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Linking social capital, cultural capital and heterotopia at the folk festival

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of folk festivals in transforming interconnections between people, space and culture. It interlinks three sets of theoretical ideas: social capital, cultural capital and heterotopia to suggest a new conceptual framework that will help to frame a deeper understanding of the nature of celebration. Qualitative data were collected at two long-established folk festivals, Sidmouth Folk Festival in southern England and the Feakle Traditional Music Festival in western Ireland, in order to investigate these potential links. Although Foucault did not fully develop the concept of heterotopia, his explanation that heterotopias are counter-sites, which, unlike utopias, are located in real, physical, space-time, has inspired others, including some festival researchers, to build on his ideas. This study concludes that the heterotopian concept of the festival as sacred space, with the stage as umbilicus, may be linked to the building of social capital; while it is suggested that both social capital and appropriate cultural capital are needed to gain full entry to the heterotopia.

Keywords

Folk festivals, social capital, cultural capital, heterotopia, space

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Introduction

This paper seeks to investigate the role of the folk festival in transforming interconnections between people, space and culture. It uses data collected at two long-established folk festivals: Sidmouth Folk Week in southern England and Feakle Traditional Music Festival in western Ireland and draws on and interlinks three sets of theoretical ideas: social capital, cultural capital and heterotopia.

First, it conceives of festivals as “other” places, in line with Foucault’s 1967 (Foucault 1984, Foucault 2008) writings on the concept of heterotopia. It uses empirical evidence from two cases to investigate how different social relations are fostered within the festival place as heterotopia. Having used Foucault’s concept of heterotopia to investigate how social relations become changed, this paper then draws on theories of social capital (Bourdieu 2002 [1986]; Putnam 2000) to deepen understanding of how these processes are facilitated through the workings of the festivals. It investigates the extent to which these changed social relations impact on bonding and bridging social capital; and the role played by cultural capital. The paper concludes by suggesting how these three sets of theoretical ideas could be combined into a useful conceptual framework which would enable others to further investigate these issues.

Festivals as other places

For Foucault, festivals constitute an example of what he termed heterotopia (Foucault 1984: 7). Heterotopic sites (Foucault 1984: 3) are defined as ones in which all the other real sites within a culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted: the relationship of the heterotopic site is to “suspect, neutralize or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect.” Foucault went on to explain that six principles underpin the idea of heterotopia: (1) all cultures constitute heterotopias, although in varied forms, (2) their function can change over time, (3) they juxtapose several incompatible sites within a single real place, (4) they break or disrupt traditional concepts of time, (5) they may require certain acts, performances or rituals to gain entry to them, and (6) they exist only in relation to all other sites and spaces. Heterotopia is a wide-ranging but under-developed conceptual framework which includes both macro and micro elements. Foucault himself did not fully develop the concept, and he has been criticised accordingly (Johnson 2013). However, it has been widely used by researchers who, like Saldanha (2008: 20181), interpret heterotopias as “countersites,” standing “in an ambivalent, though mostly oppositional, relation to society’s mainstream.” Saldanha goes on to explain that in contrast to utopias, heterotopias are located in real, physical, space-time, and serve to temporarily introduce different ways of ordering society and space into particular places, at particular times. For Hetherington (1997:40), meanwhile, heterotopias are spaces where “an alternative social ordering is performed,” in contrast to “the taken-for-granted mundane idea of social order that exists within society.”

While all of the principles of heterotopia are of value in studying festivals, and indeed present much scope for further application in the area, this paper focuses on

highlighting the particular promise shown by two of the principles. The first of these is that heterotopia can juxtapose several spaces within a single space: several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible. The term emplacement is, according to the notes in the Dehaene translation (Foucault 2008:23), a technical term denoting “discrete space,” rather than an actual site or place, although Foucault does occasionally also use it to denote these latter two. Foucault uses the example of the theatre which stages a whole series of places, as well as the cinema, which allows the projection of a three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional screen. The garden is a key example of a contradictory emplacement, according to Foucault. He explained that the traditional garden of the Persians was supposed to bring the world into its sacred space, with an even more sacred space at the centre, the umbilicus, where the water basin and fountain were. This idea may be used within a festival context by conceiving of the festival stage as the umbilicus, and the surrounding space as a site where festival goers can interact with each other and with festival performers, so intensifying social relations. Also, very simplistically, the spatial transformations effected by the staging of the festival enable the juxtaposition of several spaces within a single space, again setting the scene for intensified, although not necessarily positive, social interaction.

A second heterotopian principle showing promise is that heterotopias require certain acts, performances or rituals to gain entry to them. Echoing the features of rites of passage, Foucault suggests that accessing a heterotopian space is not easy: while in theory anyone can enter, not everyone who enters is necessarily included. People can only fully enter with a certain permission and after having performed certain gestures.

A small number of festival studies have used Foucault’s heterotopia concept to write of the disruptions caused by festivals and to conceive of them as different kinds of places. Howell (2013), for example, links sense of place and community to heterotopia in her study of the ritualised Badalisc Festival of Northern Italy. Placing Foucault’s heterotopia alongside Turner’s (1982b) work on ritual, liminality and communitas, Howell highlights how the festival, as an “other place” (p. 46), can force people to step outside their everyday mundane patterns of “normalcy.” She concludes that this “time-out-of-mundane-time” (p. 60) provides the ambience and opportunity for communication which can enhance community bonds. Of particular interest is her discovery that humour, laughter and dance, together with communal reunion, enable the festival participants to experience place in a sensual way.

Yazbak (2011) also conceives of festivals as heterotopia in his study of the historic festival of Nabi Rubin, which was first held in the thirteenth century in Palestine, ending in 1946. Yazbak explains that the Nabi Rubin formed a counter-space in the sense of the heterotopia, whereby people escaped to a simpler life, sleeping on mats, in close proximity not only to family and friends but also to strangers. In her study of Ramadan festivities in Istanbul, Karaosmanoglu (2010) claims that Ramadan may be seen as a heterotopic site and a utopic space, by considering it to be an alternative time/space which creates new, albeit temporary, ways of experiencing everyday life in the city. Karaosmanoglu concludes that Ramadan festivities disrupt usual relationships and promote the expression of peace, tolerance and friendship amongst all kinds of people

regardless of demographics or background, as religion, culture and history mingle in the spaces in Istanbul where the festivities are held.

In these studies, and expressly in the latter one, heterotopia is frequently used as an explanatory concept alongside related concepts like carnival, ritual and liminality. Generally speaking, social scientific studies of festivals understand them to have transformative powers and an ability to disrupt, even deny, the established social order (Duvignaud 1976). Their “time out of time” qualities, in particular, have been highlighted Bakhtin (1968). He understood festivals, and the closely associated carnival form, to offer a temporary release from the strictures and regulations of ordinary time and to act as a site of potential resistance where people are momentarily permitted to invert social norms through collective playfulness, frivolity, exuberance and escape from routine. Abrahams (1982), aligned festival times to ritual times, as both share a different sense of space and time from the everyday world, and provide a contrast to everyday life. Turner (1982a; 1974) highlighted the links between the energies of ritual, play, festivals and celebration. Drawing on Van Gennep’s (1960) exploration of ritual or rite of passage, Turner (1982b:121) comments that in the “betwixt and between” liminal, or middle, phase of ritual, people “play” with elements of the familiar, leading to de-familiarisation and short-term reclassifications of social experience. Turner (1982b: 50) also aligned *communitas*, an “alternative and more liberated way to be socially human,” to liminality. He explains that the inclusivity of *communitas*, which can characterise the relationships of those undergoing ritual, contrasts with the exclusivity of the social structure which gives sense and order to everyday life, although he warns (p. 84) that it is not necessarily a mechanism for promoting a gross group solidarity.

Another study that understands festivals as liminal zones, or carnival inversions of the everyday, is Ravenscroft and Matteucci’s (2003) work on Pamplona’s San Fermin Festival. Again, this paper highlights features of the carnivalesque, including inversion of the everyday. However, although they do argue that liminal zones are created in which people can engage in deviant practices, they point out that these zones are safe places to transgress the wider social structure of everyday life. This, they argue, effectively reinforces social order, although they acknowledge that new and revised social values may be gradually legitimized in the process. More recently, Jaimangal-Jones et al (2010) claim that the spatial construction of large dance music festivals may be framed by liminality and rites of passage. They highlight the temporary nature of the festival experience, where the norms and social structures of everyday life are transcended and challenged. The authors also characterise attendance at dance events as a rite of passage, with the transition, or liminal phase marking a time of ambiguity outside of normal social rules. Ziakas (2013) also picks up on the theme of liminality, highlighting its application to periods of distancing from everyday rules. He highlights its potential role in enhancing social networks and *communitas*.

Festivals, social capital and cultural capital

Notwithstanding the insights produced through the application of heterotopia in the literature to date, it is suggested here that combining the concept with social and cultural capital ideas can further advance understandings of the social function of festivals. Social capital is a broad term, with theorists interpreting and developing the concept in various ways. Bourdieu (2002 [1986]) places the individual at the core of the concept, linking the volume of social capital possessed by a person as dependent on the network of connections they can mobilise. He highlights the role of occasions, places and practices and the mutually recognisable signs within these contexts which are attempts to control access to the network. Putnam's (2000) approach to social capital emphasises the macro scale: the way in which networks, norms and trust may facilitate co-operation for mutual benefit. Putnam identifies two styles of social capital which may characterise social networks: bridging and bonding. He explains that bonding social capital is inward looking, reinforcing exclusive identities and promoting homogeneity; while bridging social capital is outward looking, promoting links between diverse individuals. Therefore, he sees bonding social capital as increasing solidarity with people who are already similar, while bridging social capital links people who move in different circles. Conversely, bonding social capital may also have the effect of excluding those people who do not conform to the norms of the network.

While many studies have a singular focus on social capital, this research follows Bourdieu who claims that cultural capital is indivisible from social capital, as cultural goods are used as symbolic goods to gain access to social capital. An individual's taste for culture is, according to Bourdieu (1984) expressed in their habitus, with a taste for music being a supreme opportunity for individuals to indulge in "intellectual window dressing": that is, to flaunt their knowledge (Bourdieu 1993: 103). Consideration of cultural capital will therefore also inform this study.

Recently, social capital has assumed greater prominence as a theoretical line of enquiry in studies focusing on the social dimensions of festivals (Arcodia and Whitford 2007; Finkel 2010; Mykletun 2009; Quinn and Wilks 2013; Wilks 2011; Ziakas 2013). Arcodia and Whitford (2007) were one of the first to study social capital in festival settings, arguing that it is encouraged by the negotiations between festival organisers and the many local groups and individuals who are needed to play a part in delivering the event. Social cohesiveness is also promoted during festival time due to the opportunities it gives to unite behind a common social purpose. Finally, the authors suggest that social capital is also enhanced by festivals because of the opportunities they give for public celebration, leading to a feeling of goodwill and *communitas*. Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) also drew on social capital when they argued that festivals can both increase the bonding social capital within a community, and enhance its bridging social capital by linking it to the world beyond the immediate community. Curtis, meanwhile, used social capital ideas in her study of an Australian jazz festival and found that social interaction was linked to the pursuit of musical excellence. She argued that the space the festival provides for entertainment and enjoyment is important in engendering a heightened sense of

belonging. She acknowledged that a festival transforms place and that, in her case study, a shared love of jazz underpins social networks which extend beyond the city. She also found that many locals also took part in the celebrations due to allegiance to the town, rather than because of the music. Finkel's (2010) work on the Scottish Up Helly Aa festival also points to the role that festivals play in creating place identities and reaffirming notions of traditionally constructed gender roles, while also acknowledging that festivals may not always engender positive social relations.

Giving added depth to the links already made between social capital and festivals, Wilks (2011) distinguished between close-knit social connections, temporary connections and separateness at festivals. She concluded that bonding social capital was in evidence at the pop and folk festivals that she studied, but that bridging social capital was not common. At the opera festival, neither bridging nor bonding social capital was prevalent, with attendees preferring to stay detached from other people. Alongside social capital, Wilks (2009) linked cultural capital with the music festival experience. Mykletun (2009) also linked these two capitals within a festival context, while Willems-Braun (1994) highlighted the links between cultural practice, social identity, and place.

Thus, whether positive or negative, it is evident that festivals produce social outcomes. Place and space are understood to be important in providing contexts for social interaction, with temporal aspects being also part of the mix. While this literature review shows that research into the social role of festivals is long standing, diverse and empirically well illustrated, there appears to be something of a disjoint, and indeed an overlap, in the conceptual ideas employed. What appears to be needed is a greater synthesising of the theoretical lines of enquiry employed so that the transformative effect that festivals have on social relations may be examined comprehensively and cohesively. This paper seeks to contribute by proposing that further elaboration of Foucault's thinking on heterotopia, linked with social capital and cultural capital ideas, can further advance knowledge.

Methodology

To help throw more light on the relationship between heterotopia and social and cultural capital at folk festivals, data were collected at two sites: Sidmouth Folk Week (Southern England) and the Feakle Traditional Music Festival (Western Ireland). Both Sidmouth and Feakle are relatively small communities where public and community space is dominated by festival activities during the festival period. A total of 92 interviews were conducted across the two festivals. At Sidmouth Folk Week, 37 interviews were carried out with local people, capturing the views of 39 local festival stakeholders. A further 9 interviews, captured the views of 10 non-local festival stakeholders. In Feakle, some 30 local people were interviewed, along with 18 visitors. The interviews were carried out "in-the-moment" in festival spaces, were semi-structured, and averaged around 15 minutes in duration. A spread of social actors was interviewed, including festival organisers and volunteers, local business people, performers, and audience. The interview outputs were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically using NVivo software.

Juxtaposing spaces, intensifying social relations

The study data suggest that the principle of the juxtaposition of several spaces within a single space shows promise in relation to the festival in both of the study cases. Like the arts-related examples given by Foucault, the theatre and the cinema, festival places are also transformed by the staging of performances in a variety of discrete spaces in the host location. So the juxtaposition of several spaces within a single space effected spatial transformations that were very clearly observed by local residents. In Sidmouth, the town's promenade was taken over by the festival procession and fireworks as is clearly explained here:

S21 "Well the procession comes down from the west end, Connaught Gardens is it, down the hill. That's Saturday afternoon and I think this year they had one during the week Wednesday or Thursday, and then they have the grand parade Friday night for the fireworks."

Indoor spaces were also altered, as local hotels, pubs and clubs, were converted into various spaces for musicians to play or sing together informally.

S14 "You wouldn't recognise the bar [of the Bedford]. Normally it doesn't look anything like that. I think they must keep the furniture in the basement and bring it out."

In the tiny village of Feakle, the absence of a dedicated cultural infrastructure to house the festival meant that every available space became transformed from its everyday existence to one replete with apparently contradictory meanings. Thus, adults took workshops in primary school classrooms; children went to village pubs in the early evening because music sessions designed to include young people are organised there; the school yard becomes an outdoor café, as the school's Parents' Association avail of the opportunity to provide refreshments while simultaneously raising money for charity; and the church altar becomes the stage for the main headline event.

The fact that both festivals were held at the centre of the town/village and not on greenfield sites meant that the presence of the festivals was all pervasive:

S44 "I think the key thing ... we are nothing like the majority of festivals, which are greenfield sites, they put a fence around their festival. Everything that happens happens within that fence, all the money is spent within that fence. It has little to do with the local community. Whereas here it's always been at the centre of the community, so that you can't avoid you know Folk Week, you have to unless you take a holiday somewhere else..."

The stages upon which the festivals' activities unfolded (whether constructions or spaces temporarily designated for performance) were located very centrally at the heart of the places studied, and accumulatively, their effect was transformative. These stages, towards which performers and audiences gravitated, recall Foucault's idea of a garden being anchored by the umbilicus of a water fountain. Akin to Foucault's analogy of the garden, the festival transforms the place into something of a sacred space, and the

accumulation of people there emerges through what might be described as a rite of pilgrimage. At the centre of this sacred festival space is the celebration of something of particular import both to the people of the place and to those who visit specifically for the festival. Hence, in Feakle, the particular music, musicians and instrumental styles long associated with the East Clare area are showcased, even venerated. Repeatedly, interviewees communicated the sense of congregating to revere:

F15 “It does attract people and you know what amazes me is you see the likes of, there’s English people there and then the couple that come from America. They are the kind of people that are guaranteed to be the first people you see when the hall door opens, standing in queues the same as they were never here before, holding their ticket waiting to get their seat. It has become a religion, it’s kind of one of the Meccas.”

F6: “And what happens is that you have people coming from year to year because they know they can sit down and talk to the ‘greats’.”

Like the umbilicus in Foucault’s garden example, the festival functions as a source of sustenance or nourishment:

F10 “And you need to nourish your soul. And what better way than to come to Feakle and nourish your soul and go back rejuvenated you can deal with whatever.”

Notwithstanding all of the above, some of this transformation was experienced as disruption. The Sidmouth data identified tensions between the various uses of the promenade, for example, as all the social actors compete to use the space in parallel. Stall holders want to use the promenade as a retail space, buskers want to use it as an informal music stage; dancers want to convert it to a dance platform; and passers-by either want to watch the performances, make purchases, or just get on with their daily local tasks. The strains that this generated were clear:

S1 “What’s distressed most of us about the festival at the moment is the fact that East Devon Council has allowed the promenade to be taken over by all these stalls selling face painting and beading hair and furry animals jumping about on fishing rods and things like that and there’s no room for the dancers. Yes, it’s really, really sad. It’s put a lot of people off going down just to enjoy the, you know, just watching free folk, free music, free dancing. Because you know the accordion band from Dorset used to come, about ten of them and used to sit and play all sorts of music at one end and then you’d get all the different Morris teams and all the little trios and duos and solos of people all playing music acoustically all along the seafront. It used to be absolutely fabulous.”

In general, however, the transformations effected by the festivals were interpreted as positive and were welcomed by people who appreciated the opportunities to socialise, reconnect with friends and family, and enjoy the liveliness engendered by the festival activities. In Sidmouth, many local interviewees reported that their use of spaces for socialising changes during Folk Week, either their use of existing cafes and restaurants intensifies, or they make use of the specially constructed festival facilities which appear on the green spaces of the town,

S38 “We meet up at the places that you might not necessarily go to at other times of the year, the Ham, with the marquee and it's got the food kind of festival feel to it is a really good meeting spot, Blackmore Gardens as well. A lot of my friends now have got younger children and I think there's something for everybody. So yeah, you do meet up and use the town in a slightly different way, I suppose.”

The situation in Feakle was similar. Here the injection of visitors, vastly outnumbering the local population, greatly alters the social make-up of the community:

F35 “Oh its 100% livelier, I mean in the winter time this place is basically dead.”

F9 “Bringing people together, friends, you meet people you haven't met since last year. Have a couple of pints, couple of tunes, share a time and music.”

This last comment came from a visiting musician and serves as a reminder that festivals create a sense of community not just for local place-based groups but also for other kinds of communities like musicians, for whom festivals create transitory but recurring opportunities for enriching and sustaining social and cultural encounters. Recurrent visitors constitute another group that forges social connections through their long-standing associations with the festival:

F4 “We stay in the campsite then because he meets the same families, they come every year and they meet the same people, he's met boys from Waterford before and another boy from Limerick and they are camping with us this year.”

Gaining entry and making the grade

The second of Foucault's principles of heterotopia under consideration suggests that heterotopias require certain acts, performances or rituals to gain entry and to leave the space. There was a variety of evidence of the challenges of entering the heterotopian space of the folk festival amongst the Sidmouth interviewees. Many of the attending interviewees had in-depth knowledge of the folk genre, with experience of folk singing or dance. Some, such as S12 is a stalwart of folk clubs, while others, according to one of the performers, S2, are “pretty well versed in the music.”

R2 “Oh right. Oh so the fact that you used to go to folk clubs then, you must have a bit of a feel for the music then.”

S12 “Oh yes. Yes we're talking forty-odd years ago though.”

Another Sidmouth performer, now in his late twenties, described how having the festival on his doorstep had influenced and helped his musical development:

S6 “While I was a kid I'd always go to Sidmouth Folk Festival without really realising the scope of it. But we started playing, busking and playing in Dukes, and the pub, you know years ago.”

S1 also described how the opportunities offered by the festival helped her to start dancing many years before, while S25 admitted that she was now involved in a genre which she had scorned when young:

S1 “I always try and do something I haven't done before. Every time I go. And that's what got me into clog dancing cos I went many, many years ago, in 78-79 or was it 77 I don't know now. I went past the huge marquee on the Knowle arena where they used

to have workshops and things. And I could hear this wonderful syncopated sound and I looked through the tent flap and there were hundreds of people all doing clog dancing and I thought I've got to do this. So I went in and you know I've done it ever since. So that's you know, what is it, thirty-something years."

S25 "I think you should expose yourself to all sorts of weird and wonderful things and you know, when I was a child my uncle was a Morris dancer, I thought he was a complete twit and I would never be involved in anything like that in my life and then there you are I find myself immersed."

Although having some musical knowledge had perhaps enabled many of the Sidmouth attendees to enter the festival space, several of them also highlighted the barriers they faced to performing the gestures which might enable them to fully enter. Local dancer, S46, had danced at the festival but explained that, even though they were a local Morris team, their participation was not an annual given, due to the politics and networking involved. Others cited personal physical challenges, such as S39's bad knees, which made her "frightened of falling over in public"; S8's arthritic fingers which prevented her playing musical instruments; or S39's lost singing voice, due to smoking "too many cigarettes"; and S10, who now lived alone, being reluctant to attend by herself. Many of these interviewees might have been fully part of the emplacement in the past but had now withdrawn due to the physical ailments of later life. The prohibitive cost of tickets was highlighted by another local, S9, even with locals' price reductions, as a barrier to attending the formal concerts, although he and his wife still found that "there's a lot for us to enjoy that's going on around town, without having to pay to go to things." The reduced income associated with retirement was also mentioned as a factor.

Not having the courage to fully join in due to a perception of not knowing the right songs or not playing a recognised folk instrument was also mentioned as a "gesture" which some were unable to make to enable entry into the emplacement. S21, who sings with choirs, and so has a proven singing voice, was reluctant to join in the pub singing, where song sheets are not the norm, due to there being "a helluva lot of songs that I don't know. And for every one traditional song that you come across, there could be anything up to 20 versions of the same song. They're all slightly different." He blamed himself, rather than the festival space for their permissions: "I shall have to apply myself some more." The challenges of playing his clarinet in public in the festival space, despite having "been known to join in with folk music from time to time," were also mentioned by another interviewee:

S22 "I've never quite summoned up the courage to bring it down to the seafront here. I'm sure I will one day."

Although folk music is the only music genre to feature in most Sidmouth festival spaces, efforts are made by locals to offer the chance for musicians of any genre to perform in "festival fringe" spaces, such as on the more informal stage of a local pub. For the open mic sessions in the afternoons, anyone with the confidence to put themselves forward can sign up, but the morning sessions are run by a local music teacher so it tends to be local people known to him that are selected.

Many of the issues revealed in the Sidmouth data also held true for Feakle. As something of a sacred space, and an important source of the East Clare tradition, the festival attracts people because “they have workshops with some of the finest musicians in the country if not in the world” (F6). In this sense there is certainly a rite of entry for musicians who perform here. Being invited to perform at Feakle carries a distinction that must be earned within the traditional music world, and the Festival Directors act as gatekeepers determining who among the throng may access the Feakle stage. As F2 explained:

F2 “I know within traditional professional music circles it’s a badge of honour to be invited to play at Feakle. Because they know that the audience is discerning, the audience come to listen to good music, they expect a standard of music from the festival as well.”

This inevitably generates some tension:

R1 “And I’m sure there’s no problem getting people to come here.”

F1 “Oh no, they want to come. They want to come up, in fact I went into a music session one night there, Wednesday night, and before I left I had three CDs handed to me from three different combinations.”

R1 “So is this becoming a problem that you have to manage?”

F1: “It is a problem because they all want to come and they are disappointed if they don’t, you know. If they are not included and I’ve got to say, I mean one guy last year, he had been doing the workshops and I just, you know, we rotate the tutors every so often you know. And I had to exclude him because he had done his three or four years and he was very upset.”

The understanding that participation in music-making at the Feakle Festival is not given freely to everyone is widely understood, as the following conversation with an Irish visitor to the village attests:

R1 “Are you like a serious player?”

F37 “Yeah, I’m serious but I’m only middling standard but I’m very, very interested.”

R1 “And so why aren’t you doing the workshops?”

F37 “I wouldn’t be at that standard, the standard of the workshops is for quite well, maybe, good players already.”

Beyond the community of musicians at the festival, another issue that the Feakle data pointed to was the very obvious blurring of distinctions between insiders and outsiders. A striking feature of the visitor population interviewed was the staunch loyalty displayed towards the festival. Visitors explained how they were making their umpteenth return to the festival (many were returning for in excess of 15, even 20 years) while locals constantly referred to rekindling connections with those visitors who had been staying with them, coming into their pub, meeting them on the street for years. For the visitors, there was a definite sense of earning “insider-ness,” not to the extent that they became a “local” but certainly to the extent that they were no longer an outsider. An observation from a New York visitor, F36 makes this clear:

F36 “It gives me an opportunity that I wouldn’t have otherwise, it gives me something to hold onto for the year, for the music and learning and also its an experience that you carry with you. For us coming year to year, and also we are incorporating ourselves into the scene where now they expect us.”

A loyal visitor from Israel had the following to say:

F18 “You know the folks and they know you and you start coming and you know you get talking, you know the families, you see the kids grow up. So you know, it’s really funny because we go to a session or something and you see youngsters playing and you say oh I remember him when he was in shorts. So you almost become, I’m not saying you become part of the community because you don’t, but you can identify people in the community and they can identify you and sort of, you do feel a certain sense of belonging. Despite the fact you are an outsider and you understand that and they understand it but there is a certain loyalty or something that comes into it.”

Social and cultural capital in action in the heterotopic space

The data collected at Sidmouth and Feakle festivals gives clear insight into the overlaps and potential inter-relationships between the three strands of the conceptual framework, social capital, cultural capital and heterotopia. Foucault’s principle that heterotopias juxtapose several spaces within a single space is demonstrated by the ways in which the conversion of spaces into festival spaces takes place at both festivals. Whilst these spaces retain their original function, as pubs or cafes or theatre spaces, they also provide the settings for intensified social interaction, with both bonding and bridging social capital in evidence. As this study shows, it is difficult sometimes to differentiate between bonding and bridging, as a characteristic of long-established folk festivals is that the same people return year after year, in effect eventually transforming relationships between visitors, and between visitors and locals, from bridging into bonding relationships. Perhaps a new term of “recurrent bonding social capital” is needed to capture this.

There is also evidence that the transformation of spaces can also cause social tensions that could even destroy former social bonds. Thus the data are very clear that festivals are not utopic in nature because, as Falconi (2011: 12) explains, they embrace both tensions and contradictions in relation to the use of space. Viewing festivals through a heterotopic lens brings into sight the double meanings and contradictions contained in a space, and these were very apparent here in the views of local respondents and in the observed contradictory and intuitively incompatible ways in which spaces can be put to use. The data suggest that in its heterotopic state, the potential of this “other” place comes to be seen afresh by a range of festival actors, both local residents and outsiders, and to be exploited in ways that bring a place closer to what might be considered its ideal state. In that brief moment, as the intensification of social relations engendered by the festival goes into over-drive, the accumulative transformation of festival spaces creates a different yet similar, new yet traditional, festival place that temporarily dislodges the ordinary place and it becomes a heterotopia. This sets the scene for bonding social capital to be intensified and gives the potential for bridging social capital, albeit of a very temporary type. Here is communicated a sense of the potentialities of festivity identified by Shields (2003) and Pløger (2010), and a clear impression of festivals as heterotopia.

Johansson and Kociatkiewicz (2011), writing about cities, argue that festivals provide new meanings for the cities they inhabit. When interpreted using Foucault’s notion of the heterotopian umbilicus, the data pertaining to festival space as “stage” or

performance area richly illustrates this argument, pointing to the construction of the festival as a sacred space and a site of pilgrimage. The performance spaces at the heart of the festivals offer sustenance and a “nourishing” space where festival goers can deepen existing social connections, forge new ones, share their art, learn new tunes, and “worship the greats of folk.” Folk festivals are particularly known for the tendency of the “stars” to “get down” and play with the audience after a show in other venues. This is particularly the case at the village-based festival of Feakle, but it also happens in the small town of Sidmouth. The data show how people regularly, and recurrently, gravitate to festivals to venerate and admire, learn and gain sustenance for the rigours of ordinary time played out in ordinary spaces. While the idea of the festival as sacred space is not a new one, the data presented here really illustrates how re-ordered space produces an “other place,” one where social interactions are intensified and the creation of social capital is facilitated.

The idea of entry and departure to the heterotopia fits in well at this point too, tying in with the concept of cultural capital and the related concept of social capital. The data show clearly that festival goers are very conscious of the need to be able to perform musically to a certain standard, even within a so-called informal space. The numerous mentions of skills and experience demonstrates that entry to the heterotopian space, in order to build social capital, needs a certain amount of existing cultural capital in order to gain entry, as well as the social capital to actually gain entry and become an insider. All of these findings echo existing arguments in the literature about festivals being highly authored landscapes where power relations are always at play (Waterman 1998). Interestingly, the data illustrates the extent to which access must not only be earned, but also maintained by all performers, amateurs and professionals alike. The festival as heterotopia is a fluid and dynamic entity which continuously reasserts the need to meet entry requirements/adopt entry rituals with every iteration. In addition, while the data frequently reveals examples of people starting very young or inheriting taste within the family, factors which are indicative of embodied cultural capital, or the habitus (Bourdieu 2002 [1986]), there were also indications that the festivals themselves were very important training grounds. There was clear evidence that the festivals initiated and educated people in folk arts practices, even when these tastes had not been previously acquired within the family or through prior learning. To date, the role that festivals play in forming, maintaining and shaping cultural capital is under-researched. Linking it to heterotopia in order to further advance understandings of the processes at play is an area worthy of further research.

Indications of the variety of festival spaces are also indicated by mention of a “fringe festival” at Sidmouth. This suggests the potential role of cultural capital, or taste and skill distinctions. Thus, those attending the fringe are likely to have a different taste in music to those attending the mainstream festival events: and each is unlikely to gain entry and “bridge” with the other set. Savage (2006) suggests that musical taste communities may be strongly related to age and ethnicity in particular, as well as to gender, educational qualifications and occupational class. However, he does warn against stereotyping differences in musical taste and highlights the breaking down of the

opposition between high and low culture, although he does not include folk music in his analysis. The possibility of a trend for people to engage in a range of musical taste communities, in effect to be omnivorous in their taste, is also discussed by Peterson and Kern (1996), Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) and van Ejick and Lievens (2008). What is not well covered in this literature, however, is the role of musical skills, although Frith (1990) does mention that the particular values of the folk festival, with their emphasis on collective, participatory music-making set it apart from other musical worlds. Further exploration of these issues of cultural capital and their relationship to heterotopias is likely to prove fruitful, while further querying of the extent to which folk festivals differ from other types of cultural festivals is another potentially interesting line of enquiry.

Conclusion

Surprisingly, despite the fact that Foucault named festivals as an example of a heterotopia, there has been relatively little application of his ideas in the social sciences literature on festivals. Equally, although social dimensions of festivals are being explored and social capital ideas are informing the literature, there remains much scope for further enquiry.

A central preoccupation here has been to investigate whether two of the key principles of heterotopia and the concepts of social and cultural capital might together inform the study of folk festivals in the context of a small town or village. The wealth of data reported in the preceding section clearly supports the value of interlinking these concepts and offering an integrated conceptual framework which could be used by others as an analytical lens.

First, drawing on Foucault's heterotopia, acknowledging the juxtaposition of multiple spaces inherent in festivals was a very useful starting point for unravelling the idea of the festival as a sacred space. Second, this sacred space can be seen as an umbilicus which can feed social capital. Third, alongside the sacred space, sit other spaces which are still within the festival space, and also facilitate the building of social capital within separate social networks. Finally, appropriate cultural capital and ideally also a certain level of social capital, are needed to gain entry to any of the spaces within the heterotopia, with the distinction of skills and knowledge or the habitus determining which of the spaces is appropriate.

By interlinking three sets of theoretical ideas: social capital, cultural capital and heterotopia; the intention is to suggest a new conceptual framework that can help to frame a deeper understanding of the nature of celebration. It is hoped that other researchers might draw on the approach adopted here as they pose further questions about how festivals alter social relations.

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