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**The Impact of Societal Transformations on the Urban Spaces  
During the Local Festivals****Rasha A. Moussa<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Collage of Architecture and Design, Effat University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia***Abstract**

Urban Spaces had played an important role in the individuals' psychological life and in their integration with their environment as it's considered as the mediator through which the interactions between people with each other and with their natural environment, they can exchange their cultures and spread activities. Despite its importance, many communities suffer from the absence of positive communication between individuals and place they belong to or lack of happiness while being in it. The reason for that is the ignorance of some urban designer to the role of the humanity in the process of the design and its impact on the formation of the urban spaces, though through urban design the complexities of the place can be managed and a general framework for change can be created by designing a compatible and sustainable space for users depending on the events and activities located in it that show political, social and economic transformations that occurs to the communities and affect the social development for individuals. Although there are social diversity among members of the same community but it was observed that there is a similarity in their behaviors towards certain positions, which expresses their culture.

Social celebrations (Festivals) are considered the most effective patronize for social formats impact on the spatial formation, as it helps in supporting the idea of individuals' belonging to the place since the human there is the main sponsor for forming the spaces that contain all the activities and events that may be specific or temporary with a time or an event, and thus it was essential to show physical and non-physical components for space formation in order to gain access to identify the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the place and highlight the most important and successful spatial expressions that help boost the spirit of communication between individuals and develop a sense of belonging to the place.

The paper examines how the dynamics of social life at the local scale are shaped by the special spatial arrangements created for urban festival events by the observation of the social changes impact on the resulting urban transformations during festival and its role in individuals' sense of belonging substation.

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**Keywords**

Festival; Enclosure; Centrality; Axial; Urban spaces; Social interactions; Human behaviors; Permeability and connectivity

**1. Introduction**

Nowadays urban festivals have become an attractive topic to most of the cities and their number had raisen in the recent decades (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004), as local authorities and stakeholders are convinced that through

these events the image of the cities can be improved and make them more vibrant and cosmopolitan in order to generate economic benefits (Saayman & Saayman, 2006).

Whereas several cities consider festivals as part of the urban regeneration thrust and place promotion activities, others are trying to raise their profile by organizing or hosting special events and annual festival (Herrero, Sanz, Devesa, Bedate & Del Barrio, 2006).

In the past, the aim of the festivals was to transgress boundaries of prevalent social and political order, but nowadays some cities harnessed festivals for more market-oriented purposes. Local authorities had found that these events become an economic key itself and make an essential contribution to the urban economy as they raise the value of properties and attract commercial development.

The role of the festival does not stand at that only, but they play a significant role in enhancing the local social life and shaping the social experiences in the local spaces, by creating new opportunities for social engagement and innervate this social bond, also festivals in large cities heighten sensation, emotion, and memory by compressing many people and activities into a certain time and place (Fig.1).

We can consider festivals as part of everyday life that is characterized by the intensities of sensory experience (Gardiner, 2004) which is formed by the social behaviors of the participants and their distinctive interactions with themselves and the physical settings of the places (Stevens, 2006).

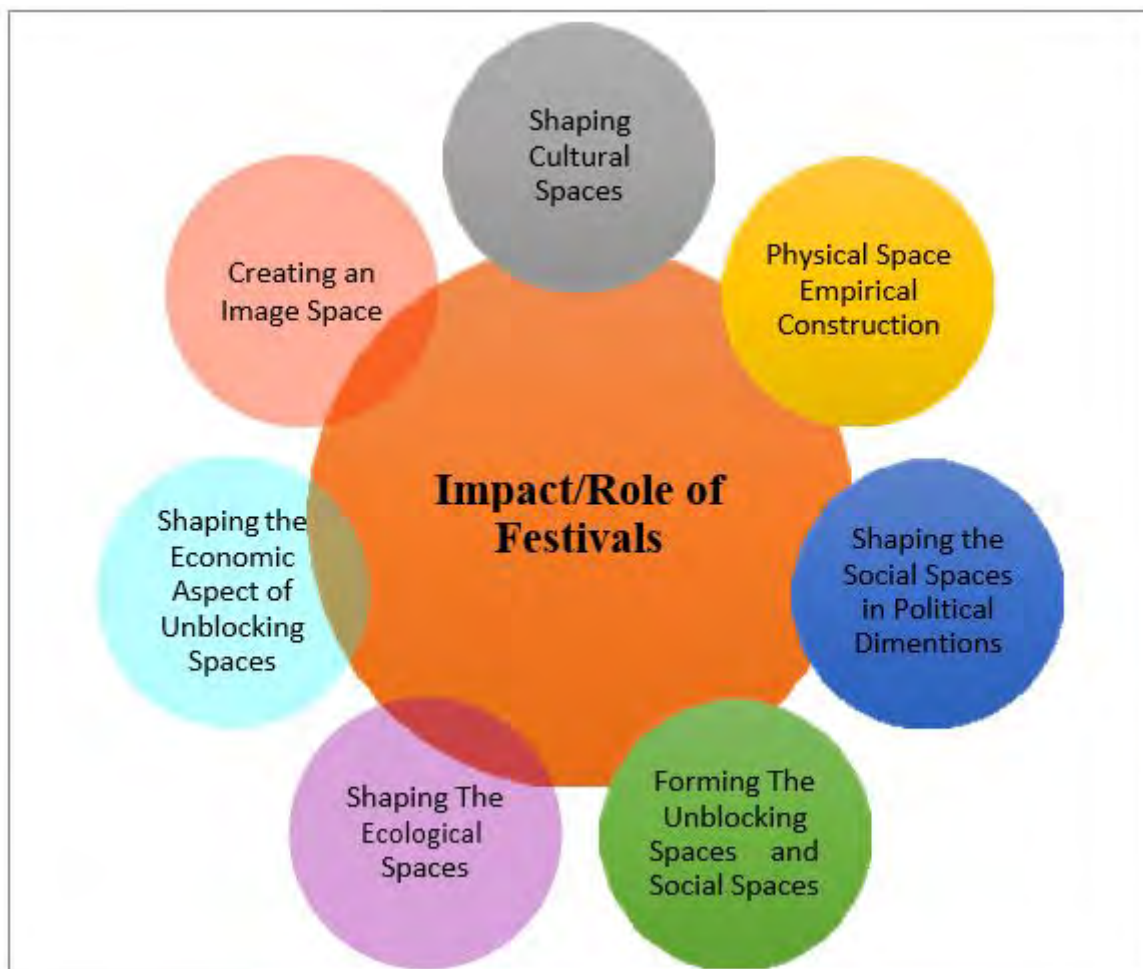


Figure 1. Shows the of festivals and their impact on communities

In this research paper, we will concentrate on the public spaces where festivals occupy and how the spatial behaviors of the participants affect the management of the place hosting them. By analyzing the different social practices connected to the festival event, we can highlight the potential festivals can provide for improving and developing

the everyday life and consequently maintain a good quality of life. The paper will focus on the diversity of actions through which urban spaces are appropriated and inscribed during festivals. The findings will illustrate how local social spaces can be redefined.

The research will cover in two main themes that happened in Old Jeddah (Al-Balad) during the annual festival that occurs in it, and the study will show:

- a) The moral of the social needs and their effect on the spatial formation of place.
- b) The characteristics of space during the festivals.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Urban festivals as a tool of enhancing cities profile**

Urban festivals have become a popular organizational form for creating experience space and for marketing cities. Through these events, the meaning of place and social life of users can be redefined and rediscovered and the identity of space will be promoted to a "distinctive city".

Festivals create the brand of a given destination by creating an impression of a memorable journey to the city, generating pleasant experiences and memories connected with it in order to persuade the recipient of the marketing message to choose this destination and not another (Cudny, 2014).

The experience economy framework has been applied to explore how certain places are arranged and organized (Hayes and Macleod, 2007-Avdikos, 2011), how users' experience and influences can be measured for developing marketing destination strategies (Morgan et al., 2009) for enhancing the attractiveness of place (Yeoman et al, 2004 - Smith and Von Krogh Stand, 2011).

Festivals provide cities with a particular image especially when it is connected to a certain location or a place that has a specific theme. For this reason, several cities consider festivals as a method for solving image problems (Quinn, 2005).

### **2.2. Urban festivals as a tool of creating social and cultural spaces:**

Festivals have a significant influence on the urban community. They can be considered as a component, which creates a broadly understood social capital, which is formed by interpersonal linkages, norms, and social relationships; as they built relationship between all the participants starting from the organizer till the inhabitants. Moreover, they are also in arena for expressing and consolidating opinions and values common to the urban community (Cudny & Rouba, 2011).

This is not the only role for festivals but Frey connected festivals to tourism and consider them as attraction way for visitors (Frey, 2000). Tourists enjoy the art, culture and entertainment offerings and that make them be one of the fastest growing branches of industry. Tourists spend money to participate in such festivals and that affect the local economy and raises it, in addition, the city can be distinguished from other cities as a tourist destination (Baerenholdt & Haldrup, 2006). The economic impact of such urban festivals on the host society goes beyond the organized activity (Hiller, 1995). People who do not usually seek out cultural facilities can be introduced to venues they might otherwise have visited (Irina and Rianne, 2011).

Festivals do not attract only tourists but also talented performers, as it is a platform for supporting and promoting them. They can have a good opportunity to meet people who are interested in such particular art forms. Many festivals organizers offer free concerts and exhibitions, which often take place in easily accessible public space such as street or square. In addition, organizers can mix between popular and talent performers in order to suit all tastes of music and art.

Altogether, these conditions can turn festivals into a meeting space for creative people and a place of popularizing

high culture and developing cultural capital which consist of several elements like taste, familiarity with high culture, social and cultural convention , formal education and culture-related property which subsequently helps in renovating the existing cultural infrastructure and growing of other cultural development.

### **2.3. Importance of festivals on places:**

Festivals become a modality for expressing the close relationship between identity and place (Quinn, 2005), throughout time, the festival and the host place can become inextricably linked (Getz, 2008). Furthermore, successful festivals can become by time centered for the host city's identity (Gibson & Davidson, 2004), so the location of the festival may have an impact on its content, objectives, and successes. Festivals that are linked to particular places (Place-bound festivals) are usually are organized to honor certain historical events or show traditions related to the local culture of the host place and demonstrate what a society believes to be its essence.

These festivals often offer physical and moral experiences that connect people to place (Derret, 2003); as they involve collective celebrations with diverse purposes like building social cohesion by bounding ties within community, learning and celebrating cultural traditions that belong to the place and drawing on shared histories and local practices. This means communicating an attractive atmosphere which come from place-bound activities, events, attractive places and diverse social spaces that make visitors and inhabitant feel inspired and connected to the place (Lorentzen, 2009).

### **2.4. Transformation of Urban Space**

During festivals, cities are reshaped and transformed either by altering their spatial constitutions or by granting them a special and specific identity. In addition, streets are closed off, unwanted elements are removed, buildings are refurbished, alternative spaces are created and extra-ordinary performances are staged in places usually reserved for more temporal activities. All of these things occur in order to encourage visitors to participate and feel safe inside the space.

So festivals provide spaces for redefining the cities and make them live in temporal rhythms of activities and people who look to the urban practices that uphold the city rather than seeing it as unitary phenomena. These cities become an experiencescape and ordinary spaces are transformed to festival spaces with alternative activities that contrast the routine of everyday life (Jamieson, 2004).

### **2.5. Festivals and Social Behaviors**

Festivals generate regulated and liminal spaces through temporary appropriations of local settings as they involve physical modifications of local spaces, which promote some social arrangement. Willem Braun emphasizes that such events set up unceremonious, intersubjective spaces where a multiplicity of identities can be expressed and deliberated (Willems-Braun, 1994); While Ravenscroft and Gilchrist suggest that this physical and temporal bounding facilitates the disciplining of social behavior during festivals. These social behaviors usually have the potential to differentiate and particularize social identity.

According to some studies on the satisfaction of visitors during festivals, it was found that it depends on the ability of attendees to adapt with the festival atmosphere as a socially integrative, interactive and emotionally engaging experience. Moreover, this can be achieved and facilitated for gaining experience under certain conditions that urban designers and organizers should take it into consideration like:

- a) Permeability, which means the ability of visitors to move freely and comfortably along a diversity of paths between different spaces and creates personal itineraries.
- b) Centrality as the event should be spatially connected.
- c) The availability of un-programmed public spaces and semi-public (third places) adjacent to Formal venues and

circulation routes, so informed socialization could be formed as it attracts visitors and generates economic benefits (Morgan, 2007).



Figure 2. Shows Place Making Elements Source: <https://www.pps.org/>

Steven's also confirms in his broader study of informal activities in public spaces that three-dimensional elements of public spaces identified by Lynch (1960) nodes, paths, and boundaries are directly involved by users as they perceive act out the potential behavioral affordances of urban public spaces.

Festivals can be a tool that cities can use to enhance a place or enrich it as the four main elements that make a successful place can be found in a well-organized event or festival (Fig.2).

### 3. Methodology

The fieldwork for this research paper had two stages: The first was observing the varieties of social behaviors occurring within the urban spaces during local festivals and the sensory and spatial perceptions available in that context; the second was to analyze the reflection of these behaviors on the transformation of this space. The observation stage focus on showing the social characteristics and behaviors of users and the interactions among them and how the spatial setting and structure of the place hosting the event can have an influence on organizing and controlling these relations. Together these aspects illustrate the role that organized festival events can play in informal socialization and in contributing the feeling of belonging to a place.

The paper studies one of the poplar events that is held annually in a significant place in Jeddah city, lasting for 10 days. This event is known by "Historic Jeddah Festival" and it is the first of its kind in Jeddah City that recalls the past of both the place and the people in the past, in a period of time through which Jeddah city had passed over more than half a century ago. The festival initiated in 2014, and aims to promote the Kingdom as the House of

culture, literature and Arabian and Islamic history, while, preserving the heritage and the cultural treasures. It links the glorious past of the Kingdom with its prosperous present, allowing the people of Jeddah and visitors to touch the episodes of last century, and it introduces new generations to the heritage, culture, traditions and history of the residents of the Historic Jeddah area.

The Festival features various events each year, including dozens of programs and activities, in addition to forums and independent performing arts that spread along the historical place (Al Balad), furthermore, it has a specific theme annually that shows the traditions and link between behaviors and attitudes of people in past and present.

The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) chooses the historical area of Jeddah (Al-Balad) to be the place of the festival as it has very particular geographical, cultural, political and financial contexts. It includes a number of monuments and heritage buildings of archeological interest, such as the Old Jeddah wall and its historical open squairs (e.g. Al Mazloom, Al Sham, Al Yemen, and Al Bahr Haras), and a number of historic mosques (e.g. Uthman ibn Affan mosque, Al Shafi'i mosque, Al Pasha mosque, Akash mosque, Al Memar mosque and Al Hanafi mosque), in addition to these several historical markets (Souks) found there.

The study focus on how attendees act within the spaces specially arranged for this festival in order to allow urban designers to sketch out a range of ways in which the spatial arrangements of urban spaces during festivals give shape to informal socialization and the production of meanings, and city brand.

The researcher visited the site of the festival before and during the festival event and observed the diversity of formal and informal activities, which were shaped around the event and how the attendees' reactions to fulfil their needs affected the arrangement of the open spaces and paths inside the site. The field visit depend on site analysis, Field notes, live observations of human behavior in public settings and photos, in addition to the archival research of media reports and festival programs from previous years.

The observations concentrated on two main aspects that shaped the space, which are:

- a. Social and Humanity Aspects (Behavioral Aspects) including diversity of user patterns, activities occurring, interactions between attendees and participants "Organizers, Sponsors, Sellers, Talented Performers" and involvement of local businesses, institutions and social groups in the festival events
- b. Spatial Aspects (Urban Space Settings) including reorganization and transformation of public and private space for the festival, intensive uses of spaces that are usually unoccupied and adding some elements to enrich the open space.

Through the precise field visits to the place before and during the festival and analyzing, the spatial settings that occur with respect to the attendees' behaviors, the research figures out the significant role of the four physical and spatial characteristics of the urban (enclosure, centrality, axial and permeability) on the organization of actions and behaviors of occupants.

#### **4. Analysis and Findings:**

Before we start the analysis of the impact of the social aspects on urban spaces during the Historic Jeddah Festival, it is necessary to concentrate on some social features for the users, which should be taken in consideration due to its importance on succeeding the event. The research divide these features into two main features, which are:

##### **a) Congestion:**

During Historic Jeddah festival, urban spaces are crowded with different users more than any time else. In addition, its level of overcrowding varies through the day, as it is more crowded in nigh than in day light due to the natural of climate (Hot and Dry Climate) - (Fig.3a-b); moreover, most of the attendees work. The congestion is caused when there is a conflict between activities that are performed at the same time in the same place. (Carmona at al., 2010).

Although there is negative side for congestion, but people in some cases prefers it for social interactions results in a collective behavior.



Figure 3. Shows how the space is crowded in night more than in day light

### b) The Diversity of Users:

Historic Jeddah festival is characterized by diversity of users in terms of age, gender, social and cultural level. Users can be divided into two main types: Residents of the District or Owners/Labors who work in shops there and visitors who come only in festivals to participate if they find attracting elements there. Those visitors might be from Jeddah citizens who feel that this festival belongs to their culture and traditions and want to share their kids all old habits or foreigners who are excited to transfer knowledge and traditions with other people and enjoy the feeling of place (Sense of Place) especially that old Jeddah has its identity.

Based on the above, we can consider that the social features is one of the main factors that reshape the urban space and help in the development of physical and behavior of space and users.

The following analysis shows that although the site of Historic Jeddah Festival is appropriate for such events and can offer opportunities for social interaction, self-expression and self-realization to develop unless we ignore any of the four key spatial characteristics: enclosure, centrality, axial and permeability and connectivity.

#### 1) Enclosure

One of the benefits of the site of Historic Jeddah Festival is that the place is totally surrounded by large walls. During normal days, vehicles can move inside and there is no separation between pedestrians' paths and vehicles' roads but as festival starts, only people can inside through the huge old gates and it is not allowed for any vehicle to go inside (Fig.4). This help in expanding the amount of spaces where users can move safely and extra temporary booths could be added so it gives the chance for more participant to share their stuff and open market for non-professional projects (Fig.5). Furthermore, it helps to reduce air pollution, traffic noise and increases the ability of users to enjoy watching the displayed elements, deal with the merchant without feeling scared of cars, as well as the density of people increase, and their opportunities for social interactions increase.

The enclosure of the urban space helps in arranging the movement of people inside and keep it smooth and easily. In addition, people can knew the initial start of the festival and lead them to have a one-way circulation and assure that they will pass through all the activities held there.



Figure 4. Shows the Huge Gates of the festivals that are open for people only



Figure 5. Shows how people can move safely and free during the festival

## 2) Centrality

Centrality describes the action of a central element in its periphery. It was defined thus as a hierarchical concept between service and attraction. It may cause congestion if it is not well arranged or the distribution of activities is not appropriate. The attractiveness and circulation of this element is based on the efficacy of the central pole and its accessibility.

In normal days, the central poles (Nodes) in the site are always empty, no theme or activity there and there is not any use for the central pole (nodes) (Fig.6).



Figure 6. Shows that some of the nodes are empty and without any theme or activity in normal

While during the Festival (Historic Jeddah Festival), most of the nodes have a certain use, and they are a lot in order to reduce the congestion. These Nodes are divided to three main types, each as its own characteristic:

- a. Nodes near the gates are used as gathering points; people can gather there then start their journey through Old Jeddah and activities of the festival. These nodes are usually very crowded thus there is no furniture in it (Fig7).
- b. Separate Nodes are spaced out along the paths providing particular points of crowd concentration. These nodes are for the activities (Fig.8 a-b) and the talent performances especially art and talent shows; as it acts as a small exhibitions where talent people can show their work (Fig.9), people usually stay inside it and it is not with furniture.
- c. Large Nodes at the end used as a meeting space where people can sit, had conversations, and enhance the social interactions between them. These nodes are full of furniture and food booths and temporary tents that increase the opportunity for the occurrence of interactions of different social ties (Fig.10).



Figure 7. Shows the gathering node near gates





Figure 8. Shows how the nodes can be used for activities or open galleries



Figure 9. Show art exhibition for talented people



Figure 10. Show using end nodes as a social interaction space

Sometimes stakeholders and organizers add huge temporary structure elements (Inflated Building) for shows that talk about history, local life and traditions. The organized events of the festival go hand-in-hand with physical planning to develop the public realm as a socio-cultural medium for interaction.

### 3) Axial

Historic Jeddah Festival is formed in order to show all things about the history and traditions of this place, as it is the initial core of Jeddah. Many events happened there and some famous people used it, so stakeholders and organizers consider it as an open exhibition where people should pass through all its parts. In order to facilitate the movement and avoid informal ones, Signs are used and sometimes they put barriers to separate between both directions. On the other hand, people can move freely in all paths during the normal days.



Figure 11. Shows how famous places are decorated and the lighting of paths



Figure 12. Show how people act with the displayed elements and what slower the movement among the paths

There is another benefit from the one-way circulation to the shops' owners; they will be assured that all people will pass by their shops. In addition to that, organizers used the wall of the famous buildings there as form digital art with different shapes to make the paths livable and people do not feel bored, and the add light above the paths (Fig.11 a-b). Most of the secondary activities' rely upon the linear structure established for the organized event.

One of the problems found was that thus the movement of people was easily organized, but the congestion lead to slower the movement as some activities attract people and some booths were placed among the paths so people stop suddenly without considering that they should move especially that there are some paths are narrow (Fig.12).

#### 4) Permeability and Connectivity:

The idea of permeability and connectivity is to connect and integrate the site with the surrounding community and areas through a network of diverse public spaces including streets, paths and open spaces. Connections with existing streets will invite pedestrians into and through the site. Permeability can enhance the attractiveness of a neighborhood through the provision of additional usable open space; can increase social interactions by facilitating more activity in the public realm, and can maximize the potential for walking to a range of services.

Old Jeddah (Al Balad) has good linkages between all its areas through the pedestrian paths. During festival not all the paths are opened. Organizers only use part of the neighborhood for the festival, this make people unable to recognize that there are other parts in the site that they did not visit unless local citizen shows them. But on the hand, we can consider the end of the festival as a cul de sac where the opportunities for social interaction increase (Fig.13). The site also includes many stalls selling ethnic food, crafts and traditional clothing that attract people especially who do not know a lot about old Saudi traditions and customs (Fig.14). The festival encourages more intensive and more varied uses of places that already carry memories and meanings for local citizen, and opening up community spaces so that new meanings can be brought to them. Also it provides better spatial opportunities for local citizens to act out and develop their own identities, and to communicate with other people from different cultures.

Finally, we could consider Historic Jeddah Festival as a tool for enhancing social engagement and the discovery of place, making strong connections to local identity and everyday life, and it illustrates tensions between efforts to control place and image, and local citizens' propensity to continuously create, circulate and debate images and ideas about places and identity.

Furthermore, such a festival provides an opportunity to develop awareness of identity for local children who participate in it, and develop their skills and confidence in bodily performance as a means through which they can communicate identity and meanings to others.



Figure 13. Show Cul de Sac as a social place



Figure 14. Show the place's identity while moving through paths

## 5. Conclusion:

Festivals may be strategically conceived with the purpose of promoting a 'distinctive city', which considered as an important feature of the experience economy. Moreover, such a use of the festival has also led to considerations of the commoditization and spectacularization of cultural events, where the traditionally perceived benefits for the local community can be questioned. Urban open spaces are the support of collective life as they reflect the inhabitant's culture, develop their everyday activities, and create the image of a place, where architectural structures and sociocultural features are mobilized, framed and re-presented.

Throughout the study, it was figured out that festivals may be able to influence social inclusion through facilitating social interaction, and stakeholders felt that these festivals were great places to get people together, and occupied a unique place in society. It was shown that urban spaces become dynamic during festival time, and neighborhood spaces are constantly being produced and reproduced with respect to their identity, meaning, rules, and social uses.

According to the previous part, it is essential to enhance the urban spatial spaces by increasing their ability to create connections and networks and provide attendees with a celebratory experience, and in order to achieve that, we should take in consideration the effect of the four key spatial characteristics as each of them had a role in facilitating social interaction. The idea of the enclosure for the space makes it safer in use and provides an identity, and centrality shows the ability of the space in attracting people through the arrangement and distributions so it could carry different uses that fits all users.

Our analysis also considered two other spatial parameters of festival event which were: axial and permeability and connectivity. These characteristics do not imply tight control of space and action. They are more open-ended, and they thus frame good prospects for introducing new uses into local space. The axial paths and movement during the festival emphasizes that the flows of people are free and not restricted to only docile queues of visitors on predetermined itineraries. Communication, interaction and movement are constantly occurring two ways at festivals, back and forth across the interface between those on the move and those who are stationary.

Organizers have to take in consideration that the space for the festival should not be too tightly regulated. In spite of the obvious benefits of enclosure and centralization, there are good reasons to loosen up the physical and managerial frame within which festival occur, so we can consider the four characteristics as important aspects that help in understanding the spatiality of organized festivals. More importantly, they illustrate how the same framework gives insight into unplanned and unexpected local activities.

By analyzing the people's reactions during festival, we could find that they act out the possibilities inherent in the festival spaces and their participations add meaning and value to the space of the festival through the un-programmed activities, and not only by decorating or renaming them. Festival can also reawaken old meanings in spaces, whether festival organizers want it or not.

The role of festival organizers in promoting social interaction needs to be unpacked further. They should know what forms of embodied engagement they offer to meet local needs; the ways in which festivals and their spaces are active, tactile, and malleable, given the findings of this study that it is part of the strategies employed by organizers to attain social inclusion goals.

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