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**Paper title: “Festival community networks and transformative place-making”.**

**Abstract**

*Purpose*

Festivals are often explicitly connected to the destinations in which they take place, explored here as contributing to broader processes of place-making and engagement with local communities. Place is defined at a local scale, primarily as experienced by volunteer contributors to an arts and cultural festival in urban Scotland. Networked relationships between festival volunteers inform the research methods and analysis, reflecting both observer and insider perspectives. The paper comments on varying attitudes among the contributors, relating these findings to their positions in the festival’s social network.

*Design/methodology/approach*

Social network analysis methods were used to capture and examine data from a sample of festival volunteers: a survey instrument was distributed among individuals identified by the creative director, acting as a key informant. These data generated information on connections between the respondents, as well as demographic and opinion based attribute data. Network centrality measures were used to sample the respondents for four follow-up interviews with festival volunteers.

*Findings*

The resulting network revealed a core-periphery structure to the festival’s organising team. The influential core group members were more established volunteers, recognised for their value to the team. The festival was widely endorsed as contributing to local place-making, though not uncritically. Management implications were identified for the dual nature of the festival organisation: a formal hierarchy with clear functional departments, acting as a platform for an intangible yet vital social network.

*Originality value*

Social relationships are shown to have profound implications for the management and identity of this volunteer festival, in relation to its host neighbourhood. Combining social network analysis with semi-structured interviews has demonstrated the value of this mixed methods approach.

*Keywords*

Festival, place-making, community, social network analysis, SNA

**Introduction**

Relationships between festivals, communities and places are examined in this paper, as experienced by the volunteer organisers of an arts festival in Scotland that transforms under-used spaces in its host city. Social network analysis (SNA) underpinned the chosen research methods, using pre-festival survey data to reveal the volunteers’ connections to each other and their views on place-making and community engagement. Network centrality measures informed the sampling of post-festival interviews, to provide four insiders’ perspectives. Community-based definitions of place are explored below (Derrett 2003a; Friedmann 2010), as are temporal and geographic boundaries to festival places (Pierce, Martin, & Murphy, 2011; Stevens & Shin, 2014).

The paper addresses the following research questions, considering in turn the festival’s social network, its objectives and priorities, and finally influence between members of the festival team:

i. What form, shape and characteristics does the festival’s social network have, and to what extent does the network reflect the formal structure of the organisation?

ii. How important are place-making and community development to the objectives and priorities of the festival?

iii. Through what mechanisms does the festival’s central management seek to instil the organisation’s values and objectives on other members of the organising team?

The focal festival explicitly describes itself as transforming spaces and making places. In 2017 it took on a 1,000 capacity theatre, which had been a local authority storage facility for a generation. The festival’s ensuing success resulted from the efforts of committed volunteers, who created a welcoming environment for artists, performers, audiences, and the local neighbourhood. Not all events identify themselves with a clear sense of place, some are “placeless” (Van Aalst & Van Melik, 2012) and indeed the chosen example tends to move on every year or so to a new venue. What part could the 2017 edition play in a sustainable place-making process, or was it content to focus within its own temporally and geographically limited boundaries? Which community did the festival prioritise: those who engaged with it directly, or local residents confronted by a temporary social hub in their midst? The following research examines a complex and dynamic example of place-making, and advocates for the continued use of SNA in festival and event studies.

**Literature review**

The following review draws from a rich literature on place and place-making, before considering relationships between places, communities and festivals. The section concludes with reference to social networks, as contributions to “creative clusters” place-making and an appropriate focus for research.

*Defining place, and the contested nature of place-making*

Places are intrinsic to shared social experiences, and are constructed through shared practices and understandings (Andrews & Leopold, 2013). Defining “place” means deciding who gets to contribute to such definitions, how their experiences should be recorded and interpreted, and what impact governments and other institutions might have. This paper is informed by a community-based perspective on place, animated through the activities and rhythms of social interaction at a “pedestrian scale” (Friedmann 2010). This befits the study of a volunteer festival network, although an “inside out” approach to defining place can be at variance with those framed by external observers (2010). It is also at odds with a familiar process of neoliberal policy-driven instrumental culture-led regeneration and gentrification, which has often utilised place-making in pursuit of place-marketing (Hudson 2006; Smith 2012). Top-down interventions can alienate existing cultural practitioners, if investment is perceived to lack legitimacy or to prioritise economic returns over cultural significance (Hudson 2006). Friedmann’s conceptualisation of urban places highlights both dynamism and tradition: the active excitement of festivities, markets and rituals, which in turn contribute to regular patterns of everyday life (Friedmann 2010). Through such activity comes attachment to place, which may lead a neighbourhood to mobilise itself against external threats or in pursuit of potential opportunities. This interpretation of place also requires an identified centre (perhaps a building or square), which may have ill-defined and dynamic boundaries, yet offers a space for people to form and reaffirm social connections. The loss of such places, through development or regeneration, can become a violent act on the community, a incident of “place breaking” (2010, p. 158).

Competition to attract mobile capital and wealth is often a backdrop to “post-Fordist” place-making trends in globally connected cities, as central governments retreat from post-1945 obligations to deliver public services (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003). Under this model, marginalisation awaits those unwilling or unable to contribute to locally accepted models of place-making, leading to detachment from the processes of change, and ultimately a diminution of one’s civil rights, political power and citizenship itself (2003). This is the “politics of place”, where communities engage with forces shaping their neighbourhoods and latent attachment to place can become “active and political” (Pierce et al., 2011, pp. 55-6). This being said, “the extant literature inadequately integrates place-making, networking and politics”, focusing instead on any two of these themes (2011, p. 54). By contrast a “relational place-making” approach is cognisant of social networks and their influence on conceptions of place (2011, pp. 59-62). This model recognises first that places are heterogeneous mixes of components, incorporating physical features of the natural and built environments, individual people, and collective organisations. Secondly, each person’s conscious and unconscious interactions with these components comprises their own relationship with a place: they “bundle” them together (Massey 2005). This bundling is compatible with Friedmann’s pedestrian perspective of neighbourhoods, prioritising the lived experience and giving community members agency to define their environment (Friedmann 2010). In stage three a “rough consensus” is formed within social groups as to which bundles have “shared importance”, emphasising networked relationships in the social milieu (Pierce et al., 2011, pp. 59-60). This is a dynamic process, for as the components that contribute to each person’s bundles change over time, so too must the collective meaning of place to which they contribute. Stimulation for change might come from an external threat, or perhaps the individual and shared experiences of hosting festivals and events.

*Places, communities and festivals: a three-way relationship*

Much of the extant literature linking festivals to communities and places is optimistic and supportive in tone, while highlighting the complexity of such relationships. Festivals are “the face of local democracy” (Derrett 2003a, p. 38), they “build pride among local citizens, and reinforce the identity of cities” (Lau & Li, 2015, p. 57), while “shaping social experiences in local spaces… to enrich identity and build social bonds” (Stevens & Shin, 2014, p. 1). Festivals both reflect and influence a “sense of community” and a “sense of place” (Derrett 2003a, pp. 38-9; Derrett 2003b, pp. 50-2). In the former, festivals develop various facets of social capital, from collective empowerment to informal individual participation (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). For the latter, a sense of place is something to develop an emotional attachment to, which festivals can achieve if the community allocates them “space within the host destination” (Derrett 2003a, p. 39).

Two case studies highlight how festivals can define places: Glasgow’s West End Festival and its parade along the city’s Byres Road (Stevens & Shin, 2014); and the Cheung Chau Bun Festival on one of Hong Kong’s smaller islands (Lau & Li, 2015). Both of these articles champion their festival’s contribution to local life, acting as “creative, oppositional, liberating and spontaneous events… [that] support the redefinition, rediscovery and expansion of local social life” (Stevens & Shin, 2014, p. 1). In Cheung Chau “festivals create, shape, or reinforce the ideology of a place” in ways that generate attachment from the local community, which is in turn projected to outsiders (Lau & Li, 2015, p. 58). Lau & Li conclude their article with a warning that the links between festivals, communities and places can be disrupted and damaged through over-commercialisation, when there is ignorance of the meanings and values that bind the three together (2015). Meanwhile the temporary creation of transformative festival spaces in Glasgow guides Stevens & Shin, spaces which shape “playful, transgressive and resistant experiences” through enclosure, centrality, axiality, and permeability (Stevens & Shin, 2014, pp. 3, 6-14). Formal boundaries are placed on the temporal and spatial dimensions of the parade: local police set up road closures, barriers and signage; parade organisers regulate its route, timings and pace. Within this altered space performers interact with observers, who may keep pace with or even join the parade for a time. The parade’s axial route, Byers Road itself, draws people together in a familiar landscape, yet they are encouraged to perceive, use and experience this civic space differently. Finally, with further echoes of the carnivalesque (Smith, 1993), the activity and the atmosphere extend beyond the parade: side streets, parks, commercial premises and public spaces soak up the event’s overflow for the rest of the day. From Hong Kong to Scotland, festivals provide the means, motive and opportunity for communities to transform familiar spaces and thus create Friedmann’s local centres of activity, centres that in their way help to define places, and engender a sense of place for both locals and visitors.

The importance of planning, of public policy, and ultimately the deployment of power and influence in the relationships between place, communities and festivals extends to Edinburgh, where imbalances between core and peripheral festival activities have marginalised local communities across Scotland’s capital in favour of visiting tourists (Jamieson 2004; Quinn 2005). Further south, one-off festivals in Derby (Clarke & Jepson, 2011) and in Bristol (Atkinson & Laurier, 1998) also excluded elements of the local community, the former influenced by a powerful Steering Group, the latter by the letters page of the local newspaper. High profile festivals present cities with the tantalising prospect of reaping substantial instrumental benefits, with local authorities and other stakeholders influencing such events for disputed objectives (Foley, McGillivray, & McPherson, 2012). The highest profile events, with the grandest claims to ‘inspire a generation’ and deliver on Olympian ambitions of urban renewal, are not immune to the fracturing of relationships between communities and place. A November 2017 London Assembly report into five years of post-Olympic regeneration found limited evidence of the desired “convergence” between deprived host boroughs and the rest of the city (London Assembly Regeneration Committee 2017). The report highlights a trend among Olympic host cities, where investment in venues and infrastructure plays midwife to rising property prices, gentrification and displacement (2017, p. 12). Caught between the forces of cultural hegemony and economic neoliberalism, the potential for underrepresented sections of society to contribute to urban festival and event place-making can be substantially curtailed.

Conversely, community driven, bottom-up approaches to defining place through festivity are not without complexity and debate either. In Peebles, in the Borders region of southern Scotland, allegations of racism were levelled at the annual Beltane festival, initially from a former resident who had moved away, and later from the national media (Smith 1993). These critiques were met with claims to cultural autonomy, in an attempt to reshape the charge as an “us and them” attack on local place identity (1993, pp. 300-3). Despite, or because of, the intricacies of effective place-making efforts, they have received clear and unambiguous support from public sector agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the USA (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). The NEA’s policy proposals enthusiastically champion the use of under-utilised buildings, increased local creative and economic activity, and training new generations of cultural workers. Personal connections underpin such proposals, networked links that forge grassroots communities and shape their relationships with both places and festivals.

Recent analysis of place-making has captured and highlighted important new perspectives on the potential contributions of festivals, events and the arts, emboldening practitioners to contribute to the making of place. Courage’s focus on “social practice placemaking” integrates themes of collaboration and citizenship, cultural activity and city-making (Courage 2017, pp. 1-3). She critiques the term “creative placemaking” for being too generalised and fiscally orientated (2017, p. 2), with echoes of Richards’ perception of events moving from place branding to place-making contributions “aimed at holistic improvements in place quality” (Richards 2017, p. 8). These interpretations retain some of the hopeful and confident spirit highlighted above (Derrett 2003b), while recognising both the fragility and potential of dynamic urban environments that shift in response to the introduction and presence of new people, new projects, and new opportunities for participation. The latent capacity of cities to accommodate vibrant arts scenes is inherent in their “vacant spaces”, those un- or under-used liminal places to which a mix of stakeholders can (or should) contribute (Courage 2017, pp. 7-9). Vacant space can be empowering, hosting and shaping “wider physical and socioeconomic spatial systems” (2017, p. 7) that Smith would recognise as a formalising of “vague spaces” (Smith 2012, p. 37). His later work focuses on the uses of urban public spaces as venues for events and festivals, exploring the contested ground of simultaneously animating formal parklands and opening them up for exploitation in search of public and private sector economic gain (Smith 2017). Producing a music festival in an urban park may well bring new users to that environment, but hiding it behind high fences and higher ticket prices does little to encourage the forging of community relationships that more accessible alternative uses might foster.

Festivals that exclude local residents and stakeholders from public spaces do so only temporarily, though the legacy of such actions can extend further if urban environments become seen as reserved only for those who can afford to engage with them (2017). The processes of “privatization, commercialization, and securitization” are at work here (2017, p. 609). But what of festivals that open up the vacant and vague spaces of urban life? In the case of the festival discussed below, extensive opportunities for independent artists to contribute their own work, paired with free public entry during the day time (if not the evening), attempt to overcome barriers to the inclusion, presentation and viewing of creative work. The venue becomes a place of cultural exchange, again only temporarily but with the potential to have just as powerful a (positive) legacy as those events which seek to shut down their space. The need for security and safety is a vital part of contemporary event production, yet the focal festival has an emphasis on engagement and inclusion, and the forging of community ties, rather than relying on transactional stakeholder relationships built on ticket purchases and expensive merchandise. It is telling that Courage, Richards and Smith all make reference to social relationships in their work, with some explicit references to networked connections, such as when wrestling with the complementary concepts of the “neighbourhood and the community” (Courage 2017, p. 4). Social network analysis may offer an important lens through which to explore each of these themes and their roles in place-making.

*Festival networks and creative clusters*

A developing literature is employing network visualisations and analysis to describe and examine festival networks (Jarman, Theodoraki, Hall, & Ali-Knight, 2014). Network nodes and their connections can represent various units of analysis, such as festivals and their stakeholders, though a focus on social network analysis prioritises relationships between people (Prell 2012; Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013; Scott 2017). Alongside this are festival analyses that present a conceptual or strategic view influenced by network principles. Early work on festivals and social capital valued the forging of social bonds (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Wilks 2009). More latterly, Richards has described leisure, events and festivals in a networked society (Richards 2010; Richards 2015a; Richards 2015b), informed by Castells’ interpretation of “global society operating at two levels: the global ‘space of flows’ and the local ‘space of places’” (2015b, p. 247). In the former, technology and a globalising culture allow us communicate with distant others instantaneously. Yet our engagement with the latter may be suffering, if we are isolated from neighbourhood communities with whom we build and inhabit places. Commensurate with this are “pulsar and iterative events” (2015a, p. 557). Pulsar events have an international reach through global media and mass engagement, with a transformative ability to empower groups and develop bridging social capital. By contrast iterative events support bonding social capital, regularly bringing communities together at a smaller scale and supporting local talent.

An exploration of the UK’s experiences with “creative cities” policies highlights “community engagement and practice” and “critical exchange” as hoped-for objectives, emphasising the value of social connections albeit in a relatively instrumentalist way (Pratt 2010, pp. 17-8). Nesta’s work on “creative clusters” is in a similar vein, with references to Porter and Florida (Chapain, Cooke, De Propris, MacNeill, & Mateos-Garcia, 2010). Four defining characteristics of a creative cluster are proposed: a community of “creative people”; a “catalysing place”; an environment that supports stimulation and free expression; and “a thick, open and ever-changing network of inter-personal exchanges” (2010, p. 11). There is scope here to consider creative clusters that are bounded temporally as well as geographically, in analysis from the UK and New York City (Neff 2005). The introduction of festivals into these connected environments stands to introduce further complexity, with associated pressures for each person who hopes to navigate a world of social connections, attachments to place, and communities operating at both local and global scales. Yet such gatherings are vital to the effective operation of community networks, and the critical study of festivals and events must develop its understanding of social networks as both an organising principle of contemporary society, and a major influence on the individual lived experience.

**Research methods**

Research for this paper adopted a whole network approach to gather survey data for a piece of social network analysis, emphasising its value to the field of event studies (Jarman et al., 2014). Subsequent findings from this SNA informed the sampling of four interviews from the same group of people. The use of SNA to examine the organisational and management structure of a festival is an important contribution to the literature, and it is hoped that these methods will find their way into subsequent work in this and related fields. The addition of qualitative interview data adds a further richness to the available material, increasing the accessibility of this work to both researcher and practitioner audiences.

*Social network analysis of the festival’s core team*

Scott defines SNA as “a broad approach to sociological analysis and a set of methodological techniques that aim to describe and explore the patterns apparent in the social relationships that individuals and groups form with each other” (Scott 2017, p. 2). Not only this, its illustrative graphs are intuitively appealing. Defining the population of interest is a key precondition for any data collection (Prell 2012). Some applications of SNA do not restrict respondents in who they wish to identify (Crossley et al., 2015), though in this instance the festival’s creative director acted as a “key informant” and identified 35 people deemed fundamental to the festival’s success (Prell 2012, p. 66). Therefore the ensuing research does not represent the festival’s entire workforce, let alone its performers, partners and other connections. Rather this is analysis of a team of volunteers, united through their important contributions to the delivery of a shared project.

The 35 names populated a numbered roster, and these people were approached a month before the festival to provide both connection and attribute data via a survey (2012): their connections to other people, and attributes of themselves. Initial responses were provided in person when the researcher attended a team meeting; subsequent approaches via email yielded additional returns. In total 29 people completed the survey, representing 83% of the population. Relational data revealing social connections can be collected through a range of methods, from email records to co-attendance at events, but it was felt that this self-completed survey of a bounded group of committed volunteers provided reliable insights into their perceived relationships to each other. This being said, it was a snapshot in time, unable to reflect changes in the network. The most recent edition of Scott’s seminal text discusses the limitations inherent in this aspect of SNA, while confidently stating that advances in statistical techniques can overcome this static situation, to “see change as a ‘stochastic’ process” (Scott 2017, p. 158). Efforts were made in the current research to reflect the length of time volunteers were engaged with the festival, including previous years, which both inform the discussion below and suggest opportunities for further research that might reflect dynamism in the network. The post-festival timing of the four interviews also allowed for some perspective.

The survey contained the single question that forms the basis of this study’s social network analysis: “Now, from the list of [festival name] volunteers, identify which five are the most important to you in your work with the festival and/or your decision to volunteer with the festival”. The question was targeted towards festival activities, yet it allowed for a degree of interpretation regarding “most important”. Respondents turned to the roster to identify themselves by number, and then their five most important connections. Collectively the respondents made 11 references to the six absent team members, and these references were removed from the data. This removal is regrettable and it represented some 7.6% of the 145 total ties reported, however the resulting data offer a more valid picture of the 29-respondent network (Borgatti et al., 2013). The remainder of the survey focused on attribute data: respondents’ roles within the festival (including department and previous experience); demographic data; and 27 Likert style questions exploring place and community. Taken together these connection and attribute data provide a rich picture of the festival network’s structure, and the social positions of its members.

*Using aggregate network centrality to sample for interview candidates*

Four interviews were held after the festival to gather richer data than a survey would permit. SNA’s contribution to mixed methods research has received recent attention (Edwards 2010; Crossley et al., 2015; Jørgensen 2016), here prompting discussions that interested all four interviewees. As the research questions above address social structure and influence, network centrality was used to identify a sample of interviewees. Centrality features prominently in SNA text books (Prell 2012; Borgatti et al., 2013; Scott 2017), and there is an intuitive appeal in identifying the “most central” person in a network. UCINET software (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) was used to report on four measures of centrality, in line with work from Borgatti et al (Borgatti et al., 2013):

- Degree centrality reflects the quantity of ties a node has. As the survey question resulted in directed data (one person nominating another), “indegree” was used to count the incoming nominations.

- Eigenvector centrality also counts an individual’s adjacent nodes, after weighting them according to their own centrality. UCINET “symmetrizes” the data for more meaningful results, leading to an undirected graph.

- Beta centrality addresses a node’s potential influence on others in the network, reflecting its diminishing influence as the steps needed to reach other nodes increase.

- Betweenness centrality looks at the presence or absence of a given node on the shortest paths between each other pair of nodes. Nodes with high betweenness centrality have the potential to act as gatekeepers.

The 29 nodes were ranked against these four measures, with the most central under each measure given a score of 1, then 2, and so on. Sometimes nodes returned the same value for a given measure, such as for all those with indegree scores of 0.00 because no one had nominated them. The validity of correlating network centrality measures is discussed by Valente et al (Valente, Coronges, Lakon, & Costenbader, 2008), with broad support for this aggregation approach. Sufficient correlation is present to reflect comparable phenomena, yet diversity between measures suggests each has its place. After aggregating the four rankings, the nodes were categorised: group A displayed centrality across all four measures (six members); nodes in group B were mostly in the second quartiles of centrality (eight members); group C mostly in the third quartiles (nine members); while group D contained nodes with 0.00 indegree or betweenness centrality (six members). All volunteers who had expressed an interest were approached for interviews, and from the replies a member of each group was interviewed.

An initial visualisation of the network revealed the structure seen in figure 1. Nodes are sized according to their aggregated centrality group; group A has the largest nodes, group D the smallest. The graph also highlights the four interview participants, with white nodes.

< INSERT FIGURE 1 >

Figure 1: initial visualisation of festival social network graph.

*Interviews design and focus*

The advent of methods text books targeted at events research provides a suitable inspiration for this paper, and it is a privilege for festival and event researchers to draw from generations of extant social science heritage (Fox, Gouthro, Morakabati, & Brackstone, 2014). The potential richness of interview data contrasts with the relatively clinical nature of network analysis. A semi-structured approach was thus adopted, with questions drawn from the place-making, community and festival themes identified above. Variations in the attitudes and perspectives of the different interviewees were sought, to provide insights into the experiences of those in different parts of the festival’s network. Interviews were held in locations familiar to the four interviewees. When combined with analysis of the network survey, discussion can now turn to the findings themselves.

**Findings and discussion**

Three research questions have guided this paper, addressing in turn the structure of the festival’s central team, its attitudes to place-making and community engagement, and the management’s influence over other members of the organising team. As above, references are made to Borgatti et al (Borgatti et al., 2013) in relation to statistical tests and measures, though other texts provide comparable depth.

*i. What form, shape and characteristics does the festival’s social network have, and to what extent does the network reflect the formal structure of the organisation?*

Data from the survey reveal a core-periphery network structure, as established by UCINET through a correlation analysis (2013):

- The core group recommended by UCINET comprises seven members. The peripheral group contains the remaining 22.

- Ties between core group nodes have a density of 73.8%, from a maximum of 100% had they all named each other. The overall graph’s density is 16.5%. The density of ties within the peripheral group is a mere 6.7%.

- The density of connections from periphery to core is 44.2%, yet core to periphery is 2.6%.

A month prior to the festival, seven people were at the heart of the network (figure 2). They rated other core figures among their most important connections, as did those on the periphery; peripheral individuals were rarely listed, in particular by the core seven. Further calculations reinforce this conclusion. The Girvan-Newman test breaks a network into cohesive subgroups, by systematically removing ties with the highest betweenness score (2013). In the festival network four small peripheral subgroups are quickly identified, leaving a considerably larger subgroup that shrinks as each iteration picks off a single member, ultimately leaving the core group. Identifying cliques also reveals structural information, where a clique is a subgroup whose members are all connected to one another (2013). In applying this test the ties between pairs of nodes were symmetrized, so it did not matter who listed whom on the survey. For festival cliques with a minimum size of four it was common to see peripheral people listed, but they were vastly outnumbered by references to the seven core individuals. They also occupied the first seven positions in the aggregated centrality rankings, reported the longest associations with the festival of several years’ duration, and contributed four of the five who identified themselves as members of the festival’s overall management. The core group all noted Scotland or England as their country of birth (the majority position overall), while non-British volunteers were noticeably peripheral, attracting relatively few ties from their British colleagues.

Longevity appears to engender centrality and importance, benefiting those willing and able to sustain a commitment to the festival. There are personal social capital rewards for this investment, as core group members achieve status and network positions to facilitate the application of influence and power. Bonding social capital appears to be evident within the core team, though bridging between core and periphery is a largely one-way process (Wilks 2009). The use of social capital terminology as a rhetorical means of framing the social aspirations and impacts of festivals and events is now well established in the mainstream literature, although the emphasis is often on social ties among festival audiences and external stakeholders (Foley et al., 2012; Getz & Page, 2016). The SNA survey used here allowed for a higher resolution image of relationships within the festival organisation itself, as expressed from multiple insider perspectives. Where social capital is an expression of access to resources, expertise and those with network power, this can be established for each individual (Jarman 2017). At a larger scale the group’s social configuration is laid out pointing to its cohesion, though this brings into focus the relative importance of its formal structure.

Combining survey and interview data reveals aspects of the network’s evolution. A month before the festival, the seven people who reported being in the Finance team displayed far greater network cohesion than any other department. Every Finance volunteer was identified by at least one other, and several four-member cliques were found between these seven. UCINET’s faction algorithm (which forces nodes into discrete groups (Borgatti et al., 2013)) placed six into a distinct subgroup, and the seventh in the core group. The Finance team best illustrates the interviewees’ appraisal of the festival’s structure when asked to describe it: each prioritised the functional teams (Content, Promotion, Finance, Site, and Bars) before any other framework. Each also highlighted their personal identification with a department, through which they connected to the wider festival. Terminology used included “tiers” of management, the importance of “heads of” departments, and a “macro system” containing “micro systems”. Further investigation could reveal what made Finance so seemingly coherent a month before the festival: closer early collaboration, responsibilities isolated from other departments, or a lack of reliance on additional volunteer labour may all have contributed. SNA can reveal social structures that may be hidden from those most closely involved, from the relative cohesion of one department to the apparent disarray of others. The potential value of additional targeted interviews lies in their illumination of these localised experiences, to examine networks within networks. Future researchers combining SNA with qualitative data must recognise the potential, or perhaps their responsibility, to select interviewees according to the focus and ambitions of their research.

< INSERT FIGURE 2 >

Figure 2: core (white) and peripheral (black) groups, with node size representing aggregated centrality ranking.

*ii. How important are place-making and community development to the objectives and priorities of the festival?*

The festival’s structure encourages examination of similarities and differences between the opinions of core and peripheral groups. On place-making, evidence from the Likert type survey questions reveals broad consistency: a relatively united or divided core was usually matched by a commensurate spread of answers from the periphery. This can be seen in response to statements such as “I am just as committed to [host city] as I am to [festival]” (prompting a very mixed responses), and “[festival] opens up urban spaces as a platform for new and emerging artists” (which received overwhelming support). These are small sample sizes, however, general consistency between core and periphery suggests the central figures are reliably reflecting the whole team’s views on place.

By comparison, community statements drew out more marked disparities between core and periphery. There was greater core support for “[festival] ‘fits in’ here in [neighbourhood]”, likewise “The local community are contributing to [festival] work at [venue]”. Central individuals may have been more aware of planned engagement with the local community, information that might filter through the network as the festival drew closer. By contrast the periphery more strongly agreed that “The only way to fully experience [festival] is to volunteer and be part of the community”. The community most valued by relatively peripheral volunteers appears to have been the festival itself rather than residents of the surrounding neighbourhood, perhaps reflecting the personal benefits they were experiencing. The core group appear more relaxed about needing to welcome others into the festival’s orbit, and maybe their experience has shown them that meaningful engagement with the festival comes in many forms. Further research, with greater numbers of volunteers and public representatives of the neighbourhood, would enhance understanding of the festival’s place in multiple overlapping communities.

In the second phase of data collection, more central interviewees were better informed about the festival’s perspectives on place-making and community. The most central individual stated a determination to work with local communities, to avoid “helicoptering in, doing a thing, then leaving an empty space in our wake”. They also explained how past festival attendance initially prompted many volunteers to get involved, but participation in the collective transformation of a site committed them to the project. The prospect of longer term sustainability for the venue had greater support among the two more peripheral interviewees, who talked of a groundswell of local and national enthusiasm. Others were more circumspect, perhaps better aware of the resources and leadership needed to make it happen. The literature on vague spaces (Smith 2012) and vacant spaces (Courage 2017) is instructive here. As to the festival’s role as a local centre of activity and identity (Friedmann 2010), all four interviewees reported valuable interaction with existing communities. They reported limited festive permeation into local parks and businesses (Stevens & Shin, 2014), though the theatre was adopted as a temporary home for local artists, alongside existing venues and studios. The festival demanded investment from everyone involved, including volunteers and artists, and the visiting members of the public who had to find the venue, negotiate the twisting staircases, and discover the visual arts and live performances. These interactions with the place and its inhabitants create “bundles” of experience (Pierce et al., 2011, pp. 58-9), laying the ground for a broader collective sense of place (Derrett 2003a). Yet before this could happen the festival’s management needed to establish a common sense of purpose within the team.

*iii. Through what mechanisms does the festival’s central management seek to instil the organisation’s values and objectives on other members of the organising team?*

Figure 3 combines several details: the core group have square nodes, the periphery have circles; node size reflects aggregated centrality ranking. Black nodes are in strong agreement that “I consider myself to be influential in the management of [festival]”, with white disagreeing and two shades of grey in between. All but one of those who feel themselves most influential are ranked and positioned centrally, while those who feel less influential are indeed peripheral. There are anomalies, including an outlier who feels influential, and members of the core group who perhaps do not recognise they influence they wield. Management’s ability to identify these people, and ensure they are aware of the festival’s core values and priorities, could have far reaching benefits. All interviewees emphasised the festival’s leadership and structure, with department heads and the creative director given particular attention for their efforts to capture and share the spirit of the organisation. A manifesto and mission statement were cited, embodying the organisation’s founding principles. Social media groups and whole-team meetings in the venue help those in less central positions to adopt and represent the festival’s priorities. Over time, and also through manifest engagement, audiences were also educated in the ways of the festival, its values and its priorities.

This festival exists to present innovative and creative work, from a grassroots community of artists and volunteers, in buildings and spaces that are forgotten, underused, and ripe for bringing back into the popular consciousness of their host communities and the wider city. The literature above demonstrates the variety of means and measures by which place might be understood, and evidence from both phases of data collection suggests that the festival’s core team are cognisant of what their organisation can achieve in pursuing place-making ambitions. What is less apparent is the extent to which the central management are aware of having to lead two organisations in one: a formally constituted and functionally structured visible hierarchy; and a socially vital yet intangible hidden network. When both work in some sort of harmony, exceptional experiences can be created through hard work and coordination. The greatest challenges for this festival, and for other festivals and events, is to welcome the dual identity of the organisations involved: their institutional role within which people find their formal and recognised places; and their function as rallying points around which individuals can bring their own creativity and potential. Festivals are place-makers, and while their managements may set a destination and provide a route map, it is through a networked perspective that the collective efforts of individuals are brought to bear on the course which is ultimately followed.

< INSERT FIGURE 3 >

Figure 3: network centrality and perceived influence.

**Conclusions**

Volunteer teams are a careful balance of individual and collective investment and reward. For the chosen festival to pursue its place-making and community engagement objectives, the management must formulate and communicate its vision throughout such an organisation. SNA has shown the means by which this may happen, identifying and understanding connections between individual people as part of a larger network of relationships. Interviews offered insiders’ perspectives to enrich the survey data, validating the creative director’s choice of participants while revealing the complexities of their diverse perspectives. The festival has built its identity on community interaction and place transformation, yet such an event has temporal boundaries and cannot singlehandedly deliver sustainable change within a local neighbourhood. This is compounded by the festival’s predilection for changing venue every year or two. A temporary centre of activity is valuable nonetheless, a home for the festival team and numerous other communities who contribute to the shared experience. With elements of both the iterative and the pulsar (Richards 2015a), festivals such as this offer a chance to renegotiate what a place can be and a community can become.

In the course of this research the festival’s management welcomed being a subject of analysis. Though it is not the place of this article to make explicit recommendations on how the networked characterisation of the organisation can be best developed, a general emphasis on sharing information, recognising everybody’s contributions, and encouraging team members to learn about each others’ connections and attributes will stand them in good stead. The interviewees confirmed, with varying emphasis, the festival’s self-perceived role in the process of local place-making, yet it was apparent that the creative and cultural ambitions of the volunteers and contributing artists were not being sacrificed on this altar. They have shown that for the duration of the festival they can make a place that has value and meaning for thousands of people. Providing such a platform, on which others may also project their interpretations of place and the process of place-making, delivered a means of integrating with local communities, and thus presented a path to longer-term sustainability for the gains achieved during the festival period.

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