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Changing festival places: insights from Galway

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Introduction

Contemporary conceptualisations of place are marked by a growing alertness to the importance of the inter-connections that exist between individual places. Massey's (1991) global sense of place, for example, construes places as permeable spaces where elements of distinctiveness are generated not only through the particular constellation of social and cultural relations within a place but additionally through the interchanges and relationships produced with other places. Tilley's view that 'geographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence' (1994: 15) expresses a similar position. These positions are closely related to Hannerz's (undated, quoted in Clifford 1988:16) argument that globalisation reproduces new diversities that are based relatively less on autonomy and more on inter-relations between places. Thus, current discussions about the make-up of place are very concerned with the edges, interconnections and exchanges between places, and between differing geographic spheres.

This paper explores how cultural reproduction in arts festival settings is shaped by the interconnections and inter-relationships that underpin the make-up of place. It begins by conceptualising festival settings as places whose characters derive from a combination of both internally derived traits and a diverse series of inter-actions and inter-relationships forged with other places. Drawing on case study research conducted in an arts festival setting in the Republic of Ireland, the discussion then moves to identify how elements indigenous to the place connect and engage with external forces. The meanings and outcomes produced as a result of these interaction processes are then

examined. The paper begins with a discussion of key themes in the literature on festivals.

Recent debates in the festival literature

Festivals are of interest to geographers because they constitute one of many practices that humans have evolved in the process of making homes and carving out identities for themselves. Festivals have received increasing attention from geographers since the late 1980s (Jackson 1988, Marston 1989, Smith 1996, Jarvis 1994, Aldskogius 1993, Willems-Braun 1994, Lewis and Pile 1996, Guichard-Anguis 1997, Ragaz 1997, Waterman 1998a and 1998b, De Bres and Davies 2001). There are several reasons as to why the festival has moved up the geographical agenda. One is simply that in recent times festivals are being created and revived on an unprecedented scale (Manning 1983). This revival is associated with the integrationist tendencies of the global economy that encourage places to recreate and reproduce themselves with the sole intention of attracting flows of capital. In what Lash and Urry (1993) have coined the 'economy of signs', places become packaged for consumption, and cultural forms commodified as, for example, decaying inner city districts are turned into 'cultural quarters' and the arts take on new significance as 'cultural industries', capable of creating employment and generating profits. Reproducing places as 'festival places' has undoubtedly become one popular strategy in this place-selling process.

Yet, the processes of change depicted above do not constitute anything radically new for festivals. To an extent, what is at issue is an intensification of processes already active.

For a long time festivals have been understood to be cultural expressions of people living in particular places, but in addition, they have always had an overt outward orientation which sees communities of people generate cultural meanings expressly to be read by the outside world. Furthermore, their very existence has always been premised on movement, interaction and the exchange of people, ideas and money, both as flows circulating within the festival landscape itself and between the festival site and elsewhere. Equally, the cultural meanings produced at the festival site have always displayed the influence of forces prevailing both locally and in other geographic spheres. Thus, while they are located in specific places, festivals have always been meeting points. Using Hannerz' (1988) term, 'interrelations' rather than 'autonomy of place', has been their defining criterion.

These festival traits generate a series of interesting and complex geographic questions. If festival settings represent forums through which extra-local interactions are forged, what and who are the formative forces shaping the reproduction of culture? Can place retain its position at the heart of the festival, and precisely how does a particular constellation of internal / external linkages emerge over time? These are important questions for geographers because festivals constitute a vehicle for expressing the close relationship between identity and place. Ekman (1999), writing in a Swedish context, for example, described festivals as occasions for expressing collective belonging to a group or a place. In creating opportunities for drawing on shared histories, shared cultural practices and ideals, as well as creating settings for social interactions, festivals engender local continuity. They are arenas where local knowledge is produced and

reproduced, where the history, cultural inheritance and social structures that distinguish one place from another, are revised, rejected or recreated. To borrow Geertz's (1993) terminology, they are an example of a 'cultural text', one of the many ensembles of texts that comprise a people's culture. Interrogating festival settings yields insights into how a people's sense of their own identity is closely bound up with their attachment to place. The arts festival setting, specifically, has allowed geographers (Willems-Braun 1994; Waterman 1988a, 1998b) to explore how people connect with their place and with other people through their arts practices.

In the wider social sciences literature on festivals, a strong emphasis is placed on the role that festivals play in promoting social cohesion and reproducing social relations. Bahktin's (1984) interpretation of carnival as a form of resistence where people are given the freedom to turn the world upside down, to escape from the routine and structures imposed by society, in a time that is diametrically opposed to ordinary time, is much cited. The release offered is but temporary, however, and as Eagleton (1981), Hughes (1999), Ravenscroft and Matteucci (2003) and others have pointed out, the liberation apparent therein is illusory, with festivities being socially sanctioned affairs designed to allow people 'let off steam' while safeguarding societal interest in the long-term. This interpretation puts festivals 'firmly within the sphere of social regulation and control' (Ravenscroft and Mateucci 2003: 2) and so refutes the suggestion that they might hold any potential for resisting social norms or relations. However, at the micro level, much of the literature on festivals is strongly alert to the idea that there is very little that is natural or spontaneous about festivals. A key contribution of the literature

has been to use festival practices to demonstrate how human populations are culturally and socially structured such that access to power is a constant source of struggle. Festivals are sites where certain individuals and groups promote particular sets of values, attach specific meanings to place and attempt, with varying degrees of success, to reproduce hegemonic meanings (Jackson 1988, Marston 1988, Smith 1996). The import of decisions taken in festival sites, as elsewhere, varies greatly depending on who makes the decisions, whose interests are best served, and who stands to gain or lose in the process. The reproduction of difference does not proceed unproblematically and the meanings and practices reproduced in festival settings are usually resisted and negotiated by those who don't automatically understand or accept them (Green 2002, Quinn 2003).

This line of enquiry is evident in the small body of literature specifically devoted to arts festivals. Festivals are never 'impromptu or improvised events, and arts festivals in particular, are never spontaneous' (Waterman 1998a: 59). Fashioning festivals from within the locale are powerful human agents such as artistic directors who provide the inspiration for the style of cultural production at issue and are responsible for engaging artists and developing audiences. However, the freedom of human agents to manipulate the festival production process according to their own agenda is at all times constrained and modified by social structures and competing forms of agency. Beyond the festival organisation, in and beyond the festival place, key influences such as gatekeeping institutions (e.g. sponsors, public authorities, government agencies, the media) promote the acceptability of particular norms, greatly affecting the advancement of particular

artistic ideas and initiatives and influence the unfolding festival landscape. Waterman (1998a), for example, has noted how 'managers' have come to challenge the authority of artistic directors in steering the course of arts festivals, while Quinn (1996) has written about the constraints that commercial sponsorship can place on the artistic policies of arts festivals.

In the closely related work on carnivals and public rituals, questions about culture, authenticity and commodification predominate. Philips (1998) has written about the carnivalesque becoming increasingly commodified through contact with outsiders. The relationship between the festival and tourist markets is the most critical one here. Ravenscroft and Mateucci (2003: 4) argue that it is the very presence of outsiders that 'shifts the construct of the festival from celebration to spectacle, from production to consumption'. In this interpretation, tourists in their role as consumers are held responsible for eroding the ritual and promoting the spectacle dimensions of festival. Local people, meanwhile, can become disempowered, as the social functions of the festival discussed above become superceded by economic prerogatives (Philips 1998). One of the most widely cited pieces of research pursuing this line of argument is Greenwood's (1989) study of the Alarde in Fuenterrabia, Spain. Drawing on Marx, his work represents a devastating critique of the commodification of a village's public ritual which concluded that public intervention to develop the festival's tourism potential resulted in the performance becoming 'a performance for money'. (1989: 178). In a similar vein, Crain (1996) concluded that tourism development promoted 'massification', commercialisation and privatisation processes at a Spanish place of

pilgrimage, alienating villagers from their traditional Pentecost rituals. Meanwhile Sampath (1997), writing about the Trinidad carnival, has argued that tourism development may be deleterious to artistic freedom and to the distinctiveness that underpins the carnival's tourism appeal.

More recently, however, some analyses have become more nuanced, suggesting that festivals and public rituals have always absorbed outside influences (Green 2002) and thus have been continuously reproduced through a combination of internal and external factors and interactions. This latter line of thinking facilitates movement away from the polarised stances that either 'embrace the rhetoric of the global market or romanticize resistance against a global hegemonic order' (Shepherd, 2002: 196). It reflects a growing awareness that local factors and agencies play an important role in mediating global forces (Oakes 1993). It equally acknowledges that globalised phenomena such as tourism are interpreted best as transaction processes that incorporate the exogeneous forces of global markets and multinational corporations as well as the endogenous powers of local residents, elites and entrepreneurs (Chang et al. 1996, Milne 1988) However, to date, there has been little attempt to explore how the interweaving of exogenous and endogenous forces might combine to shape the reproduction of festivals in particular places. The empirically grounded discussion that follows attempts to redress this situation.

Methods and context

Arts festivals in Ireland have traditionally flourished wherever committed enthusiasts have acted to meet a locally-felt artistic need. They have tended to emerge as bottom-up enterprises, small in size, local in scale and thoroughly dependent on volunteers. There is nothing uniquely Irish about this. Such traits have been ascribed to arts festivals elsewhere in Western Europe (Rolfe 1992, Waterman, 1998a). This paper reports on a study of one such festival, the Galway Arts Festival, established in 1978. One of the oldest and most successful combined arts festivals in Ireland, it sets standards towards which a majority of combined arts festivals in Ireland aspire. Key research questions addressed in the broader study from which article draws, concern the changing nature of relationships linking the arts festival with its place and local population over time. The research methodology employed a combination of approaches within a framework that was predominantly qualitative in design. The findings reported here draw mainly on: an analysis of Arts Council of Ireland archival material pertaining to the festival (including written communications, press releases, programmes, policy statements and funding decisions); semi-structured interviews with 'key informants' involved in the festival organisation and in the arts scene in Galway; and questionnaire surveys, containing both closed and open-ended questions, administered to local people in public spaces in Galway (N=138) during the 1996 festival.

The case of the Galway Arts Festival

Galway, (population 57,241 in 1996, 65,774 in 2002 (Census of Ireland 2002)), is located on the mid-west coast. Capital of the western region and long depicted as a repository of Gaelic culture, the city has experienced rapid economic and demographic

expansion since the late 1960s. The establishment of the Galway Arts Festival in 1978 was part of a growing swell of artistic activity in the city and was initiated by a group of students from University College Galway. Its key founding figure was Ollie Jennings, who, upon leaving college in 1977, established links with local people working on a community radio project and formed the Galway Arts Group. The festival was established in the following year with an Arts Council grant of 1,270 euro and over the ensuing years it has pioneered developments with respect to broadening public engagement with the arts. It now runs for some 14 days during the last two weeks of July and attracts audiences in the region of 100,000 to both free and fee-paying events.

The Galway Arts Festival could be described as what Degreef (1994: 18) has termed an 'artistically responsible festival' in that it emerged in response to specific artistic needs genuinely felt within its place. Its founders were concerned to make the arts an integral part of the city's landscapes and lifestyles. They tried to engage as many local people as possible in creating, performing and experiencing the arts by minimizing ticket prices and by developing programmes that were radical in the content and production, and imaginative in their use of space. The emphasis was on the locale. Artists from Galway and the Western region dominated festival programmes, and images of Western landscapes dominated the visual exhibitions. There was nothing parochial about this venture. Their ideas were very much in tune with prevailing Western European cultural developments and were manifest in decisions to stage literary theatre on the stage alongside visual theatre on the streets, art exhibitions in warehouses and in vacant retail lots, concerts in tents and poetry readings in community halls. Gradually, Galwegians

responded to the festival's efforts and over time, the festival became a catalytic figure in the development of infrastructures, initiatives and supports for the year-round arts in the city. In 2003, its mission is to continue to challenge the informed and enthusiastic year-round audience for the arts that has developed, and to develop new and broader audiences (Galway Arts Festival 2003).

Local - extra-local connections in the festival site

From the beginning, the festival organization was innovative, drawing internationally prevailing cultural paradigms into the local domain in ways that gradually were to influence the arts practices and policies emerging within the country at large. In the beliefs and values they expressed and in the practices that they adopted, the organisers acted as critical conduits controlling how the world became drawn into the local place. In a national context, the organization's geographical location and the unconventional ideological nature of its artistic policies promoted a relatively isolated existence. Its non-elite social origins and the fact that it was seeking to challenge the prevailing status quo whereby culture was by definition understood to mean 'high' culture were further factors. In addition, it was seeking to assert the creativity of the Western region in a highly centralized country at a time when state involvement and support was overwhelmingly focused on the East coast capital city. It was, for instance, only the second arts event located West of the River Shannon to ever attract state funding, and it was 10 years before the Galway festival featured in an editorial in *The Irish Times,* a leading national newspaper. This contrasts sharply with the history of other more 'high brow' festivals, like the Wexford Festival Opera, which featured in an *Irish Times*

editorial in its first year (1951). The endeavours of the Galway Arts Festival were thus little understood and consequently relatively ignored by national institutions for the best part of a decade. With the exception of its relationship with the Arts Council,[1] its networking was confined to encouraging support for the festival within the local sphere. At no point did the festival seek to promote itself through association with powerful patrons and it was a decade before it launched a sponsorship campaign. Its focus was on developing audiences and engaging artists, and for almost a decade it did this while attracting relatively little national attention from outside the region.

Throughout this early period, it was, however, developing links and associations with international arts organizations and introducing artists, artistic ideas and practices that were new to Ireland. The underlying priority was always to engage international artists to stimulate local creativity, but in no sense was the former to take precedence over the latter. For example, the first international artist engaged by the Galway Arts Festival was an internationally renowned Galway musician whose career was by then based in the USA. The most outstanding example of how the Galway Arts Festival effectively drew external artistic influences into the city to foster local artistic production has been in the area of street theatre. In the early years, the festival engaged foreign companies, most notably the British company Footsbarn and the Spanish Els Comediants to introduce festival audiences to what was, in the Irish context, a new artistic experience. By 1986 it was in a position to set up its own street theatre company, Macnas, specifically hoping that it would emulate the success of visiting theatre groups. In the period since its foundation, the extremely successful Macnas has greatly outgrown its

[1] It was upon receipt of grant aid to the value of £IR 1000 that the founders launched the festival in 1978.

sponsoring festival company in terms of gross turnover and employment and has deeply embedded itself in the artistic life of the city. Simultaneously, Macnas has used EU funding to deliver a series of arts education and training programmes to professional community arts groups and theatre companies. This has resulted in its influence spreading throughout the island of Ireland. Its influence on Dublin's annual St Patrick's Festival, the largest festival in the country, for example, is obvious. Most of the indigenous street theatre companies involved here have formative associations with Macnas. Thus, Macnas is an example of a locally-based organisation absorbing international street theatre practices and re-inventing them through a series of local resources (celtic-inspired storylines and costume designs, actors, designers, funds, etc.) to effectively create a new tradition of street theatre which has since spread its influence outwards across the national arena.

This circuitous interaction between local – international – national spheres has been a key dynamic propelling the Galway Arts Festival forward. A fundamental objective for the festival organizers was to promote local knowledge, foster creativity and develop locally derived ideas, artists and audiences. Contemporary European thinking about democratizing the arts hugely inspired this cultural ethos. In 1978, the notion of the combined arts event was relatively new, not only in Ireland but in Europe as well. The 1970s was a time when continental countries experimented with new combinations of art forms, and with the traditional relationships between artist and audience, between the arts and ordinary life and between art and space. While the Galway Arts Festival was not the first to introduce the combined arts festival into Ireland (ventures in

Kilkenny in 1974 and in Westport 1976 both precede it), it was the first to re-think these relationships. As it did so, it paved the way for other arts organizations and influenced the policy-making Arts Council. In 1985, for example, the Arts Council's stated aim was 'to seek out the study of perfection which is the true aim of culture' and within this aim, 'to widen our horizons in order that we may bring the arts to every citizen'. In statements like this resound echoes of what the Galway Arts Festival had been saying since its inception: 'the festival (will) be as accessible to as wide a number of people as possible. This populist approach will in no way diminish the quality or excellence of the events' (Galway Arts Festival submission to the Arts Council for Funding, 1983).

The process of drawing on external expertise and creativity, recreating it in the local arena and influencing national developments has resonance in terms of technical production too. A key recurring difficulty facing the Galway Arts Festival until the opening of two new performance spaces in 1995 -1996 was a huge venue deficit. In 1978, when the festival began, there were only three dedicated arts spaces in the city. In consequence, the festival led what could be described as a nomadic existence, staging its performances and exhibitions in a diverse and constantly changing series of venues that included vacant retail lots, disused warehouses, abandoned garages and tents, as well as community halls and public spaces. This had many implications for the festival. Space became a powerful and integral element in its campaign to politicize the arts, to break down barriers to public engagement and to enable participation in the arts. However, in practical terms, it created an urgent need to acquire expertise in staging and producing performances. Thus, from very early on, the festival had to be innovative in

transforming technically unsuitable buildings into performance/exhibition spaces. It gradually amassed a core of initially inexperienced volunteers to overcome the acoustic, lighting and accommodation constraints involved in transforming these buildings and in adapting outdoor spaces. Much of this voluntary experience has become professionalised over time and several production specialists based in Galway now work year-round staging and servicing productions at large scale events elsewhere throughout the country. The current production manager of the largest festival in the country, the Dublin-based St Patrick's Festival, for example, began working voluntarily for the Galway Arts Festival parade while a student in the city. Thus, the Galway Arts Festival can be interpreted as a local organisation interpreting and developing local resources through international lenses, and gradually influencing national developments in the process.

Evolution and change

The festival began as an amateur organization, dependent on voluntary energies and minimal financial resources. Since the late 1980s, however, it has evolved in a manner that broadly typifies Hyde and Lovelock's (1980) conceptualization of evolving arts organizations. It has professionalised its operations, institutionalized its management structures, broadened its market segments and become more commercial in its thinking. Change has engendered tensions, and the festival has struggled to maintain both its individuality and its creativity in the face of increasing pressures to commodify. While the festival's early development was very attuned to prevailing international thinking about the arts, the first ten years of its existence were relatively isolated in the sense that

it clearly controlled its own artistic development. Since the early 1990s, this has been no longer the case, as the festival organization has had increasingly to manage gatekeepers' expectations of what its roles and responsibilities should be. It has faced criticism in the national press, for example, for continuing to programme local artists in a festival of international standing. It has also had to balance pressure from the state tourism agency to develop its tourism audiences, with the Galway public's sense of ownership of the festival. Clearly, the balance between artistic and economic priorities has begun to shift. Prior to 1994, the organization could claim that: 'the artistic goals and business goals are not balanced…. Its quite clear that the business is clearly subordinate to artistic … the artistic director is the overall director of the festival …it's her prerogative over anything related to ticket sales, sponsors, council funding or whatever – very, very clear' (Festival Chairman quoted in Kenny 1991: 79). As the 1990s wore on, such claims increasingly lacked conviction and while the festival continues to advocate policies that are underpinned by socio-political intent, its ability to translate its principles into practice lost momentum.

The pressure to become more commercially astute is very strong, given the economic realities that arts organizations must face, yet this sits uneasily with the Galway Arts Festival's long-standing commitment to promoting access to the arts. The over-riding difficulty now is that increasingly, the organisation's actions conflict with the aims it espouses. Since the late 1980s there has been a struggle to balance emerging commercial priorities with the festival's core objectives of permeating every level of society and attracting the participation of the city's citizens irrespective of their age or

cultural ambitions (Galway Arts Group 1982). The season ticket scheme, for example, had been abandoned by the mid 1990s because it was failing to maximize potential revenue. Similarly, and very controversially from a local perspective, the festival's policy on concessions (i.e. reduced cost tickets for the unemployed, students and old age pensioners) is now shaped more by commercial priorities than by a desire to minimize the elitism associated with the arts. These developments have not been lost on the local population. The local population survey (N=138) found local engagement with the festival in terms of attending events and volunteering to be very significant. Some 53 per cent of respondents had attended an event during the 1996 festival, and 80% claimed to have attended at some point in the past, with 60% claiming to attend either 'every' or 'most' years. In terms of voluntary engagement, 4.3 per cent claimed an active engagement, while 6.5 per cent had been involved in the past. However, respondents' comments showed an awareness that the festival's identity as a festival for the people of Galway has begun to weaken. Repeatedly, they cautioned against the changes associated with the organisation's transformation from amateur to professional status: 'the festival must be kept as it used to be, meeting the needs of ordinary Galwegians', 'it must maintain its identity, it needs to be careful about this, shouldn't go too alternative'. Significantly, comparisions were drawn between the festival and Macnas. 'Macnas is "the" thing, still open to ordinary people. It's the elitist stuff that's going wrong, not for the people'. 'The festival has become very professional, very arty, it has killed something. Macnas is the only group that has maintained its amateur status'. These comments were made in spite of the fact that by 1996, Macnas had significantly overtaken the festival organization in terms of size, turnover and number

of employees. One respondent's comment provided a summary: the festival 'has become more professional but less accessible'. Local perceptions of growing inaccessibility derived from the difficulties encountered in viewing the parade comfortably, the prohibitive cost of tickets, the dilution of concessions and the content of the arts programme itself.

Undoubtedly, the emergence of tourist audiences has been a significant factor in the transformations apparent in the respondents' comments. The Irish tourism industry experienced unprecedented expansion during the 1990s and in the Western region, annual international tourist arrivals grew from 361,000 in 1988 to 2,354 million in 2002 (Bord Fáilte 2003). Galway city was receiving 1 million visitors annually by the mid 1990s. Inevitably, the rapid expansion of tourism demand in the area impacted upon the arts festival. Prior to 1988, audiences had been almost wholly local or regional in origin but in the late 1980s, this began to change. Initially, the audience profile began changing without any specific marketing efforts, but by 1991, the festival organisation had recognised the latent potential that the tourist flows attracted by Galway city represented and began to market the festival accordingly. By 1994, 40% of audiences were tourists. Twenty five per cent were domestic in origin (coming from outside of Galway city and county), 3% were from Northern Ireland and 12% from overseas (Envision Marketing Ltd.,1994). The expansion of tourist audiences increased throughout the 1990s and by 2000, 22% of audiences originated overseas.

For the arts festival organisation, developing tourist audiences appeared to be a sound economic strategy, but there was, in fact, little appreciation of the conflict that could arise with respect to its actual objectives. As tourist audiences have increased over the course of the 1990s, the sense of ownership that city residents have traditionally felt with regard to the festival has become threatened and they now show signs of being dissatisfied. The 1996 survey found that, for example, 10.1% of the local respondents surveyed don't like being in the city during the festival, and that 21.1% had some complaint to make about visiting audiences. In addition, only 45% of the sample thought that the festival was improving. The fact that the festival takes place at the height of the tourist season at a time when the city is already experiencing tourist saturation does little to facilitate local acquiescence to changing circumstances. It also limits the economic benefits that the festival can generate (and which 9% of the sample personally experience) because capacity sales in the city's hospitality and tourism-related retail sectors are already at or near saturation point.

For its part, the Galway Arts Festival organisation is well aware that powerful business elites and tourism agents would have it identified primarily as a tourist attraction (McGrath 1997) but remains adamant that meeting local needs is the priority. The city's Chamber of Commerce, for example, has long wanted to move the festival to an off-peak/shoulder season in order to optimise tourism benefits (Feeney 1996). However, the arts festival has rejected this proposal consistently because it runs counter to the aim of attracting extensive local participation. Similar tensions exist between the festival and the state tourism authority. In an address delivered at the opening of the 1997 festival,

the international marketing manager of the state's tourism board highlighted the festival's latent tourism potential. His comments generated an adverse reaction in the local press and elicited a swift response from the festival organisation reassuring local people that while tourists were welcome, the festival would continue to prioritise local audience needs.

Thus, the festival's growing appeal for non-local audiences has created tensions that the festival organisation struggles to deal with. Moreover, the city's changing tourism profile is but one element of change. Galway was identified as one of Europe's fastest growing towns in the 1990s. Thus the city, its economy, its people and indeed its arts scene, have all moved on since the late 1970s when the first Galway Arts Festival was launched. In order to remain what Degreef (1994 : 18) has termed an 'artistically responsible festival', responsible to the artistic needs of its place, the festival has had to develop in tandem with the changing needs of the place and to find ways of accommodating its changing resident and visitor communities. A key element underpinning the festival's success has been its willingness to embrace change, as manifest through expanding and developing its programme, extending the duration of the festival, campaigning for improvements to the city's venue infrastructure, collaborating with arts and theatre companies that produce outputs on a year-round basis and establishing a number of festivals that serve different interest groups and operate at different times of the year. (These include a film festival, established in 1989, a junior film festival, established in 1995, and a children's arts festival, established in 1997). In all of its efforts, the festival organisation has to manage increasingly diverse

expectations from a growing consortium of stakeholders (local audience segments, visiting audiences, sponsors, tourism authorities, arts critics, the Arts Council, etc.).

Concluding comments – negotiation and adaptation

Undoubtedly, the forces shaping cultural production in arts festival sites are becoming more complex and more spatially diverse in their origin. As the findings of this case study have shown, the process of interacting with other places can act as a means of releasing the potential innately held within an individual place. Equally, there are moments when external forces can appear to overwhelm, when the urge to promote the spectacle threatens to weaken the festival's ability to engender local engagement with place. At these moments the contested nature of cultural reproduction in festival settings (Jackson 1988, Smith 1996) becomes evident. Festival organizers' agenda can conflict with the motives of other powerful gatekeepers like sponsors, tourism organizations, business associations, either within or beyond the festival place. In the Galway case, the internationalization of the festival has been balanced by the organisers' determined efforts to sustain the promotion of local identity through the arts. Its ticket distribution mechanisms accommodate credit card holders and internet users (thus facilitating the growth of spatially-disparate audiences), yet it specifically promotes postal booking, states in its booking material that credit cards are not necessary and offers a 'walk-in' box office for local residents. Similarly, it continues to signal commitment to local culture by using the Irish language in its booking material and programmes. Meanwhile, local artists, stories and images continue to have a strong presence, although in

proportional terms, the presence of local, *vis a vis* international, artists has diminished over time.

Similarly, evolution over time brings festivals into contact with such forces as policy-makers, audiences, critics, tourism interests, and sponsors. These interactions create new sorts of demands which festival organizations must negotiate and work into their own set of cultural ideals. What emerged clearly in this research was the importance of local context in negotiating the potentially homogenizing forces of globalisation. Place was a very formative force shaping the tenor and ambition of the festival. The key local actors conceived of a festival that would develop through a series of exchanges and inter-relationships between the locale and wider geographic arenas. Thus, while the locale itself determined the artistic needs and the socio-political aims underpinning the agenda, the legitimacy and support gained through alliances with external gatekeepers, such as the Arts Council of Ireland, and foreign theatre companies was critical in enabling local creativity and innovativeness to flourish. Hence, the true ambition and the coherency of the process only became fully apparent when viewed in international, rather than in purely local or regional contexts.

As such, these findings unequivocally support Massey's argument that places are 'constructed out of the juxtaposition, the intersection, the articulation of multiple social relations' (1991, 18), relations that evolve continuously through inter-place connections. More specifically, the interactions between local actors, local resources and the locale itself on the one hand, and gatekeepers operating at the national level in the guise of the

Arts Council, the state tourism agency, the national press, as well as more international processes including the internationalisation of Ireland as a tourism destination, on the other, produced a series of unique outcomes. The Galway Arts Festival could not have evolved and developed in the form that it did anywhere else. The celebration of the indigenous, the concern to promote the city's identity through involving local people in the arts, combined with an openness to embrace changes emanating from the outside created a festival that has been reproducing what have become internationally popular local traditions for the last 25 years. On this basis, the article supports the general conclusion favoured by many geographers (e.g. Massey 1991, 1996, Thrift 1997) that the outcome of local-global interaction is a continuous emergence of new, recreated and hybrid forms of difference.

In recent interpretations of difference, it has been popular to conceive of festivals as having demonstrated a shift from production to consumption and from ritual to spectacle (Philips 1998, Ravenscroft and Mateucci 2003). However, the ritual nature of festivals has had a spectacular dimension for a long time, and the tourist gaze (Urry 1990) has been long implicit in the reproduction processes operating in festival settings. Green (2003) has elaborated this point clearly in respect of carnival practices in Trinidad. A basic point made by Green, and one reiterated here, is that outside influences have always been a part of carnival, with much borrowing, adaptation and re-invention of traditions implicit over time. Thus, while festivals engender local continuity by offering opportunities to celebrate local identity and to connect with place (Ekman 1999), both the local continuity and the festivals in question constitute an

evolving set of cultural practises. As the Galway case demonstrates, this evolution process is partially informed by the introduction of externally sourced traditions, and by their subsequent re-invention through local lenses.

By extension, the perceived loss of authenticity often ascribed to contemporary festivals and carnivals may be attributable indeed, to what Green (2003) has termed 'academic nostalgia' for a supposedly purer form of carnival that in reality, never actually existed. Tourism is frequently identified in the literature as the main culprit. Seen to operate as a placeless global force, it is interpreted as despoiling rituals and diluting their social meanings irrespective of local conditions. While much apparent evidence to support this assertion can be found in the tourism literature on both rituals and other cultural practices (Boissevain 1992, Crain 1996), insufficient attention has been paid to how tourism development can, in fact, be driven and shaped by actors, initiatives and forces based in local contexts. Authors including Oakes 1993, Chang et al. 1996, and Milne 1998 have strongly argued that tourism functions as a transaction process involving both global processes and a series of locally-based mediating forces. Tourism flows do not circulate the globe in abstracted, unconnected ways. They arise from a convergence of interactions and are rooted in, as well as routed through, multiple places and different spatial spheres. In the Galway case, the festival's evolution as a tourist attraction has been inextricably intertwined with the city's evolution as a tourist destination. The festival organisation gradually identified the tourist flows coming into the city as latent festival demand and over time took actions to exploit this demand. Thus, while some local people bemoan the fact that the festival is becoming less accessible to them, the

fact is that this situation stems from the locally-based festival organisation's decision to adapt to a changing market place.

Adaptation is not an easy process. The study's findings contained a clear sense that the festival's growing commercialism is problematic for local people. Increasing professionalism and the growing stature of the festival both as commercial enterprise and as tourist attraction underpinned a perception that the festival is becoming increasingly inaccessible. For its part, the festival organisation remains actively committed to serving local needs, but the city's rapidly changing social and economic contexts mean that both production and consumption contexts have changed. Developments in the city's cultural infrastructure, partially achieved through the efforts of the festival, have facilitated a more commercial approach to arts production, for example. Meanwhile the city's rapidly growing population, in both residential and tourist terms, is creating an unprecedented breadth and diversity of artistic needs. Advancing its longstanding ambitions of developing inclusive and accessible approaches to the arts and encouraging local creativity through the new contexts facilitated by *inter alia* increased sponsorship, the availability of purpose-built venues and new ticket distribution mechanisms has been a process of adaptation and negotiation. Some local dissatisfaction came through in the survey findings, but overall, local engagement with the festival remains very significant. The festival organisation's efforts to adapt its cultural ideals to these changing contexts have enjoyed varying degrees of success. Some initiatives, like the outdoor pop music events introduced in the mid 1990s, (and subsequently abandoned) while commercially successful, were

problematic overall because they were insufficiently adapted to meet festival objectives and poorly integrated into local consumption contexts. The introduction of several other art-form specific festivals, at different periods throughout the year, on the other hand, has been a much more successful way of adapting to changing contexts. Equally, policy statements acknowledging the dynamism and vibrancy of local arts culture, deliberately showcasing local alongside international acts (Galway Arts Festival 2003) and asserting, in the face of pressure from the state's tourism board, that local audiences are the main priority, embody notions of balance and negotiation.

In conclusion, festivals clearly are characterised more by inter-relations than by autonomy. They play important social roles for the place-based communities that produce them, but an important function has long been to engage with other places in processes of cultural exchange as well as in the interest of communicating local identity and local values with the outside world (Farber 1983, Green 2002). The process of interacting with other places is not unproblematic. As local agents draw on outside influences and simultaneously engage with more globalised forces, the process is one of negotiation and adaptation as locales become contexts for re-working an array of often conflicting ideals and influences. The findings of the case presented here refute the suggestion that place seems to have 'dropped out of sight in the "globalisation craze" of recent years' (Escobar 2001: 149). They align with the theoretical positions of authors like Massey (1991) and Thrift (1997) in demonstrating how local actors and contexts can play important roles in negotiating powerful globalising forces. Certainly, inevitable difficulties are faced as festivals negotiate the potentially standardising forces of

homogenisation, however, local contexts can only realise their full potential through continuous interaction with other places.

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