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Selected spatial aspects of cultural events

Julia ZIÓŁKOWSKA^{1*}

1. Jędrzej Śniadecki Academy of Physical Education and Sport, Department of Tourism and Recreation Management,
K. Górskiego Street 1, 80-001 Gdańsk, Poland, e-mail: juliag@awf.gda.pl

* *Corresponding author*

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Abstract. Cultural events, ranging from large-scale international festivals to small-scale local initiatives, are in the field of interest of many researchers. Economists, sociologists, geographers and tourism researchers have devoted work to understand different aspects of this phenomenon. Cultural events are complex, multidisciplinary occurrences, strongly linked with the environment. This article tries to show selected links between cultural events and space.

Keywords: cultural events, planned events, space in geography

Introduction

At regional or local level, cultural events have become a popular way to build tourism potential or to diversify the free-time activity offer for residents. Events are in the scope of interest of different scientific fields, including geography. Cudny (2014) notes that festivals are a frequent theme of geographical inquiry, researched mainly in respect of cultural and social aspects. The aim of the paper is to present a preliminary analysis of event-space relationship in regard to cultural events and chosen elements of space characteristics. The paper is based on literature review and the authors' own reflections on this subject.

Planned events

Planned events are temporary occurrences, they have a finite length that is fixed and publicized, each event is a transient, one-time composition of the setting, people, design elements and programme (Getz 1997, 2008). Getz (2008) shows a

typology of planned events (table 1) that divides them into several categories in relation to their form and purpose.

The purpose of each event is defined by the institution responsible for its organization or by the body (i.e. a local government) that commissions the event. Among the many organizers of planned events it is possible to name non-governmental organizations (i.e. cultural or religious), public bodies (of local and national level), international organizations (in the field of sport, politics and business), the management of purpose built venues (congress and expo centres, tourist attractions, sport stadiums, etc.), educational and research institutions (i.e. universities) and the entertainment business (i.e. concert or marketing agencies). Private events are organized by families or social groups with participation being restricted those specially invited. For that reason this type of events is not considered as open to the public and will not be taken into consideration in this paper.

Table 1. Typology of planned events (source: Getz, 2008)

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS festivals carnivals commemorations religious events POLITICAL AND STATE summits royal occasions political events VIP visits ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT concerts award ceremonies	BUSINESS AND TRADE meetings conventions consumer and trade shows fairs, markets EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC conferences seminars clinics
SPORT COMPETITION amateur/professional spectator/participant RECREATIONAL sport or games for fun	PRIVATE EVENTS weddings parties socials

Planned events may also be defined as to their potential to attract tourists. The tourist demand for local and regional (periodic or one-time) events is low or medium, periodic hallmark events and occasional mega-events have a high value and high tourist demand (Getz, 2008). As noted by Koh & Jackson (2006) mega-events are large-scale events that have the possibility to affect whole economies and are covered by global media. What distinguishes hallmark events is the fact that they become synonymous with the place of their localization (i.e. the carnival in Rio de Janeiro). Regional events have the potential to attract tourists, while local events are intended mostly for residents.

The research on events concentrates mostly on mega-events and hallmark events, especially on the impact of these events on local economy and society as well as their potential for tourism development. Local and regional events are less in the

scope of research, although, if organized by local residents, they have the chance to attract tourists (Carlsen et al., 2000).

One of the events type widely covered in literature and research are festivals (see Cudny 2014). Festivals are cultural events based on religion, culture or local traditions (McCartney, 2010). According to Cudny et al. (2012, cited in Cudny 2014) the characteristic features of festivals are (among others): the celebration of elements that are important in a given community's life, the regularity, the possibility to combine with competitions, in addition festivals are often composed of different social and cultural events. Festivals are the dominant type of cultural events and they organization is possible "(...) all over the world and in all societies" (Cudny, 2014, 131).

The concept of space in geography

As stated by Kostrowicki (1997) it is impossible to formulate one, general definition of space. The understanding of this term is strictly dependent of the subject and object of reflection. In addition, the criteria used to divide geographical space might be as well subjective as objective. Geographical space is defined by Leszczycki (cited in: Tkocz, 2008) as the natural base on which people live, work and rest, it is a space that combines many functions necessary for human being existence. In geographic inquiry on space two strands are dominant – one that focuses on the sense of place ("defined by the lived experiences of people") and one that concentrates on space as socially produced and consumed (Hubbard, 2010). The concept of physical and non-physical space is presented by Lisowski (2003). The first is seen as a set of objects and the relations between them on the Euclidean geometry. The second is seen as a set of objects in relation to defined subjects that shape, act-in or study this space. Non-physical space consists of ecological, social and cultural spaces. Ecological space is analysed from a human and environmental perspective and will have different properties depending of the subject being taken into consideration. The social space consists of physical space elements that are organized by society in a purpose-led activity. Cultural space "carries meanings" for the subject and is a symbol of cultural values. These cultural values might take the shape of specific behaviour of people in space. In this concept people have not only the possibility to use space but also to shape it into different functions and meanings.

As noted by Kuciński (2013) because of the ever growing use of space and its natural elements for economic purposes, its character is shifting from geographical towards economic. The economic space includes all spheres and relations that have an economic property and in this context human existence is considered in terms of production, exchange and consumption (Tkocz, 2008). One of the essential aspects of space is its' differentiation, which has a critical role in planned events organization. The main elements used to differentiate space are natural, economic, social, political and institutional features (Kuciński, 2013) which reflect in the accessibility to specific resources needed to perform human organized activity.

Event – space relationship

The organization of planned events, as any other human organized activity, is based on resources accessibility. Getz notes that the resource base of events shifts from natural to economic and events tend to be shaped by politics (Getz, 2008). To be successful, event's organizers need to manage often scarce resources and coordinate the needs of various stakeholders (local community, politicians, artists/performers, visitors). In this part of the paper an attempt is made to present the relationship that occurs between chosen elements of each resources type and the organization of planned cultural events.

As stated by Kuciński (1994) resources used in production and consumption can be grouped into the following categories: natural, cultural and human.

Natural resources include minerals, sources of energy, climate conditions, soils, natural flora and fauna, waters, landscape, landforms and the space itself. When analysing cultural events in the context of natural resources, landscape stands-out as the most important of them. The New Penguin Dictionary of Geography defines landscape as an area of the earth's surface characterized by a certain type of scenery, comprising a distinct association of physical and cultural forms. As stated by Bobek &Schmithüsen (cited by Kowalczyk, 2007) the cultural landscape is formed by the abiotic sphere (inanimate nature), the vital sphere (animate nature, including the activity of humans at the lowest level of civilisation development) and the intellectual sphere (the effects of culture-led human activity). In the semiotic approach to cultural landscapes the attention is focused on intangible cultural assets, on the *genius loci* or "spirit of landscape" (Plit, 2011, 11). The cultural landscape of a given area may be reflected in the theme (subject) of an event, it may form the background (understood as a view or a setting) for the event, it might also be reflected in the activities presented during the event programme (i.e. as the everyday life of a community). The relationship between the cultural landscape and the event is especially strong in the case of hallmark events and local/regional events i.e. festivals, fairs and historical reconstructions, which reflect the unique character of a landscape.

Kuciński (1994) explains that cultural resources may also be described as capital resources which are elements of geographical environment created by humans. They build the fixed assets of a given area and contribute to the effectiveness of production and consumption processes. Infrastructure is one of the elementary forms of capital resources and it might be defined as an arrangement of objects and institutions operating and linking spatial systems, as well as fulfilling an ancillary role to population and to the different sectors of national economy (Pakulska, 2013). The primary types of infrastructure noted in literature are: basic, information, innovation and social infrastructure. Basic infrastructure includes transport, energy, water and sewage management. Information infrastructure consists of equipment used to send, accumulate and process information as well as of institutions providing services in this area. Innovation infrastructure is formed by scientific and research organizations and other specialized institutions involved in development and dissemination of innovations. Social infrastructure covers institutions and equipment in the field of science, culture, social care, health care,

physical culture, administration, public order as well as socio-political organizations (Pakulska, 2013). From the event perspective, infrastructure provides the tangible and intangible assets needed to successfully perform all the elements of organization. Starting from the point of event planning there is a need for data and information, followed by administrative and financial support, not to mention the basic infrastructure needed for the functioning of each event venue. The quality of infrastructure will be reflected in the event performance, also in terms of possible competitors and the readiness of people to participate in events.

From the perspective of geography, human resources are seen as the population of a given area, with its spiritual, intellectual and physical capabilities to perform in work and consumption (Kuciński, 1994). The notion of human resources is linked with social capital which F. Fukuyama (2001:7) describes as “an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between individuals (...). In the opinion of the same author “(...) it also is a byproduct of religion, tradition, shared historical experience and other types of cultural norms” (ibidem). Social links and initiatives are also in the core of social capital because they testify of the ability to cooperate and reach common goals (Kuciński, 2013). In the field of event studies several authors (i.e. Getz 1997; McCartney 2010; Arcodia & Whitford 2006) underline the importance of common work within an event, for the creation of social capital. Voluntary work during local or regional events is especially valuable as it helps to form strong bonds between the members of one community. In the case of cultural events, social capital might be reinforced throughout the reproduction and dissemination of local traditions and history. This phenomenon can be observed during small-scale festivals or fairs when members of local communities gather to show and sell their products or to participate in cultural performances (i.e. traditional dances, songs and storytelling). The empowerment of local community and the development of cultural tourism can be reinforced by the cultural exchange between tourists and residents (Razaq, 2003, cited by McCarthy, 2010). On one hand taking active part in cultural events organization builds the social capital of a given society. On the other hand, if the level of social capital is low, the possibility to organize a successful local event is less probable. The importance of the engagement of local inhabitants in the event can go far beyond its’ organizational success. As stated by Moscardo (2007, cited in Pasanen et al., 2009) if an event does not create community involvement, it is unlikely to have much of an effort on regional development.

The tangible and intangible heritage of a (local) society forms a specific type of resources not mentioned in the regular typologies, but very important from the point of view of event research. Czerny (2005) underlines that heritage can be exploited in the same way as other resources and used in different spheres of people lives, including economy, social interactions and culture. The commodification of heritage that is reflected in the consumption of historical venues, ideas, experiences and skills takes place during free-time activities (recreational or tourism-driven) (ibidem). When valuable and attractive, cultural heritage can be used for business or non-profit activities, including event organization.

Cudny (2014) explains that festivals cause changes in physical and non-physical space: new infrastructure (temporary or permanent) is built for the performance of festivals and festivals are elements of social flows and interactions.

It is important to state that each event will not only depend of the resources available in a given area, but it will also have an impact on the space and the resources. This impact might act as well on those resources that are used for the achievement of the event, as well as on those not used directly, but present within the event localization.

Table 2 shows the possible inputs and outputs of planned cultural events in relation to specific spatial resources used in the organization process of events.

Table 2. The links between events and resources

Type of resources	Chosen element	Possible input on the event	Possible output of the event
Natural resources	Cultural landscape	the tangible and intangible "quality" of the event setting	transformation of the landscape (positive or negative)
Cultural resources	Infrastructure	the venue of the event technical support organizational support products and services accessibility	construction of new venues development of new linkages between infrastructural elements
Human resources	Human and social capital	organization possibilities event participants and staff characteristics	strengthening of social bonds and local cooperation entertainment and education possibilities
Heritage resources	Tangible and intangible heritage	the event theme the event venues	new use for existing objects dissemination of intangible heritage

The influence of the elements of space mentioned in Table 2 on cultural events organization will reflect in the following areas: the opportunities and constraints of event feasibility and the positive or negative impact of events. Getz (2003, 414 - 415) underlines that "(...) only so many events can exist in a given area owing to competition for scarce resources (including money, venues, volunteers) and for customers." An interesting question to ask would be which of these resources and in what degree are crucial for event organization. Would it be possible to elaborate a scale of their importance? Getz (2003, 419) also asks the question about "(...) the extent to which certain types of events are resource-dependent or rooted in specific environments." Some events may be derived from local traditions and based on local resources and then strongly linked with a given space, whilst some may be more independent of the natural or cultural resources typical for a given localization. In the second situation it might be possible to "move" an event from one setting to another without causing loss for the event itself, but probably causing some loss for the area (and its' resources) where it was organized in the first place.

Conclusions

For every event organizer geographical space is source of resources needed for a successful event achievement. From a geographic perspective it is interesting to see the interaction between space and events and to assess the possible changes resulting from this process. The aim of this paper was to start a reflection on how chosen elements of space can affect the event organization. It was also a goal to show several possible outcomes of events on space. The author is conscious that without proper empirical data it is impossible to fully confirm the statements included in the paper, but this theoretical reflection might be starting point for further research.

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