

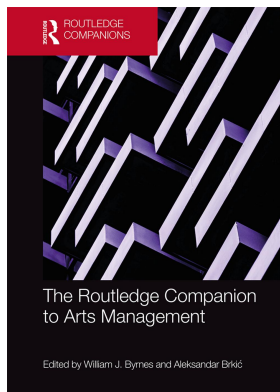
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### Postmodern approaches in curating and managing arts festivals in global cities

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# 18

## POSTMODERN APPROACHES IN CURATING AND MANAGING ARTS FESTIVALS IN GLOBAL CITIES

*Benny Lim*

### **Introduction**

Getz (2012) argued that a festival could be defined as a notable occurrence where the word ‘notable’ is interchangeable with the word ‘special’, making common the term ‘special event’ when referring to a festival. Special events are characterized by the concept of transient, which suggests that such events should not happen often, and are mostly temporary, and short-term (Gilbert and Lizotte, 1998). The limited literature on arts festivals has always focused on two directions, which seem to overlap sometimes, and yet, contradict at other times. It is reflected in many texts that festivals impact and build their respective communities. Other literature suggest that arts festivals are regarded as important aspects of the creative industries and that they contribute to the creative economy and the overall branding of the city. Quinn (2005) first identified a pressing situation in a comprehensive paper, which discussed how government in urbanized cities are more interested in the economic impact of arts festivals, and how festivals serve as a quick fix to a city’s branding. In the same paper, she also highlighted that these festivals fail to celebrate and build communities.

Drawing on Quinn’s research, I started visiting arts festivals since 2014, with the main intention to observe new directions in curating and managing arts festivals in urban areas, specifically in global cities. A global city is usually characterized by being the financial, media, medical, entertainment and innovation center of the state/country (Sassen, 2001). It is also where the key universities of the state/country are situated (Cunningham, 2012). Unlike other similar researches that explore interesting trends and new management styles, this research specifically delves into how the weakening of community linkages has brought about some new possibilities in curating and managing arts festivals in global cities.

In the context of Asia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul are usually considered as global cities, although the most recent A.T. Kearney Global Cities Index 2017 includes other Asian cities such as Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Taipei, as well as a number of Chinese cities (Dessibourg and Hales, 2017). As of December 2017, non-intrusive participant observations of 15 unique arts festivals in four Asian cities, namely, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong were conducted. In each festival, I participated in a range of the activities as an audience member, and communicated with different stakeholders informally, including other

audience members and festivals' organizers. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) recommended that researchers conducting participant observation should understand the field and connect with relevant stakeholders, be aware of the situations on the field, and learn how to listen and when to withdraw. Many arts festivals' websites also contain crucial and useful information such as artists' information, programs descriptions, and annual reports. Hence, secondary research, which included the collection and analysis of reports and other information from the websites of 30 arts festivals in these four cities, were also carried out.

This chapter discusses, drawing on the context of postmodernism, some new directions in how arts festivals in global cities are being curated and managed, with reference to case studies from four such cities in Asia. The chapter concludes with recommendations to arts managers in tackling the challenges and new directions of arts festivals in global cities.

### **Building communities and sense of place**

The term 'festival' has its origins from traditions that celebrate festivities (Ryken, 2002). A festival differs from a 'fair' in that a fair is a gathering of tradespeople or vendors (Tribhuwan, 2003), while a festival has always been a form of celebration, where a distinctive community comes together to celebrate the special event (Getz, 2012). The festivities could involve sacred and religious elements, where communities pay respects to the supernatural forces that protect them or adhere to specific traditional practices. Hence, festivals have always played a positive role to integrate the communities and the people within them (Jepson and Clarke, 2016; Yeoman, Robertson, and Smith, 2012). The place of the festival itself contributes to the uniqueness of the community, and it offers a sense of pride to the people who reside within it. Derrett (2003) saw festivals as a long-term investment for a community to build a sense of cohesiveness, attachment, lifestyle, values, active citizenship, well-being, and new directions for future. By participating in local festivals, participants can search for authenticity, uniqueness, and familiarity of the city, and thus build up the sense of belonging and civic-mindedness (Derrett, 2004). Further thought shows that festivals also facilitate visitors from outside these communities to understand and appreciate their respective cultures. The festival becomes a place within a place for visitors to come in touch with the place and its community (Haanpää, García-Rosell, and Seija Tuulentie, 2016). Another important consideration is for the events in the festival to be executed without spoiling the quality of life of the locals and their future generations. Members within the community should be considered as key stakeholders, partners and sponsors in the development of the events and in a large number of cases, as it is them who form the majority of the festivals' participants (Jepson and Clarke, 2016). Therefore, it should be noted that a festival is not able to provide to the heart of a community unless its organizers make them culturally inclusive and the members within the community are fully invited and engaged by the event (Jepson, Wiltshire, and Clarke, 2008).

Festivals now include secular aspects such as arts festivals, which encompass a wide range of artistic activities such as performing arts, visual arts and more recently, digital arts, usually held in a specific place and curated with consideration of a specific community. Arts festivals are usually organized and presented by an association or organization, a group or a person (Tonkin and Jameel, 2016). Bourdieu (1984) has illustrated the impacts of building cultural capital as the individual's means to the enhancement of social status and distinction. The intellectual satisfaction received through participating in such cultural activities promotes individuals' creative thinking, the pursuit of arts excellence and further personal development, which in turn, build up one's cultural capital, and in the process, facilitate one's contribution to society on the whole.

Kinder and Harland (2004) also suggested that participating in the arts can influence individuals in advance learning, attitudinal and behavioral change, relationship, communication skills and psychological development. Enjoyment and engagement created in arts festivals or events influence participants' interests and thus encourage the learning of arts and self-expression. By empowering the community with the ability to appreciate arts, arts festivals can bring about cultural democratization and fulfill art education purpose of the organizing place. On a societal level, an increase in the focus on arts festivals could give rise to social awareness of issues and problems that might otherwise have remained dormant (Slater, 2016).

### **Arts festivals in global cities: festivalization and the disappearing communities**

There is a growing number of arts festivals alongside many other different types of festivities in global cities. For instance, there is, on a monthly average, one to two arts festivals happening in Singapore and Hong Kong. Hence, the pressing issue is that some of these arts festivals are outcomes of the effects of 'festivalization', which cultural policy makers, mostly the government, adopt as a strategy to fulfill policies and economic growth. Négrier (2015) defined festivalization as "the process by which cultural activity, previously presented in a regular, ongoing pattern or season, is reconfigured to form a 'new' event, e.g., a regular series of jazz concerts is reconfigured as a jazz festival." Liu (2014) stated that arts and culture festivalization as urban policies had become a worldwide phenomenon, with aims to preserve cultural identity, promote and (re) brand the city, attract tourists, develop and rejuvenate communities, promote active citizenry, educate the public about arts and culture, exchange creative ideas, develop cultural facilities and infrastructure – the list goes on. Local politicians are becoming increasingly convinced of the potential of festivals to boost economic development and growth (Quinn, 2010; Pejovic, 2009), over and above their socio-cultural impacts to communities and their people.

Global cities are often more cosmopolitan in comparison to other urban areas, suburban or rural areas. With the over-saturation of festivals and the presence of diverse communities, each with different motivations and wants, global cities may not offer the right conditions for arts festivals to truly fulfill the celebratory function of communities and the people within, let alone building an effective sense of pride and place. It is surmised to say that the current literature on festivals and their impacts on communities seem to fit better in cities and towns that are not considered global, with lesser arts festivals, a smaller population that connects festivals and their communities. Arts festivals in global cities celebrate the intellectual, creative achievements and the aesthetics of the city. These festivals not only encourage cultural participation but also support the development of the creative industries (Ooi, 2007; Hall, 1994). In measuring the success of arts festivals, two common measurement tools are often proposed by scholars – economic impact studies and cost-benefit analysis (Bowdin et al., 2011; Williams and Bowdin, 2008). Economic impact does not just focus on the direct revenue made through sales of tickets, and other merchandise in the festival, but also the indirect and induced economic impacts generated by the existence of the festival. Cost-benefit analysis incorporates the economic impacts but also other intangible variables, such as stakeholders' engagement and sociocultural impacts to community and place, which may be considered cost or benefits depending on the nature (negative or positive) of the impact. Although cost-benefit analysis considers impacts to communities and place, the data collected have to be processed before they can be used, and non-monetary cost and benefits are often considered less important than monetary ones. In sum, socio-cultural impacts of festivals are easily sidelined in the calculations.

## New directions in curating and managing arts festivals in global cities

### *A new cultural logic for continuity/discontinuity*

Shakespeare 400 Festival was an arts festival held in Kuala Lumpur in 2016. It was timely for such a festival because 2016 marked the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Obviously, the festival was made up of theatre productions written by the bard. Considering the uniqueness of this celebration, Shakespeare 400 Festival was meant to happen only once, unlike many other festivals that usually return yearly or biannually. Despite its unique situation, Shakespeare 400 Festival triggers some further thinking in terms of continuity. One-off festivals tend to embark on a discourse in response to specific social conditions of a particular point in time and may not make any sense to have another installment in the coming year or two. For the last five years, I have been involved in organizing an annual arts festival that responds to specific socio-cultural and political happenings in Hong Kong. Though the festival returns every year in April, the continuity is disrupted by a complete change of the festival's title and focus year on year. Simply said, the same organizers put up a different arts festival every year, and therefore, each festival is one-off. Indeed, festivals serve as excellent platforms to critically reflect and respond to crucial issues. Moreover, these issues are time-based and therefore are only relevant in their immediate aftermath. One may also argue that being time-based does not mean that the issues cannot be further explored and debated. One-off arts festivals may be deemed as half-hearted in their attempt to frame a discourse. Shakespeare's works are known to be timeless. The bigger question herein lies – is there more to celebrate about Shakespeare than just his death anniversary? In fact, there are many Shakespeare Festivals around the world that return year to year to effectively bring across the timeless nature of his works. A one-off arts festival may come across as commodifying the issues it discusses in this age of consumerism.

As established earlier, festivals are special events that are celebrated by communities. Hence, the continuity of a festival ensures the ongoing opportunities for celebration, and for members of communities to be in communal settings to reinforce their sense of place. However, with the disappearing focus on communities, the continuity and survival of many arts festivals shift towards economic impacts and city branding (Ooi and Pedersen, 2010). Politicians that govern over a particular city or state would extend their support to arts festivals that contribute to the branding of the place, which in turns attracts tourists. Their support has led to a trend of major arts festivals commissioning market research agencies to assist them with economic impact studies, which would eventually become important data for state funding bodies and corporate sponsors, creating a dual-commodification process whereby economic impact studies reports would become a commodity that major arts festivals would invest in and that economically successful festivals would become products that are reproduced over and over again in the same mold. Arts festivals that subscribe to the agendas of specific political parties are also likely to receive the support for continued installments. In October 2017, I visited the second edition of Blossom Arts Festival in Kuala Lumpur. This arts festival seeks to bring a range of performing and visual arts programs to Chinese Malaysians and is organized by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), which is part of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) party. Despite having a clear idea to build up the cultural capital of the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur, the festival's organizer was certain that the festival must also enhance the reputation of MCA and the ruling party. With BN being voted out of power for the first time since Malaysia's independence in 1957, it is unlikely this festival would return for the third time in 2018.

### ***Challenging the state of transient***

Another unique feature of the Shakespeare 400 Festival is in its year-long programming. The events of this festival were spread over the duration of a full year in 2016, with the first theatre program in January and the final one in December. A year-long seems to challenge festivals' state of transient, but on further thinking, it might not be the case. Since this is a one-off festival celebrating a very specific moment, it makes sense to spread out the events as long as possible. It is likely that future festivals about Shakespeare similar to this one will only happen decades later on his 450th or 500th death anniversary. However, there are also arts festivals that return yearly but have their programs spread out over a longer duration. Here, I do not just refer to arts festivals that place their events only on consecutive weekends. The West Kowloon Cultural District of Hong Kong organizes Freespace Happening, which is a music and arts festival. It began in November 2014 as a 2-day Freespace Fest but the word 'Fest' was replaced by 'Happening' from 2015 onwards. Instead of a short 2-day festival, the event format was changed to one day (or two, sometimes) per month on the second weekend for six months per year. Ultimately, this festival only runs for about six to ten days, over a six-month period per year. Is this festival still a special event as defined by Getz? Perhaps the state of transient as a key characteristic of festivals is no longer valid in global cities due to the sheer number of art events and other arts and cultural activities. The public in these cities can hardly feel the unique state of the impermanence of festivals. This raises one major question – do arts festivals still make sense in global cities that are constantly filled with different kind of arts events as well as non-arts focused festivals? In hindsight, the change of name from Freespace 'Fest' to 'Happening' (as in, something that happens) foregrounds the question. From a management perspective, lengthening the festival's period does have its benefits, especially in Hong Kong, where there are shortages of arts venues. Spreading out the programs of the arts festival over a longer period means lesser pressure for the organizers to ensure a consecutive availability of venue(s).

### ***Packaging festivals***

A single, standalone performing arts or visual arts event needs to focus on its artistic vision and message. Similarly, an arts festival should have its vision and statements, but it is also made up of a number of standalone arts events, each with its own artistic message. Curators of festivals need to carefully consider the complexity of the underlying thread that links the events within the festival together. Programming philosophy serves as a guiding principle and provides a clear line of reasoning for the festival's programming team as well as the public on the choice of the arts events, artists, and venues. If well defined, the programming philosophy can definitely determine a clear existence and the 'soul' of the festival. Goldblatt (1997), in his book, *Special Events – Best Practices in Modern Event Management*, presented some key questions that must be answered in developing the core values for a special event. The first question looks at the reasons behind the event. Event organizers must be able to identify the compelling reasons for holding the event. The second question requires the identification of the various stakeholders involved, as it will influence the outcomes of the third question as to when and where the event should take place. The fourth question seeks to clarify the event's product, and in the case of the festival, it suggests that a clear statement of the festival's programming philosophy should be communicated to the public through the festival's offerings as well as other tangible cues. Finally, the last question that event organizers must address is their expected outcomes of the event. Brown and James (2004) also highlight five key design principles of events – focus, scale, shape, timing, and build – that

may also affect the experience of the participants. Focus, here, aligns perfectly with Goldblatt's five key questions discussed earlier. For an arts festival, the scale is directly related to the expectations of the participants, regarding the choice(s) of programs and venues. Next, the concept of shape suggests that the layout of (or movement within) an arts festival should consider the audience psychology and expectations. The festival must also be aware of the turnaround time for different artists/arts organizations; especially if they share the same venue. Timing should also consider the participants' expectations, from the duration of the events to time needed to travel between events. Finally, there should be a fair distribution of high and low energy/impact events throughout the festival, to generate maximum impact in terms of experience for the audience. Having two high energy events one after another within the festival, for instance, will result in one event diminishing the impact of the other.

DiverseCity: Kuala Lumpur International Arts Festival was first introduced in September 2015 as a month-long post-National Day celebration event for Malaysia. In the first edition, some of the events were specially curated for the festival, while the Kuala Lumpur International Comedy Festival and the Kuala Lumpur International Jazz Festival, both with a longer history than DiverseCity, were then organized as part of the festival. These two smaller scale festivals became part of a much bigger festival, with more resources and support for publicity. It is worth clarifying that the subsuming of two smaller festivals into one big one only happens in 2015, and not in the later editions of DiverseCity. Nevertheless, the packaging of loosely organized singular events and smaller arts festivals under the umbrella of a bigger festival is highly possible, and in some ways, it creates a spectacle and indirectly contributes to the city branding. After all, it has repeatedly been mentioned in this chapter that global cities are saturated with a range of different arts and cultural events. Hence, packaging events into an arts festival also serves as a more convenient mode of operation than curating a festival from scratch. Packaging arts festivals may also mean that less thinking goes into the programming philosophy. This packaging of events into a festival should not be confused with many fringe festivals happening around the world, where any artists/arts organizations are welcomed to participate. The term 'fringe,' which suggests the broad idea of non-mainstream, is in itself a philosophy and those who participate consider their performances and activities as against or challenging the mainstream.

There is also a noticeable trend of convergence of festivals' forms and functions. Increasingly, more arts festivals are considering including different types of events that serve different functions. Some events must contribute to the financial health (big-name international acts), while some focus more on cultural democracy, giving the public more opportunities to come in touch with the arts. There are also events that transfer knowledge, such as symposiums and forums that are organized alongside arts festivals, as well as networking events within the festival for key stakeholders, such as arts markets. For the first time in 14 years, the Bangkok Theatre Festival, held between 1–18 November 2017, included a 5-day Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting. This event offered a series of workshops and talks on specific arts forms and provided a platform for impresarios and festival directors from around the region to mingle and promote their shows.

### *Audience-centricity*

Marketing the arts has evolved over the years, in terms of theoretical and practical perspectives, from a transactional process to a more sophisticated concept of relationship marketing (Hill et al., 2012). Within the realm of relationship marketing, there has been a clear shift from customer-focus to customer-centric (Sharma, 2011), triggering the tendency for arts festivals' organizers to map out the entire experience of the audience, which includes the non-arts aspects

such as hangout spaces, food and beverages, and photo opportunities (including selfies). The advent of the digital age has brought about categorically changes to how arts festivals operate. RFID wristbands are coming into use, allowing festival-goers to leave their purses behind in safe places and store information regarding their credit card on their wristband (Thakkar, 2016). Clockenflap Music and Arts Festival is an annual 2-day arts festival in Hong Kong, which has evolved from a small and humble festival to one with 60,000 attendees. Clockenflap has effectively incorporated RFID technology into their operations, enabling the purchase of beverages and merchandise and assisting the organizers to gain some insight into the habits of the attendees that are useful for crowd control and sponsorship activation.

Technology has also shifted from being mere support (buying tickets online, acquiring information about the festivals from websites, facilitating in cashless transactions on the festivals' sites, etc.) to a medium on its own. Arts festivals in global cities are increasingly exhibiting three distinct dimensions, 'experimentation', 'spectacularization' and 'immersion', all of which offer new opportunities and challenges for the management of innovative types of work that continue to retain their separate aesthetic power (Jordan, 2016). Frew and McGillivray (2008) reiterate 'the transformational power of technology' in allowing escapism and fantasy through the design of an event. Surprises will become a theme of rising importance in arts festivals (Getz, 2015). In this digital age, participants will share these surprises on their social media platforms. The input of technology enables faster, more online, live or streamed events to be delivered and with greater use of such advanced technology (Frost, Mair, and Laing, 2015), the experience of participants, i.e., the Generation C (Sadd, 2015), can be enhanced and rapidly publicized. Even with the inevitable invasion of technology into the domain of arts festivals, several scholars believe that social meeting of events in physical spaces will still be crucial in the future (deBlanc Goldblatt, 2011; Duffy and McEuen, 2010). It is unlikely that arts festivals will completely move into the virtual sphere. A possible trend is the rise of hybrid festivals, where part of the experience is virtual while part of it needs the participants to be on site (Nolan, 2017). Festivals are also likely to popularize the use of virtual and augmented reality to enhance the layers of experience by the audience. One such festival is the Cooler Lumpur Festival in Kuala Lumpur, branding itself as a multidisciplinary celebration of culture and ideas. In the 2017 edition, the festival has incorporated a virtual reality expedition catered for children and has also invited Japanese artist Aimi Sekiguchi to showcase her virtual reality art performance.

### ***Embracing mass culture***

Arts festivals often curate events that are considered high arts, such as classical concerts, theatre productions, as well as classical and contemporary dance, as opposed to mass culture. My research suggests that some arts festivals are breaking away from only curating events that are traditionally considered as high arts. In these festivals, the divide between high and low arts is deliberately blurred, gearing towards a creative platform for a contemporary lifestyle. Freespace Happening embraces a range of different performing, visual and literary arts with handicrafts, food, digital technologies, games, pets and even skateboarding. While there are no intentions to privilege high arts, there are apprehensions that this cultural phenomenon (of blurring) leads to a public perception that the arts, and arts festivals, are therefore similar to other leisure and entertainment events. By being perceived as just one of the many leisure choices, arts festivals in global cities are likely to shift even further away from their socio-cultural benefits. Comic Arts Festival is another example of a festival embracing both events of high arts and mass culture, or a mix of both. Besides the choice of programs, the festival has always been held in a popular shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur since it was first introduced in 2013. Another noteworthy example is the



Living Arts Festival in Bangkok, which features outdoor 4D street-art creations, installation arts, and pavement arts that seek to distort pedestrians' perceptions. The festival, which only ran for two years in 2013 and 2014, was held on a pedestrian bridge in the heart of Bangkok shopping district. Cooler Lumpur Festival also renders a couple of these traits – the programs embrace a mixture of high arts and mass culture, and the festival is held in an event space within a relatively high-end shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur.

### Postmodernism to blame?

'*We live in a postmodern era*' (Robinson, 2005; Janson and Janson, 2004; Ogilvy, 2002) is a common phrase used in a number of scholarly publications in the last two decades, although there seems to be a general trend of dismissing this phrase as cliché in recent times (Mestrovic, 2010). The problem lies in the (lack of) definitions of the term 'postmodern,' and its related derivations such as 'postmodernism' and 'postmodernity.' Hutcheon (2002) states that the term postmodernism is overtly abused in its association with the concepts of contemporary culture. Being a set of ideas about a particular situation in our current society, postmodernism is deemed as a condition (Holzman and Morss, 2000) and a phenomenon following the downfall of modernism (Reading and Schaber, 1993) in the late capitalist age.

Lyotard's (1984) views on the 'incredulity towards metanarratives', sometimes also known as the 'death' of metanarratives, suggests a complete rejection of absolute truths as the key characteristic of the postmodern condition. 'Incredulity' refers to disbelief or skepticism, while 'metanarrative' indicates the totalizing ideas behind the human condition. This disbelief extends to modernism, where science and progress take precedence (Capaldi and Proctor, 2012). Contemporary societies are highly computerized and capitalized, and have evolving knowledge structures, disfavoring the taking roots of metanarratives. According to Foucault, power relations play a part in knowledge dissemination, thus rejecting the idea of truths beyond the structure of power (Hannem, 2012). The discourse of festivals in relations to their community impacts could be deemed as a metanarrative in itself. In this postmodern day and age, arts festivals in global cities create a false sense of consciousness and fail to bring about impactful knowledge to communities. Moreover, it remains a big question mark whether fixed and stable communities ever existed.

Various authors have stated that in future, society will be aging but also, at the same time, ageless (Bowen, 2015; Northrup, 2015; Yeoman, Robertson, and Smith, 2012). Age may become a less important factor in attendance, and the identities of audiences in global cities will also become more complex and fluid, making the concept of communities more ambiguous. Lyotard's preference towards mini-narratives focuses on the provisional, temporary and situational in explaining the human condition. As such, the need for arts festivals to continue yearly or biannually becomes less important.

The distrust towards grand narratives has also made its way into management processes. The Industrial Revolution created new challenges for managers and business owners alike, and new management approaches were conceived to tackle these problems. In the late 19th century, Frederick Taylor came up with the Scientific Management theory, which focused on methodologies in identifying the most efficient management procedures for a given project (Schermerhorn Jr, 2009). The drive towards efficiency and effectiveness propels the evolution of Scientific Management towards Modern Management approaches, which is largely characterized by the creation of systematic management processes by the human actors. Here, management is associated closely to the processes of planning, organizing, leading and monitoring, and in the center of it all are human actors, who are believed to have the agency in controlling the management

decisions and processes. Over time, these systems ironically replace the very human actors, who become commodified in the management equation (Gephart Jr, 1996). When human actors fail to control the systems, the concept of management also fails and recedes into the background, giving way to new cultural logic. This gives rise to the referencing of postmodernism to the death of individualism (Berger, 2003) or the ‘unavailability of the individual style’ (Jameson, 1991). In the case of arts festivals, it can also refer to a cut-and-paste curatorial style, recycling what has been successful and putting (sometimes) unrelated events together. Jameson (1991) has discussed at length on the commodification of all aspects of life in this late capitalist age, a clear shift away from the modernist critique of commodification. In this postmodern society, subscribing to the market ideology has become important and necessary, even for nonprofit sectors.

Since Enlightenment, there has been plenty of literature on the intellectual benefits of exposure to high arts. Similarly, the Frankfurt School considers high arts having the ability to project utopian visions and was critical of the rise of the commodification of the arts in the industrial age (Modleski, 1986). Jameson, on the other hand, considers Frankfurt School’s view of high arts as elitist and believes that high arts and mass culture should be looked at objectively, especially when faced with capitalism (Thomas, 2013). The blurring of boundaries between high arts and mass culture is a cultural phenomenon in this postmodern age (Gloag, 2012; Huyssen, 1986). Postmodern urban spaces affirm postmodernism’s plurality and multiplicity, embracing the consumption of different cultures, arts and entertainment (McClinchey and Carmichael, 2015). Many newer arts venues in global cities are built next to shopping belts and entertainment hubs. There is also the rising importance of spaces of transience, such as shopping malls, bridges, and walkways, as venues for the arts festivals. These spaces are otherwise known as non-places, a concept introduced by anthropologist Marc Augé. Buskers performing in the London Underground or New York Subway were the initial users of such non-spaces. Augé observed that places of transience are not considered significant enough to warrant the status of a particularly defined purpose (Arno and Neumann, 2012). He further argues that “in the concrete reality of today’s world, places and spaces, places and non-places, intertwine and tangle together” (Augé, 1995). Interestingly, while having little anthropological past, some of these non-places in these urban cities are gaining importance in the hearts of the people, very much a part of the city’s heritage. This is partly due to people spending more time in non-places. Furthermore, with the processes of gentrification going on so rapidly in urban cities, many places with rich histories and stories have to make way for urban renewal and development. By attending arts festivals in these non-places, audiences are not only exposed to a unique experience, but are also urged to reflect upon the very location in relation to the city’s cultural development.

### **Concluding remarks**

On a (postmodern) self-reflexive note, it is apt to conclude with a discussion on how managers of urban arts festivals could move forward with the scenarios and challenges mentioned in this chapter.

### ***Growth of community arts festivals***

First and foremost, the growing emphasis on city branding and creative economy suggests the further marginalization of social issues that were not represented by the arts festivals. One possible way forward is to encourage the organization of ‘bottom-up’ community arts festivals in global cities to counter this situation. These community arts festivals tend to focus on giving a voice to subordinated communities, such as people with disabilities, or communities that

require social change (Hague, Hague, and Breitbach, 2011), that are not fully integrated into the society. The festivals are likely to be organized by the communities themselves or by NGOs and arts practitioners who work closely with the communities. In such festivals, the quality of the artwork may not be most important, but the ability to tell the stories of these subordinated communities to the public or relevant stakeholders becomes extremely crucial. Some might be concerned that this could be a form of governmental control of communities in that the people would be side-tracked in organizing and taking part in community arts festivals as a way of expressing their thoughts and opinions, rather than joining in protest meetings or marches (Bajc, 2014). Moreover, these 'bottom-up' community arts festivals could also face very stiff competition from resource-rich government agencies organizing community arts festivals from a 'top-down' approach. One such example is the PAssion Arts Festival, organized by the Community Arts section of People's Association, a government agency in Singapore. This festival prides itself to bring 'arts and culture to everyone, everywhere and every day.' Instead of being a platform for communities to voice out their stories, these 'top-down' community arts festivals sometimes focus on what the 'top' think is important, such as environmental and recycling issues, which indirectly leads back to the idea of city branding. Government agencies may support a certain community arts festival in fulfillment of their key performance indicators, such as social cohesion, and cultural democracy. Sponsors giving money to community arts festivals could be seeking opportunities for product placement and brand recognition. It is, therefore, necessary for arts managers to bear in mind the different power structures when engaging with stakeholders. Arts managers play an important role to ensure that power-sharing is way forward for such community-based festivals.

### ***Rethinking the role of technologies in arts festivals***

Given the adoption of technology into arts festivals, it is necessary for arts managers to be well equipped with technological skills and knowledge. Apart from learning how to use different technologies, arts managers need to be critical of the different approaches to incorporating technologies into arts festivals. As this chapter has highlighted, technology can be used in three ways – as a support for better service and management; as a medium of expression and co-creation; as means to enhance the entire festival experience. When making use of technologies, arts managers must consider the likely impacts and decide if it aids in achieving the mission, vision, and philosophy of the festival.

### ***Mediation: the way forward***

Arts managers need to be constantly critical of the cultural logic and resist the seduction of commodification and consumerism. Instead of the impossible task to fight the postmodern condition altogether, arts managers need to constantly navigate within the phenomenon, in search of a better environment for the arts and culture. While numbers (including economic impacts) serve as important data for decision making, arts managers should avoid being overtly obsessed with numbers in the management process. The reliance on attendance numbers as criteria for funding shifts the attention away from the process of art-making to the process of management by numbers. This shift risks the importance of the intangible benefits of the arts, such as building a more cultured and civilized society, as well as encouraging critical thinking. Moreover, the socio-cultural impacts of festivals might not be necessary at odds with the concept of city branding and economic contribution. Wee (2002) mentioned that the state support in the arts is crucial if cultural production is not to be reduced to the level of simple manufactures. He also

mentioned the symbolic values of cultural productions and how they represent a larger symbolic life of the city-state. If a city wants to be successful in being culturally vibrant, the values of the arts must first be upheld. It is also worth noting that artists are currently engaging in a wide range of activities supporting the notion of place-making (Maguire, 2016) by animating public places and spaces to feed a new phenomenon which is occurring around the world, that of capturing a place's essence, through the vehicle of a festival. Maguire (2016) suggests that it would be possible to use a working prism consisting of a threefold 'people-place-purpose' in a capacity as a lens through which it could be possible to observe the unfolding of events and the constitution of various areas of work-defining self-contained spaces as place-animation, for innovation and general investigation. As Jordan (2014) argued, however, economic and tourist policymakers do not often consider this when initially formulating economic plans and policies. Managers of arts festivals should also take on the role of cultural mediators, to defend arts, to facilitate more people to come in touch with the arts through festivals, and to actively connect the relevant stakeholders, such as artists, audiences, sponsors, arts policymakers as well as city planning, economic and tourism policymakers.

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