, we will explore how the three project logics can help us appreciate ESC 2014 as a total social phenomenon. First however, we turn to how we related to the field and to the materials generated through this engagement.

## **Methodology and Materials: Caring for ESC 2014**

What does it mean to care about and for the ESC 2014 as opposed to debunking the event? Here we take our cue from recent work with the field of post-ANT (Actor-Network Theory) studies, extended to the

field of valuation studies, which connects caring with valuing. Asking, “What is a good tomato?” Frank Heuts and Annemarie Mol have recently suggested that “[c]aring is an activity in which valuing is implied—both caring about and caring for have a “good” on their horizon. At the same time caring indicates efforts that are ongoing, adaptive, tinkering and open ended” (Heuts and Mol 2013, 130). Taking inspiration from this way of connecting caring and valuing, our fieldwork on ESC 2014 sought to grasp what a “good” ESC 2014 might be and how this “good” was to be achieved in the practices of organizing, managing and, later, valuing the event. This, of course, is not an innocent approach (Haraway 1991). Rather, it is an interventionist endeavor on our part in which we seek to take into account and understand, but also go beyond conclusions which reduce the event to a mere waste of money, end of discussion. As presented above, to understand ESC 2014 as a total social phenomenon, ANT is the primary conceptual tool utilized to achieve this. As cross-sectoral innovation projects become increasingly popular, a caring approach to ESC 2014 may be seen as a trial balloon from which to draw new learnings on interfering with such projects. In the following, we explain how this approach was undertaken.

In December 2013 the first contact was made with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) and the project company, Host City Company (HCC). The latter company in charge of ESC had been created and was owned by the local destination management organization of Wonderful Copenhagen and financially supported by Wonderful Copenhagen itself, the City of Copenhagen and the Capital Region of Copenhagen. Our aim was to learn how this collaboration was meaningful to these partnering organizations as links were made between the event and tourism development, branding initiatives of the city and regional commercial development. Through the following fieldwork, we undertook qualitative interviews with the project company, the destination management organization of Wonderful Copenhagen, the City of Copenhagen and the Refshale Island property company.

Further, to explore emerging issues we also monitored media and social media for ESC relevant issues and discussions and read through evaluation reports and other official documents related to the event and the project. Several times, we visited the venue, which was reconstructed to fit the event purpose. Following the holding of the song contest in May 2014 and our initial analysis, we invited the partnering organizations for a seminar on value creation in ESC 2014 and cross-sectoral innovation projects more broadly at our university. Here, we introduced our caring approach to ESC 2014. Through examples generated from the fieldwork material, we presented a preliminary version of the project logics and their possible interferences and used the following round table discussions and

feedback to further sharpen the analysis. Apart from putting our preliminary analysis, the project logics and their possible interferences *at risk* by inviting and enabling feedback from the partnering organizations through our presentation (see Stengers 1997; Latour 2004), our aim with the seminar was to underscore that we see the partnering organizations as knowledge collaborators rather than mere informants. The seminar, whose outcomes will be presented and discussed in further detail below, received participation from the City of Copenhagen, Wonderful Copenhagen, Visit Denmark, Refshale Island as well as DR and the Capital Region of Denmark.

On these grounds, our following attempt to bring to the fore and enact three different project logics of ESC 2014 take in the attempts of the partnering organizations to organize and value ESC 2014 in a way that is meaningful to them. Hence, we seek to appreciate ESC 2014 as a trial balloon for what is to come in terms of cross-sectoral collaboration rather than merely a one-off song contest. As we hope to demonstrate, ESC 2014 is a continuously changing, unsettled and sensitive object of study and with our choice of methodology we strive to appreciate it as such.

### **What is ESC 2014?**

Right from the start in 1964, the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) was a hybrid phenomenon; its actors and interests were many and diverse. One expressed first wish was to bring together the EBU member countries in a war-torn Europe through a light entertainment program, another to technologically experiment with linking countries in a wide international network before satellite communication, meaning that it could also be viewed as a technological development project. Today, it is one of the most watched non-sporting events, drawing together up to 600 million global viewers. As a consequence of this explosive growth, it has also become a highly commercial event, an important economic factor and a way to promote the host countries as tourist destinations. Along the years, it has also had many different geopolitical implications, such as changes in visa requirements in the Ukraine in 2005 and is at the root of more than a few controversies.<sup>4</sup> The complex nature of the ESC can even be experienced within its own expanding field of research (Raykoff and Tobin 2007).

In spite of its multiplicity, one thing is certain in the ESC: The organizers of the yearly Eurovision event series are not privileged with extended deadlines. Unlike many other mega events, which are often planned years in advance, the country hosting the upcoming Eurovision is only known a year to the day, when the Eurovision winner is elected and their home country is awarded the honor (or

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,1896688,00.html>.



duty, to some) of hosting the upcoming event. Hence, it was only in May 2013 when Dane Emmelie de Forest won the ESC 2013 in neighboring Sweden that Denmark became the host of ESC 2014. In June 2013 DR, responsible for everything connected to the running of the TV show, invited Danish cities to bid on hosting the event. The difficulties which followed of choosing a venue for the contest had already given an early warning of the controversies to come, as Copenhagen and several provincial cities aggressively and publicly wooed DR to choose their locations for the contest. In September 2013, eight months before the song contest was to take place, Copenhagen was awarded the rights to host the ESC 2014. The Copenhagen bid, prepared in a consortium consisting of Wonderful Copenhagen, the City of Copenhagen and the Capital Region of Denmark, was supported by a vast and diverse group of public and private organizations and companies: The Öresund Region, the Region of Zealand, Odense Municipality, Copenhagen Airport, the Copenhagen Metro company, Malmö City, Roskilde Festival, Copenhagen Fashion Festival, Copenhagen Cooking, Copenhagen Jazz Festival and Distortion Festival. DR's choice fell on an unusual and highly surprising venue: The old assembly halls of Burmeister & Wain (B&W), a former shipyard situated on the semi-deserted Refshale Island, close to the city center. In a later report by the Project Company we learn that:

Already from the beginning it was recognized by all involved parties that the Refshale Island was an experimental choice or—as it was expressed by the managing director of DR—“a creative obstruction.” But at the same time it was the B&W Halls which were able to turn ESC 2014 into something exceptional and that could give the marketing of Denmark an edge and punch internationally—which also proved to be the case. (Statement, Wonderful Copenhagen, July 2014)

Our interest in undertaking this research was spurred not only by the choice of venue and the short deadline, a challenge in itself, when choosing a dilapidated former industrial area for a glitzy show, but also by the organizing Project Company made up by public, semi-public and private organizations. This organizational setup was radically different and a far more complex way of collaborating and organizing the event in comparison with 2001, when Denmark also hosted Eurovision. We wondered if this cross-sectoral project organization could say something more general about the role and challenges of public–private collaboration in tourism development and elsewhere. The cross-sectoral setup of ESC 2014 allows us to engage critically with the trend toward more public–private collaboration, which we not only see within events, but also science and innovation policy and practices (Elgaard Jensen 2012; Jespersen et al. 2012).

By inquiring into ESC 2014 as a *potlatch*, in the sense of a *total social phenomenon*, we were able to focus on how the cross-sectoral setup did not perform one *coherent* innovation project comprising a single dominant logic but rather contained multiple project logics. Our notion of project logics is developed with inspiration not only from Mauss, but also from John Law's notion of "modes of ordering" which describe "ordering arrangements, expressions, suggestions, possibilities or resources" (Law 1994, 20; see also Law 1996; Law and Moser 1999). Law, one of the key contributors to the field of post-ANT studies, suggests that such modes of ordering describe logics that are imputable to "the bits and pieces that make up the networks of the social" (Law 1994, 21). Taking a British laboratory and its management in the era of Thatcherism as his empirical field, Law further states: "I *think* I see certain patterns in the ordering work of managers, and its effects. I *think* that if I conceive of these patterns in this way, then I can say that these are being partially performed by, embodied in, and helping to constitute, the networks of the social" (Law 1994, 21, emphasis in original).

In the following, we outline three different and empirically situated ESC 2014 project logics: The creative logic, the business logic and the public logic. We do not wish to propose that these three project logics are exhaustive—more project logics could have been developed. We are, however, saying that we think these three projects logics are imputable to and might help us understand and interfere caringly with the social networks of ESC 2014 and, broader, the organization and valuation of current cross-sectoral innovation projects.

### **Business Project Logic**

Understood through a business logic, ESC 2014 is one event in a long succession of events hosted by the city of Copenhagen and Wonderful Copenhagen. The increasing understanding of the role of events as being catalysts for city branding and city tourism development (Richards 2000; Ren and Gyimóthy 2013) has led to Copenhagen becoming a central international player in this market. This was emphasized and exemplified in the bid on hosting the ESC 2014, in which the majority of photos used came from earlier, international events held in Copenhagen, such as the MTV European Music Awards in 2006, the IOC Congress in 2009 and the UN Conference of the Parties (COP15), also in 2009.

The business logic focuses on the economic potential of ESC 2014. Most clearly—but not exclusively—potential linked to tourism. The ESC 2014 was seen as creating positive effects on media coverage, marketing and branding Copenhagen and Denmark as attractive to tourists and investors. This would attract tourism, hence increasing local and national tourism-generated revenues. Connected to this, the

single show was extended into nine under ESC 2014, including dress rehearsals, “family shows” and two semifinals. Also, the event was stretched out in duration and space through an elaborate one-week outreach program in the center of Copenhagen. According to the event manager and outreach coordinator at Wonderful Copenhagen, the ESC 2014 outreach scheme draws on Wonderful Copenhagen’s year-long experience with “putting in some values and activities so that [the event] gets a more popular appeal and message” (interview, Wonderful Copenhagen, Event Director, February 17, 2014). According to him, the unfolding of an extended outreach program outside of the televised show displays a huge development compared to 2001, where “to my best knowledge, there was nothing, as in absolutely nothing going on apart from the show” (interview, Wonderful Copenhagen, Event Director, February 17, 2014). Now, however, tourists and visitors as well as locals were invited to take part in ESC 2014 celebrations (and consumption) among music stages, food and beverage stalls and sponsor booths (Mordue 2007).

As mentioned, tourism was not the only industry included in the business-oriented parts of the organizational setup. During interviews with representatives from the Refshale Island property company and the City of Copenhagen, references were made to the works of Richard Florida (see, for instance, Florida 2002) and it was made clear that ESC 2014 was seen as a promising platform for attracting businesses to Copenhagen. By allowing for activities such as the outreach scheme, which spread out across several squares and the main pedestrian mall traversing the city, the city authorities displayed willingness and ability to comply with demands from the tourism sector. According to a special consultant at the business administration of the City of Copenhagen, the procedures for engaging with cultural and business events had changed radically over the last ten years. Where requests for using public spaces for event activities were previously turned down automatically and needed to go higher up to the board of the administration to be authorized, it was now the opposite. A request only needed to “travel upwards” if it was turned down, in which case the highest committee within the city administration was to provide an explanation for the refusal (interview, City of Copenhagen, March 6, 2014). The engagement of the city, the destination management organization and private developers and sponsors in the ESC 2014 displayed how the event was not only engaged with as a song contest, but was also organized and managed through the ordering pattern of business. However, creative project logic can also be imputed to the early coverage of and statements from ESC 2014, as we shall now see.

### **Creative Project Logic**

From the outset, DR had the ambition to create a show that not only honored the traditions of the ESC, but also pointed toward the future.

In a press release, DR executive producer of the show, Pernille Gaardbo, stated:

With the choice of the B&W Halls at the Refshale Island we are well on the way to unfold the most innovative arena ever. It is our ambition to renew the show in both form and content, so it becomes a stylish update with respect for tradition. The B&W Halls at the Refshale Island give us the opportunity to create a unique show, because we can shape the framework inside. The Halls give us some creative options that match our ambitions.<sup>5</sup>

By performing ESC 2014 as a creative project, the aims and purpose of the show could revolve around pooling together the creative and innovative skills and resources needed to turn the B&W Halls and the surrounding areas into a suitable venue for the event and its guests. According to the Head of Planning and Rental at Refshale Island, Claus Hovmøller, the project was about getting a muddy place with no infrastructure ready for stilettos and also, through this creative process, to surprise foreign spectators and television viewers with our, implicitly Danish, ability to transform an ugly and dilapidated site into an awe-inspiring event platform (interview, Refshale Island Property Company, January 30, 2014). For DR, this entailed building a high-technology stage and underscored the importance of lighting, sound and filming. The costly removal of some centrally positioned stanchions inside the B&W Halls, which later played a key part in the ESC aftermath, were in this light perceived as a minor problem, adding positively to the creative obstruction, which DR and the Project Company had set for themselves.

The creative take on the show led to the slaughtering of a few holy cows, one of them being the 40-second TV-postcard of each national contestant before their arrival on the stage. Each postcard originally featured the singer/band having fun or otherwise engaging with local sights, attractions or icons, such as the Little Mermaid in 2001. In order to “get closer to the artist”,<sup>6</sup> as stated by DR, the decision was made to replace the postcards with footage of the artists as they ingeniously visualized their national flags in a homeland setting using paint, sea shells, dominos, umbrellas, people, etc. This move, which (also) received substantial media coverage, was criticized by many tourism actors, who lamented what they saw as a loss of branding opportunity. The director of the new TV-postcards disagreed in arguing in a media interview that the flag concept is very Danish: “I will humbly say that it is a good idea, and that is what we as Danes will be living off. We are told that it is not our production power that

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.dr.dk/Om\\_DR/Nyt+fra+DR/artikler/2013/07/090853\\_1.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Om_DR/Nyt+fra+DR/artikler/2013/07/090853_1.htm), accessed Nov. 17, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from <http://jyllands-posten.dk/kultur/musik/ECE6663051/her-er-manden-bag-tv-postkortene-til-eurovision/>, accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

we are going to gain from, but our ideas, thoughts and creativity.”<sup>7</sup> While the tourism actors seem to view the abandonment of the traditional postcard as compromising the business logic, the director of the new TV-postcards seems to argue that, and points out how, the business logic can feed off the creative logic and not the other way around. Here we have an example of how the project logics may interfere with one another in not always straightforward ways and create surprising effects.

Common for all of the activities under the creative ESC logic was an explicit focus on making room for and accepting uncertainty. In a documentary produced by DR on the creation of the TV show, which aired a few days before the ESC 2014 semifinals began, representatives from DR agreed that one should not always do the obvious thing. This line of thought can partly at least be seen as a reason for choosing the B&W Halls as the venue.<sup>8</sup> According to a statement made by Wonderful Copenhagen to explain the later exploding budget:

[A]ll parties knew that the B&W halls were a difficult and risk filled choice of venue. In spite of the fact that structural expertise was used in the bidding phase, time did not allow for the preparation of an actual structural analysis and project design, which is not uncommon for larger constructions. It is characteristic for highly innovative projects that they take shape during their realization—often resulting in higher costs. (Project Company ESC 2014 LLP 2014, 8)

In this account, we see how the wish to draw together, explore and display creative resources is valued as central and works as a driver, a motivator and an end goal of the project. If the business logic can latch onto this creative logic, then good, as the new TV-postcard director suggested, but the creative logic comes first. As we shall see, this creative logic and the subsequent acceptance of risk, uncertainty and ongoing adaptation did not seamlessly combine with the overall project. First, however, we present our last project logic, which seeks to enact ESC 2014 as a public project.

### Public Project Logic

With the involvement of the City of Copenhagen and the Capital Region of Denmark, the ESC 2014 is inscribed with and organized and managed through what we term *public logic* (Dredge and Whitford 2011). Financially, the City of Copenhagen and the Capital Region of Denmark supported ESC 2014 with over €10 million. Public money was, for instance, spent on improving the access to the privately owned parts of Refshale Island by creating new cycle paths and erecting

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <http://jyllands-posten.dk/kultur/musik/ECE6663051/her-er-manden-bag-tv-postkortene-til-eurovision/>, accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.dr.dk/tv/se/eurovision-song-contest/eurovision-song-contest-bag-kulissen-1-3>, accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

lampposts. During interviews with the City of Copenhagen, we were told how they were mindful of anchoring the event to some of their existing projects, for instance to their work of promoting Copenhagen as a tolerant city. An example of this was Wonderful Weddings, an outreach sub-event primarily targeted toward homosexual couples traveling to Copenhagen for the ESC 2014.<sup>9</sup> Taking place at three romantic locations in town, the weddings were to mirror the city's decade-long work to promote equal rights and diversity. During our workshop, which took place after the Wonderful Weddings sub-event, the representative from the City of Copenhagen described these as a "great success" (seminar, partnering organizations, June 23, 2014).

Also public "core tasks" (du Gay et al. 2012) were linked to the ESC 2014. For instance, municipal middle-managers were encouraged to "volunteer" for ESC (during their working hours) as a means of upgrading their project and event management skills and competencies. In the case of the Capital Region of Denmark, a large school project on the Green future of Europe was initiated to create stronger ties between Danish citizens (schoolchildren in this case), Europe and the status of Copenhagen as European Green Capital 2014. The winners of the competition received tickets for one of the shows. Both of these public educational "anchorings" were conceived as successful achievements by the city and the region. This was not assessed based on systematic evaluation, but simply because it had—or at least rehearsed—how core tasks could be solved through cross-sectoral collaboration.

DR, also a public organization, worked explicitly to create connections with and between a larger public. As stated by DR's relation manager in an article explaining DR's ambitions for the TV show, "events such as [ESC 2014, eds.] are able to gather the audience, viewers, users, Danes and Europeans in completely other ways than regular TV shows. It is a very engaging event, building expectations and it has the potential to purport a strong message."<sup>10</sup>

The engagement of the audience as co-producers of the show was to take place through co-creation, which DR defined in the following way: "Co-creation is about gaining strength and creating a product together across groupings such as businesses and consumers or artists and audience."<sup>11</sup> One way to involve live and social media audiences was an ambitious social media strategy and the use of the slogan and

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z39oZFQCbe4>, accessed May 9, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.dr.dk/CMS/melodigrandprix/default2.drxml?\\*ur=nyheder/2013/10/30160105.htm&GetData=trace=rt3](http://www.dr.dk/CMS/melodigrandprix/default2.drxml?*ur=nyheder/2013/10/30160105.htm&GetData=trace=rt3), accessed Nov. 17, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.dr.dk/Om\\_DR/Nyt+fra+DR/artikler/2014/02/18091559.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Om_DR/Nyt+fra+DR/artikler/2014/02/18091559.htm), accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

official Twitter hashtag, #joinus. The joining was also extended to the live shows. As stated by the head of show, Jan Lagermand Lundme:

One of our biggest ambitions and central themes of the Eurovision Song Contest 2014 is that we get closer to each other. Therefore, we reach out to all—each and everyone who wants to form a choir or dance in the show—saying: Come join us. It's so wonderful when we can stand together and share the Eurovision Song Contest.<sup>12</sup>

## Valuations of ESC 2014

As seen in this account of the three project logics, much extensive and intensive work within both public and private collaborating organizations was invested into creating value and values in, around and through the ESC 2014, including—to name but a few—outreach schemes, weddings and school competitions, volunteering and training, city dressing and refurbishment of the Refshale Island. So far, we have argued for the need to see the ESC 2014 as a total social phenomenon realized through (at least) three different project logics. However, as we now show, far from all of this work was made present in the valuations of the event. In the following, we turn to the question of how to value such an event as a total social phenomenon. We first show two examples of how the ESC 2014 was valued in an evaluation report and in media coverage, which display what we termed a *quantifying* and a *debunking* approach to the valuation of the ESC 2014.

### A Valuation Striving to Quantify

In August 2014 Wonderful Copenhagen published the report *Eurovision Song Contest 2014: Tourist Economic Impact Analysis* (Wonderful Copenhagen 2014). In relation to our understanding of ESC 2014 as a total social phenomenon what is striking about this impact analysis is that it—in passing—actually recognizes ESC 2014 as, exactly, a total social phenomenon. The impact analyses primarily determined the “tourism economic impacts” (Wonderful Copenhagen 2014, 4) in terms of the total tourism turnover, the number of visitors attending the nine shows, the number of bed nights, the number of jobs generated and the tax revenue, and assessed the satisfaction with and perception of the ESC 2014 among the audience and local citizens. However, on top of this, it also pointed to what was termed “intangible benefits (or costs) for the local citizens” (Wonderful Copenhagen 2014, 23). We learn that these are effects, which “are very difficult to quantify, like increased happiness, proudness, social cohesion, etc. These are effects, which increase the individual utility [of an event like ESC 2014, eds.] for the citizens” (Wonderful Copenhagen

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.dr.dk/Om\\_DR/Nyt+fra+DR/artikler/2014/02/18091559.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Om_DR/Nyt+fra+DR/artikler/2014/02/18091559.htm), accessed Nov. 18, 2014.

2014, 23). No attempt is made at quantifying such effects in terms of economic impact.

The impact analysis, however, does seek to point to their presence in terms of benefits and costs by reporting on a survey in which local citizens in Copenhagen were asked to voice their agreement with two statements. While the first—"I am proud that an event like ESC is held in Copenhagen" (Wonderful Copenhagen 2014, 24)—is designed to determine the intangible benefits of hosting ESC 2014, the second statement—"I'd rather be without it" (Wonderful Copenhagen 2014, 24)—is designed to determine the costs. In its attempt to quantify the ESC 2014, the impact analysis seeks to make the business logic present, while pushing the public and the creative logics into the background. Not that their (potential) importance is not recognized—they are simply too difficult to quantify and thus made somewhat absent. The hosting and the values of ESC 2014 are thus assessed in terms of economic impacts.

### **A Valuation Striving to Debunk**

A few weeks before the holding of ESC 2014, a journalist from *Politiken*, a large national newspaper, called up Carina, one of the authors of the present paper. The journalist had learned about our research involvement in the event and was eager to know more about some of the expected outcomes of ESC 2014 considering the high costs, which were at the time slowly becoming publically known, as confidential documents and meeting minutes were leaked and traveled to the news rooms of the Danish media. In short, was this event really financially worth it? Carina explained that she was not able to provide any of the numbers or figures, which the journalist was asking for, as our research utilized a qualitative methodology and, thus, implied a broader conceptualization of worth. Also, Carina explained that such numbers were difficult, if not impossible, to generate, especially on such a short run, as outcomes and values may take some time to manifest themselves. For instance, the measuring of intentions to travel to Copenhagen based on the event could be seen as quite speculative until the trip was actually undertaken. And then again, how might we know if the trip was actually purchased because of ESC 2014 and nothing else? Such questions resonate well with event literature, in which the difficulty of measuring impacts and outcomes are well known (Ritchie 1984). Most often such difficulties are merely addressed through attempts to refine the quantitative measuring tools (see Barad 2003 for a critique of representationalism).

Carina mentioned how another possible way of exploring the outcomes of this particular event was by way of comparison with the previous ESC event held in Copenhagen in 2001. The 2001 show, which broke even budget-wise and was therefore perceived as a



success, had, for instance, no or very little collaboration, as we learned from the interview with Wonderful Copenhagen (interview, Wonderful Copenhagen, February 17, 2014). As an illustrative consequence of this lack of collaboration, all shops in Copenhagen were closed the day before the final of the song contest, as this was a public holiday. Requests from businesses made to the City of Copenhagen to have their shops open along the pedestrian mall had been turned down. Carina pointed to how current collaboration between many different actors had enabled initiatives such as the outreach scheme, the Wonderful Weddings event and the school programs. She suggested that these new types of collaborations could be seen as a part of the explanation as to why and how Copenhagen has become one of the strongest city destinations in Europe while also scoring high in livability and sustainability indexes. Perhaps the collaboration around ESC 2014 could also be taken into account as an outcome? In other words, Carina sought to challenge the journalist's eagerness for a financial bottom line by pointing to the multiplicity of the event and how it created value and values along a number of registers.

After a long talk, the journalist expressed her thanks but said that the *Politiken*, the national newspaper at which she worked, angle on the story was a different one. Next day, the article headline by the journalist stated "ESC will not be a money machine for Copenhagen."<sup>13</sup> In the article, a Swedish professor in tourism economics stated the following: "Politicians and tourism organizations often talk about the effects of such events, but there is no scientific proof of it leading to increased tourism or jobs."<sup>14</sup> The claims made by the article and by the researcher in it, might be true: That in fact ESC 2014 is not a money machine for Copenhagen and most likely, making a surplus had been an ambition with the Project Company.

However, as we have attempted to show, many other kinds of value and values were created in the hybrid collaborative efforts and through the mutual commitments of the participating actors. While the organizational setup of the event was innovative in its collaborative nature, the journalist asked for a less than innovative valuation of the event. More generally, the media paid little attention to the organizational setup and the collaborative efforts and outcomes of the ESC 2014, disabling media accounts of the broader set of values that Carina outlined. So while acknowledging that "economic over-expenditure" was also an important story for the media to tell, it missed the opportunity to critically engage with the current trend of cross-sectoral collaboration and its widespread societal impacts.

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<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from <http://politiken.dk/kultur/musik/ECE2210342/melodi-grand-prix-bliver-ingen-pengemaskine-for-koebenhavn/>, accessed Nov. 17, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from <http://politiken.dk/kultur/musik/ECE2210342/melodi-grand-prix-bliver-ingen-pengemaskine-for-koebenhavn/>, accessed Nov. 17, 2014.

The ESC 2014 may not directly or quickly have led to more tourists, a stronger city brand or job creation; however, studying it as a total social phenomenon points to “how this economy of gift-exchange fails to conform to the principles of so-called natural economy or utilitarianism” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 69). While this could be seen as a downside, as in this valuation by the media that sought to debunk, or as simply too difficult to pin down, as it was in the valuation attempt to quantify, it could also be perceived as an opportunity to explore and enable discussions of different logics of organizing, managing and valuing, as we have done in this article. In the last, concluding section we will discuss how such logics of organizing, managing and valuing may be studied in an engaged and caring manner.

## **Post Festum**

### **Post festum—latin: post (after) + festum (feast)—After the Fact**

In this article we have sought to destabilize the “known fact” of the ESC 2014 being too expensive by viewing the event not only as a glitzy song contest that quickly lost its shimmer but as a total social phenomenon performed through a range of situated and interfering logics, each comprising their own definitions of meaningful exchange, status, power and domination. Understood as a total social phenomenon, the ESC 2014 became more than a fun and colorful and overly expensive party resulting in a (financial) hangover. Combining Mauss’s concept of the potlatch with Law’s notion of modes of ordering enabled us to go beyond the quick conclusion that the ESC 2014 was too expensive and allowed us instead to discuss what cross-sectoral collaboration entails and what kinds of value and values such collaboration might enact.

Instead of quantifying the outcomes of this collaboration or (prematurely) debunking it, we attempted to “slow down” reasoning” (Stengers 2005, 994) by engaging in the ESC 2014 with methodological care, meaning “sustained and respectful tinkering” (Heuts and Mol 2013, 125). We have sought to achieve such sustained and respectful tinkering by seeking out opportunities to learn from, discuss with and engage in knowledge collaborations *with* stakeholders, rather than, say, information retrievals *from* stakeholders (Whatmore 2003; Whatmore and Landström 2011). Through all of this we have aimed to kick-start conversations on the current trend toward more cross-sectoral collaboration within tourism and the related fields of research and innovation. One example of such knowledge collaborations was the seminar held with the partnering organizations of the ESC 2014. We will elaborate upon this seminar and its outcomes in these concluding remarks.

### Caring Knowledge Collaborations

In June 2014, one month after the show, the financial and budgetary scandal of the ESC 2014 was at its highest. Dismissals and accusations of fraud, nepotism and the wasting of public funds were reported upon daily in Danish media. This is when we decided to re-contact the partnering organizations. This time we did not ask them for interviews but invited them to a presentation of our preliminary analysis, followed by a round-table discussion about the creation of longer-lasting values and effects in relation to ESC 2014. This required some persuasion as media coverage had painted a very clear picture of the ESC 2014 as a financial scandal brought about by the incompetence and inability of the partnering organizations to collaborate. After many reassuring emails and telephone conversations where we stressed that our aim was to learn from rather than to exercise criticism, we were able to welcome ten participants, representing DR, Wonderful Copenhagen, Refshale Island Property Company, the City of Copenhagen and the Capital Region of Denmark, as well as the national tourist organization VisitDenmark, to our Copenhagen campus.

In our opening presentation to a noticeably nervous audience, we displayed an early version of the project logics and their interferences, which we have sketched out in this article. We also pointed to some emerging cross-sectoral values, which we argued had emerged in the organizing process. Perhaps relieved by an approach which explored the ESC 2014 as meaningful, the oppressive atmosphere turned into one of cautious elation. Soon, discussions started flowing across the table as stories of learning, organizational outcomes and possible longer-lasting effects were shared. As some of the seminar participants had requested that nothing from the seminar was recorded, we do not have any footage of the discussions that took place that day besides what was frantically scribbled down in our notebooks. However, what we witnessed was partners describing multiple successes of various sizes on different fronts. It is perhaps not too surprising that each organization described their own engagement in the ESC 2014 as a success, but what the participants also pointed to were unique value and values created *across* the partnering organizations. In other words, the seminar enacted a version of the ESC 2014 where it had worked as a—admittedly not unproblematic, but still valuable—way to improve skills and competencies, gain new knowledge, make connections and change and optimize current work practices across the partnering organizations.

The above account of the seminar elucidates the three lessons that we have drawn in this article based on Mauss's notion of the potlatch as a total social phenomenon. (1) The account has displayed how the ESC 2014 was not perceived, organized and interfered with as a pure business, a pure creative or a pure public project. Rather, the

partnering private and public sector organizations engaged with it as a *hybrid collaboration*. In that manner, it closely resembled a total social phenomenon such as the potlatch, which Mauss describes in his work. (2) We exhibited how the ESC 2014 as a hybrid collaboration contains not one, but many logics, three of which have been presented in the present article. We have shown how throughout the conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of the event, the logics each produce certain values and ways of valuing which are made present or become “othered” as they encounter valuation devices such as the media, evaluation schemes and even the present article. (3) The study of collaborative events and other similar initiatives within, for instance, science and innovation sheds light on how Mauss’s concept of utilitarian economy is unable to contain or appreciate something other than a business logic and the values which it makes present. It also points to how we must improve our ability to add other ways of enacting and activating values.

To achieve this, we must become in the words of Mauss “something more than better financiers, accountants and administrators” (Mauss 1925 [2011], 75). We exemplified the dominant valuing attempts of the ESC 2014 through quantification and debunking, but also illustrated how a more engaged and caring approach gained ways for the foregrounding and elaboration of multiple kinds of value and values. By showing and appreciating how project collaborators and logics *did the ESC 2014 together*, what appeared from the start as a meaningless consumption and even destruction of (public) wealth from a purely economic perspective was supplemented by new and meaningful interpretations and, hopefully, realities.

## Interviews and Other Materials

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Interview, Wonderful Copenhagen, Events Director, February 17, 2014.

Interview, Wonderful Copenhagen, Head of the Project Company, February 21, 2014.

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**Morten Krogh Petersen** is Assistant Professor in the Techno-Anthropology Research Group at Aalborg University Copenhagen. Utilizing modes of analysis from the field of science and technology studies (STS), especially material semiotics, he studies innovation and design as distributed, heterogeneous and collaborative achievements. He has published in journals such as *Science Studies*, *Ethnologia Europaea* and *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*.

**Carina Ren** is Associate Professor in the Tourism Research Unit at Aalborg University Copenhagen. Her main research interests are tourism encounters and tourism innovations, which she explores through branding initiatives and mega-events and in destination development. She is a co-editor of *Actor-Network Theory and Tourism. Ordering, Materiality and Multiplicity* (Routledge, 2012) and *Tourism Encounters and Controversies. Ontological Politics of Tourism Development* (Ashgate, 2015). She has published her work in journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Science Studies*, and *Ethnologia Europaea*.