

Doctoral PhD thesis

FESTIVALS AS NEW FORM OF CULTURE

Szabó János Zoltán

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Szabó László Tamás Dsc.



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Faculty of Arts

Debrecen, 2012

UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Faculty of Arts

Doctoral School of Interdisciplinary Social and Human Sciences

Doctoral (PhD) Programme on the Educational Sciences

Festivals as New Form of Culture

Submitted by:

Szabó János Zoltán

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Szabó László Tamás Dsc.

Debrecen

2012.

1. The field of the study and the aims of the dissertation

Culture festivals play more and more important social and economic role in Hungary since 1989. The transition, with all its successes and failures, is reflected in this process. The main goal of the thesis is to research the festival phenomena including its social contexts and societal functions, both in general and in the light of culture policy practice.

Digging into festival history I tried to answer the question what aroused the public and scientific attention about festivals. In the past, societal functions of festivals were usually different depending on the actual context. The freedom of play and action basically determined the conditions of public events. Regarding the context, the research focused on the socialisation processes, therefore identification was considered primarily including the questions of conformism, community and learning processes. Societal functions are usually considered by grant giving public bodies too, but it is not known what functions are reflected in the practice of supported festivals. Are the assumed functions reflected in practice? Our empirical survey aimed to uncover both the role of societal functions in the socialisation processes as well as the grant giving principles and the social functions of the supported festivals.

Every society celebrates, and the way of public celebration is reflecting the world view and the identity of community. Nevertheless festivities were the highest form of play as Johan Huizinga claimed. However, play factor is depending on the opportunity given for free action of the individuals. Because of political reasons, freedom of action was not insured in every society; although, sometimes play factor was relegated to the background within culture itself. Historically festivals are interpreted in the category of play, and the celebration culture.

Regarding the function of festivals, theoreticians underline the role of two fundamental theories: the exchange of values worked out by Marcel Mauss and the liminality developed by Victor Turner. The theory of liminality explains not only festivals but tourism as well, this way John Urry understood festivals as part of the tourism. On the other hand, the exchange of value theory is connected to the incorporated cultural capital of Pierre Bourdieu. The examination of socialisation processes are determined by these theoretical frameworks. One of the first scientific descriptions was given by Alessandro Falassi, updating his approach I use the notion that festivals are recurrent, thematized celebrations set up by ritual events, which expose the identity, value and world view of the community. Community is understood as the group that consists of locals and visitors who participate in the festival. Culture festivals are events putting arts values into the center of the festival concept.

Antecedents of festival research date back to the turning of the 19-20 century. That time cultural anthropologists, such as Arnold van Gennep started to record celebration practices of archaic societies. Although they realised that festivals in current societies are realised in different contexts, however, contexts determine the society's celebration habits. The key is the reinterpretation of community. Today festivals are special events just like before, but it is a programme, concept and facilities are organised by professionals. Festival is leisure time out of time where participants can experience the illusion of primary community. As Robert Putnam underlined, the community life is in crisis, but it is also possible that today individuals live different community life – for example on festivals. Culture festivals have become more and more important institutions in the process of social and cultural inheritance and the evolution of counter culture had key role in this.

Festival surveys appeared in the international scientific literature in the 1970's. Of course international festival surveys can be initiated by different reasons and motivations; however, common general methodological and interpretation frameworks were developed by today. Recent surveys have two major, but different issues: that of the social effects and that of the economic benefits. Social effects are mostly covering the issue of local societal-economic environment, social inclusion of underprivileged, active citizenship and culture based urban development (Francois Matarasso, Franco Bianchini, Charles Landry). Inter-sector cooperation synergies in the field of tourism and culture, not to speak about branding of cities are understood as economic benefits (John L. Crompton, Donald Getz). Hungarian social sciences are a bit of a different track. Leisure time and free time statistics, cultural consumption surveys, especially the *Magyarország kulturális állapota* (Vitányi 2006) surveys and youth studies (Gábor and others, Bauer and others, Ságvári) were key elements in realising the emerging importance of festivals in Hungarian culture. As reasons one might refer to the late expansion of education and late cultural paradigm shift.

A reasonable share of festival researchers analyses societal functions of festivals (Matarasso 1997), that can result different typologies depending on the disciplines used. One of the results of the literature review was a structured model of festivals' societal functions, using the most relevant disciplines (history, cultural anthropology, education, sociology, cultural studies). In this model, artistic, community and political functions are distinguished as three main domains, which are not mutually exclusive, but provide a framework for the analysis of specific festival practices. In general, researches highlighted the emerging significance and embeddedness of festivals.

In Hungary, the festival issue was organised by the state (television and radio song festivals), bottom up initiatives were drained (Pusztavacs) or made impossible (supported counter-counter festivals). In the 1960's and 1970's the main arts forms of counterculture were beat and rock music in Hungary, while the main cultural field of the mainstream socialist realism was sculpture. Different periods of times were represented by different music groups. The Great Generation – called the first youth culture movement in Hungary – started by beat music groups Bergendy, Metro, Illés and Omega. They appeared mostly on the dance song festivals organised by national TV and radio. Communist state propaganda used this festival form to influence the youth but in the meantime the youth has created its own culture. The symbols of this era were “The Jeans” trousers. State propaganda controlled these kinds of festivals by preliminary selection and the festival as form of play was not free neither for the presenters neither for the audience, because of the live TV and radio broadcasting.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's segmentation of subcultures turned out when Generál, Color, Express, LGT and Skorpió appeared. The Great Generation identified youth by sharing the same adorers groups (regardless ones favourites) while new subcultures rarely visited each others' concerts and clubs. Rock music appeared in the mid 1970's when Omega started to play rock and in the late 1970's punk rock and hard rock groups Beatrice, P. Mobil has become enemies of the Hungarian People's Republic. By that time the “3 T” (túr, tilt, támogat = tolerate, forbid, support) system was on power in culture policy and Beatrice, P. Mobil and its adorers groups were part of the forbidden side of the system. Their symbols were not just the cut jeans, long hair and “neck kerchief” called babos kendő (red kerchief with white circles). They started to organize the first festivals at Miskolc (1973) and later they organized the first festival on Óbuda Island (Fekete Bárányok, black sheep concert). They and their adorers considered themselves as groups who want to live free life but hated by the system. Besides dress code, song lyrics were focusing on social problems - this was the way they expressed their nonconformist counterculture. Even a film was shot with the title “Felt like living free” – “Úgy érezte szabadon él” directed by László Vitézy in 1979, but it was not possible to broadcast it until the next decade.

In the Kádár-era, Chanson Committee was controlling the lyrics of songs before recording and publishing. Some rockgroups not fulfilled the requirements of this committee like Beatrice and P. Mobil, but some others (Edda, Hobo Blues Band) were refined enough to change the words on records – on concerts they sang the song with different lyrics. While rock punk and hard rock bands were fighting against censorship, alternative rock bands came up and they were not keen to fight for official records – samizdat-like home made records

were enough for them. When transition started in 1989 the new generation did not know too much about P. Mobil and Beatrice, they have got out of the star system again – but this time by the market. Well, communist star system disappeared but the new market developed slowly. These years electronic pop music were the mainstream in pop music and alternative rock bands (PUF, Tankcsapda, Kispál és a Borz) acted as nonconformist music. Only after a number of years they have become part of the star system, and festivals like Sziget and Sitkei Rock Festival helped them a lot in this process. By today alternative music has become a conformist direction and festivals are already reasonable programme for youth to go out. Finally festivals were used in the conformist and nonconformist battle from both side: from the communist state and the communities of youth as well. As a result, habits of counter culture survived Kádár system, but by today, media has accepted the counter culture of the 1980's as part of mainstream music.

2. Research methods

Because of the “three T” (tilt, tűr, támogat equivalent of forbid, tolerate, support) culture policy principle of the Kádár-system the expansion of festivals was not possible until the transition in Hungary. According to the Festival-world research the majority of the festivals (80%) was first time organised after 1989. In the same time the expansion of education took place at the turning of the 20-21 century as one might know it from Youth 2000 researches. In this context, within the concept of culture festival and the societal functions model the hypotheses were composed about: (1) socialisation processes of festivals and its relation to conformity and (2) hidden consideration of grant giving following the NKA's festival support.

(1) the festivals have become symbolic institutions of paradigm shift and socialisation after 1989 and this development process basically determined the relation of festivals to conformity. The question occurs: how festivals fulfil their socialisation role and what effects of paradigm shift prevail on festivals? To answer these questions I investigated the interactions of socialisation processes during festivals; especially about

- values and cultural conformism,
- community and social network,
- learning processes.

Within this structure I focused on representations of values, genres of arts, visitors' profile, freedom of action, cultural memory, nonformal learning and financial aspects.

(2) Worldwide spread of festivals is a general phenomenon; however, some researchers draw the attention to the fact that the concept behind public support to festivals is rather unarticulated and unknown. This is why I researched the concept of grant giving practice of National Culture Fund and the concept of the supported festivals. I supposed that here must be a hidden consideration of grant giving following the NKA's festival support. The interviewees were directors of culture festivals supported by the Board of Outstanding Cultural Events, NKA in 2007, however there was no clear definition on what does it mean outstanding festival? The call for application referred to outstanding festivals as festivals attracting nation and international visitors, therefore I investigated what are the characteristics of the supported festivals compared to the Festival-world research statistics and are they successful in solving the problems discovered in 2004. Of course, I followed the societal function model for this purpose as well.

The stated goals of research have been supported by empirical survey. In this kind of cases Hungarian research methods recommend to use visitor (what of the offer?) and institutional (what are the conditions of the offer?) consideration. I used both. In the empirical survey I asked 57 festival organisers by a questionnaire and asked visiting experts to take observation notes on the festival using a visitor's questionnaire as guide. Asked festivals were supported by the National Cultural Fund as being outstanding events in 2007. I used two kind of tools for the visit:

- the visit included a questionnaire for the interview with the director and
- a questionnaire for the observer's notes (field research)

All questionnaires were recorded during 2007-2008 about the festival organised in 2007. On the basis of the filled questionnaires many new questions raised up, therefore I used an additional guided interview questionnaire for asking Hungarian theatre festival directors about audience development and educational activities.

3. Results

Ancient Greek and Roman celebration culture were different from the point of view of freedom of action, genre of arts and conformity etc. In Athens, politics appear in the festival organisation, however, in Rome they realised the political danger of celebrations (forbidden Compalia feasts, historical remember day). By the end of antiquity, celebrations had become local, habits had changed definitely. Feasts of early middle ages adjusted to the Christian liturgical diary; the general form of celebration was procession. As the dialectic pair of clerical events, the concept of inverted world was developed (laughter culture). By the end of the Middle Ages the organisation of celebrations was professionalized, but the social status of artists was quite low. In the 15-16th century, the way of celebration had changed dramatically: festivals lost the clerical consideration, feasts of citizens and aristocrats became separated. The conformity shown in the genre of arts was different for the citizens and the aristocrats, aristocrats escaped from the public. The role of artists and cities was more and more appreciated. Soon the city put the artist in the centre of festivals, as at the first arts festival: Bayreuther Festspiele, 1876. This festival formula was celebration of the city elite, and was not open for the wide public. Arts festivals had to take a long way to open their door for the public. International film festivals open first. Cannes was open for the professionals; Locarno was open for the general public – the star system was really demanding, it needed the public attention. Festivals took political role (Venice – Cannes) between the two world wars, and later during the reconstruction of Germany (Berlinale 1951). Festivals open for the wide public became general after the World War II, unfortunately not in Eastern Europe – because of political reasons. Counter culture brought a completely new situation in the 1960's, the new model of youth rock festivals. In the Western world, cities intended to use this popular festival formula to serve tourism and urban rehabilitation, while it was question of ideology in the Eastern world (World Youth Festival).

This short essence of the historical aspects of festivals showed how different festivals can be organised in different social contexts. In most of the cases festivals had political relation (in other words, the politics discovered the festival formula as a tool for ideology. The fact the both radical right and left powers used this festival formula shows that the formula is not politically or ideologically committed – as Johan Huizinga declared. One might also recognise that there were festivals used for nation building as well: Richard Wagner and his festival was the symbol of the German unity.

Research results can be concluded on the basis of the investigation about the socialisation processes during festivals as follows:

- (1) Regarding the socialisation processes of festivals and its relation to conformity I analysed the cultural and community embeddedness of festivals, and the learning processes supported by festival organisers.
 - a. Cultural embeddedness was understood on the basis of cultural conformity indicated by seven variables: name, symbols, artistic genre, autonomy of organisers, festival concept, mediated values and functions. Using those seven variables the following festival typology was set up: old conformist, new conformist, nonconformist and innovator festivals. Old-conform category stands for the arts forms classified as mainstream before counter culture appeared. New-conform row stands for the music used by counter culture, mostly rock and all its forms. Non-conform row stands for the contemporary, avant-garde culture. The mixed category refers to the fact that there are festivals mixing different conformist and new-conformist art forms, and aiming to revive the heritage and understanding of culture.
 - b. Community embeddedness was indicated by involvement of local volunteers, the relation to self governments, to local sponsors and to the built and intangible heritage. Critical point was the involvement of local service providers.
 - c. Learning processes led by festival organisers was analysed by a typology of festivals' education concepts as follows: artistic, professional and value protection concept. The latest concept type paid the most attention to learning processes.

According to the results of the survey and field research, cultural embeddedness has defined the content of learning and the message of the festival. Community embeddedness has ensured the conditions of the learning process. Certain learning processes were detectable both in personal and organisational, but also in formal, nonformal and informal level. One third of the examined festivals had the necessary embeddedness for conscious, organizers driven learning processes. Two third of the festivals can be understood as impulses for further autonomous learning.

- (2) The results of the exploration of social functions fulfilled by supported festivals and its relation to the goals of the original call for applications the research find the following elements:

- a. The advantage of old conformist and tradition innovator festivals
- b. The advantage of education as secondary goal
- c. Paying attention to underprivileged visitors
- d. Territorial balanced grant giving
- e. Advantage of festivals that are longer and bigger (budget and audience) than the average. Advantage of theatrical and classical music festivals against folk art festivals
- f. Economic efficiency
- g. Conflict of interests: local self governments prefer tourist festivals (political function), NKA prefers artistic festivals (artistic function).

The results were disappointing about the problem solving skills of festival organisers. All the problems realised in the first festival survey in 2004 were still underdeveloped.

Our research raised many new research questions regarding the political and developmental role of festivals. When starting the research it was not clear that the history of festivals, especially Hungarian festivals in not written yet. Difficulties are also reasonable: the historical past of festivals is not documented properly, not to speak about that that fact that festival audience is always changing. Youth expansion was the essential element of cultural paradigm shift, but after the 2008 financial crisis and the 2012 Euro crisis – expansion seemed to turn back. Nevertheless, NKA's festival support is going on and hopefully societal functions will be clearer for decision makers.

4. Publications of the author in the filed of the dissertation

(2012) Festivals and Non-Conformism in Hungary.

In: *Útközben. Kutatás, képzés, tudomány a Nevelés- és Művelődéstudományi Doktori Programban.* Debrecen, p. 10. (megjelenés folyamatban)

(2010) A fesztiválok hatása a közösségi és kulturális életre.

In: (Juhász Erika – Szabó Irma szerk.) *Nemzetnevelés – felnőttnevelés – közművelődés.* Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, Debreceni Egyetem, KultúrÁsz Közhasznú Egyesület, pp. 400-407.

(2010) La investigación acerca de los festivales

In: *Boletín Gestión Cultural No. 19.*, pp. 34-41.

<http://www.gestioncultural.org/boletin/files/bgc19-JZSzabo.pdf>

(2009) Theatre Festivals: Towards a Bigger Theatre Audience

(konferencia előadás) In: *13th International Symposium of Theatre Critics and Scholars on International Theater Festivals and Audience Development.* Újvidék/Novi Sad: Sterino Pozorje, p. 10.

<http://www.pozorje.org.rs/2009/symposium/s-JanosZSzabo.pdf>

(2008) Les festivals hongrois á la loupe

In: (ed. Autissier, A.) *L'Europe des festivals.* Paris: Université de Paris

Társszerzők: Hunyadi Zsuzsa, Inkei Péter, pp. 175-186.

(2008) Shifts and Breaks in Hungarian Theatre

In: (ed. Cas Smithuijsen) *Stage on Stage.* Amsterdam: Boekman, pp. 111-122.

(2007) *Culture 2000 under Eastern Eyes*

Társszerzők: Inkei Péter Daniela Langusi, Friss Judit.

Budapest: The Budapest Observatory

(2006) *Fesztivál-világ*

NKA Kutatások 3. Társszerzők: Hunyadi Zsuzsa, Inkei Péter. Budapest: Kultúrpon

Kht., Kelet-közép Európai Kulturális Obszervatórium Alapítvány

(2006) *Festival-World*

Társszerzők: Hunyadi Zsuzsa, Inkei Péter. Budapest: Kultúrpon Kht. Kelet-közép

Európai Kulturális Obszervatórium Alapítvány

- (2006) Budapest: Regaining Multiculturalism
 Társszerző: Keresztély Krisztina In: (Ed. Dorota Ilczuk, Yudhishtir Raj Isar)
Metropolis of Europe: Diversity in urban cultural life.
 Warsaw: CIRCLE, Pro Cultura Foundation, pp. 98-133.
- (2003) Kulturális non-profit szervezetek Debrecenben
 Társszerzők: Csoba Judit, Juhász Erika, Márkus Edina
 In: *Debreceni Szemle* 1/2003, pp. 27-52.
- (2001) *The Role of Arts on Processes of Social Change*
 Szerkesztés. Társszerkesztő: Sabine Schaschl
 Budapest-Bécs: Arts and Education Network
- (2001) Kulturális non-profit szervezetek Debrecenben
 Társszerzők: Csoba Judit, Juhász Erika, Márkus Edina
 In: *Acta Andragogiae et Culturae* 19., pp. 99-127.
- (2000) Society of Theatre Actors in Hungary
 In: *Actas del V. Congreso „Cultura Europea”*
 (Ed: Enrique Banús-Beatriz Elío) Pamplona: Centro de Estudios Europeos,
 Universidad de Navarra, pp. 889-898.
- (1997) Siker és közösség
 Társszerző: Forgon Emese
 In: *Acta Andragogiae et Culturae* 16., pp. 89-105.
- (1996) Tradition and Invention in the Revival of the Non-Profit Sphere in Hungarian
 Culture.
 Társszerző: Szabó Csaba
 In: (Ed: Enrique Banús-Beatriz Elío) *Actas del III. Congreso „Cultura Europea”*.
 Pamplona: Aranzadi, pp. 693-707.
- (1996) A Nullpont Kulturális Egyesület története.
 Társszerző: Forgon Emese
 In: *Kultúra és közösség* 1996/1, pp. 133-149.
- (1995) A kultúra gazdasága - a gazdaság kultúrája
 In: *Kultúra és közösség* 1995/1, pp. 182-187.