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Cultural Festivals and the City

Abstract

Cities have always been hubs for celebration and festivity, bringing people together to escape temporarily from the mundane nature of everyday routines. Festivals have often been bridges between people and places, linking personal geography with collective experiences and therefore increasingly of interest to cultural geographers. However, festivals also have social, economic, and political aspects that are constructed by societal influences of the time and place. This paper presents some of the key debates ongoing in academic literature across disciplines to demonstrate the contested role that cultural festivals play in urban settings and suggests that urban geography is critical to developing these debates. It is simply no longer possible to say that festivity is a simple rupture in the mundanity of everyday life of urban citizens; rather, contemporary cultural festivals now often exhibit complex and uneasy tensions between the socio-economic strategies of commercialized neoliberal cities and the cultural needs of diverse communities to gather and celebrate. By reviewing the development of festivals as part of the urban cultural economy utilising a geographic lens, this paper sets out how cultural festivals are now more often employed by cities for marketing, tourism, and other socio-economic benefits. We demonstrate that cultural festivals and cities have an ongoing relationship, which is now mainly commercialized and politicized, and this has diverse impacts on communities, urban spaces, and cultural identities.

Key words: cultural festivals, urban regeneration, place image, placemaking, tourism, community cohesion

Introduction

Throughout history, people from all over the world have set aside time for communal celebration and festive experiences (Turner, 1982). Carnivals, fairs, parades, and festivals offer excitement and a new range of sensations and a general release of emotions. It has been widely accepted by scholars for some time that, historically, festivals were temporary escapes from the mundane nature of everyday routines (Featherstone, 1992) and bring people out of the ordinary reality of their lives (Urry, 2001). Along with this escapist function, festivals also have social, economic, and political aspects that are constructed by societal influences of the time and place. Festivals have often been bridges between people and places, linking personal geography with collective experiences. The symbolic and affective dimensions of festivals can provoke the re/negotiation of individual and group identity and place-based heritage through representational displays of meaning. Festivals can tie in to the semiotic meanings of place because the use of space during a festival can be seen to “overlay physical

space, making symbolic use of its objects" (Lefebvre, 1991, 39). This paper presents some of the key debates ongoing in academic literature across disciplines to demonstrate the contested role that cultural festivals are playing in urban settings. It is simply no longer possible to say that festivity is a simple rupture in the mundanity of everyday life of urban citizens; rather, contemporary festivals now often exhibit complex and uneasy tensions between the socio-economic strategies of commercialized neoliberal cities and the cultural needs of diverse communities to gather and celebrate.

The geographical lens adds to understanding patterns of social interactions and their relationships with space and place, and event environments are often employed as examples to illustrate wider concepts and controversies (see Davidson & McNeil, 2012; Poynter, 2009). As Finkel et al. (2018, 1) state, "Special events are microcosms of society. Because they are temporary and usually bound by geographic space, they can be considered reflections of or responses to societal norms at the time they take place." The main contribution of geographic thinking to event landscapes, especially utilizing urban geography discourses, has been providing an established framework for identifying and analysing patterns of development and policy, governance, urban regeneration, and socio-economic place-based inclusions and exclusions (see Soja, 2010; Hall, 2013; Harvey, 1989). Through this there is the potential to appreciate wider value of festivals beyond economics but how they might contribute to sustainable urban development (see Perry et al., 2019) This also involves mapping experiences by conducting immersive studies of events in streets, parks, and other urban spaces, exploring the socio-spatial relationships and tensions.

Thus, in the past decade, there has been an emergence of interdisciplinary scholars who have adopted urban geography frameworks and approaches and applied them to festival and event spaces (see: Finkel & Matheson, 2015; McGillivray & Frew, 2015; Smith, 2015; Quinn 2010; Waitt 2008). By drawing on the literature and methodologies of the more established urban geography discipline, it can be seen that a subset subject focusing on event spaces is in the process of becoming assembled. This has contributed to the development of the field of critical event studies (see Platt & Lamond, 2016; Spracklan & Lamond, 2016), which, among other conceptual undertakings, seeks to "set an agenda for ethical management, governance, and coexistence with the wider external world" (Robertson et al. 2018, 865). It is through this critical event studies lens that urban celebrations can be better understood to advance scholarship and praxis. This is particularly relevant in the past decade whereby there has been a growth in the study of festival and event management within the UK.

This paper examines urban cultural festivals, specifically those located in the UK as examples to illustrate how festivals have become contested features of most urban destinations. Cultural festivals are intangible forms of heritage on the one hand (such as place-embedded events like Lewes Bonfires, Bridgewater Carnival, Beltane Fire Festival, etc.), but they also can be manufactured multi-arts events more commonly seen now in urban centres (such as Manchester International Festival, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and so on). A broad but concise definition offered by Perry et al (2019), drawing on earlier definitions of Getz (2010) suggests that festivals are "*spatially* as well as temporally bounded composites of different realities; they are a symbolic, contingent and situated set of events and understandings, usually only comprehensible in context." Indeed, urban cultural festivals are temporary but vary in length from a one day celebration (i.e. Hogmanay) to a year long programme of activities (i.e. UK City of Culture). More recently, cultural festivals, and specifically their potential contributions to communities and places, have been recognised worldwide; for example, in UNESCO's *Culture and Development Framework*, 'culture' is now listed as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

The UK has been selected as a focus because it was one of the early adopters of the model of cultural and event-driven urban regeneration (Smith, 2012) and, therefore, presents some of the more advanced examples of the interplay between cultural festivals and urban policies and planning. Additionally, many of the strategies implemented in the UK have been adapted globally, with cities on almost all continents embracing UK-tested approaches (Pratt & Jeffcut, 2011). We demonstrate that cultural festivals and cities have an ongoing relationship, which is now often commercialized and politicized with multifarious impacts on communities, urban spaces, and cultural identities. As city governance has embraced neoliberalist policies, it has led to the increasing politicization of festivals and events to achieve instrumental agenda items (Bennett et al, 2014; Foley et al, 2012; Smith, 2015). Contemporary cities tend to cultivate a cultural festivals landscape for three key reasons, often prioritized in this order: 1) regenerating urban areas; 2) promoting the image of the city as an exciting place to live and visit; and, 3) encouraging community involvement and cohesion (Finkel, 2013). This paper sets out how cultural festivals are now more often employed by cities mainly for marketing, tourism, and other socio-economic benefits by reviewing the development of festivals as part of the urban cultural economy. Then, we discuss the impacts this has had on communities and neighbourhoods through changes in symbolic meanings as well as physical spaces. The paper concludes by examining the inherent tensions in the growth of festivals in cities and what a research agenda might look like for future work in this area.

The value of cultural festivals to the city

Cities have always been hubs for celebration and festivity, drawing people together to interact in ways that perhaps were not considered suitable outside of the festival space and time. Festivity most often referenced in relation to this is the carnival, as examined by Bakhtin in his seminal work, *Rabelais and His World* (1968); whereby, the carnivalesque was typified by the idea of the collective whole with no hierarchies and the 'world upside down', rebelling against social norms before the community made a sober return to normalcy after the temporary period of festivity (Stallybrass & White, 1986).

It is important to note that festivals, although cultural entities, also have social, economic, and political elements to them as well, and, indeed, in many regards, always have done so (Getz et al., 2017). For example, this can be seen in some of the UK's landmark urban cultural festivals. One of the most famous festivals in twentieth century British history was the 1951 Festival of Britain. A key purpose for this festival was to regenerate the derelict riverside and shipbuilding areas of London after the war. It also aimed to celebrate civic pride and reaffirm the values and beliefs associated with British way of life. This can be viewed as not merely a celebration over the national struggles to overcome the Nazis, but also a show of strength against the threat posed by the Cold War and conflict in Korea (Turner, 2011). These regenerative elements helped boost public morale by encouraging people to enjoy outdoor areas that they had not been able to go to during the curfew of the war. It also was to demonstrate both nationally and internationally the industrial progress and prowess of Britain at this time. The festival also contributed to the regeneration of a key destroyed area of London. New structures were built on the bombed out Southbank of London to house performances and exhibits. This transformation of the physical landscape of the capital from wartime to peacetime was seen as important for helping the nation to move forward (ibid).

Cultural festivals also have been adopted to aid in efforts involving urban redevelopment and changing attitudes towards place. This is especially true during the manufacturing decline in many British cities in the late twentieth century. Community arts and leisure entertainment were often utilized to help with wider regeneration plans to change people's perceptions of neglected areas. The 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival is an exemplar of this kind of festival, which set out to beautify the dockside with flowers and redevelop it with new infrastructure and buildings. Its goal was to bring people to engage with the docklands area to try to change perceptions of it for the better. The festival in Glasgow was one of a series of large-scale national garden events that was designed to transform derelict places around Britain (Gomez, 1998). This was done to help change perceptions about the city as a lively and safe place to live and visit. The Glasgow Garden Festival was not only influential in its host city, but also was replicated in surrounding cities seeking to improve conditions. It is still considered a model

example for urban festivals that want to achieve wider community engagement and regeneration objectives (Smith, 2012). As a result, Glasgow has developed a credible urban event strategy which arguable grew from the 1990 European Capital of Culture designation (Garcia, 2005) through to the 2014 Commonwealth Games (Foley et al, 2012).

Cities, particularly those emerging from their industrial glory and resultant decline, have sought to reposition and promote themselves on a global scale in order to create or maintain reputations as desirable destinations to live, work, and visit (Kearns & Philo, 1993; Quinn, 2019). However, more than the basics of safety, access, and public transportation are required to make a place appear desirable. The various uses of culture to achieve non-cultural goals include: place promotion, image restructuring, urban regeneration, employment opportunities, and economic development. In an increasingly competitive environment, cities seek to highlight that they are exciting places to visit and live, which often involves offering a myriad of cultural attractions and activities (Smith, 2012). Competition for the acquisition of internal investment needed for restructuring and regeneration now requires cultural events, and there is increasing competition to host these events in smaller towns across the UK, such as the introduction of the UK City of Culture scheme developed out of the success of Liverpool's 2008 designation as European Capital of Culture. Cities bidding for such events often see themselves as the 'underdog' (Cunningham & Platt, 2018) in need of investment but with strong cultural heritage which would draw tourism and boost local pride. It is worth noting that in the case of Derry/Londonderry in 2013, the designation had more locally specific driven ambitions about demonstrating reconciliation and intercultural dialogue (McDermott et al, 2016).

Cities in the UK are considered to be the main drivers of regional and economic growth (Miles & Paddington, 2005) and are viewed as important in the production system not only of goods, but of cultural outputs as well. They are the sites of both cutting-edge economic activity and distinctive cultural events. As Scott (2000) argued, the post-industrial economy has become reliant on the convergence of the economic geography of production and the cultural geography of place. The urban sector can be viewed as crucial for the successful production and consumption of cultural forms because of the sizeable audiences they can provide and the level of capital they can attract. Increasingly, cities around the world have become dependent on the cultural economy to stimulate development and reposition the city competitively. Along with becoming primary venues for cultural production, most cities have also become hubs for cultural consumption. The popularity of cultural forms and the revenue they began to generate and accumulate caused many urban officials at the turn of the twenty-first century to take notice and discover what the cultural economy could do for their cities. As

Zukin (1995, 2) suggested in the now seminal, *The Cultures of Cities*, “With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities: the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique competitive edge.” These types of solutions to urban problems have been criticized by academics as supporting “cappuccino urban politics, with plenty of froth” (Peck, 2005, 760). However, such “street-level cultural innovation” has been readily adapted by urban officials worldwide (Peck, 2005, 755). Additionally, this illustrates a change in how smaller events are being viewed. It once was the case where only mega sporting events were seen as desirable and worthy of investment for competitive bidding. This is no longer necessarily the case. More and more cities have been bidding for seemingly more manageable cultural festivals and events, such as European Capital of Culture and UK City of Culture, as they are perceived to offer better returns on investment and better media impressions, as opposed to unwieldy, expensive, and overly disruptive Olympic Games (Lenskyj, 2008)

Cultural festivals, then, can be seen to be a part of the toolkit of cultural forms being co-opted to achieve instrumental goals concerning place management, participation, and community economic development (Stevenson, 2004). Within this context, “festivals have taken on a new significance in the context of globalization. They are now construed as entrepreneurial displays, as image creators capable of attracting significant flows of increasingly mobile capital, people and services... They ally tourism objectives with urban planning” (Quinn, 2005, 931). For the most part, the social functions of festivals in contemporary society cannot necessarily be separated from their economic functions. This is not to say that they no longer have social properties. On the contrary, certain festivals can, and do, still have community-building and identity-forming elements, especially with regard to ethnic minority and marginalized communities (see Duffy et al, 2018), or contribute to cultural innovation (see Olsen, 2013). However, contemporary urban festivals, on the whole, are influenced by the fact that they are subject to production, marketing, and consumption systems and not just community-based social processes. As Debord (1994) argues, “The spectacle can be considered a commodity in contemporary society because of its ubiquitous production and rigorous marketing.... The spectacle is the chief product of present day society.” Most festivals are now part of layered marketing processes, especially through social media platforms such as Instagram, which is used to attract potential attendees for ‘lifestyle attainment’ by way of experiential consumption. Additionally, such promotional techniques are often utilized to market the host city in which the festivals occur as well to increase tourism through positive place image.

One of the roles of festivals in these new culture-oriented urban development strategies is to help make the city "appear as an innovative, exciting, creative and safe place to live or visit, to play and consume in" (Harvey, 1989, 9). In many respects, the symbolic nature of festivals in these cases is not to connect people with place, as was one of its traditional functions, but to represent a "dynamic community" to the outside world (ibid), where life is quite literally a cabaret. This 'theme parking' of the city (Sorkin, 1992) is well documented as part of discourses surrounding the Disneyization of society (Bryman, 2004) driven by consumption and the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), of which cultural festivals tend to perform a starring role (Foley et al, 2012; Waitt, 2008). Indeed, market-led solutions involving festivals are being employed as part of urban strategies to combat the complex challenges presented by deindustrialization, globalization, and associated economic restructuring (Harvey, 1989). As Peck and Tickell (2002, 393) articulate:

> The logic of interurban competition, then, turns cities into accomplices in their own subordination, a process driven - and legitimated - by tales of municipal turnaround and urban renaissance, by little victories and fleeting accomplishments, and ultimately also by the apparent paucity of "realistic" local alternatives. Thus, elite partnerships, mega-events, and corporate seduction become, in effect, both the only games in town and the basis of urban subjugation.

Yet, this is also why more contemporary festivals have a limited lifespan. There are more festivals than ever before; however, the paradox lies in their lack of originality. The saturation of festivals has led to increasing competition for scarce resources. For example, Finkel (2009) found that cultural festivals are increasingly more standardized and homogenized throughout the UK. She argues this is due to cities competing for people's attention and entertainment expenditure by trying to replicate known successful experiential formulas. Although those festivals which connect with people and places are more likely to be supported by engaged audiences and volunteers (Jordan, 2013), they are not guaranteed sustainable futures due to market forces. Finkel (2009, 3) argues, "The increasing serial replication of combined arts festivals throughout the UK could be detrimental to traditional local festivals as more contenders vie for resources, leading to a loss of place-based individuality for combined arts festivals and a uniformity of cultural forms presented." Another example of this is 'winter festivals', which have become ubiquitous in recent years, spreading carbon copies of commercialized cheer across the UK and Europe. As opposed to representing the holiday traditions and rituals of local communities, thus rooting festivity in place, many cities are 'parachuting' standardized winter festival components, e.g. Christmas markets, Santa's grotto, ticketed musical shows, into city parks and plazas (Yeoman et al, 2003). In creating what MacLeod (2004) calls 'the placeless festival', the lack of distinguishing local culture can be

seen to change the meaning of such events to be less about authentic celebration and more about competitive city marketing and consumer culture.

We have set out a snapshot in this section of how cultural festivals have been firmly embedded in expanding neoliberal city strategies, and the following section investigates this further with regard to external-facing approaches involving place management and development and the internal placemaking potentials of festivals.

Contribution of urban festivals place image, place-branding, and placemaking

Image promotion and place management objectives are closely tied to strategies to attract tourists. Tourism related services, such as travel, accommodation, restaurants, and shops, count on being beneficiaries of increased spending due to festivals and events. In the effort to transform perceptions of urban cultural festivals into more prestigious cultural holiday destinations desirable for annual visitation and longer breaks, event organizers and destination tourism offices work together to provide place-related promotional campaigns. Strategic bodies such as Event Scotland have emerged to drive growth of the event offer in regions and allow them to bid for more international and globally mediatized events. However, despite desires and discounts, Finkel (2009) found that the vast majority of UK cultural festivals are still not considered international or even national cultural tourist destinations. Most cultural festivals draw from the local community and realistically aim to widen their attendee radius to include more regional visitors or those who are visiting the city already and did not plan the trip specifically for the festival.

The Edinburgh Festivals are of the few UK cultural festivals that attract large numbers of international visitors on an annual basis (Chouguley et al, 2011; Naylor et al, 2016; EFF, 2018) and have contributed to the 'Festival City' place-brand. The thousands of tourists that flood the main streets of Edinburgh in the month of August are partially responsible for sustaining thousands of jobs across Scotland and creating a strong branded city image (Todd, 2015; Jamieson 2004; Quinn, 2010). During the festivals, the city spaces are transformed into an almost unrecognisable landscape filled with tourists and performers (Prentice and Andersen, 2003). However, many local residents view their city differently during the festival and resent the crowds, traffic congestion, crime, and other negatives that increased tourism can bring. This also has been exacerbated in recent years due to the controversies involved with AirBnB and limited accommodation and housing. The media has highlighted these issues as part of a wider ongoing process of over-tourism in European cities. Such international exposure has helped housing associations and local charities gain traction with challenges to the city council's policies in an effort to preserve the "conservation and enhancement of Edinburgh's

landscape and historic and architectural heritage" (Cockburn Association, n.d.). This also extends to environmental dimensions, such as the impacts of the festival on the state of land - recycling bins are no longer considered enough when grass, gardens, and roads are being decimated by festival infrastructure - and the use of public land for private means (see Smith, 2013; 2015; 2019). Emphasis on catering to tourists can often lead to the appropriation of public space to the detriment of locals. Crowded public spaces and transport may lead locals to feel a lack of control over their surroundings, which is crucial in considering a place to feel comfortable and like home. Locals, not visitors, can feel as if they are the excluded 'other' in their own spaces and in their own celebrations, leaving questions of who these events are actually for and who is permitted to participate (Waitt, 2008).

Despite their temporality, larger-scale festivals and major cultural events have been found to contribute to place-branding of destinations (Ashworth & Kavaratis, 2015; Herstein & Berger, 2014; Jago et al, 2004). However, there is a contestation between whether a festival helps contribute to the image or perception of a place or vice versa. Indeed, Davies (2016) found that the relationship between place and festival was highly relevant but co-dependent. For example, European Capital of Culture or UK City of Culture designations have had an impact of challenging perceptions of places (see Boland, 2010; Garcia, 2005; Platt, 2015). Additionally, even just bidding for the awards brings some positive outcomes (O'Brien & Wilson 2013). In 2017, Hull, an ex-industrial harbour town in the northeast, was awarded UK City of Culture. The city topped the leaderboard in the book, *Crap Towns*, in 2003, but, whilst official impact studies are only now emerging (and critical analysis of these likely to follow), it is reported that, "75% of those who visited Hull in 2017 stated that it changed their perception of the city for the better" (CPPI, 2018). It is worth stressing, as others have done so (Cox & O'Brien, 2012), that context is important, and this success in one city does not mean it can be replicated elsewhere by applying the same strategic model. In the case of the so-called 'Liverpool Model', using cultural events as policy planning was touted as transformative, but there is critique to be made on whether this was a coherent strategic approach or retrospectively applied (Connolly, 2013).

This link between place and festivals has received increasing attention, particularly in relation to the idea of 'placemaking' (see two recent special issues on the subject: Platt & Ali-Knight 2018; de Brito & Richards 2017). Placemaking is often understood to be a more democratic process whereby citizens are involved in the decision making (Strydom et al, 2018); however, placemaking too has become embedded in neoliberal place management strategies (Fincher et al, 2016; Shaw & Montana, 2016). Richards (2017) suggests that events are now being utilized in placemaking rather than in the wider marketing agenda of place branding. Yet, Platt

& Ali-Knight (2018) suggest that grassroots festivals are still salient in contributing to the way places are experienced and shaped by local people, from the bottom up. Festivals can even be employed to resist so-called top-down placemaking and thus become a site of resistance for communities under threat (Catanzaro & James, 2018). This is very much an example of Massey's (2012) progressive sense of place, whereby, contra to Auge's ideas of 'placelessness' or Harvey's time-space compression, places have specificity. Festivals here have the potential to be spaces where local identities are (re) negotiated over time and alternate versions of places can be projected in line with Turner's (1979) notion of the 'subjunctive mood'.

Furthermore, there are examples throughout history of the ways in which festivity does not just emerge from the top down, especially with regard to marginalized groups or subcultures, such as in relation to LGBTQ+ events (see for example Lamond, 2018). Most notably addressed in the literature within a UK context is the Notting Hill Carnival which has roots in the migration of Afro-Caribbeans to the Notting Hill Area of London in the early 1950s (Cohen, 1980; Jackson, 1988; Ferdinand & Williams, 2018; Ferris, 2013). Promised jobs and a better life, the migrants faced poor living conditions and racial discrimination, and carnival emerged as a direct response to the social situations of the time (Jackson, 1988). In many respects, the political undercurrents of Notting Hill Carnival continue to evolve in a similar way today, serving as an expression of identity and community activism in the face of commercialization and social control (Taylor & Kneafsy, 2016). This also can be seen most recently in responses at the event related to the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017, where attendees were encouraged to wear green in an act of protest and remembrance. Therefore, despite the general ubiquitous presence of carnivals and Pride events around the globe, they do have the potential to still be activated for purposes of resistance and political activism.

Not engaging with certain sections of the local community or impressing top-down cultural provision can have negative effects on how locals view and identify with the places where they live and can lead to place-faking (Courage, 2017) or art-washing communities (McLean, 2014). The risk is that the very component -- the cultural festival -- that was supposed to involve residents can have the opposite effect if locals feel they are not the main priority or target audience for the events. It can be seen as vital for the good of the local community and the continued existence of the cultural festival that "harmony is sought between the needs of the visitor, the place, and the host community" (Holden, 2016, 176). This includes making the locals feel they have ownership of the festival, either by actively participating in and/or co-creating the events. Also, it includes making the spaces of the festival accessible and inclusive for local people. Smith (2013; 2015; 2019) has found that public parks throughout the UK and

predominantly in London are increasingly becoming privatized by councils in an effort to animate areas and fundraise by leveraging ticketed events. He links the festivalization of cities with expanding restricted access to public spaces, which are being threatened by commercialization, privatization, and securitization. Yet, transforming public parks into private event venues, and, thus, integrating them into the tourism economy, does not have to be inherently negative given the amount of income and publicity that can be generated. Smith (2019) argues that there are three key ways to improve this practice for local communities: 1) limit the amount of park space and number of days that major events are allowed to occupy; 2) involve park users in decision making; and, 3) have greater transparency about how income from events is spent.

Moreover, festivals and processes of festivalization need not always be viewed with a critical judgement. The development of the festival landscape in contemporary times can be evidence of an evolution of cultural consumption and production (Giorgi & Sassatelli, 2011; Négrier, 2015). Further, festivals provide sites of wonder and conviviality which Edensor & Sumartojo (2018) contest that festivals allow locals to view place in new ways and to reconnect through defamiliarization and refamiliarization with their locality. Indeed, the argument that festivals are merely temporary interventions in places (that may or may not be parachuted in) has been challenged, with Edensor (2019) suggesting that the everyday experience of places contribute to the temporary festival experience. Indeed, annual festivals, in particular at a grassroots level are embedded in the everyday lives of those who take part year on year through cycles of preparation and anticipation (Platt & Medway, 2020). Here, the everyday is evidently still salient in processes related to the creative city narratives that emerge in towns and cities around the globe (Evans, 2010). However the central question that remains is, who is the festival *by* and *for?*

Conclusions

In the past few decades, cultural festivals have been adopted as an important part of urban strategies. Events have had an impact on urban life due to their widespread adoption by cities seeking to leverage them for instrumental benefits. This has led to an increase in interest in them within urban geography discourses and applying a geographic lens to their study in terms of how they have an impact on people and places and function alongside the everyday life of our cities and towns. However, the growth of festivals has created tensions in some cities, especially in the UK, due to the emphasis on economic rather than social aspects. As with major sporting events, larger cultural festivals require legacy planning in order to be inclusive and meaningful for local communities (Cunningham & Platt, 2018). The relationship between cities and cultural festivals can be one of mutual benefits if planned well. However, to date,

the agenda on inclusion and alienation identified by Waitt in this journal in 2008 still remains, and, therefore, more work needs to be undertaken to develop a more critical view of festivals beyond economic impacts and outcomes.

With the cross-fertilisation of critical event studies with urban geography, there is scope for more entangled work in this area beyond case studies of particular cities and particular festivals with particular practices. Future research agendas focusing on environmental impacts of festivals and events on urban spaces could be helpful for councils, urban planners, and event managers to create more responsible city-wide experiences. This could focus upon changes in physical infrastructure as well as outcomes on community accessibility and wellbeing. The issues of over-tourism, crowding, and limited housing also would benefit from further empirical exploration, especially with regard to the growth in experience and peer-to-peer economies. Providing joined-up evidence-based models of best practices and lessons learned would be helpful for easing the possible tensions of festivals in the city for multiple stakeholders. By examining the macro-trends in urban policy and planning, and framing research in festival spaces, wide-ranging social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental implications can be drawn out and critically analysed. Also, future research based on more innovative approaches that are emerging in urban geography, such as mobile methods, creative methods, and/or visual and digital methods, could be helpful in advancing understanding of the impacts of festivals on people and places in neoliberal and, increasingly, 'smart' cities. As the evolving vision of the global urban landscape embraces festivity, there is a need for more rigorous evidence of the impacts and outcomes of cultural festivals in cities in order to develop models of best practice and inclusive design.

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Louise is a Senior Lecturer in Festival and Events at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research interests predominantly lie in the role of festivity in places. Her current work examines the processional form in the urban context with a particular focus on historical religious processions in the northwest of England. She has an interest in place-based festivity and their role in shaping, but also problematising, placemaking. This is manifested in both academic work and in advocating for these community events through her fellowship of the Institute of Place Management. Much of Louise's work is interdisciplinary in nature drawing on performance theory, architecture, philosophy and cultural geography. She is on the executive committee of the Leisure Studies Association and editorial board of *Leisure Studies* journal.