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PLACEMAKING BETWIXT AND BETWEEN FESTIVALS AND DAILY LIFE

Burcu Kaya Sayari and Tuba Gün

Introduction

Festivals are highly influential elements in public life. This stems from their power to operate outside the limits and borders of daily life while still being situated in a socially constructed realm. This attribute of being ‘betwixt and between’ daily life and performances nourishes both the festivals and daily routines by providing a chance for a connection among local people, between generations, and between traditional and popular culture. Even though there is not a consensus in the literature about which is more powerful in this interaction, it is certain that festivals and daily life are intertwined. As elements of the festival become extended into daily life, we are also witnessing the infiltration of the roles and rules of the festivals into our daily life as well.

One way to investigate events is by considering their form and content (Bowdin, O’Toole, Allen, Harris & McDonnell 2006, p. 22). While content refers to elements of collective cultural memory such as myths and customs, form points to performances such as songs and dances, and together they shed light on the festival structure (Brandt 2012, p. 141). The formation and combination of these elements determine the flow and the borders of the festival. These, in turn, actively shape the placemaking attributes of festivals. The form and content of the festivals change not only the way place operates but also the rules of this operation. In the flux of festivals, places may be transformed consecutively many times, owing to the practices festivals involve. The same place may have various formations as the festival exerts its power over it by reshaping its borders and rules. During festivals, symbols, meanings and practices create distinct atmospheres and identities of places.

Cultural anthropology has a significant ability to uncover the symbols, meanings and processes woven into the festival atmosphere. Yet it is only recently that anthropology is gaining prominence in the contemporary debate around festivals with its insightful ethnographic methods and theoretical frameworks (Frost 2016). It is vital that we allow cultural anthropology and its valuable tools to contribute to festival studies (Frost 2016, p. 578). This chapter examines the flow between the festival and daily life through an ethnographic analysis of liminalities that occur as part of the placemaking of Water Festival, in the small Turkish county of Kızılcahamam. The thermal springs of Kızılcahamam have historical roots which go back to the Roman Empire.
The springs have long been appreciated not only for their curative powers and their appeal to tourists and travellers but also for creating an excellent opportunity for the promotional efforts of the county. The festival lasts 3–5 days and has been taking place since the 1930s. As such, it enjoys a significant place in the community. In addition to the contemporary entertainment activities and concerts, it embraces traditional and religious rituals such as oil wrestling and whirling dervishes ceremonies as a juxtaposition between the past and the present. Given this festival is at once a varied assemblage of heritage and popular culture, it is a significant tourist attraction. Moreover, it simultaneously reflects symbolic, social and doxastic elements of the county.

**History of the festival**

According to the official records of the Ottoman Empire, the history of the town dates back to the 1820s. These records show that there was a small village of Yabanábád, which was the predecessor of Kızılcahamam (Ünal 2016, pp. 148–149). The population of the county is currently 25,000. The first occurrence of the festival in the 1930s was in the form of a street fair that later evolved into the present form. The festival has moved locations over time, but each of the selected locations has been the common point at which inhabitants usually gather in their daily lives. In the beginning, the fairs took place in the valley, which was part of the town’s common land. As time passed, the street fair turned into a festival, and the festival moved to the area in front of the thermal springs, then to the main street, and then to the entrance of the national park, respectively.

The changes are not limited to the festival site. The original name of the festival was ‘Festival of Soguksu’, but it was changed into ‘Kızılcahamam Culture, Art and Water Festival’ in 1994. The name change was the result of the primary aim of the municipality, which was to foster and promote three different water sources of Kızılcahamam, which are thermal, mineral and spring water. Moreover, in parallel with the different practices of changing municipalities in charge, the performances and rituals that take place in the festival have been changing. While the oil wrestling activities and concerts remain the same, activities such as the staging of traditional marriage ceremonies, the amateur dramatics reviving historical events, Qur’an chanting and whirling dervishes have been added over time. In addition to these performances, the festival has included jereed (Turkish: Cirit): a traditional Turkish equestrian sport in which the object of the game is to throw the javelin accurately enough to hit the opponent (Sheehan 2004, p. 113), sinsin (a traditional fire play acted by men), reciprocal satires, folk dances and concerts. Nowadays, there is a marked shift from traditional performances to the combination of religious and modern activities. However, the oil wrestling activities continue to take place.

Naturally, opportunities for entertainment activities as part of daily life were limited in the past. It was not until the 1970s that TV arrived in the town. However, the social life of the town people was colourful. There were five cinemas in the town, and it was common for the townspeople to spend their leisure time in groups. As the festival was significant for the locals, it also represented a chance to dress up:

I even remember people who dressed up as if they were attending a wedding. They were wearing evening dresses while they were going to the picnic of the festival. Wearing ordinary clothes to the concert of popular singers was considered to be disgraceful.

*(Man, 48)*
Festivals in the nexus of heterotopia and cultural capital

Festivals vary depending on different aspects such as their venues, season, scale, repeatability, theme and attitude to religion (Cudny 2016, pp. 32–33). The scope and components of each festival render it open to interpretation through different conceptual frameworks. Since ‘festivals provide unusual activities and evoke feelings and emotions that are very different to the regular and material routines of the workday’ (Davies 2015, p. 535), this fact makes the places of festival compatible with the notion of ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault 1986). Foucault (1986, p. 24) defines heterotopias by saying that

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.

We also consider the festival to be a habitus, which covers different activities and places at once. Bourdieu describes the habitus as

Both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices. And, in both of these dimensions, its operation expresses the social position in which it was elaborated. Consequently, habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; however. They are immediately perceived as such only by those agents who possess the code, the classificatory schemes necessary to understand their social meaning.

(Bourdieu 1989, p. 19)

The festival as a whole carries the attributes of an established order since it has its own internal rules. Therefore, drawing upon Bourdieu, we also question the degree to which this festival establishes itself as doxa, an ‘established order that tends to produce the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness’ (Bourdieu 1977, p. 164). Bourdieu draws our attention to the ‘quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organisation (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident’ (Bourdieu 1977, p. 164). Even though the agents’ apprehension of the world is ‘the product of double structuring’, with its objective (social structures) and subjective (schemes of perception and appreciation) sides (Bourdieu 1989, p. 20), subjective construction of the agent’s vision emerges within the limits of structural constraints (Bourdieu 1989, p. 18).

This portrayal is very similar to the festival places. Wilks and Quinn (2016, p. 25) consider festivals as a heterotopia that not only ‘require certain acts, performances or rituals to gain entry to them’ but also juxtapose several incompatible spaces within a single space. In this juxtaposition, festivals can be evaluated ‘as a mode of meaning and a process of communication’ (Piette 2014, p. 231). From this point of view, festivals not only offer a reality that is distinct from the mundane, but they also present ‘an ambivalent world which leaves room for fluid realities with contrary or contradictory aspects’ as Piette (2014, p. 231) reveals.
In the same vein as Wilks and Quinn (2016, p. 25), Karaosmanoğlu (2010) builds on Foucault and Bourdieu and characterises Ramadan as one of the celebrations in Islam which creates a temporal heterotopia once a year by rearranging routine activities through ‘a new discourse of time’ (Karaosmanoğlu 2010, p. 293). Moreover, this month ‘produces a multi-cultural and a multi-religious space’ through universal values such as tolerance, peace and love (Karaosmanoğlu 2010, p. 294). However, not every event can create such heterotopias. Thus, these incidences are crucial. Moreover, Howell (2013, p. 57) argues that a festival with heterotopic characteristics can create a significant awareness in the participants’ sense of place while admitting that ‘not all (festivals) offer universals of place that can jolt, transport, or confront our sense of reality’.

In order to go beyond the existing festival literature, the chapter will elaborate on Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of doxa, since we believe it has more explanatory power of the festival’s placemaking process. While doxa and heterotopia enable us to scrutinise a festival’s placemaking attributes, the liminality approach of Van Gennep (2010 [1960]) and Turner (1967) will allow us to dismantle the flow of a festival as a social practice. Van Gennep (2010 [1960]) focusses on ‘the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another’ (p. 10), which, in turn, points to rites of passage. He scrutinises these ceremonies in three phases: separation, transition and incorporation. He describes the process that participants go through as a complete scheme which consists of ‘preliminary rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition) and post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation)’ (Van Gennep 2010 [1960], p. 11). Turner builds on Van Gennep’s concept of liminality. He deems liminality to be in between on a scale where at one end is the structured society and at the other unstructured positions (Turner 1966, p. 96). The use of such a scale highlights ambiguous positions that are ‘neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial’ (Turner 1966, p. 97; our italics). He focusses on the liminal stages in rites of passage since processes of mid-transition ‘expose the basic building blocks of culture just when we pass out of and before we re-enter the structural realm’ (Turner 1967, p. 110).

Turner (1974) distinguishes between liminal and liminoid phenomena. While liminoid experiences/spaces tend to appear in societies characterised by organic solidarity, in Durkheim’s term, and fragmentary formation, liminal experiences/spaces tend to occur in societies characterised by mechanical solidarity (Turner 1974, pp. 84–85). Liminal experiences/spaces tend to unfold ‘in the flow of natural and social processes’ and may have a calendrical and rhythmic structure (Turner 1974, p. 85). Last but not least, by having a composite character, ‘they reflect … the history of the group’ (Turner 1974, p. 85). We will use the term of liminality since it is more compatible with our case study.

Liminality also has spatial links. During the threshold phase, ‘the passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another’ which is accompanied by ‘the literal crossing of a threshold which separates two distinct areas’ (Turner 1974, p. 58). Thus, liminality assembles ‘ritual and spatial relations’. These spatial elements not only determine the borders of the ritual process but also ‘become charged themselves because their relations with other ritual symbols are activated during the rites’ (Lawrence 1992, p. 213). Moreover, these symbols may not be at the forefront of the ritual, and their symbolic meaning may perish as the ritual is replaced by daily life (Lawrence 1992, p. 214).

The chapter interrogates the placemaking process together with the experiences and backgrounds of the agents participating in the festival and adopts a constructivist approach. Drawing from the work of Turner (1967) and Van Gennep (1960), the flow of the festival
will be scrutinised as comprising three phases: preparation, festival duration and post-festival periods. The festival and its components are evaluated in each part through a ‘time’ element. This framework is compatible with Van Gennep’s and Turner’s points of view, which scrutinise activities on three levels.

The basis of this study was a number of sources of data. First, the authors collected information about the festival from historical collections, texts, photos and local newspapers. Then, in order to represent all groups involved in the festival, interviews were conducted with 13 residents of Kızılcahamam county centre and two villages in the county, who were festival organisers (1), prior and current local authorities (2), performers (3), audience members (5) and amateur researcher-writers (2). Semi-structured interviews were reinforced by participant observations over a one-week period in the summer of 2017. All data were kept confidential. Interviews ranged in duration from 30 to 120 minutes and were tape-recorded. Locals were interviewed in their homes, offices and cafes. In the analysis of these sources, the authors drew upon Turner (1967), Foucault (1986) and Bourdieu (1977).

**Preparation period of Water Festival**

The preparation period comprises different elements for different stakeholders of the festival such as inhabitants, the local authorities and visitors from outside of the county. First, the festival is announced, and invitations are sent to ensure a high level of participation involving all groups. In terms of the festival landscape, there are various preparations. Environmental preparations take place so that the traffic flow is arranged in a way that does not affect daily life. Moreover, food and harvest stands are erected for the sellers who come from the city centre, other towns and surrounding villages. The festival area is designated by the hanging of local and national flags.

The festival is a source of excitement for the local people who look forward to this time of the year. In previous years (although it is not a current practice), local people used to leave cushions at the festival site one day prior in order to hold a place:

> We were going the night before and arranging our place. Let me put in this way: we used to go at night time and leave a blanket. I mean it was fascinating to us. Also it used to influence our lives.

*(Man, 61)*

Further, the women prepare provisions the night before, since the family will be at the festival area throughout the day. As a part of their community spirit, it was, in the past, very typical for the women in the same neighbourhood to gather and prepare food for every family on special occasions such as Bayram (*fest*) and festivals. On such occasions, traditional foods were being prepared meticulously:

> Preparations were beginning at least a week beforehand. My mother used to do Turkish crepes; Aunty Hacer was cooking flatbread. Aunty Zeliha used to ferment yoghurt. The others were preparing stuffed vine leaves. Others were stuffing dried eggplants.

*(Man, 53)*

It is not only the audience who gets prepared beforehand but also the team who will perform the folk dances. Their rehearsals take place for approximately two months before the festival.
Moreover, the *mise en scènes* based on historical realities are also put in place. These activities are seen as a valuable part of the festival and the pride of the county.

The festival was a source of excitement in the county's life. It used to imply a break in the mundane flow of daily life:

> I will tell how it was before. We used to be very curious about it and getting very excited. We knew that we would have a good time. I mean our participation was heartfelt and enthusiastic. Tradespeople were making preparations and see it as an opportunity. They used to feel that it was going to be good for them.

*(Woman, 61)*

As life in the county changes in parallel with the technological improvements, such as television and the internet, the festival is losing its power to break the ordinary flow of daily life. In the past, it was the only way to listen to good music or to see famous singers. Moreover, neighbourhood relations were closer in the past, and it was more common to spend time in groups for all age groups. Today, the festival still has an important place in the county. However, the experiences of attendees and the community are different. It is the passage of time that has changed these experiences and the way of life in the county. Therefore, time is an illuminating element for each level of the festival.

### Festival duration and liminalities of the Water Festival

The festival site has different facets that make it a distinct place that is apart from daily life. First, even though this is not the case anymore, entrance to the festival originally required payment at the door. This was a strict demarcation line that draws attention to the fact that one has arrived in a place that is separated from daily routine. Since one of the traits of heterotopia is that it is not accessible to just anyone who wishes to enter, the festival site was, in a way, quite similar to heterotopias. As Foucault points out,

> In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures.

*(Foucault 1986, p. 26)*

The festival also captures divergent points in time. Wedding ceremonies and oil wrestling, which belong to the past, and concerts, which are elements of modern times, come together in the same festival. All these activities and performances belong to different time 'slices' as Foucault calls it which also contributes to making them a heterotopic site: ‘We are in the epoch simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near-far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed’ (Foucault 1986, p. 22). Another example, which vividly demonstrates this case, is the re-enactment of Atatürk’s (the founder of the Republic of Turkey) visit to the town that happened in 1934. Until recently, the celebrations had been staging the events of this visit using cars and clothes authentic to the period.

The festival, as a regional custodian of cultural memory, encapsulates those historical occasions, which have a particular significance for the locals as well as traditional rituals. Therefore, it narrates a past event that flows into the present. As two different time slices – past and present – are intertwined, this event also creates another heterotopia.
In the same vein, almost every performance in the festival has its own rules that the locals are conversant with. Thus, there is a limit to how much performers can change their performances. When their practices are not compatible with the traditional, recognised and expected practices, there is a risk of them not being able to continue. One of these practices in danger of vanishing is sinsin (fire dance). In criticising the young sinsin performers, one of the locals underscores the importance of the correct moves.

Young men performed it improperly. This game is not like that. Sinsin has a distinct music, atmosphere and figures. Those figures require a special talent. I mean they require much experience. Later, the villagers performed it. They were at a certain age, over 60–70s. They perform it properly. Each move has a special meaning. One performs these moves while there is a fire in the middle. Then, the rival appears and he chases him. If the rival catches him, he beats him, but only slightly.

(Man, 66)

The festival makes use of a range of places, moving from one to the next. Each activity is associated with specific places. Moreover, the activities that take place in the form of corteges produce a different kind of place, which is a temporary one. As the cortege moves, it incorporates the places it is passing by into the festival space. As soon as the cortege leaves one place, daily life regains its superiority. Thus the borders of the places that the festival constructs are porous. In addition, some activities and performances use the whole town centre as a performative stage and create their flow instead of being stabilised in a particular place. There are two incidences of this case. One of them is the mise en scène of ‘bride receiving’, which includes taking the bride from her house to the performance of a wedding ceremony. The bride rides up to the festival location on horseback with the accompanying crowd.

They took me on horseback. There was a retinue whose heads were all covered in white. The horses came from the villages. I wore a red veil that has a tiny slit in the front, but in a way so as not to show my face. They used to call it a veil. We went to the festival, but before, wandered in the town: ‘there is a festival’. We wandered in the town. Everybody looked at us. It was not possible to find such a leisure activity easily in the past. I mean these events… they were something we had never seen before.

(Woman, 82)

The second example is the revival of Atatürk’s arrival to the town, which includes a long cortege. As the cortege moves through the main street of the town, one can be just passing by the same street. S/he will step into the festival habitus as the habitus is written into the place and equates its borders with the place. S/he may just continue to walk and return to daily life again in just a couple of moments. Therefore, there are multiple passages (in/out/in…) rather than only two (in/out). However, the borders – or thresholds – are still flexible as Bourdieu depicts within the habitus. Since the festival is surrounded by thresholds, they are implied by the divides of the place itself. From the traffic flow that is arranged by taking into consideration the festival to the flags that demarcate the festival area, there are lots of liminal zones that embody the boundaries between daily reality and the festival. Thus, there are different doxas in different liminal zones since every performance and daily life itself carry their common rules with them. These physical but invisible borders are not only porous but also define the rules that should be followed if one steps inside. The boundaries within which wearing performance costume is normal
will be equated within the physical borders of performance zone. When the performer leaves these borders, since the costume is not compatible with common expectations, it will be seen as unusual.

**Residual effects of the festival**

Some effects of the festivals do not quickly fade away and may penetrate into daily life. One of these effects is the privileged status of performers. Even though performers act their roles as a requirement of the festival doxa and leave them as a requirement of the daily life doxa, some extensions of the role still stay alive. Owing to the liquid form of the borders between the festival and real life, performers carry the status associated with their roles into their daily lives.

When we win, we like it to be ranked first. Of course, we pride ourselves on victory. Wrestlers are well-known in the county. Especially, if he is a successful one, he becomes popular. People follow him.

(Man, 69)

They still respect me in the villages. When I go to the outskirts of the village, they call out to me ‘Pehlivan! Pehlivan!’ (Wrestler! Wrestler!)

(Man, 82)

On the other hand, it is sometimes the social capital or status accrued in daily life that defines the status that will be gained during the festival. For example, when asked the reason she did not perform as a bride in the festival, one of the interviewers answered,

She was the wife of a teacher. I am just a daughter of a peasant and a wife of a peasant. Who would accept me?

(Woman, 66)
Alternatively, social capital which infiltrates into the festival space is reflected back to the realm of daily life again as symbolic capital. Most of the people believed that the performance was real:

For example, when my husband was passing through the villagers, they said, ‘Look at that man, he must be a wealthy man, look at that wedding!’ That is what they said to me: ‘Here comes the bride who rode the horse!’

(Woman, 82)

Another flow that occurs between the festival and daily life is the revival of some historical traditions that had been forgotten. One of the examples of this is the traditional wedding ceremony that had died out in the past and was revived after being placed in the context of the festival:

Regarding their own weddings, young people were saying ‘we want them (traditional ceremonies) too.’, ‘I want bridal procession.’ It is like a chicken-egg relationship. A tradition, which is already rooted in the community before, goes on being performed by virtue of the festival.

(Woman, 56)

**Conclusion**

We discussed in this chapter the Kızılcahamam Water Festival’s processes by drawing upon the theories of Turner (1967), Foucault (1986) and Bourdieu (1977). The temporal framework of Turner enabled us to scrutinise the festival in three phases, alongside the liminality inscribed into the place of the festival as it transforms the place and the flow occurs between the place of daily life and festival. We pointed out these liminal zones. We used doxa and heterotopia frameworks to scrutinise the festival’s placemaking attributes. The liminal zones, doxa of the festival and daily life revealed that festival has porous borders. Thus, we could not consider our festival as a heterotopia. Even though we admit that the festival requires a social and cultural capital, these forms of capital are always in transition between everyday life and the festival.

As a doxa which has its own rules and order, the festival has its own borders that are equated with the physical place as well. Liminalities are intrinsic to these borders. Therefore, there are various interactions between this doxa and the doxa that belongs to the daily life. These two doxas embrace a flow of reciprocal exchange of roles and values. These reciprocal relations nourish the festival as well. However, the substantially unalterable and non-transferable rules of both the festival and routine life materialize the idiosyncratic framework of these places.

**References**


Placemaking between festivals & daily life


