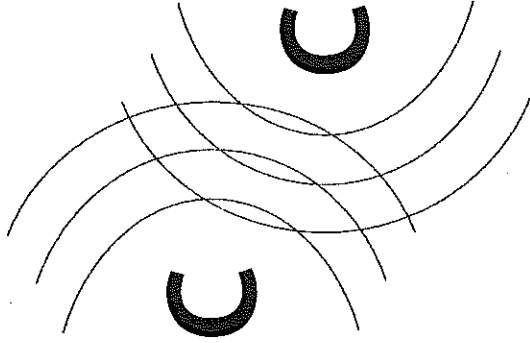


MUSIC



CITY

American Festivals
and Placemaking
in Austin, Nashville,
and Newport

JONATHAN R. WYNN

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The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637

The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London

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Printed in the United States of America

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-30549-3 (cloth)

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-30552-3 (paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-30566-0 (e-book)

DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226305660.0001

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wynn, Jonathan R., author.

Music / city : American festivals and placemaking in Austin, Nashville, and

Newport / Jonathan R. Wynn.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-226-30549-3 (cloth : alkaline paper)—ISBN 978-0-226-30552-3

(paperback : alkaline paper)—ISBN 978-0-226-30566-0 (ebook) 1. Music

festivals—United States. 2. Music festivals attendees—United States. I. Title.

ML37.U5W96 2015

780.7873—dc23

2015019949

© This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992

(Permanence of Paper).

Introduction

City and Stage

Within the Walls of Peace and Love

Borlänge, Sweden, is a former iron and steel town located about two and a half hours northwest of Stockholm. It's home to about 37,000 residents, as well as to the largest music festival in Sweden, the annual Peace and Love Festival. Officially, the festival focuses on fighting xenophobia and racism, and stresses diversity, solidarity, and understanding across cultural and ethnic groups; experientially, however, it's mostly a white, heavy metal crowd. Because the festival books all the city's hotel rooms, most festivalgoers commute from Stockholm or camp nearby and then walk into town.

Europe has its walled cities, but this town's fortress is different. The festival itself is held in the city center, surrounded by a temporary six-foot-tall chain-link fence covered with a blue tarp-like material—a modern and fleeting re-creation of ancient city walls dividing In from Out. Security guards stand sentry, with walkie-talkies attached to their vests, opening the gates for ticket holders.

Inside, five stages are scattered in the town's squares and parking lots, and many corners have smaller programming. A metal band called HammerFall rages on a big stage in a public plaza, the pulsing red and yellow lights bursting through smoke effects behind them transforming the musicians into four black silhouettes. Heads bounce in rhythm. A

Their sound—a mix of folk and echoey '80s pop rock with bright backing horns, keys, and singers—was often described by the title of that first major single. From a stage the next block over, the tune rushes over the buildings on either side of the narrow street.

Most locals take the festival's presence as an opportunity to leave town, so the walled-off city center, the business district, is ceded entirely to the event. The streets terminate at the blue plastic wall encircling the area. The barbershop, the bank, the post office, the travel agency, and the optometrist are closed, and only a few places remain open to offer delicables like Thai food, sushi, ice cream, and beer. An empty storefront serves as an information kiosk.

Borlänge was the demographic and geographic equivalent of gating off Amherst, Massachusetts, the small college town where I now teach. With so many local businesses shuttered for the three-day weekend, and so many inhabitants being just plain gone, the thousands of young kids traveling in for the festival transformed the small old steel town, and Borlänge became a festival city. A Music City.

Behind the Scenes in the Music City

Fairs and festivals predate recorded time, likely having their roots in religious gatherings such as India's Maha Kumbh Mela, where millions of Hindus make a pilgrimage for a festival that occurs four times every twelve years. They serve as outlets of emotive expression, as bounded places for people to depart from their everyday routines, but, at least since the gladiatorial performances of the early Roman Empire, town and city officials have also planned them in order to provide mass entertainment and distraction. One can think of early European festivals, both secular and religious, that drew the entire community into the streets. Travelers and locals would spill into every town square, the food and music making the city a "theatre without walls." Carnival turns *il mondo alla rovescia* (the world upside down), while Midsummer or St. John's Eve, coincident with the Solstice, represents renewal. Present-day annual bacchanalia like Rio's Carnival, New Orleans's Mardi Gras, Mexico's Day of the Dead celebrations, and even the Burning Man festival in Nevada's Black Rock Desert pick up those secular and religious elements to



A band playing the Tropico stage in a closed-off Borlänge town square.

block down, a woman is DJing from a temporary six-by-six-foot tent while a juggler handles flaming torches before a small audience, performing in sync with the throbbing techno beats. The DJ's two hands glide over the turntables, making the speakers emanate a Thum thum thum thum-ka/Thum thum thum-ka. The crowd claps in unison. The juggler's hands move as if enslaved in a trance. All around, black T-shirted rivers of young Swedes bubble over the old cobblestone roads, with caps of blond hair cresting. One wears a shirt that says "Fuck You, I'm from Hell," and another carries a black bag with "666" and the familiar "God Save the Queen" image from the 1977 album *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*.

Farther down the road, the lyrics from the Waterboys' 1984 hit "The Big Music" rush over the low buildings like a swell:

I have heard the big music, and I'll never be the same.
Something so pure (Hey!) just called my name.
I have drowned in the big sea, now I find I'm still alive
and I'm coming up forever.

craft celebratory rituals.¹ But even the more common county fairs and street festivals are part of this tradition.

Occurring yearly, the festivals arise and fade almost naturally with the seasons, yet they are the carefully scripted products of maneuverings and agreements between powerful stakeholders and cultural institutions. I started thinking about how these short-term events work for people and their places by delivering longer-lasting effects.

After all, today's festivals might be fun for attendees, but they are also used to attract tourists and residents, bolster existing public and private amenities, augment government services, entice business relocations, enhance territorial trademarking, and so on. At the same time, the contemporary music industry needs live events to stave off the rapid decline of profits in a new digital age, and musicians hope to capitalize upon one of their most unique assets—interactions with audiences via live performances—with larger crowds, better compensation, and more impact than the average club gig provides. And then there are the surrounding communities that also challenge, augment, and extract meanings and goods of their own. Festivals, then, illuminate some of the key struggles in our modern urban and cultural lives, as they bring some groups together and marginalize others, impose a crafted image of place for locals and visitors, and create unintended opportunities and challenges. They are the mechanisms for all these various groups to engage in cultural work through a process—which I will explain in a few pages—called *festivalization*.

One moment from early in my research did more than solidify the importance of festivals in my mind. An impromptu speech by the mayor of Austin, Texas, during the city's 2007 South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival shaped my understanding of how various actors and organizations use city resources through these short-term events.

The Mayor of Rock 'n' Roll

The event is called "Gonna Gonna Get Down 2," and it is run by the cultural-events website *Austinist* at a music venue known as the *Mohawk*. Situated in Austin's downtown entertainment district, the *Mohawk* fits in among the mixture of other live-music venues, but it also

contrasts with the corrugated steel siding of a few light-industry buildings and fenced-in dirt lots, including one right across Red River Street.

The event features fourteen bands, split between inside and outside stages, and a stream of people flowing through a hallway between them, thick in boozy and sweaty smells; layers of unknown band stickers coat the club's murky walls and bathrooms. The capacity crowd of about 600 comprises mostly college-aged kids and, at one o'clock in the afternoon, everyone seems to be holding a two-dollar Lone Star beer can.

The band on the outdoor stage, *Earl Greyhound*, stops between songs in their runaway rock-and-blues set to introduce the honored guest who has just arrived. With a background in real estate development and an eye for transforming downtown, Mayor Will Wynn takes the mic with a crisp white shirt and a multicolor striped tie. After a cordial greeting—"I just want to say 'hi' and 'welcome' to, particularly, all of our out-of-town guests. How about all of those musicians coming from all around the country and the planet?"—the mayor launches into his speech:

There are 1,725 bands in town this week; 515 local bands in town this week. It's a fabulous time to be in Austin... Remember, in order for us to be the Live Music Capital of the World, we need three things. We need venues like [the] *Mohawk* and some of the other venues to be successful. They gotta be in town. We gotta have a bunch of venues that are downtown, so that folks can walk to five or six or eight or ten or twelve venues in one night, and see fifteen, twenty, thirty bands during South by Southwest.

You gotta have your musicians. Austin is now home to 8,000 working musicians. The vast majority of them, understandably, they're low income and uninsured. We gotta find out how to support them, you know, financially, spiritually, economically, and otherwise. And then third, we've gotta have a bunch of citizens, like me, who will turn their televisions off, get their asses off the couch, and go out and listen to live music.

The audience cheers and hoots, engaged and somewhat amused by the mayor saying "asses." Wynn continues:

Austin is far and away the biggest city in the country that doesn't have either an NFL team, an NBA franchise, or [a] major league baseball team.

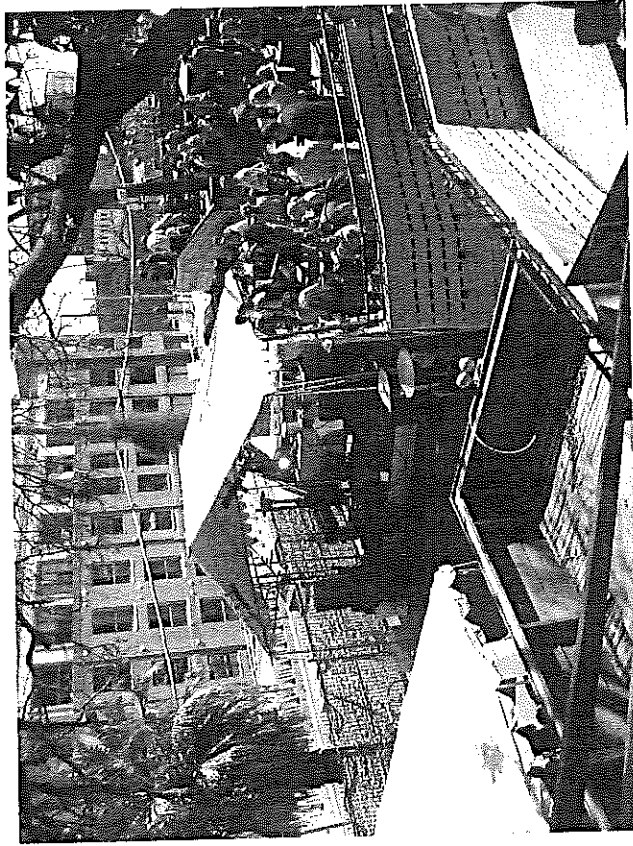
twentysomethings sporting asymmetrical haircuts and ironic T-shirts cheers for the businessman-politician as he exits stage right.

A year later, "Gonna Gonna Get Down 3" returns to the same venue, but I now see that new condominium construction has replaced the empty lot across the street. Back in the 1980s and '90s, the neighborhood had a seedy reputation, known for its drug deals and homelessness. It certainly hasn't been transformed completely, but now men and women from the nearby Austin Resource Center for the Homeless mix with the new residents who live in downtown condos, along with the yearly influx of music industry professionals from New York and Los Angeles in town for South by Southwest. Dust kicked up from the building site settles on Styrofoam plates piled high with complimentary barbeque and smoky beans, as attendees in the VIP lounge look down from the rooftop at a band playing an operatic folk-rock set.

Studying Festivals

Mayor Wynn's speech provides some evidence of how festivals can benefit their communities today, and how something as seemingly chaotic as SXSW can reflect the goals of his mayoral administration. At another level I know that, in order to achieve their intended or unintended goals, these collective spectacles lash together a variety of different folk with different agendas through their coordinated activities: from the musician looking to further her music career to the participant who wants to see his favorite band, from the mayor who wants to bolster a local cultural scene to the music executive hoping to sell records, from the locals' frustration over corporate branding of their city to the tourist's search for a good time. They are a chance for large groups to congregate and commune, on the one hand, and yet they can also be (literally, in the case of Borlänge) walled off and exclusive.

Given that such occasions are so commonplace and well attended, it is surprising that scholars have not been particularly interested in them. Perhaps because they are so popular, and come in so many forms, sociologists mention them mostly as related to something else (e.g., an ethnic community's demonstration of pride and promotion of group solidarity,



The Mohawk outdoor stage at South by Southwest with new condos.

And people ask me frequently, "So, Mayor, when is Austin going to get an NFL team?" I say, "You know what? Live music should be our sports franchise!" Instead of a family or folks going out and dropping about 400 bucks to go to an NFL game to subsidize a billionaire sports owner that the taxpayers already built a 400-million-dollar sports stadium for, why not instead, about three or four or five times a month, go out and drop twenty-five, thirty-five, fifty bucks supporting live music in a great venue, helping our 8,000 working musicians, making SXSW more productive, more experiential, for these fabulous bands to come from New York and across the planet to enjoy [the] Live Music Capital of the World: Austin, Texas!

The members of the band return to the front of the stage, getting ready to continue their set as the mayor waves good-bye. Kamara Thomas, the black, female bass player and vocalist, steps up to the mic to say, "Thank you, Mr. Mayor . . . the Mayor of Rock 'n' Roll!" The audience of hip

or part of a larger cultural tradition).² The National Endowment for the Arts found that the majority of outdoor events have music as a central or primary component.³ By my count, there are at least 250 ongoing music festivals in the United States, ranging from the Oregon Bach Festival in Eugene to the Spirit of Bluegrass Music Fest in Live Oak, Florida. In 2014, over 90,000 people attended each day of the Coachella festival in Indio, California; Middle Tennessee's Bonnaroo, Chicago's Lollapalooza, and Las Vegas's Electric Daisy Carnival all exceeded 100,000 attendees; 160,000 went to Miami's Ultra electronic music festival; and there were 852,000 attendees over the eleven days of Milwaukee's forty-seventh annual Summerfest. The numbers increase every year.

As someone who studies cities and culture, the idea of how music adhered to certain *places* intrigued me, and helped me narrow my focus to festivals and festivalization. When one thinks of the home of the blues, for example, cities like Chicago and Memphis come to mind. Seattle is the capital when many talk of 1990s grunge rock. Detroit has its Motown, and New Orleans, its jazz.⁴ But when it comes to actual festivals, only a few really stand out as having a strong connection with indigenous music, or a willingness to enhance local culture.⁵ For example, despite the forty-five-year history of the Oregon Bach Festival, few think of Eugene, Oregon, with regard to mid-eighteenth-century chamber music. A place like Nashville, Tennessee, however, with the third-largest population of musicians in the country and its own legendary "Nashville Sound," is indelibly linked to country music. Austin, with its long reputation as the eccentric counterpoint to mainstream music businesses in Los Angeles, New York, and Nashville, is a natural hotbed for indie rock.⁶ Although Newport, Rhode Island, lacks a homegrown music scene, it has established itself on the global music map with its long-held sister jazz and folk festivals. These three cities struck me as interesting and unstudied cases.⁷

Although Nashville and Austin have comparable sizes (pop. 601,222 and 790,390, respectively, in 2010) and growth rates, and Newport exists only as a smaller vacation outpost for New England elites (pop. 24,672 in 2010, though it quadruples in the summer), all three places exist within similar-sized geographic regions, known as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). MSAs are territories of economic and

political influence that extend beyond state and municipal lines—the New York City MSA, for example, includes areas of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Though small within its own city limits, Newport actually sits within a larger Providence–New Bedford–Fall River, Massachusetts, MSA, which allows for a nearly identical foundation for comparison: as of 2010, Austin's was the thirty-fifth most populous MSA in the United States, while Providence's was thirty-seventh and Nashville's was thirty-eighth. With over 1.6 million residents each, the Nashville, Austin, and Providence MSAs serve as the cultural and political centers for their regions, function as central nodes for major universities, and rank as second-tier cities. Whereas Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles—like other first-tier, "global," or "alpha" cities and top MSAs—have the benefits of diverse and well-established culture industries, recognized tourist attractions, and much scholarship devoted to the dynamics at work within them, there are a greater number of smaller MSAs in need of study.⁸ Scholarship on the cultural strategies of an Austin, a Nashville, or a Newport may be of greater utility and generalizability. Put another way: there are far more Charlestons striving for the success of Nashville than there are Baltimores aspiring to be New York.

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Once I narrowed my focus to these three festivals and their locales, I then thought about how to study something so big. Festivals are tricky. No rooftop VIP lounge is high enough to provide a vista for all the interactions and experiences of a festival; there is no one street corner to sit on, and no single group to query. And, like a medicine show or a traveling circus, they're gone in a few days. Festivals are what Jürgen Habermas called an *occasional public* or an *arranged public*: a moment wherein these players and organizations come together with multiple perspectives, motives, investments, and experiences.⁹

Thus, understanding these events would require an equally dynamic approach that included the producers, supporters, and consumers of music. Early in my research, I found Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* to be a good model for taking on such a complex cooperative web. The art world, for him, is a network of coconspirators whose activities and tasks—wittingly or unintentionally—produce "the kinds of art works that an art world

is noted for," a perspective that assists an effort to apprehend how art is "made and appreciated" by that wide array of people.¹⁰ As related to the scene at the Mohawk, for example, the mayor is there to promote his vision for a Music City, while an Austinite would tell me he's there for free entertainment; a SXSW attendee would say she flew to Austin to scout bands for her music label, while local musicians would express disappointment that they weren't invited to the city's big cultural event. Festivals are occasional publics with only a measure of consensus, and a multifaceted approach to the multiple perspectives of people seemed the best way to understand them.¹¹

That there are a variety of views—and even conflicting ones—among participants of such large social gatherings is not a particularly surprising realization. And yet, to integrate those varied perspectives across settings and cases, I decided to use four methodological tracks: two primary ones, and two supplemental. First, I conducted 110 semistructured interviews with members of key organizations in and around the three music festivals: attendees, organizers, founders, members of the chamber of commerce and visitors bureaus, headlining musicians, mayors, owners of local music venues, major record label executives, local media members, music promoters, and booking agents. (Anyone identified with a first and last name has not been given a pseudonym. For a list of respondents and a comment on using real names, see appendix A.) These interviews were done between June 2006 and August 2013, in a variety of locations and manners: at music venues, cafés, and convention centers, between sound checks and after late-night performances, in person and, in four instances where in-person interviews were not an option, on the phone. The second major technique was ethnographic. This methodology, also called participant observation, is a kind of data collection balancing on the line between being an objective spectator of social life and being fully immersed in it. I participated in a variety of ways: from performing onstage to listening in the audience, from gaining entrée as a low-level volunteer to being granted backstage media access.¹² I took a notebook everywhere, and wrote in the dark smoky honkytonks and bright convention halls, or immediately afterward if conditions limited my ability to write. In three situations—the above address by Austin's mayor and two public discussions about festivals—I digitally recorded

the events and transcribed them. These two techniques of interviews and participant observation allowed me to match what people told me with what I saw myself across a range of different places. Throughout the book, there are sections like the descriptions of Borlänge and Austin that closely resemble what I wrote down at the time. Commonly called field notes, these sections provide a more visceral impression of these experiences, grounded in specific places and times: the sights and sounds from the sweaty front row to the air-conditioned offices of city hall, from a late-night performance with a bass guitar in hand to the dervishing mayhem of a closed-off street on a hot summer's day.¹³

I cross-referenced this information with historical accounts, media sources, biographies (when available), festival programs, and genre magazines (e.g., the folk magazine *Sing Out!* and the Country Music Association's *Close Up*) for a better understanding of the community, the history of the festivals, and the interrelationships between organizations and groups. Toward the end of the book, there is evidence from two additional methods, one unconventional and one more traditional. The first comes in chapter 5 as a set of strolls, or "walks with a purpose," as a way to compare places and investigate similarities and differences across these Music Cities and witness how economic development is experienced. I also administered a small survey to over 210 festival attendees to gain participants' perspectives on festivals for chapter 6: their engagement with these events, perceptions of city and corporate branding, and what they see as a close tie between the festivals and their cities.¹⁴

This multilayered approach seemed the best way to tackle such an odd social form across places and publics, connecting how these events are put together with how they are experienced, and the approach buffered me from both overly joyous and resoundingly pessimistic conclusions on the state of contemporary urban culture.

Understanding Festivalization:

Four Resources and Three Patterns

The late German urbanist Hartmut Häussermann called the increasing presence of these events in cities *festivalization*.¹⁵ I see festivalization as not just the general rise of festivals, but an ongoing organizational

and the "potential beneficiaries of" such space-making, and these ideas—married to Mayor Wynn's speech—can help us come to a multidimensional understanding of how festivals draw out and reinforce the noneconomic costs and benefits for places as well.¹⁷

And so, following this recommendation, I also suggest a second resource of *physical or spatial resources*. Mayor Wynn spoke of these amenities in his speech too. He said Austin needs its clubs and music venues—not just that they should exist but that they should be geographically proximate: "We need venues . . . They gotta be in town. We gotta have a bunch of venues that are downtown, so that folks can walk to five or six or eight or ten or twelve venues in one night." It is a principle reminiscent of Count Basie's description of why Kansas City was a great place to perform: "Clubs, clubs, clubs, clubs, clubs, clubs, clubs, clubs. . . In fact, I thought that was all Kansas City was made up of."¹⁸ Cities have a great number of these spatial resources for urban culture: both public spaces (convention centers, parks, streets, sidewalks, empty lots, and "ploaps"—places left over after planning) and private ones (concert halls, cafés, bars, honkytonks, and parking lots). When it comes to outdoor festivals, 71% use public plazas, parks, or streets.¹⁹ The closer these resources cluster together, the greater their potential use for an event, and the limits of a festival's size can be attributed to the availability of such spaces as much as by money, local talent, or attendees.²⁰

That brings up a third resource in Wynn's speech: people and their talents and skills. These are *social + cultural resources*. For simplicity's sake, this is a combination of two sociological terms from Pierre Bourdieu: the social capital of durable social ties of recognized interpersonal and group memberships, and the cultural capital of knowledge, skills, and education that reap benefits within certain related spheres of social life.²¹ According to Mayor Wynn, the city needs to "support its musicians," but really, there are dozens of kinds of workers in and around a city's lively cultural scene: these are as varied as club owners, arts teachers, sound engineers, and members of the convention and visitors bureau. Festivals draw attendees, employees, and volunteers from near and far. This might mean particularly significant individuals (e.g., municipal bigwigs and industry hotshots from Los Angeles or New York) and collective community organizations that produce the event, or performing musicians.

process wherein short-term events are used to develop, reinforce, and exploit an array of communal goods, churning out costs and benefits both near and far. Festivalization, then, is a process where cultural activity meets placemaking, but it is also a *cultural policy* that cities and communities can debate and adopt.

Although it did not occur to me at the time, Mayor Wynn's urban culture pep talk matched how I later viewed the relationship between these events and their communities, helping me identify just what those "communal goods" really are. His "three things to make Austin the Live Music Capital of the World"—music venues, musicians, and audiences spending money—turned out to be a great start. Mayor Wynn's speech unwittingly provided an outline of urban culture, allowing me to see how cities and their communities use festivals as ongoing mechanisms for investing in, using, and replenishing multiple kinds of resources, or capital—not unlike money in a bank.

Perhaps the easiest introduction to this way of thinking about festivalization (and really, urban culture more generally) is to focus first on the community asset closest to the metaphor of "capital": Mayor Wynn said audiences have to spend money to make his city a thriving one, and indeed, urban culture requires *economic resources*. There are financial benefits when outside spending exceeds a city's own local investment (e.g., municipal loans, waivers). Organizers and city officials often justify events to the local community in economic terms: direct visitor spending, hotel rooms booked, transportation taxes, tolls, parking fees, or indirect impact through local restaurant and other business growth. Although some festivals are run as not-for-profit organizations, music festivals are the most expensive type of festival to produce—due primarily to artist fees—and, therefore, they all need to garner revenue and some financial backing (perhaps from corporate sponsors looking to promote themselves through a particular event) to pay performers and secure event spaces.

Profit, however, is unlikely to be the sole justification, or the sole measure, of any urban cultural activity.¹⁶ And the sociologist Henri Lefebvre noted that economics should not be the only resource for thinking about the relationship between culture and place. He believed that social, physical, and symbolic resources were additional "ingredients for"

Austin may already be home to thousands of musicians, but the example of Newport shows that local musicians are not required *per se*: unlike Austin and Nashville, the Rhode Island summer vacation town has a limited number of performers and little interest in fostering a local scene, and yet it hosts internationally known festivals regardless.

In addition to economic, spatial, and social + cultural resources, Mayor Wynn also referred to another resource, although indirectly, when he said that these three resources make Austin the “Live Music Capital of the World.” This is not just an ad-libbed turn of phrase, but rather, the city’s official motto. It originated with a local blues musician who, as she was driving home from a gig in Houston, reckoned the city needed a slogan and approached the city government with the idea of calling the municipality the “Music Capital of the USA.” When research uncovered that Austin had more live-music venues *per capita* than Nashville, Los Angeles, or even New York City, they came up with the “Live Music Capital of the World.” This kind of motto or slogan is a *symbolic resource*.²² Symbolic resources are image- and idea-based goods that can be linked to, or promoted within, a city festival and the surrounding communities. The creation and manipulation of such symbolic goods could also be called *branding*, a remarkably flexible term used to describe marketing for anything from nations and ethnic groups to diet soda.²³ For cities, this level of brand promotion ties in with place and can be orchestrated via the coordinated efforts of convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) and chambers of commerce. A Nashville CVB executive told me that the city’s brand, “Music City, USA,” is a recognizable resource they are “eager to use.”

However, urban symbols and slogans, these mundane talismans of contemporary life, can also be organic and informal. They can be drawn from the shared local histories and regional identities that urbanist Gerald Suttles calls the *cumulative texture* of a city, which are then crystallized and promoted to a wider audience.²⁴ Folks call Austin “Weird City” on the radio, and country singers have long referred to Nashville as “Honkytonk Heaven.” Sometimes an image unintentionally gets adopted as a city’s trademark. For example, the graffitied image of an “alien frog” by infamous Austin indie singer-songwriter Daniel Johnston often serves as an icon for the city’s informal and unofficial “Weird City” ethos. Of

course, corporations can play the game of imprinting upon visual landscapes as well, from Boston’s Citco Gas sign to Times Square itself (which people often forget was renamed in 1904 after a lobbying campaign by the *New York Times*).²⁵

With regard to urban culture, festivals aren’t the only sites for the use and exploitation of these kinds of resources. They are, however, a rarely examined one that can tell us something about how fleeting moments can set in motion a great many actors and assets for longer-term impact. They are another opportunity for some stakeholders to extract physical resources and economic benefits and impose branding. They might stoke revenue for local businesses and nonprofit institutions, nurture music scenes, and attract visitors and locals. Mayors and city stakeholders get a “signature” event, CVBs get something to promote for visitors, chambers of commerce get an influx of tourist dollars, musicians get to play to new audiences, local businesses get customers, residents may secure temporary employment, even police get paid time and a half. Festivals often make use of publicly held resources like parks and streets, but in the process, there is always the danger that these public resources are appropriated and coopted for the benefit of the few. At the same time, these events also provide opportunities for individuals and smaller groups to use these assets for their own, unofficial goals. There is, then, a lot going on.

The Newport, Nashville, and Austin festivals illustrate important differences in the availability of these reserves of community goods, and in the struggles over them, as the following chapters will explore in greater depth. Each shows the different ways festivalization can develop. The Newport Folk Festival, for example, began with the *economic* resources provided by local philanthropists, a network of stakeholders who used their financial resources to bring musicians to the small resort community and to finance production costs. However, high property values and taxes have limited the growth of much of a homegrown creative community despite the long-running festivals that bear the city’s name. This smaller pool of social + cultural resources—aggravated by the city’s smaller population and geographic area compared with Austin and Nashville—is balanced by the fact that, as the marketing director of Newport’s CVB told me, the city actively promotes its events to gain tourist revenue from the “about 10 percent of the US population”

that resides within a short, 200-mile drive.²⁶ And yet, there is a lack of live-music venues and thus a shortage of spatial resources. On the positive side, Newport has extensive symbolic resources generated by the prestige of its festival events—according to current festival producer Jay Sweet, “everywhere I go, when I say ‘Newport,’ people want to talk about the festivals”—and the festivals join other Rhode Island leisure activities as a key cultural offering.

The value of the name “Newport” echoes Mayor Wynn’s description of Austin’s large talent pool of musicians and a dense network of music venues as social and cultural and spatial resources that bolster its symbolic resource of being the “Live Music Capital of the World.” This status then attracts more young, educated people to Austin. This can also be compared to the symbolic and economic strengths of Nashville’s Country Music Association (CMA) Music Festival. The CMA Fest is firmly tied to the city’s more extensive country music recording and marketing industries, and the CMA itself is a trade organization that aggressively uses corporate sponsors it feels match its audiences, just as Newport did with Ben and Jerry’s ice cream. This is, of course, just the beginning of understanding how these festivals developed, and how they used their collective cultural goods.

Across all three cities, people from the municipal agencies, CVBs, and chambers of commerce reported seeing a steadily increasing level of concerted coordination to brand and promote their cities, a newfound emphasis on tying those images to their festivals, and a renewed interest in deploying these assets in the inter-city competition for more resources and visitors, new businesses and residents. In contrast with the massive mobilization of assets and organizations required to construct major museums, sports arenas, and tourist districts, festivalization offers a repeatable, adaptable, and potentially more responsive cultural form.

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This thumbnail sketch only hints at how these four resources are used. But each event is also oriented a little differently toward its communities, and its particular arrangements further highlight the relationship between event and city. These three cases offer three different patterns of cultural occasions—what social scientists, drawing from Max Weber,

call *ideal types*: hypothetical frameworks for investigating real-life phenomena.²⁷ The following patterns are not proposed as perfect reflections of actual cases, but rather as good “tools to think with” because they allow us a sort of yardstick for comparing how resources flow through the different festivals.

Based in Fort Adams State Park, the Newport Folk Festival is a bit removed from the downtown area. The fortress spaces of the park made me think of calling it a *citadel pattern*: the festival is organized in a way that consolidates and isolates events within a single, bounded space,²⁸ similar to the Peace and Love Festival in the walled-off town center of Borlänge. This pattern benefits some restaurants and businesses but keeps others on the outside. When the festival is removed from the town center, as Newport’s is, the citadel pattern likely requires that services (food trucks, facilities, first aid) be brought onto the grounds; at the same time, it allows organizers to carefully control the on-site activities. Seattle’s Bumbershoot and Chicago’s Lollapalooza festivals also demonstrate this kind of configuration.

The arrangement of Nashville’s CMA Fest is noticeably different. The festival is situated around a centrally located set of downtown public and private spaces: a convention center, two sports stadiums, museums, and publicly accessible parks and streets. I thought of this as a *core pattern*, looser than the citadel one, where central facilities are utilized and passersby have mixed levels of admittance. Some events were free to anyone, while only ticket holders could access other activities. Nashville’s restaurants and famed honkytonks, I will show in the coming chapters, are not an official part of the country music festival, but they are still integral to the experience for attendees. The sidewalks and many public spaces in and around the core have a jumble of festivalgoers and city dwellers concentrated into a relatively small area.

And then there is South by Southwest, which uses a great variety of locations in and around downtown Austin, like the Mohawk. This is similar to how Paris’s Fête de la Musique (and the hundreds of cities around the world that replicate it) places musicians and bands at corners, alleys, and unconventional stages around the city. As Pop Montreal creative director Dan Seligman explained it to me, his festival follows this pattern too, engaging a wide array of places and organizations:

We try to really be part of the city and make the city kind of like the landscape for where the festival happens [using] venues you've never been in before and it's kind of like a creaky rickety old church or under a bridge and you're like "Wow this is amazing," and all of a sudden your senses are heightened and music starts and it's like it feels more like a real complete experience. That's something we try to do and it's something city administrators have really been helpful with—getting permits, and working with the fire department and the Festival and Cultural Event Office, and all those things—to like help make it happen.

Events like Pop Montreal, SXSW, and Fête de la Musique conform to what I would call the *confetti pattern*, which sprinkles festival events across a wide area, perhaps bringing together the widest array of actors, organizations, and experiences, but also involving the least amount of control over those activities.

These three festivals discussed in the following chapters only approximate the ideal types. SXSW is closest to a confetti pattern, and I will show that there is a measure of decreased control over the image and branding by festival organizers, while there are other aspects of the Austin story that do not fit so easily into that image. Furthermore, the spatial organization of each festival influences the distribution and use of resources: at the most general level, the more dispersed a festival is, the greater the potential struggles for controlling resources, and the wider the impact across a variety of local groups. A more confined and isolated festival is inclined to fewer struggles and more limited impact.

To say that these patterns and resources are good tools to "think with" is to indicate that using them is the start of analysis, not the end of it. These tools frame the expansive relationship of festivals, culture, and cities, shining a light on the individuals and groups that play a role in placemaking, examining how particular goals and ends are achieved, and noting those who work on the margins of these activities. As the upcoming chapters detail the lived experiences, on-the-ground interactions, varied perspectives, and tensions and challenges of these three different festivals, they do so in terms of these four resources. In conjunction, the three patterns are the "shape" of festivalization, from the physical organization of the events to the interactions and experiences around the

music, which help us see how festivals fit within the larger systems of a city. These patterns are also critical in understanding how the festivals have changed in their relationship to city spaces and communities over time: I will show how, for example, the Newport Folk Festival moved from a core model of using downtown Newport to the citadel model, and how the CMA Fest moved from the downtown core, to a citadel pattern, and back to the core.

Conclusions: Festival as Music City

Festivals, as large moments of rather intense sociability, are another facet of urban life with costs and benefits in need of appraisal.²⁹ Urban policymakers, mayors, chambers of commerce, and local businesses are moving toward embracing urban branding with slogans like "Live Music Capital of the World" and "Music City, USA," promoting a kind of identity, and using festivalization to further their respective agendas. While there is legitimate concern over the privatization of public spaces—in the case of festivals using public space and economic resources for the benefit of corporate sponsors and the music industry and, in all three cases, finding different paths toward the successful annexation of their respective cities' spaces and urban branding—an understanding of the world around such developments ensures that one does not blind himself to their benefits. Musicians, fans, and creative communities participate in festivals, using them to their advantage and drawing out a measure of "pride of place." Festivals can also be the sites of unofficial participation and protest. The Music City is, if only temporarily, resplendent in crisp, bright experiences with lots of perspectives to tap, and lots of effects to trace out.

Understanding the process of festivalization requires a mapping of the key actors and institutions involved in the founding and managing of the events, but also the development over time into a rather unique and expansive organizational form.

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The trajectory of this book is as follows. The first chapter shows how historical trends in cities, music, and festivals create a moment of concentrated investment and participation in urban cultural activities by

individuals and organizations. The next three chapters then provide the significant developments, experiences, key tensions, and intended and unintended consequences of three major music festivals. These more detailed chapters offer variations and nuances, and show different approaches to balancing competing agendas across city leaders, music fans, musicians, and corporate sponsors within three signature events. Critically, they identify the key players in these cities' festivalization—from Newport's wealthy benefactors to the union of Nashville's music industry and municipal growth organizations to Austin's countercultural scene—and critical moments in the process—from Newport's exile to the CMA's return to downtown to the Austin city government's embrace of South by Southwest. These chapters are ordered by their founding: from the Newport Folk Festival (since 1959), to Nashville's Country Music Association Music Festival (since 1972), and Austin's South by Southwest (since 1987). The chronology of these three chapters moves through the three patterns of citadel, core, and confetti and demonstrates a bit of a continuum, perhaps most easily differentiated by the decrease in the spatial consolidation and control of the aforementioned four resources. Chapters 5 and 6 build off these three chapters to compare across cases, analyzing the resulting costs and benefits to the different communities. The conclusion details the importance of festivalization as an urban cultural policy. An "encore" chapter reflects upon the findings of this book and uses Erving Goffman's call for a *sociology of occasions* to unpack how social scientists can see events as a more general sociological phenomenon, which situates this study and proposes a unique framework for analyzing mass social activity.

The Unlikely Rise in Importance of American Music Festivals

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City, Song, and Symbol

Most of the early American music festivals were, ironically, showplaces for European music. There were classical music festivals highlighting Haydn, Handel, and the like in the late 1800s in places as scattered as Buffalo, Los Angeles, and Springfield, Massachusetts; perhaps the most successful was Aaron Copland's Yaddo Music Festival in upstate New York, a critical location for "serious" music from 1932 to 1952.¹

The start of popular music festivals in the United States, however, could be traced to two people: Louis and Elaine Lorillard. The couple met in Italy during World War Two, fell in love, learned about jazz, and returned to their summer resort home in Newport, Rhode Island, resolute in their desire to add to the cultural fabric of their community. Rather than creating yet another festival in the European classical tradition, however, they decided to structure it around what is arguably the most distinctive of American cultural contributions: in 1954, they offered \$20,000 to fund a jazz event. They reached out to George Wein, owner of the Boston jazz