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City festivals and festival cities

Introduction: Cities, space and festivals

As thousands of professional festival performers in lavish costumes shout bombastically into the crowds, the decorum that usually characterizes this city dissolves [...]. Colorful photocopied flyers that promise exciting new theatrical shows decorate the cobbled historic High Street. The medieval old quarter of the city center becomes a stage where professional street performers shout over layers of cheers and laughter, inscribing their presence on the city through movement and performance. (Jamieson, 2004: 65).

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe which has been running since 1947 is one of the most well-known cultural festivals in the world. With over 50,000 performances shown across 300 venues in 2017 (Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2017) it is also the largest. Spilling out into the city centre during three weeks each August, it has a profound transformational effect on the cityscape. Street performers, flyer artists promoting their shows, tourists and vendors mingle along the crowded Royal Mile leading up to the castle. Signs point to venues large and small, smart and dingy, housed in permanent and temporary structures. For some this is the hotly anticipated highlight of the summer, for others an annual source of overcrowding and nuisance. The presence of the Fringe is difficult to ignore as the city becomes 'redefined by the altered energy and velocity of strategically planned festival spaces' (Jamieson, 2004: 65). Although the festival undoubtedly makes a mark it would be misleading nevertheless to claim that the Fringe transforms 'the city' in its entirety. While some venues are dotted around the city the main action and most visible part is concentrated to the centre and historical Old Town. A city is not a homogeneous entity easily captured and packaged, although there is a strong tendency

to do so in the contemporary context of city marketing and branding. An interesting question to consider, then, is how the aforementioned 'strategically planned festival spaces' are designated, used and experienced.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a conceptual and empirical discussion of the interlacing of festivals with the shaping and re-imagining of urban space. It places the role of the urban festival in the broader context of contemporary market-based principles that underpin urban identities and places, and focuses particularly on performance- and theatre-centred festivals. The chapter draws on Lefebvre's (1974/1991) conceptualization of space as socially produced, and subscribes to a relational ontology of space as a 'product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions' (Massey, 2005: 9). Space is dynamic, always under construction, always in the process of being made; never finished, and never closed. Similarly, the city is in a perpetual state of becoming 'through circulation, combination and recombination of people and things' (Crang, 2001: 190). These circulations, combinations and recombinations are co-productive with space: 'identities/entities, the relations 'between' them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive' (Massey, 2005: 10). Identities emerge through space and in turn shape space. This means that space is contested and political, and marked by heterogeneity. In short, we must not see space as an empty, neutral frame which is filled with people, things and events, but as a dynamic force which contributes to producing people, things and events.

The chapter builds on existing writings on the role and nature of urban festivals and how they are mobilized for economic, social and cultural purposes. The heightened interest in and prevalence of such processes has been conceptualized as festivalization (e.g. Bennett et al., 2014), understood as the increased emphasis on, and attribution of value to, the festival format as a vehicle for performance-based cultural expression, regeneration, and social inclusion. As Richards and Palmer (2010: 30) point out, festivalization is also linked to 'the spatial and economic restructuring of cities'. The authors place events at the heart of urban strategies and indicate how festivalization carries meaning beyond concrete instances of festival organizing – it is representative of a wider system of cultural production and consumption. Festivals have undoubtedly

come to occupy significant positions in national, regional and local cultural policy and promotion strategies, and it is important to understand the conditions and practices that enable or constrict their presence and form, and what their effects are.

In what follows, I will start by placing festivals in the broader context of the 'experience economy' and concomitant ideas of the role of cities in such an economic system. After a brief overview of the development of the urban festival in Europe, the chapter then proceeds to discuss festivals from a spatial perspective. This is followed by some examples of performance and theatre festivals, also in a European context, before closing the chapter by returning to the core question of how we can understand festivals in relation to urban spatiality.

The contemporary experience-based city

Returning to the opening example, we can note that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is part of a larger brand architecture which makes up the Edinburgh Festival City brand, enabling the city to call itself 'the world's greatest festival city' (Edinburgh Festivals, 2015). Like many other cities vying for visitors and investments, Edinburgh has chosen to make culture a source of value and differentiation, in this case focusing particularly on festivals. This is indicative of a broader trend of urban culture-led regeneration and place promotion through 'cultural flagships and festivals' (Evans, 2003: 417), which largely emerged in the 1990s (Smith, 2012). The imperative of being distinctive means that cities, situated in a global symbolic economy, compete according to market-based principles which demand the packaging and commodification of an urban offering (Zukin, 1995). These characteristics are symptomatic of what has been labelled the 'experience economy' (Schulze, 1992; Pine and Gilmore, 1999) following which immaterial experiences become prime generators of value. This backdrop is significant for the discussion in this chapter in that space, inseparable from economic and social structures and practices, is part of a system of governance that influences how urban life is organized and experienced.

We can theorize the significance and quality of space through the oft-cited spatial conceptualization of Lefebvre (1974/1991), according to which space is multifaceted,

socially produced and imbued with power relations. Lefebvre conceptualizes space as intersecting dimensions of planned, practiced and lived space. Simultaneously, space is an abstraction informed by ideology and the codes and knowledge about space that prevail in society; it is the practices through which space is enacted and which for example designate the use of space for particular purposes; and it is the lived dimension of experience, imagination and alternative spatial interpretations. The interlocking character of these facets point to an inherent tension or playful dynamic between an ideological order, everyday tactics which respond to the order, and embodied ways of bringing into being alternative imaginations (Simonsen, 2005). 'Non-conformist' usage of urban space, for example in the case of festivals, which often usurp space for purposes other than those it is planned for, creates an experiential frisson and points towards the indeterminacy of meanings of space. Tying in with the discussion of the experience-based city, we can see why festivals are considered to be perfect means for enhancing the urban 'experiencescape' (O'Dell and Billing, 2005). Following experience economy and tourism dictates, festivalized urban space should offer unexpected, aesthetically and emotionally engaging experiences.

Culture-led approaches which emphasize access to and consumption of cultural resources are seen as imperative for successful urban and social policy (Gibson and Stevenson, 2004). Some have pointed to the positive potential of renewal residing in such strategies, whereby cultural events such as festivals are seen to be 'replete with possibilities for challenging social conventions, social order and authority, and inverting society's cultural norms' (Quinn, 2005: 932). Meanwhile, others have pointed to the sanitizing tendencies of city festivals (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011), both at a physical level at which 'spaces are dressed up' (Smith, 2012: 36) for the occasion – streets are cleaned and closed off, 'undesirable' elements are removed and particular parts of the city are chosen for display – and at a social level with regard to the privileging of particular identities and representations of for example gender and race in relation to the cultural and creative city (Parker, 2008). Physical and social dimensions are inseparable: festivals that physically rearrange the cityscape are also part of social (re)configurations in terms of upholding or disrupting established social patterns; and these practices are further shaped by economic forces.

The ways in which festivals have been mobilized for purposes of urban renewal and reinvigoration, and the ways in which they are attributed with value in relation to creativity, identity and community can be understood as adhering to particular social imaginaries; the social-historical fields within which we are situated, and which have restricting as well as enabling effects. The imaginary infuses material reality with meaning, values, assumptions and beliefs – for example with regard to the creative, experiential role of cities. Contrary to definitions according to which the imaginary and imagination take place in the mind only, the imaginary is here seen as intertwined with the material. It gives the surrounding world an ‘affective texture’ (Lennon, 2015). Moreover, ‘products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols [and] utopias’ (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: 12) are an inherent aspect of the production of space. Space encompasses physical and social aspects, as we have seen above, as well as imaginary aspects. Events and festivals form part of the constitution of reality through the imaginary, sometimes by deliberately invoking images of another time or another place. They can be organized with the aim of narrating the history and future of particular communities, for example, which inevitably becomes an exercise in packaging complex realities into digestible messages. Importantly, such narrations cannot be completely decontextualized. The event has to ‘tap into’ existing social imaginaries so that it makes sense, and presents not only a recognizable but also a desirable narrative (Johansson, 2012), which is corroborated by material manifestations – for example seen in how cultural event strategies are supported by physical regeneration projects (Smith, 2012). Such narratives give strong clues regarding what and who count as valuable and worthy of commemoration, and it also shows how festivals are implied in staging particular preferred realities. As cities continue to occupy powerful positions as representations of economic global growth, cultural multitudes, and social progress as well as social deprivation, it is well worth taking a closer look at how festivals play a part in their constitution.

The urban festival

Urban space lends itself to celebration due to its density, complex physical structure and concentrations of people – which simultaneously makes it an unpredictable and

potentially dangerous site. However, contemporary urban festivals are mainly seen to present a number of benefits, including 1) a potential for the democratization of cultural participation 2) the forging of social connections and identities (e.g. neighbourhoods) 3) economic opportunities 4) tourism and image enhancement, and 5) unique artistic and cultural value (Faivre D’Arcier, 2014: 114-116). They are thus seen to encompass artistic, cultural, social and economic value, and urban space has always been the site of staged events. In earlier times the medieval city was no stranger to spectacle. Tournaments, pageants and processions, royal entries, and the public weddings and funerals of the nobility ‘defined urban relationships, glorified cities, and attracted visitors and their money into the urban marketplace’ (Hanawalt and Reyerson, 1994: ix). As such, their purpose sounds surprisingly identical to what contemporary urban events are meant to achieve. The contemporary mind might envisage medieval city festivities as tumultuous, irreverent and uncontrolled occasions, but such events had a strong mission of preserving tradition, privilege, and social hierarchies. This tension between order and disorder is seen as a defining characteristic of events and festivals. On the one hand there is the subversive potential of the carnivalesque, on the other hand festivals can be viewed as licensed transgression, working as momentary pressure-releasing ‘safety valves’ (Smith, 2012) which actually help reinforce the established order: ‘The purportedly subversive moments of festivals could be just as easily imagined as ideological cover for a commodified production that entrenches and reinforces social circumstances, patterns of actions and social identities’ (Toraldó and Islam, 2017: 7). How the balance between revelry and regulation is achieved through where boundaries are drawn and by whom, provides insight into relations of power. For example, Smith (2012: 13) points out that governments have often expressed unease over urban festivals ‘because of moral panics regarding their effects’, exemplified by legislation introduced in Britain in the 19th century to clamp down on fairs in England. For Smith, the reintroduction and growth of contemporary urban festivals can be seen as ‘attempts to recover some of the festivity of medieval cities, albeit in a more regulated fashion’ (13). There is a tension between permitting revelry which transgresses everyday social norms, and governance which seeks to curb antisocial behaviour and pollutants associated with festivals, such as inebriation, drug use, vandalism and noise.

The holding of the Great Exhibition in 1851 in London is generally seen as a pivotal point in the emergence of the link between large-scale events and urbanism (Smith, 2012). The exhibition was held in a specially designed building in Hyde Park dubbed the Crystal Palace due to its plate glass structure. The exhibition's international displays of manufactured goods drew six million visitors and was deemed a great success, including having positive effects on tourism (V&A Museum, 2016). Following on from this, the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the birth of the modern European urban arts festival, with the foundation of the Bayreuth Festival in 1876 being an oft mentioned watershed moment. Other notable festivals such as the Salzburg Festival and the Verona opera festival followed in 1920 and 1936, respectively. Although the Salzburg Festival was initially meant to be inclusive, it soon developed into 'a special event and élite festival' (Waterman, 1998: 55), reflecting the characteristic of its contemporaries which generally reflected a cultural taste for 'high art'. After WWII followed a period of 'cultural exchange' (Clark, 2008) whereby arts festivals came to function as important symbols of rejuvenation after the war. Postwar examples include the Edinburgh International Festival and its aforementioned 'shadow' the Fringe, the Avignon festival, and the Ruhrfestspiele theatre festival in Recklinghausen; all founded in 1947. According to Quinn (2005: 929-930) especially the Avignon festival aimed for 'inclusiveness, accessibility and new forms of interaction between audience, artists and place', showing a commitment to not only artistic but also social aims. More radical tendencies and a questioning of dominant art paradigms in the 1960s and 1970s coupled with civil rights movements saw the appropriation of urban space for demonstrations and other forms of intervention, as well as a growing interest by city administrations to enhance their cultural capital through cultural performances (Richards and Palmer, 2010). Later, with the development of market-based urban models of governance as outlined earlier, the city festival became a potentially lucrative source of income, a builder of brand reputation and a means of regeneration. The urban landscape which hosts iconic architecture as well as derelict sites which can be transformed into pop-up festival venues, presents a wealth of opportunities. Klaic (2014: 69) writes about the innovative use of spaces in the city and how festivals may invest 'a great deal of imagination and logistic resources in assuring appropriate and inspiring sites'. Again, we see how 'strategically planned festival spaces' become an important part of urban management,

whereby 'festivals seek to explore the implicit texture of urban spaces' (Klaic, 2014: 69), becoming part of the very fabric of the city. In other words, the city is not simply a backdrop for the festival (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011), instead, the festival produces, and is produced by, city space.

The production of festival space

To conceptualize festivals and space we can start by thinking of the festival itself in spatial terms. Perhaps more often, festivals are framed in temporal terms, as 'time out of time' (Falassi, 1987); temporal events during which everyday routines are suspended. But festivals of course also necessarily have spatial dimensions. Chalcraft and Magaudda (2011: 174, added emphasis) state that 'festivals can be seen and analysed as *terrains* where different cultural, aesthetic and political patterns and values temporarily converge and clash, constantly creating, stabilizing and redefining the setting of festival interaction'. This metaphor describes festival space as characterized by negotiations between converging and diverging interests and values; it draws attention to the nondeterministic and dynamic quality of festivals. It also points to a certain intensity, one which is often understood as enabling heightened aesthetic and emotional experiences. As such, festival space affords multi-sensory experiences (Toraldó, 2013) which engage the body, including 'the impact rhythm has on the flesh' (Duffy et al., 2011: 17). The enabling of an altered register of bodily sensations and movements, and the simultaneous presence of other bodies similarly engaged contribute to making festival space 'extraordinary'.

Festival space might also afford identity construction and play; for example Goulding and Saren (2009: 43) discuss how gender is performed at a Goth festival, claiming that the Goth 'subculture positively embraces the active reconfiguration of gender norms'. The festival provides a space for challenging gender norms, and for performing alternative and varied expressions of gender. On the other hand, Stevens and Shin (2014) have shown that festivals may reproduce gendered, classed and racialized hierarchies rather than transgressing and transforming them. An example is provided by Johansson and Toraldó (2017) who have explored the emergence of so-called 'boutique festivals' in the UK. These are festivals that are described as small-scale, 'non-commercial' music or

mixed-arts festivals, which are seen to offer an alternative, more participatory experience compared to large mainstream events (Robinson, 2015). The boutique festival offering and promoted lifestyle have attracted audiences largely consisting of white middle-class consumers. Hence, we can see the political aspect of festival space as a site for constructing and performing social identities and differences.

The above means that the presumed broad accessibility and democratizing character of urban events can be scrutinized. We can pay attention to patterns of domination and marginalization by examining who tends to appear in different urban spaces including festival spaces. In the context of street protests, Butler (2015) writes about a politics of assembly, that is, the effects of publicly bringing bodies together in concerted action. In coming together, they exercise their *right to appear*. However, such rights are not evenly distributed. Instead, who or what appears is 'regulated in such a way that only certain kinds of beings can appear as recognizable subjects, and others cannot' (35). Something or somebody can appear only insofar as they are legible. Examples of this can be seen in relation to debates around elitism, for example, whereby particular cultural activities and events remain exclusionary (Waterman, 1998). Festivals are generally seen to have a significant potential for participation and inclusion due to their format and perceived broad appeal, but they are not exempt from social stratification. When particular embodied identities are favoured over others in festival space, it perpetuates ideas and ideals of participation and cultural consumption. As such, festivals become part of the production of broader value hierarchies, as mentioned earlier. But, following a relational perspective on space, we also need to acknowledge the possibility of destabilization and redescription of dominant realities and identities.

Returning to Massey (2005: 151, citing Donald, 1999) and the political possibilities of space, we can observe that we tend to 'experience our social world simply as the way things are, as objective presence', meaning we take a certain state of affairs for granted and thus fail to see how contingent everyday reality is. Part of the power ascribed to festivals is that they have the potential to disrupt this taken-for-grantedness, and present us with an alternative reality. Staged interventions may provide a jolt which makes us experience our surroundings differently, including those we are familiar with

on an everyday basis. An example of this is given by Beyes and Steyaert (2013) who recount one of the author's experience of partaking in an event staged by the Berlin-based theatre collective Rimini Protokoll. Although not a festival, the example illuminates how a choreographed intervention transforms a previously familiar urban landscape into a realm of ambiguity and, in this case, uneasiness. Equipped with a smartphone, headphones and a map supplied by the theatre, participants in the urban 'play' were guided by recorded messages to follow a particular circuit in the city. As they arrived at designated spots, recorded voices told of buildings and places in relation to a not too distant past. More than a traditional guided tour, however, the narrations were personal, chilling accounts of the doings of the feared Stasi state security police of the German Democratic Republic. Innocuous buildings and mundane places suddenly seemed to gain a sinister edge as the personal testimonies were delivered, 'all connected to and radiating from buildings, sidewalks, squares and street corners' (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013: 1454). The author suddenly saw his familiar home city in a new, not entirely reassuring light. He experienced it as overlaid with new meanings tinged with paranoia that surveillance might be ongoing at that very moment without him being aware of it. This suspicion was uncomfortably confirmed upon the author returning to the starting point and handing in the borrowed devices, at which point he was given a printout of a map neatly plotting his movements during the tour. The example shows the potential of staged urban events to provide the aforementioned jolt into experiencing a different reality beyond the familiar and taken for granted. Of importance is the embodied and emotional reaction that the intervention creates, not simply the cognitive processing of new information. There is both immersion in the play as the walk goes on and estrangement – a sort of *Verfremdungseffekt* – from the everyday surroundings. Similar jolts can be produced by other guerrilla-style tactics such as flash mobs which 'aim to cause a sensation of estrangement, to disrupt the habitual perceptive patterns of passers-by... and enliven... the public space of the city with surprising, even provocative encounters' (Klaic 70). The unexpected, surprising and exhilarating are seen as desirable experiences that urban festivals have the means to deliver and in so doing to enhance what the city has to offer.

Theatre festivals and the uses of urban space

Some insight into the European theatre festival field can be gained through information drawn from *Europe for Festivals – Festivals for Europe* (EFFE).¹ EFFE includes 715 arts festivals in 39 countries (EFFE, n.d.). A search for theatre festivals yielded a list of 289 festivals. Of these, 37 listed ‘theatre’ as the only keyword and a further 18 listed theatre in combination with one other arts form²; the majority of all festivals encompassed several genres in the manner of multi-arts programming. Further, of the 37 festivals only three are held in cities or towns with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, which means that the urban setting is a common feature of these theatre festivals. While the EFFE list is not an exhaustive tally of all festivals in Europe, it gives an idea of the extent to which theatre is represented as an art form in the festival field.

Copenhagen International Theatre (CIT) runs a festival called Metropolis (since 2017 a ‘seasonal event’) the aim of which is to ‘challenge and transform urban spaces through artistic experiences, which play with the boundaries between everyday life and staging’ (Metropolis, 2012: 6). Metropolis specifically invites artists to intervene in the cityscape with the purpose of ‘blowing apart established artistic definitions’ (Metropolis, n.d., author’s translation) by providing ‘art experiences in temporary and mobile spaces’ (Pløger, 2015: 264). The festival has an explicit mission of re-imagining the city by demonstrating ‘how we by way of experiments, actions and images can become aware of structures and possibilities’ (Metropolis, 2008: 17). The aim is not simply to stage artistic performances in places which can frame them in an aesthetically interesting manner, but to bring the city, or aspects of the city, into awareness. In one performance the audience were taken on a walk by a group of dancers through a ‘socially unsettled’ area of Copenhagen. ‘All of a sudden, every street corner, walkway, balcony, shop window and even the cemetery turned out to be a potential stage’ (Metropolis, 2012: 78) for the dancers to perform scenes based on the local inhabitants’ everyday lives. As the performances took place in public spaces, the distinction between the audience and inhabitants who were passing by became blurred. ‘The inhabitants and the sometimes tired, derelict buildings... were invested with a poetic dimension’ (p 79) which the

¹ EFFE is a programme coordinated by the European Union-funded *European Festivals Association* (EFA), an umbrella organization for festivals.

² These were dance (10), music (4), street arts (2), circus (1) and heritage (1).

visitors could approach 'in a playful way'. From the neighbourhood the performance then moved towards the city centre – the centre of power and wealth – which provided a sharp contrast and made the audience 'acutely aware of the exclusion [of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood] in [sic] the wealthier and bourgeois parts of the city' (p 79). Such performances may provide revealing insights into the social stratification of urban space, and how some parts of the city, including its inhabitants, are perhaps only known to us as 'socially unsettled' through the media accounts we read which support particular social imaginaries. Moving through different parts of the city provides a striking perspective on the cityscape, and on the kinds of people that we might expect to see in particular spaces. Yet, we must be careful that peoples' neighbourhoods do not turn into mere spectacle for the benefit of the audience's festival gaze (cf. Jamieson, 2004). In this case the performance was intimately linked with the space in which it happened; its very purpose was a narration of that space and its inhabitants rather merely providing a thrilling background to performances decoupled from it.

Another performance described by Pløger (2015) aimed at transforming an everyday situation familiar to commuters, that of getting on and off buses with other commuters. This banal and unreflexive routine, a well-known part of the métro-boulot-dodo circadian rhythm of many city dwellers, is thrown into consciousness by performers disguised as commuters doing sudden, strange body movements. As well as showing how a significant part of our life is conducted in an almost automatic state of carrying out daily routines, this type of intervention can also point to social regulation through how we react to unexpected behaviour. In order to flow, cities are dependent on masses of people moving and acting in an orderly and predictable fashion, as anyone who has squeezed themselves onto packed public transport will know. Any behaviour that breaks the social contract is viewed with suspicion or fear, and a simple intervention which gatecrashes spatial practices – a key part of the production of space – makes a powerful statement in laying bare the norms that govern urban life.

Other festivals also seek to disrupt established structures, whether physical or other. The LIFT biennial theatre festival was founded in London in 1981. It has become a well-

known festival which has ‘presented shows in partnership with London’s major arts venues, theatres and galleries, but also in countless hidden spaces and places across the city’ (LIFT, n.d.). Armitstead (1994: 152) lauds the ‘strong and idiosyncratic voice’ of the festival and credits it with having introduced a breath of fresh air into institutional theatre ‘through an extraordinary range of strategies – from enlisting business sponsorship for the building-blocks use to construct the Bastille in the heart of the South Bank, to unleashing a party of Catalan pyromaniacs on the usually sober reaches of Battersea Park’. The rebellious mission of the festival is underscored by their spectacular urban performances, some of which take place in locations associated with the cultural establishment. The Bastille Dances, a piece performed by the Station House Opera company in 1989 for the bicentenary of the French revolution was a ‘spectacular constantly moving sculpture with 8,000 concrete blocks’ (Station House Opera, n.d.) staged on the South Bank, which also houses landmark cultural institutions such as the National Theatre and the Royal Festival Hall. To stage performances adjacent to iconic buildings or well-known institutions draws attention to architectural representations of power – planned space in Lefebvre’s terms – yet performs differently to what is normally expected in such surroundings, and as such, at least temporarily, provides an alternative enactment of their meaning.

Also aiming to change the city are the Ruhrfestspiele in Recklinghausen, claiming the epithet of the oldest theatre festival in Europe: ‘a magnet for artists and theatre enthusiasts from around the world’ (Nordrhein Westfalen Culture, 2018) attracting some 80,000 visitors. On the website one can read about the subversive genesis of the festival: of how a coal shortage in the winter of 1946 meant that theatres in Hamburg could not operate for lack of heated rehearsal spaces, and how ‘a delegation of lorries’ made its way to the mining town of Recklinghausen to retrieve coal, which was then ‘smuggled’ into Hamburg to keep theatres going. To thank the inhabitants of Recklinghausen a large number of actors put on a guest performance in the town the following year, and the festival was born. During the festival period in May-June the town is ‘transformed into a truly international cultural metropolis’ (Ruhrfestspiele Recklinhausen, n.d., author’s translation). Here, the festival is seen to lend the city a cosmopolitan quality; ‘Recklinghausen becomes a “creative place” which constantly

reinvents itself' (Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen, About Us, n.d.). Mentioned performance sites are a school farm, a hairdressing salon, a bank, tents, and industrial buildings, which 'open up new performance spaces for the artists' (ibid.). The injection of life and creativity through festivals is as we have seen a common justification for their value and attractiveness and the size of the festival makes it a major event in a town of just over 100,000 inhabitants. The festival also has its own Fringe, which stages productions that are 'imaginative, provocative, off-beat and fast-paced' (ibid.). It enables the festival to stay fresh and position itself as a pioneer of pushing traditional boundaries: 'beyond the conventional borders the festival offers the opportunity to experience fresh and bold theatre at extraordinary places' (ibid.). Breaking the boundaries of conventionality, in part through appropriating city space as performance space emerges as a central theme.

The idea that festivals can further inclusivity comes through in the case of the Lainsuojattomat (English translation: The Outlaws) theatre festival in the town of Pori in Finland. As well as an artistic mission the festival also has an explicit social one: 'to provide opportunities for citizens in terms of leading an active life' (Luonila and Johansson, 2015: 223). By taking to the streets the Lainsuojattomat festival hopes to reach audiences who do not normally go to the theatre but who might be enticed to visit an indoor performance during and after the festival if they are inspired by what they see in the streets. The city thus is a means to provide 'tasters' which will hopefully inspire and attract new theatre audiences. To achieve this, the street events have to have an atmosphere which is created 'when there are hundreds of people' (Luonila et al., 2016: 472). 'Energy' and 'community' are labels attributed to the festival by the organisers themselves, which they see as being the result of a mixing 'performances, experiences and surprises' (Luonila et al., 2016: 471), all ingredients that are considered key for the success of the contemporary city as we have seen. Apart from streets the festival also makes use of cafes, business spaces and storage spaces, and they bring a bucolic imaginary into the city by hosting an urban picnic in the courtyard of a regenerated factory turned cultural centre. At the same time, the festival is curated based on what different spaces afford them. Some performances need the technical support and infrastructure of a traditional theatre venue and do not lend themselves to non-

traditional spaces. Hence, it is not a question of simply trying to be as quirky or radical as possible when it comes to designing the festival, it is about understanding the interplay between performance and space, and how they might be mutually enhanced or transformed.

Munro and Jordan (2013) used an observational methodology to examine how Edinburgh Fringe street performers applied particular spatial tactics in order to claim public street space for their performances. The street festival is a recognized and important part of the Fringe. Some spaces are seen as being better 'pitches' than others; particularly broad pedestrianized streets, and squares. The pitch slots are allocated amongst the performers on a daily basis through drawing lots, thus ensuring a degree of randomness regarding what performances might crop up where. As there are no natural performance space demarcations in the street, the boundary or 'edge' of the performance is created through means like laying down a rope or cajoling passers-by to stop and form the parameter for the performance. If successful, a temporary space 'owned' by the artist is created for the duration of the performance. As the audience is free to come and go as it pleases, it is a precarious space which needs to be maintained through an intriguing, funny or exhilarating enough show.

The space of these and other festivals also extends beyond the staging of performances, and beyond the duration of the festival. For example, the Metropolis festival also aims to link 'the world of the arts and theatre with city life and urban development' (Metropolis, 2008: 3). An associated event called Nordic Urban Lab is organized to bring cultural managers and workers together with artists, city planners and councillors, architects, academics and activists to explore 'key aspects of taking a cultural perspective on the city and on urban strategies' (Metropolis, n.d.). The festival hence purposefully aims to intervene into the wider cultural sphere as well as the urban space, to shape how the latter might develop in the future. For most festivals, the enabling of their performances also happens through governments which adopt cultural branding strategies; City Councils that grant permissions for events to be held; cultural bodies and businesses which provide funding and sponsorship; and audiences drawn to the festival. These extend the terrain well beyond the time and space of the festival itself.

As the examples show, innovative uses of urban space is a hallmark of city festivals. Presented aims from creative to subversive, from inclusive to transformative. In the final section I reflect on what spatial analyses of this kind might offer in terms of understanding the nexus between city festivals and city space.

Concluding remarks

The value of urban space in the contemporary global economy has often been framed in terms of how it can be appropriated for domestication and commodification. Cities are seen to provide valuable sources of revenue through tourism and other forms of consumption they can offer, which means that they are being framed and managed as ‘experiencescapes’ (O’Dell and Billing, 2005). However, following an understanding of space as productive and relational as discussed in this chapter, space always remains open to contestation and alternative imaginations regardless of attempts at ordering and sanitizing it, for example for marketing purposes. The indeterminacy of space and its quality of ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey, 2005: 151) – ‘the chance of space [which] may set us down next to the unexpected neighbour’ – points to continuous processes of circulation, configuration, and reconfiguration. Instead of viewing space as emptiness waiting to be filled, we must view it as productive in its own right.

The sense of the unexpected is attributed to festivals based on their potential to redescribe everyday urban space and life. Not confined to specially designed performance sites, the ‘entire city becomes a stage’ (Richards and Palmer, 2010: 27) which invites participation in shared aesthetic experiences. The festival foregrounds a set of activities which do not normally take place (Schoenmakers, 2007: 31). It throws things into relief, the effect being that things can be experienced otherwise. The ‘experiencing otherwise’ also means that festivals can reorient us individually and collectively through how they ‘enrol different consumers, experiences and cultural tastes’ (Bennett and Woodward, 2014: 12). The notion of enrolment indicates that cultural tastes and preferences – the cultural ‘subject’ if you will – are being made as much as reflected by festivals. Space is always implied in such processes, as identities/entities and relations ‘between’ them are co-constituted through spatiality (Massey, 2005).

Further, although often defined as events that are temporally and spatially bounded, festivals must be viewed in relation to their surrounding conditions including the broader economic, social and cultural forces that inform their emergence, development and maintenance. Understanding how festivals relate to those conditions, how they enable or hinder the development of social relations, and how they potentially disrupt dominant conditions is important. Festivals ‘open out and spill over into “outside” worlds’ (Picard and Robinson, 2009: 4), which indicates that they are not only being worked upon by outside forces, but that they also have the power to affect those ‘outside worlds’. As such, festivals also co-produce wider cultural and political spaces in that they shape cultural patterns and ways of performing, and influence cultural policy making. Festivals, then, can both be viewed as ‘concrete’ localized performance spaces, and as constituting social imaginaries which provide possibilities for new forms of relations and activities, and lend meaning to cultural practices.

The above are all positive aspects, often emphasized when festivals are promoted for their entertainment and recreational qualities. Such discourses also render festivals somewhat apolitical; however, this is not the case. A spatial perspective on festivals acknowledges how power underpins what meanings, practices and identities become valued or neglected. Apart from shaping cultural preferences festivals also shape patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and can be mobilized to protect established boundaries as well to transgress them.

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