

## The undervalued of potential of the peripathetic feature of festivals. A look at the FISahara Film Festival

Looking at festivals in terms of social events, Alessandro Falassi wrote an interesting essay entitled “Festival: definition and morphology”(1987). The definition that he quotes states as follows:  
*As for the social sciences, the definition that can be inferred from the works of scholars who have dealt with festival while studying social ritual events from the viewpoint of various disciplines such as comparative religion, anthropology, social psychology, folklore, and sociology indicates that festival commonly means 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.* (Falassi, 1987:1-10)

In his analysis Alessandro Falassi continues by pointing towards ritual acts, ‘rites’, as units giving value to festivals in terms of events happening in a specific time and a specific place. It is ultimately through this process of ‘valorisation’, that festival’s space and time is transformed. In particular, the formula outlined by Falassi in order to describe the festival experience is: “time out of time”; that is to say, a special temporal dimension in which imagination and the deleuzian practice of “fabulation” and “deterritorialisation” become possible. (Falassi, 1987:1-10). In this first instance “fabulation” for Deleuze and Guattari is a process proper to Art. Gilles Deleuze himself states, in his book *Cinema 2: The Image Time* (1985):  
*Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people.* (Deleuze, 1985:209).

The intensity provided by artistic force of fabulation generates an electrification of the social realm, in which the power to emotionally affect and be affected is the main force.

In addition to that, in *A Thousands of Pleatus* (1980) and *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari discuss the transformative process of bordering, in which order and disorder are constantly re-invented. In particular they describe the process of deterritorialisation as a process of escaping from institutions, opening the way to a multiplicity of possibilities and connections.

The practice of deterritorialisation has always been followed by a definition of new, alternative and inventing forms of bordering. It makes us potential nomads, inventing and reinventing space through people’s practices and tactics, such as the gathering for a documentary screening and any other elements part of the social event.

Following this line, the festival’s community, in particular film festivals, is a special genre of “imagined community”, borrowing from the famous book written by Benedict Anderson on the birth of nation as forms of narrations and cultural artefacts. On one hand, it is imagined through the medium of the movie screened, and on the other, it is also a factual one, since the social nature of these events attracts a diverse range of people gathered together in the name of the same cause.

Dina Iordanova, in her introductory essay to the *Film Festival Yearbook 2 – ‘Film Festivals and Imagined Communities’* (2010) – explores the definition of film festival in relation to imagined communities by saying that:

*Festivals (...) are “live” events that convene only in one place at a time, usually at regular intervals as*

*yearly events. For the festival to happen, organizers and audiences must come face to face in exactly the same place at exactly the same time” (...). In the “live” space of the festival, organizers and audiences form a community, an actual one, that congregates face to face for the purpose of fostering an “imagined community” that comes alive in the act of watching a film and imagining distant human beings becoming part of the one’s experiences”. (Iordanova, 2010:13)*

In relation to the practice of deterritorialisation, The FISahara film festival, coming to its 6th edition is one of the most atypical activist film festivals, which takes place in a refugee camp in the middle of the Algerian desert, where the Saharawi population live in exile, separated from their homeland. The festival run by the director Javier Corcuera is:

*An extraordinary example of an “imagined community” in which hundreds of participants from around the world and thousands of Saharawi refugees live together for a week under the same roofs, eating the same food, watching the same films and participating in workshops and other cultural and educational events, temporarily sharing a land that ultimately belongs to none of them, and to which none of them belongs (Stefan Simanowitz and Isabel Santaolalla, 2012:122).*

Therefore, using Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical framework, one can expand the concept of deterritorialisation to the gathering of film festivals. In fact, if the nomadic structure is a feature proper to almost all festivals, FISahara is a special case. It is a non-competitive peripatetic festival that each year moves to a different camp of the Saharawi refugee camp. The festival becomes a cultural and educational event in which “through artistic and political camaraderie FISahara creates a platform for powerful intercultural exchange between the Saharawi and the external participants.” (2012:131). This is done with the purpose of increasing awareness and support of the struggle of the Saharawi conflict. Hence, festivals become a space that is constantly created anew through the experience and interactions of people that gather at a specific time in a specific place.

The Italian cultural scope is particularly fertile for what concerns peripatetic festivals. The multifaceted and heterogeneous feature characterising the Italian landscape identity has often been considered one of the main factors responsible for making this country difficult to govern, manage, and preserve. However, more than struggling to find solutions aimed to change the diverse Italian cultural morphology, one should challenge this reality and, to some extent, transform it into a resource.

Should we not start to pay more attention to the itinerant feature proper to festivals and develop it more extensively within our territory as a winning business/social model?



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