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Publication date

2019

Document Version

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Vliet, H. (null). (2019). Wat is een festival?., Festival Atlas.
<https://www.festivalatlas.nl/wat-is-een-festival/>

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What is a festival?

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Introduction

Glastonbury, Avignon Theatre Festival, North Sea Jazz, Sensation White, German Oktoberfests, the carnivals in Rio and Venice, Mardi Gras in New Orleans, the launch of the latest smartphone or major videogame, Fiesta de San Fermín in Pamplona, local talent hunts, May Day Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling and Wake (where the goal is to chase a rolling Gloucester cheese down an impossibly steep hill), *etcetera*... In this day and age, it's hard not to be overwhelmed by the sheer variety of festivities taking place on weekends and holidays. Gay Pride parade on the canals of Amsterdam, the food fight festival La Tomatina in Spain, the Hindu ritual bathing festival Kumb Mela, Palio of Siena, Cure Salée in Ingall, the Super Bowl, Liberation festivals, annual markets, all the different ways New Year is celebrated around the world, *etcetera*... The list goes on and on and on.

Various words are used in our daily lives to describe all these different festivities and events, including: festivals, parties, concerts, celebrations, ceremonies, tributes, rituals and performances. Some are intrinsically linked to the village/city/region/country where they take place – such as Carnival. Others have a more global feel – such as with the millennium celebrations. Yet others connect with our more personal and important life moments – such as birth, marriage, death, passing seasons (e.g. harvest festivals) – or relate to historical occurrences such as Liberation Day. Some, like major sports events, require years of planning; others may erupt spontaneously. Some of these events, like a street party, are small-scale; others are 'mega' like the Olympics.

The sheer variety and number of the different festivities and events raises the question whether these events can actually be divided into different categories so we can better clarify their nature. While we might feel that a wedding, Carnival, the World Cup Rugby final, a TED Talk and Sziget festival may all share some similarities, we're also aware they have significant differences. They all have different rules when it comes to how we (should) behave and what we can expect. So, what are these similarities and differences? The answer to this question can help us to be more precise when evaluating the relevance of a statement in a book or article on events. For example, if we claim that the number of festivals over the

years is increasing, do we actually know what we are talking about?

In this paper, I will argue that events can be differentiated in three ways: 1) by clustering together events that resemble each other (category approach), 2) by listing event characteristics (definition approach), and 3) by regarding festivals as a big family of instances that share more or less (family) resemblances (prototype approach). Based on this I will offer a profile of what a festival actually is.

Festivals as a specific category of events (the category approach)

The first way to separate festivities is to make categories of events that resemble each other based on multiple (random) aspects. For example, you can use size to create categories such as Mega-Events, Hallmark, Major and Local (Skoultzos & Tsartas, 2010). You can also use accessibility to create categories such as private parties (e.g. wedding), closed events (e.g. parties for private associations) and public happenings (e.g. King's Day). However, using a single criterion to create rather rough categories can result in two events – that actually 'feel' very different – ending up in the same category. For example, a national war remembrance and a carnival parade may both be public events yet they don't feel overly connected – even when their differences in historical background and societal meaning are ignored.

In addition, researchers don't always clarify the criteria on which they base their categories. For example, Wood & Masterman (2008) use fifteen types of marketing events – open days, conferences, road shows, product launches, etc. – without clarifying their actual differences. Crompton & McKay (1997) also use little justification when they divide the activities of a ten-day festival in Texas into five categories: parades/carnivals, pageants/balls, food-oriented events, musical events and museums/exhibits/shows.

Some event handbooks and overview articles do offer more systematic summaries of possible event categories. For example, Getz (2008) in an article about event tourism offers a typology of eight categories based on differences in goal and programming:

1. Cultural celebrations: festivals, carnivals, commemorations, religious events
2. Political and State: summits, royal occasions, political events, VIP visits
3. Arts and Entertainment: concerts, award ceremonies

4. Business and Trade: meetings, conventions, consumer and trade shows, fairs, markets

5. Educational and Scientific: conferences, seminars, clinics

6. Sport competition: amateur/professional, spectator/participant

7. Recreational: sport or games for fun

8. Private events: weddings, parties, socials.

In this context, festivals are seen as a form of cultural celebration, such as a carnival. On the other hand, festivals are in this categorisation separated from 'Arts and Entertainment', even though we can naturally reference concerts (North Sea Jazz, LiveAid) and film prize ceremonies (Oscars, Cannes Film Festival) that we often also call festivals – though perhaps in name only.

Berridge (2007) cites a similar relationship between festivals and cultural celebrations. He presents a categorization that resembles the one used by the *Event Management Body of Knowledge* (EMBOK, see www.embok.org) in that it is mainly based on the gathering's goal (see Table 1), with festivals covering the full range of cultural celebrations, whether they're religious or not. What's notable that each of his category descriptions ends with a statement that this category can occur "in conjunction" with another event – in other words: reality has many hybrids.

Table 1: Event categories (Berridge, 2007)

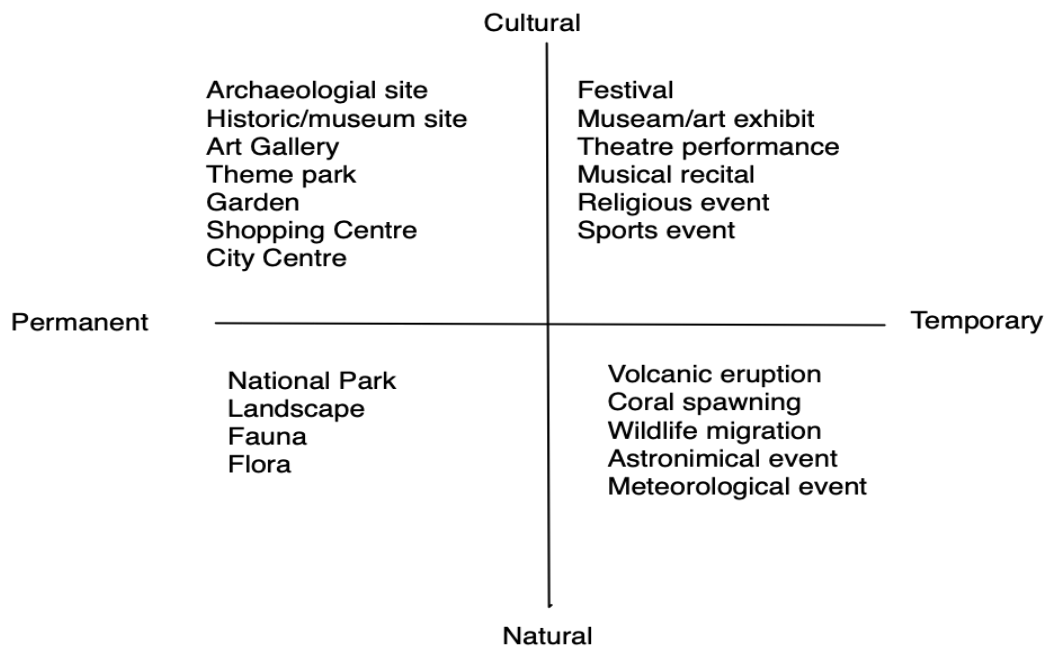
Business and corporate events	Any event that supports business objectives, including management functions, corporate communications, training, marketing, incentives, employee relations, and customer relations, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Cause-related and fund-raising events	An event created by or for a charitable or cause-related group for the purpose of attracting revenue, support, and/or awareness, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Exhibitions, expositions and fairs	An event bringing buyers and sellers and interested persons together to view and/or sell products, services, and other resources to a specific industry or the general public, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other

	events.
Entertainment and leisure events	A one-time or periodic, free or ticketed performance or exhibition event created for entertainment purposes, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Festivals	A cultural celebration, either secular or religious, created by and/or for the public, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events. (Many festivals include bringing buyer and seller together in a festive atmosphere.)
Government and civic events	An event comprised of or created by or for political parties, communities, or municipal or national government entities, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Marketing events	A commerce-oriented event to facilitate bringing buyer and seller together or to create awareness of a commercial product or service, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Meeting and convention events	The assembly of people for the purpose of exchanging information, debate or discussion, consensus or decisions, education, and relationship building, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Social/life cycle events	A private event, by invitation only, celebrating or commemorating a cultural, religious, communal, societal, or life-cycle occasion, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.
Sports Events	A spectator or participatory event involving recreational or competitive sport activities, scheduled alone or in conjunction with other events.

But summarizing is not the only way to create event categories. Festivals can also be subdivided into at least four categories based on two or multiple dimensions. An example is the study by Benckendorff (2006) that looks at trends in tourist sites. Benckendorff groups the many types of tourist attractions using two dimensions: 1) the division between culture and nature (i.e. what exists based on human activities), and 2) the division between the permanent and the temporary: “The temporary-permanent dimension implies that while some attractions are permanent, the core resource may change. Furthermore, this dimension recognizes the temporary nature of events as attractions” (2006, p. 202). These two dimensions divide tourist attractions into four categories (see Figure 1) in which

festivals fall under the category ‘cultural-temporary’ – just like museum exhibitions and religious events. Hence, once again, festivals are roughly placed beside other events that may share some features (cultural and temporary) while also having obvious differences. For instance, when was the last time you saw headbanging at a museum exhibition?

Figure 1: Categories of tourist attractions (Benckendorff, 2006)



Festival characteristics (the definition approach)

A second way to categorise different kind of festivities is to define their specific characteristics. In this approach a festival is defined by summing up characteristics that are (together) exclusive for the category festivals. EMBOK’s categorization already does this in same way by, for example, stating that all events relate to a specific place, moment and goal. So, what are characteristics regularly appearing in the literature that seek to define festivals?

One characteristic that appears in almost every description of festivals is their relation to a specific **public place**. Namely, festivals occur in an existing open space that is often transformed: “For the festival-goers, it is a space set apart to which they come seeking an extraordinary experience. This experience can have an emotional and symbolic significance, which they then come to associate with the place itself” (Morgan, 2007, p. 113).

For example, a farmer's field can turn into a dance valley. Or streets are blocked to not only make their road signs meaningless but also to be decorated and transformed to welcome people to eat and dance where they usually wouldn't (Picard & Robinson, 2006; Morgan, 2007; Getz, 2008).¹ Such a public place is often demarked: it may be by fencing or by promotional material that says, "This belongs to the festival". While in principle this public place may seem accessible for all, pricing and other policies can determine the make-up of the public that actually enters. Festivals can have a large impact on their location – for example, a city's appearance can change temporarily or even permanently. Certainly, the Olympics and World Fairs have resulted in some permanent icons, such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The term 'ephemeral architecture' is often used to describe temporary architectural changes made for parades, processions, regattas and other such events. Historical examples of such architectonic changes include triumphal arches, bridges, tribunes as well as recreations of whole buildings, such as with *Old Manchester* during the Royal Jubilee Exhibition (1887) or *Old Holland* during the 'World Fair for Hostelry and Travel' (1895) (Bonnemaison & Macy, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2011).

A second characteristic of festivals is how they take place over a **defined period** – i.e. a specific moment in time. This period can be a day or, as with some festivals, months. While a festival may have a clear beginning and end, this says nothing about how visitors look forward or prepare themselves for a festival (beforehand), or about the lingering memories (afterwards). Frequency is not directly relevant – it can be about an annual festival or a one-off that happens to become legendary (Woodstock). The defined temporality of festivals is also reflected in how we talk about the 'festival season'.

A third festival characteristic is how it involves **planned** and **organised** activities. Festivals are consciously planned with someone given end responsibility. This is a requirement since a festival needs at least some coordination since it involves relatively large groups of people. Issues such as communication, logistics and safety must be addressed with clear agreements on who is responsible for what. The planning and organizing of an event also means there's a **goal**: "Planned events are created to achieve specific outcomes, including those related to the economy, culture, society and environment" (Getz, 2007, p. 21). This goal can be idealistic, such as a festival *against* for

¹ Actually, this 'public place' can also be virtual (Getz, 2008). For example, you can have a festival in *Second Life* (!), or a *World of Warcraft* event when players arrange to enter a newly unveiled section of the game world at a specific time. While certainly an interesting phenomenon, these types of 'virtual festivals' fall outside the scope of this discussion.

instance racism, or *for* the environment or fighting poverty. But the goal can also be simpler: making money or having fun. A festival can also be organized to reflect societal goals, such as emphasizing what we share as a society (e.g. a liberation festival). So, in this context, it can be said that festivals have themes that celebrate something (Getz, 2010).

As a fourth festival characteristic – independent of the goal – is how they create a **unique experience**. By anchoring a festival to a specific time and place, every festival is different: you need to have been present to have ‘truly’ experienced it. “They [festivals] create the sense of unique, one-off experiences, for which it is important to say ‘I was there’, and which therefore bear their own authenticity” (Giorgi, Sassatelli & Delanty, 2011, p. 18); and “Much of the appeal of events is that they are never the same, and you have to ‘be there’ to enjoy the unique experience fully; if you miss it, it’s a lost opportunity” (Getz, 2008, p. 404). In other words, you have to experience something at a festival that cannot be experienced elsewhere – and this aspect is emphasized again and again throughout the literature. However, due to the sheer number of festivals, a sense of conformity is unavoidable. Certain (successful) formats are repeatedly copied making it difficult to distinguish one festival from another. Rebecca Finkel (in: Sassatelli, 2010) has called this uniformity ‘McFestivalisation’, while Leenders et al. (2005) speak of ‘excessive sameness’. Getz (2015) also recognizes the phenomenon and observes how people are now searching for new ways to fill in the ‘unique’ aspect: “Because it’s getting harder to find unique events, engaging patrons with surprise has become a theme. Total immersion, learning, sensory, and emotional stimulation are elements of design that promise to engage and fulfill individuals” (p. 27).

As a final characteristic, festivals involve **non-everyday situations and actions** where play and performances are used to suspend regular reality: “All types of festivity seem to include forms of staged and non-staged performances and enactments, through which individuals and groups can discursively manifest their visions of the world and create meaningful frameworks of their being together” (Picard & Robinson, 2006, p. 12). This play element means that people are voluntarily part of the festival, that beforehand they don’t know what may actually happen, that they will follow certain rules that fit the situation while veering from the usual rules of social interaction, and that a second “as if” reality is created (Rippen & Bos, 2008). Not only does a festival transform a certain space, but it also transforms the actions of the people in that space – both those literally performing (musicians, actors) and the public (through dancing, partying, dressing up). These different

behaviours bring different rules and conventions to the forefront and change the expectations of what is normal: “Objects (props and sets) and people (actors, audience) are assigned symbolic values and roles; where all attending observe rules and conventions that are different from those of everyday life” (Morgan, 2008, p. 83).

Turner (1982) used the term *liminal* to describe this special situation within a transformed space. Borrowed from Arnold van Gennep’s concept of liminality, the term refers to being on a threshold (*limen* means threshold in Latin) between an old and new way of structuring one’s identity and one’s place in the community and the larger world. For Turner, it’s a situation where visitors are more relaxed and can experience pleasure. With fewer inhibitions, visitors are more open to new experiences and knowledge. By it being a relatively safe situation, factors such as social status, mutual role relations and everyday identities temporarily lose their dominance. Festivals can function as a surrounding where people are (temporarily) freed from their daily routine (Anderton, 2011; Pielichaty, 2015). Through this lens, Ravenscroft & Gilchrist (2006) see festivals as an extension of the carnivalesque where ‘divergent’ behaviour can be displayed without fear of reprisals since it takes place outside the normal social order: “They have license to enjoy themselves in ways that would be inappropriate and disrespectful at other times. With this license, visitors can explore different personas and their relationships to others, while being safe in the knowledge this is a legitimate short-term activity after which ‘normal’ relations will resume. Equally, the spectacle of the carnival allows people to ‘hide’ serious political messages of protest within the grotesque bodies and liminal practices of the carnival” (ibid, p. 154). This also explains the popularity of costumes and masks: they not only express certain social customs and mores, but also allows one to behave indecently without being recognised, such as with *touloulous* during Mardi Gras in French Guyana. Breaking the rules of daily life is also a recurring theme with festivities such as *Blanc-Moussis* in Belgium’s Stavelot or the *Hadaka Matsuri* in Japan (Davey, 2012). For those in power, such festivities are also a handy and safe way to channel and defuse citizen unrest. In other words, (folkloric) festivities present an alternative social order that at the same time confirms the usual social order and authority structures. Hence, we can speak of a disciplining in line with Foucault’s ‘disciplinary heterotopia’: “The heterotopia represents a liminal zone that offers neither genuine freedom nor genuine control. Instead it offers the possibility of a temporary lifting of the ‘moral curtain’ followed by an embarrassed or guilty return to the moral code” (Ravenscroft & Gilchrist, 2006, p. 152). In fact, Ravenscroft & Gilchrist observes the lineage

of the carnivalesque extending less into large commercial festivals and more into other contemporary occurrences such as *raves* and *dogging*.

Based on the festival characteristics described above, we can now formulate the following definition: *A festival is a gathering of a relatively large group of people in a specific public place and during a defined period, where visitors are offered a unique experience that is planned and organised based on a certain goal and where use is made of transformations and play so visitors have the possibility to behave and feel differently than during their everyday reality.*²

Clearly, this definition does not rid the world of all discussions around whether a certain event is a festival or not. The launch of the first iPad can certainly be characterised as an event, with characteristics such as being in a public place (Apple Store in NY), occurring at specific moment (launch date), being planned, having a specific goal (marketing, profit) and delivering a unique experience ('I was there!'). However, the launch remains an everyday experience since it was 'basically' consumerist behaviour – albeit heavily magnified. So, naming such an event as a festival goes a bit far. 'National Windmill Day' in the Netherlands is another example of an event that shares a number of characteristics with festivals (place, time, planned), while lacking the 'non-everyday' and perhaps even 'unique', since most windmills can also be visited on other days throughout the year. It's much easier to typify organised street theatre festivals such as the Aurillac Festival in Auvergne and 'Deventer on Stilts' as festivals. They both have all the described festival characteristics, including 'non-everyday' since some performances involve public participation. However, enough debateable examples remain. For example, the football finals for the World Cup may share characteristics with festivals, including the 'non-everyday' since fans often dress 'different than usual' – not to mention that terms such as 'football circus' are often used. Yet, few would be comfortable in deeming the World Cup as a true festival.

A possible solution for this situation would be to include **artistic performances** as a festival characteristic. Namely, to include performances by bands, theatre/dance groups and perhaps even film screenings under an old-fashioned term such as 'public entertainments'

² This definition is in line with Falassi's often-cited definition, which however puts more emphasis on the cultural anthropological aspects: "A periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festival celebrates." (in: Getz, 2007, p. 31).

(Gras et al., 2011). Thereby, music, theatre, dance and films festivals would be differentiated from an iPad launch or the World Cup finals. But again, a discussion could arise on whether a beautiful play by a footballer could be interpreted as 'performance'. Or how Superbowl features halftime performances by the likes of Coldplay, Bruno Mars and Beyoncé. And what about all those cultural events such as tea festivals, wine festivals and arts & crafts festivals that focus less on performance and more on the exchange of traditions, rituals, objects, etcetera?

In short, these recurring discussions cannot be avoided unless we find a conclusive definition. But since we are constantly confronted with the sheer diversity and hybridization of events, the question remains whether any categorization or definition can ever do reality justice. Getz came to the same conclusion: "No widely acceptable typology has emerged" (2010, p. 2). In addition, this challenge is not only limited to festivals but also exists for every concept. We may all know what a dog is, but providing a conclusive definition remains tricky: has fur (but then there's the hairless Chihuahua), has four legs (until the supposed dog loses one in a car accident), and barks (unless you're Egyptian Basenji who does more of a yodel) (Riesberg, 2007). This is why we need to find a categorisation method that brings together a collection of occurrences that describes the members of a certain category while still leaving room for exceptions and borderline cases.

Festivals as a big family (the prototype approach)

A third way to categorise festivities uses their mass diversity and hybridization as its very starting point – namely, to regard for instance festivals as a natural category instead of a formal one. An example of a formal category is the collection of all rectangles. A rectangle is simple to clearly define (four straight sides, four right angles) and one rectangle is not any better or worse than any other rectangle (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). An example of a natural category is the collection of all fruit – they may have many similarities but also have many differences. With no single fruit having all the characteristics of what a fruit can be, it's simply impossible to come up with a conclusive definition. In other words, fruit only show a *family resemblance* to each other. The philosopher Wittgenstein introduced this concept to show that all manifestations of a natural category can be seen more or less as a big family with more or less shared 'genes' (i.e. characteristics) wherein some family members look more like each other (brothers, sisters) than others (cousins, great uncles). Something is

therefore more or less a member of a category. The more category characteristics a particular member has, the more we're prone to see this member as a representative of that category. Hence, we more readily regard apples, pears and bananas as fruit than we do dates, kumquats and persimmons.

Wittgenstein's philosophical solution has been adapted to cognitive theory on how people categorise objects and situations. To make sense of all the manifestations of objects and situations in our surroundings, we construct and use categories so we can then classify, interpret and understand these occurrences. In this way, we not only learn what a chair or a dog is, but also what to regard as art or a theatre performance. These categories must be, on one hand, stable enough for us to ably process the impressions. On the other hand, categories must also be flexible enough to adapt to new objects and situations. Categories are useful for making inferences about new 'members' so we don't have to be constantly busy actively thinking about every new object or situation we encounter.

The most renowned theory about categories is from Eleanor Rosch (Rosch, 1975, 1978; Rosch & Mervis, 1975; Gardner, 1987; Van Vliet, 1991; Riesberg, 2007, Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). Rosch states: "Categories are built around a central member or *prototype* – a representative example of that class which shares the most features with other members of the category while sharing few, if any, features with elements drawn from outside the class" (Gardner, 1987, p. 346). An apple is a more prototypical example of the fruit category than a kumquat; a robin is a more prototypical bird than a chicken or penguin. When confronted with a new example, we compare this to the prototype to determine whether the example belongs to the category – that, for example, it's a bird. We use the prototype to quickly recognise things, make inferences and learn categories.

By taking things from the centre and not the borders of a concept, it's no longer about whether something belongs or doesn't belong to a category. Rather, it's about a graded membership: "Each item has at least one, and probably several, elements in common with one or more other items, but no, or few, elements are common to all items" (Rosch & Mervis, 1975, p. 575). Some dogs are 'doggier' than others; some fruits are 'fruitier'. A category member that has a greater overlap of potentially shared elements means that it is more prototypical within that category. And this aspect can be observed in many categories, such as with animals, furniture, tools, sports and countries (Dry & Storms, 2010), as well as with concepts such as art, theatre, dance and literature (Van Vliet, 1991). This also means less-

prototypical examples exist that fit less well within a given category – borderline cases that are difficult to describe, or perhaps fall in two or more categories. For example, are avocados fruits or not? In other words, category borders are *fuzzy*.

These ideas around family resemblances, graded membership, (proto)typicality and fuzziness are now proven to be psychological realities in that they can explain a lot about how we use categories to learn and think, with all the nuances that these processes involves – for example whether a category is represented by an abstract prototype (prototype view) or by a specific stored example (exemplar view) (see below; Reisberg, 2007; Loken, Barsalou & Joiner, 2008; Dry & Storms, 2010, and others). In fact, Ziff (1953) already offered comparable ideas in his article about the definition of an artwork. Ziff believes that an artwork is made up of a ‘set of characteristics’, and if an artwork harbours the biggest collection of these ‘characteristics’ than it’s the ‘clearest case’ (i.e. prototype). But often, a concrete artwork only has a certain subset of these ‘characteristics’ resulting in artworks having overlapping characteristics (i.e. family resemblance), and these traits can be weighed in terms of how important they are (i.e. degrees of centrality). This evaluation of importance is also reflected in John Searle’s elaboration on the nature of constitutive and regulatory rules (see below).

What does this all mean for festivals? To regard festivals as a natural category combines two earlier given answers. Festivals can be seen as a specific category of events, but then with the caveat that there are gradations in this category based on how ‘typical’ a certain festival is as a representative of that category – for example, Glastonbury is a more typical example of a music festival than Burning Man. In addition, categories have vague borders. For example, can a festival such as Stukafest where performances take place in people’s living rooms still be considered a festival? Festivals can also be described based on characteristics, but then with the knowledge that all forms of festivals cannot be described with a single set of necessary and sufficient characteristics. While all festivals do share characteristics with each other, they are not always the same characteristics. In addition, there can be characteristics that are excluded from the definition, yet still play a role in typing a particular festival. In a study by Jago & Shaw (1999), 500 randomly selected Melbourne residents were asked on the applicability of 39 characteristics of ‘special events’ (including festivals, and both minor and major special events). In the 228 questionnaires that were returned fully answered, the most important characteristics came forward: “the number of attendees, the international attention due to the event, the improvement to the

image and pride of the host region as a result of hosting the event, and the exciting experience associated with the event” (p. 20). Two of the characteristics (number of visitors and unique experience) are found in our previously given definition, but two are not (impact and international attention). So, should we include these in the definition? This would result in a large Dutch music festival such as *Appelpop* no longer being a festival since it gets no international attention. In addition, the study subjects found that the characteristic of a defined time period as a non-relevant characteristic of a festival. The results from Jago & Shaw (1999) only form a problem if we continue to regard festivals as an exactly defined formal category with a limited set of essential characteristics. But in fact, their research results can be used as evidence to support the much better idea of regarding festivals as a big family of similar occurrences that share certain (variable) characteristics.³

We can use the line of reasoning behind using family resemblances, graded membership, (proto)typicality and fuzziness to typify festivals to take a further step: to regard the characteristics of a particular category not as elements to define that category but as heuristic rules that people employ to recognise – and react to – situations. For this, we need to have a look at the work of John Searle (1969) who introduced the difference between constitutive and regulative rules. Constitutive rules are rules that make a situation a situation: football is football because there are rules to ensure that a certain situation is football, such as it can only involve two teams playing against each other, and the ball can only be touched with the hands of the keeper while he or she is in a certain area. If this no-hands rule doesn't apply then we are witnessing another situation: perhaps rugby or handball. An occurrence such as football does not exist without a number of these kinds of constitutive rules: “The activities of playing football or chess are constituted by acting in accordance with (...) the appropriate rules” (1969, p. 34). Regulative rules are about how you should behave within a certain situation – for example, you are expected to cheer when a goal is scored. These kinds of rules are determined through convention and can differ between regions or countries and are therefore arbitrary in relation to the football game. Constitutive rules answer the question ‘What kind of situation is this?’ with the answer largely transferring information – ‘You are watching football’ or ‘This is theatre’. When explaining a certain situation to someone for the first time, we usually summarize the

³ It's notable that Jago & Shaw (1999) don't refer to the (psychological) studies on categorization, since their study follows a comparable set-up as other empirical studies into prototypicality and fuzziness. They could have also benefited from such references when interpreting their results, as done in the study of Van Vliet (1991) into the mental representation of art concepts.

constitutive rules. Regulative rules answer the question 'What should I do?' whereby the answer suggests the proper behaviour. When constitutive rules are disagreed upon, a high level of confusion arises. When regulative rules are disagreed upon, it's more about a sense of awkwardness that may result in some embarrassment.

To illustrate the potential complexity involved in using the concepts of constitutive and regulative rules, two aspects can be highlighted. First, these rules are not static but develop over time. For example, the constitutive rules that lie at the basis of playing chess have changed. If you were to explain the current rules to players of the earlier Persian game *sjatrandj*, which was chess's precursor, they would likely cry out: 'This is not *sjatrandj*! It's also quite easy to imagine that the current rule of shaking hands to mark the beginning of a chess game can evolve from being a polite habit to becoming the formal start to the game. Over time, shaking hands can become a constitutive rule since a game cannot formally begin until hands are actually shaken.

Second, there will always be more than one constitutive rule, since within this 'set of rules' not all rules are equal, with some rules weighing heavier than others. Searle calls this 'degrees of centrality'. If a group of seven children try to kick a ball between two jackets on a grass field, it will still be called football even though many of the formal rules have been broken. Also, in formal football situations, some rules are 'adapted', such as with under-12s who play without offside and have shorter halves (20 or 25 minutes). In other words, constitutive rules differ among themselves in their relevance to the constituting, in the proportion of the constituent. This manner of thinking about typifying situations can help explain why people react in a certain way, because they touch a psychological reality of how people deal with situations (Van Vliet, 1991).

What a festival is

As may already have become clear from the discussion above, there is a strong preference for taking the prototype approach in tackling the question of what a festival is. As said, festivals can be seen as a specific category of events, but then with the caveat that there are gradations in this category based on how 'typical' a certain festival is as a representative of that category. Categories also have vague borders - there is fuzziness. Festivals can also be described based on characteristics, but then with the knowledge that all forms of festivals cannot be described with a single set of necessary and sufficient characteristics. While all

festivals do share characteristics with each other, they are not always the same characteristics. Using a framework of natural categories and concepts such as family resemblances, graded membership, (proto)typicality and fuzziness we can do justice to the complexity of reality and also bring some psychological reality to how festival visitors categories festivals as a specific kind of festivity.

Using the prototype approach to define festivals has a number of consequences when undertaking research into festivals. One such consequence is that when one presents their study, a festival's characteristics must be precisely described – along with the 'borderline cases' and why they were, or were not, included. Given the heterogeneous and hybridised nature of festivals, it is very important to know *what* is being referred to when making any (scientific) statements. This can result in detailed justifications on what's included, or not, in the research (see for example Van Vliet, 2017).

Deventer
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