

Cultural Democracy: The Way Festivals Affect Society

by

Maria-Louisa Laopodi

ISBN: 1-58112-186-5

DISSERTATION.COM



Parkland, FL • USA • 2003

Cultural Democracy: The Way Festivals Affect Society

Copyright © 2002 Maria-Louisa Laopodi
All rights reserved.

Dissertation.com
USA • 2003

ISBN: 1-58112-186-5
www.Dissertation.com/library/1121865a.htm

**Cultural democracy:
The way festivals affect society**

MARIA-LOUISA LAOPODI

MSc Festival Producing & Management

Queen Margaret University College

Scottish Centre for Cultural Management & Policy

August 2002

*'I believe it's not too late to build a utopia that
allow us to share the earth'*

*[Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Colombian writer and journalist]*

ABSTRACT

The dissertation studies the extent to which festivals, from a popular event for the masses, evolved into exclusive events, and shows how festivals affect society and are affected by it through practices in accordance with cultural democracy.

Festivals' relation to society is explained through the following concept-areas:

1. The artist's role
2. The use of festivals
3. The European example
4. Cultural democracy
5. Cultural policy
6. Active participation
7. Cultural tourism
8. The media

The dissertation identifies cultural policy, active participation and the media as key areas of concern in order to attain a coherent culturally democratic society. The study recognised that certain festivals and forms of art have been taken over by elite groups of people who exclude others from accessing them.

What is called 'mass culture' appeared to include many more practices and manifestations of creativity than the perceived established arts. How mass culture is seen, is important in the way people are given freedom to preserve and express their cultural preferences and identities.

In this respect, the media play an important role through their capacity to promote and supply culture. The media use segmented functions of culture and influence people's behaviours.

INDEX

Chapters	Page Numbers
Abstract_____	3
Index_____	4
Introduction & Contextualisation_____	5-15
Literature Review_____	16-30
Methodology_____	31-44
Discussion_____	45-87
Conclusions & Recommendations_____	88-98
References_____	99-104
Bibliography_____	105-119
Acknowledgements_____	120
Appendices_____	121-177
Illustrations_____	178
Tables_____	179

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXTUALISATION

"Cultural democracy: the way festivals affect society"

'No matter how bleak the European scene may become, it can be illuminated and warmed by the dawn of cultural democracy'

[Council of Europe (1976) Towards Cultural Democracy, p. 124]

Area of examination

This dissertation studies the relation between festivals and cultural democracy in the EU context. In order to fully study these issues, it is important to define their meanings to enable a fuller understanding of their areas of concern and applications.

The concept of cultural democracy comprises a set of related commitments:

- Protecting and promoting cultural diversity, and the right to culture for everyone in our society and around the world;

- Encouraging active participation in community cultural life;
- Enabling people to participate in policy decisions that affect the quality of our cultural lives; and
- Assuring fair and equitable access to cultural resources and support. ("What is Cultural Democracy?" (2002) <http://www.wxcd.org/cddef.html>, [accessed on 26/05/02])

Each of these commitments incorporates festivals and their practice in an attempt to use festivals' concepts of inclusiveness, conviviality and participation. Festivals are cultural artifacts which are not simply bought and 'consumed' but which are also accorded meaning through their active incorporation into people's lives (Jackson 1993: 208-209 in Waterman 1998). Viewing festivals as incorporating and incorporated events altogether, suggests that their role is fundamental in their contribution to cultural and everyday life.

Festivals started as religious celebrations and evolved into celebrations of a specific theme usually as repeated events in one specific time of the year. The word 'festival' comes from the Latin word 'festus' (feast-like, belonging to a feast),

also used as 'festivus'. The word 'festivus' (adjective) is explained as lively, gay, festive, joyous, gladsome and merry (Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary). In Medieval Latin and Old French it was used as 'festivalis' and in Middle English as 'festive' (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2000). A festival is defined as 'a special day or period, usually in memory of a religious event, with its own social activities, food or ceremonies, or an organised set of special events, such as musical performances or plays, usually happening in one place' (Cambridge International Dictionary of English 2002). As well, a festival is 'a series of presentations, or a gathering of exhibitors in one or more of the fine arts, or crafts, or such a gathering based on a central theme, food, season or the like' (Wordsmyth 2000).

The identification of different uses of festivals in cultural life has led the study to examine their evolution from popular events where all members of the religion/society in question are involved, into segmented events for specific audiences through selective procedures such as pricing policies, marketing policies, etc.

The study establishes certain conceptual or theoretical areas with associated subjects into which meanings and ideas of related topics have been found through the research. Those can be divided as follows into concepts of:

1. The Artist's Role: art/ art and health care/ sports and culture/ Olympic Games/ education
2. The use of Festivals: definitions of festivals and culture/ use of festivals/ negative aspects of festivals/ Festivalization/ audience/ public-non public/ elite-mass culture/ elite and power/ difference of people in society/ melting pot/ networking/ education/ sponsors
3. The European Union: western-European culture/ Europe
4. Cultural Democracy: democratic culture/ democratic economy/ economic democracy
5. Cultural Policy: visions of culture/ wording/ cultural identity/ cultural heritage/ globalisation/ multiculturalism vs. transculturality/ cultural diversity/ civil society/ future
6. Active Participation: democratic participation/ community life/ (neighbourhood) community arts/ socio-cultural animation/ community development/ urban development/ urban regeneration/ cultural identity

7. Cultural Tourism: tourism and culture and festivals/
commodification of culture/ festivals as distribution
systems/ use of festivals
8. Media: Television/ cultural/creative industries/ cultural
market/ USA example

The different concept-areas have been studied and identified through the literature review. Through the use of three festivals, as examples of the actual practice of festivals in their respective society, it was possible to identify issues relating to the practical side of each festival. These are: the Bank of Scotland Children's International Theatre Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, the Couleur Café Festival in Brussels, Belgium and the Medi@terra International Art and Technology Festival in Athens, Greece.

The Children's festival started in 1990, in an attempt to act as an advocate for the provision of high quality performing arts for children in Scotland (SAC Funding Application 2002/2003). The festival runs for ten (10) days in spring, and in 2002, it reached 15,000 attendees.

The Couleur Café festival started in 1990 by Zig Zag, in order to showcase music originating from Africa in Belgium and later, and as the music scene evolved, World music. The communications manager said the objective of the festival, is 'to bring this music here, and mainly bring the different cultures and to party' (interview, see Appendix 6). It runs during the last weekend of June and the 2002 festival attracted more than 56,000 people.

Finally, the Medi@terra festival began in 1998 in an attempt, as the director of the festival mentions, 'to create an intense dialogue around the numeric civilisations and the big problems that are created today like globalisation, change in life etc.' (interview, see Appendix 7).

Reasons for interest

The reason for choosing this subject of study, originates from a general concern of the researcher in the relation between the democratic practices of culture/arts and the democratic expression of today's societies. Previous study in Interior Architecture explored the relation between architecture and democracy in the 20th century. The present study suggests a

powerful relation between culture and democracy and emerges as a continuation of the researcher's inquisitive approach towards these issues.

On a practical level, the researcher's Greek origin and life in Brussels and Edinburgh, permitted a rather dynamic approach of the cultures involved in the festivals chosen, while guiding this choice through better knowledge of the respective locations. The researcher has lived and studied in all three cities of the chosen festivals and has tried to objectively use her experience for the purpose of the study.

Another reason for choosing this subject is an interest in the evolving nature of festivals in society, and the way people express themselves. It seems as if our societies, have come to a point of stagnation in their artistic and cultural productions, and look for new ways of expression that will inhibit more accordingly our present life styles. One such example is the range of music playing on popular radio today. Pop music is more and more imitating disco music of the late '70s and '80s, and a lot of the hip-hop and rap music is remixing old songs. The amount of original works is very limited. Also, the reason for this decline in originality can

be considered as a result of the importance given by the cultural industries in profitable products, rather than ones of quality and artistic originality.

As the researcher felt the need to redefine some of the values that will enable societies to 'create' with freedom, her global approach as 'a citizen of the world' pushed the research further in relating the promotion of creativity through festivals, with societal practices.

Steps taken and statement to the main conclusions

The study took place in a period of six weeks. This period was further divided into three shorter ones that separated the tasks into a research and collection of material-period, process of all information gathered-period and a writing period.

During this time, the practical and theoretical researches were conducted in conjunction. In order to consider holistically the matters in question and gain a complete idea of the current situation, the study of the organisation of festivals and the theory behind their use in society were

examined to the extent to which each festival is part of its societal context.

The research was conducted through the literature review and three qualitative semi-structured interviews with organisers of the chosen festivals under study. Additionally, the literature review enabled a much wider search of festivals around Europe and the world. Through the first literature search and the formulation of the questions for the interviews, the different subject areas to be studied became clear. Following the creation of the subject areas, the process of the data collection through the interviews and their relation to the findings of the ongoing literature search, formed the drivers of the study's aims. Finally, the identification of concept areas and the separation of the material drawn were steps that helped the final creation of the dissertation.

The two-fold process of the research for the subject under study, proved to enhance the findings of the study and their contextualisation within the broader area of culturally democratic practices. The different resources available enabled the realisation of the current situation and its

origins, while the needs and agonies for the future of our societies were expressed. In this sense, the word 'agonies' is used in the way M. Santorinaios, director of the Medi@terra festival, used it for his festival, when talking about efforts for more communication. In his words, it is a combination of 'the anxiety for the evolution of our civilisation, a need for communication with other people who have the same agonies' (interview, see Appendix 7).

Cultural democracy and its practice through festivals, if diachronically approached, tell truths that segmented studies fail to deal with. From their origin until today, festivals function to gather people together and enable them to express their concerns and anxieties while providing them with cultural experiences. Festivals group different forms of cultural activities and different people and promote a cultural and democratic exchange.

Societal patterns of globalisation and automated living styles discourage communal life and active participation. Furthermore, the media and their powerful imposition on people's consciences, discourage the promotion of cultural diversity and fair access to cultural resources. Through the

repeated emission/release of life-models that are unable to adapt themselves under normal living standards, people are pushed to isolate and alienate themselves from their civil rights.

In such unfriendly social settings, festivals can manage to re-invent communal life while promoting cultural forms of expression. They are capable, through their all-inclusive and all-embracing character to foster the environments required so those citizens redefine themselves in the new global era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Focus

The study is concerned with the relation between festivals and their environment. It is concerned with their respective social or other context and the use of them as exclusive events by intellectual, economic or other elite, rather than as popular entertainment events for the general public - in an all-inclusive sense of the word 'public' - through culturally democratic practices. The idea of cultural democracy in the service of the general public has long been debated for in an attempt to practice its principals and adopt its values and its aspects of equality. The research has been mainly based on resources available from 1990, with the exception of a Council of Europe report from 1976.

Context

One of the first documents in Europe, focusing on cultural democracy, was the publication by the Council of Europe back in 1976, of a report called 'Towards Cultural Democracy' from

the Conference of Ministers with Responsibility for Cultural Affairs. Through the culturally democratic practice, the report argued, that societies could be better developed towards a more culturally egalitarian reality through the abolishment of such big differences between the working groups of each society and the richer and/or more educated people. Festivals in that context were seen as a potent means of promoting group life and involvement in community affairs, as well as of enriching life on the streets (Council of Europe 1976, p. 69).

The term 'cultural democracy' is made up of two separate words that together form what Adams & Goldbard (2001) define 'a philosophy or policy emphasising pluralism, participation, and equity within and between cultures' (p. 108). The context upon which the study has been based is one, which Zuidervaart (2000) expressed in terms of the prospects of cultural democracy

'If a democratic culture must evince characteristically democratic habits, sensibilities, understandings and commitments, then it will have more chances to thrive in a cultural environment where participation, recognition and freedom set the tone for people's lives. Democratic dispositions do not simply flow from membership in a political democracy and participation in the political process. They require a *cultural* [sic] environment in

which dialogue, independence, mutual respect, critique, creativity and public discourse prevail. Such an environment presupposes appropriate schools, religious institutions, arts organisations and media of communication'. (Cited in Zuidervaart & Luttikhuizen 2000, p. 25-26)

In this context, the use of festivals becomes vital as they act as a key player by affecting directly or indirectly the realisation of a cultural democracy. Such relations of power between people and their cultures are of great importance in today's reality of the uneven and unfair situations that they face and have faced through the past.

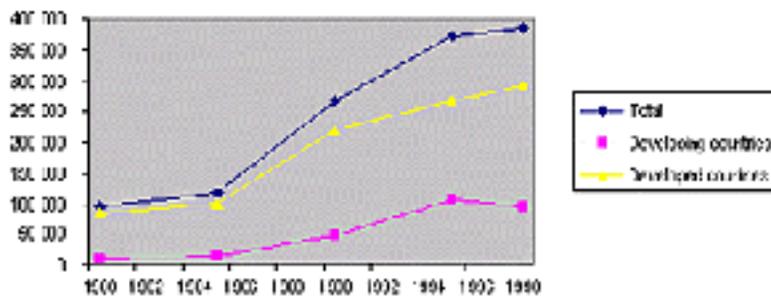


Table 1: World trade of cultural goods (in millions of dollars), 1980-98 (Culture, trade and globalisation (2002) http://www.unesco.org/culture/industries/trade/html_eng/question24.shtml [accessed on 26 May 2002])

The above graph shows the distribution of trade of cultural goods from 1980-98 in the world. It is clear that developed countries keep a steady favoured position in the cultural market as well as increasing their share faster than

developing countries. The countries' uneven positions express the imposition of some cultures on others.

Identification of resources

The theory related to the core subject is represented by an entire set of issues that formulate the basic areas or that are a result or a consequence. Within the different resources available, an attempt is made in the following section to identify common areas of debate and to group them by relevance of their topics:

1. In the area concerning the role of the artist and festivals in today's societies, the 30th session of the General Conference of UNESCO (1999) with its appeal by the Director-General on arts education sets the scene for the role of the arts in education. Similar to this, the '2002 Olympic Arts Festival' in 'Contrast, Culture and Courage' (2002) from the Olympic Games web site, links arts to the sports as well as a fact sheet by the same source that concerns 'Art competitions at the Olympic Games' (2002). Another case where the use of festivals is considered is in UNESCO's 'La Campagne de revitalisation de Venise' (2001) results link. Similarly,

Joss's (2001) article 'International rescue' argues how festivals have a powerful attitude. Finally, the example of the UNESCO/UNAIDS research project 'A cultural approach to HIV/AIDS prevention and care' (1999) in Malawi-Africa gives a different perspective and view of the uses of culture in certain sensitive cases of health care.

2. Directly linked to the above themes, the use of festivals defined in several ways, is discussed and studied from a networking point of view in the article 'DIY culture and extended millieux: LETS, veggie boxes and festivals' (1997) as well as in 'Arts Networking in Europe' (1992) by the Arts Council of GB. Shrum (1996) in 'Fringe and fortune: the role of critics in high and popular art' debates the notion of festivals as distribution systems. Directly connected to high and popular art are several journal articles concerned with the relation between public and non-public, elite and mass audiences and culture in Waterman's (1998) 'Carnivals for elite? The cultural politics of arts festivals', Reid's (2001) 'An elitist Festival cut off from the people' and Bonaventura's (2001) 'Taking a world view'. In the same spirit, issues about the media and negative aspects of festival promotion are evaluated in journal articles by Roth &

Frank (2000) 'Festivalization and the Media: Weimar, Cultural Capital of Europe 1999', 'Brands get in the party spirit' by Mason (2001) and in Wilson's (2002) 'B.W. finds food with no thought at pop festivals'.

3. The European example is set by mainly two documents from the Council of Europe: 'Cultural Policies in Europe: A Comparative Approach' (1998) as well as 'In from the margins: A contribution to the debate on Culture and Development in Europe' (1997) and one by the European Commission, the programme 'Culture 2000: First European Community Framework Programme in Support of Culture (2000-2004)' (1999).

4. The research in the subject of cultural democracy, has proven to involve such issues as political and economic democratic practices; the main documents debating it are the report by the Council of Europe (1976) 'Towards Cultural Democracy', and the books of Fitzgibbon & Kelly (1999) 'From Maestro to Manager', Goldbard & Adams (1990) 'Crossroads: Reflections on the Politics of Culture', and Zuidervaart & Luttikhuisen's (2000) 'The arts, community, and cultural democracy'. Additionally, 'Culture as Praxis' by Bauman (1999), 'Spaces of Culture: city, nation, world' by

Featherstone & Lash (1999) and 'Culture and the public sphere' by McGuigan (1996) are concerned with similar issues around the politics of culture and democratic approaches. Finally, a speech at the International Seminar on Representative Democracy held in Porto Alegre by Pont (1999), debating issues about 'Representative democracy and participatory democracy' can be found in the 2002 World Social Forum web site.

5. Cultural policies and globalisation are debated through different perspectives in documents such as the Council of Europe's summary report 'Civil society or 'everyone for themselves?' Culture as an agent for democracy in Europe' (1998), as well as by the International Intelligence on Culture (2001), which is a company that groups experts on issues around cultural policies and their international dimensions among other things. 'Culture, Trade and Globalisation' (2002) is a link in UNESCO's web site that explores key concepts and ideas related to culture and trade and its potential for development. 'Cultural diversity and globalisation' (date unknown) is a text covering similar issues, from the Millennium Forum of the United Nations in the themes of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre 2002. Another document that treats comparable issues is UNESCO's link to the

'Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development' (1998). Following comes the Final Report of the Round Table of Ministers of Culture '2000-2010: Cultural Diversity: Challenges of the Marketplace' (2000). Finally, 'Transitional Media, Cultural Diversity and Global Multiculturalism' (date unknown) is a link of the Culturelink Archives of UNESCO that resumes the themes mentioned. Additionally the report by Vandembroucke (1998) 'Globalisation, inequality and social democracy' debates similar issues.

6. Cultural development and urban regeneration are two interrelated subjects that are discussed in conjunction with topics such as community arts and active participation. Documents that examine such themes are books like Landry's [et al.] (1996) 'The art of regeneration: urban renewal through cultural activity', 'Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the west European experience' by Bianchini & Parkinson (1993), internet link to Landry's (2000) 'A Cultural Approach to Developing the Creative City', 'City Centres, City Cultures: the role of the arts in the revitalisation of towns and cities', a book by Fisher & Worpole (1991), and articles by Harcup (2000) 'Re-imagining a post-industrial city' and