

[DRAFT 26 NOV 2009]

The Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland  
and  
European Festival Research Project  
announce

Celebrating Europe: international festivals strengthening the civil society,

Poznań (PL), April 22-25, 2010.

The long weekend consists of 3 distinct events:

Thursday, April 22, afternoon

*Culture as A City Capital – Festivals in the urban developmental strategy*, a round table with the participation of invited experts, festival operators and the representatives of the local governments. They will discuss how festivals stimulate urban development and produce social and cultural capital.

Friday, 23 April

*Europe of festivals – civil society benefits?*, an academic conference, where invited speakers discuss festivals' role in shaping and strengthening Europe wide civil society, with a strong local base. Can artistic events integrate local communities? Can such events build not only a society of art consumers but also a culture of dispute and criticism? Do European artistic festivals enhance the attitude of civility, and thus strengthen the civil society?

Saturday 24 April (the whole day) and Sunday, 25 April (morning)

EFRP research workshop *Artistic festivals with an intellectual agenda*. Festival concepts and typology are shifting from the artistic disciplines to complex intellectual topics. Increased popularity of festivals dedicated to science, philosophy, economy, food, climate, and festivals celebrating feminism or gay rights, or probing globalization, migration and urban interculturality fill and expand the public space and attempt to engage in societal agenda setting through debate, transcending the programs of political parties and their ideological foundations. Such festivals bring together experts, politicians, academics, students and ordinary citizens but rely on artist to sharpen the debate with the power of the metaphor. How do artistic components of such festivals highlight their mobilisatory, deliberative and learning purposes? Is an artistic component stimulating the knowledge generation process and the sense of involvement and responsibility of the civil society? Researchers are invited to submit short proposals of their contribution by 1 February 2010 to Dr Dragan Klaic, EFRP Chair at [draganklaic@gmail.com](mailto:draganklaic@gmail.com). Accepted proposals are to be developed into power point presentations of maximum 10 slides. In the workshop, presenters will have 15 minute for their presentation, with ample time reserved for discussion. Power point presentations are due by April 5. Presenters consent to have their power point presentations published on the EFRP public depository at [www.efa-aef.eu](http://www.efa-aef.eu).

**The organizers** of the event will cover the accommodation and meals of the invited speakers and presenters in the EFRP workshop. Participants are responsible for their own travel costs. Additional cultural program with theater visit will be provided.

For further information, contact: dr Joanna Ostrowska at the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan ([j\\_ostrow@amu.edu.pl](mailto:j_ostrow@amu.edu.pl)) or dr Dragan Klaic, EFRP Chair ([draganklaic@gmail.com](mailto:draganklaic@gmail.com))

## Background briefing paper

Festivals are occasions to celebrate being together. People gather on their own free will and want to be together with others. It is as simple as that. New and authentic social bonds may be born this way.

When in 1947, soon after the traumatic experience of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Edinburgh Festival of Arts came to life, its principal aim was to 'enliven and enrich the cultural life of Europe' and 'provide a platform for the flowering of the human spirit'. What was crucial there was the deep belief that artistic culture could be very important factor in the healing of post-war trauma and in reintegration of the continent. Such a belief was shared by the organizers of many other festivals and festivities of the epoch, although this was not always stated explicitly. The effect of all those efforts was, as Bernard Focroulle noticed, that „since the end of WW 2 festivals have multiplied in Europe just as monasteries and cathedrals burgeoned in the Middle Ages”.<sup>1</sup> The great majority of post-war festivals' organizers were underlining the international and especially the European dimension of these events. They sought to create platform of exchange and multilateral cultural collaboration and for rebuilding of empathy. The aim was to overcome political, ethnic, cultural and linguistic barriers. The reconstruction of common European cultural space was one of the most important effects of festivals' coming to life and their quick, fruitful development.

In every epoch, and especially in times of tumultuous changes and fundamental, deep, historical shifts, the need for large gatherings of people may manifest itself in many places and contexts. The fullest and most clear manifestations occur, however, amongst crowds participating in spectacular artistic events. Art gives easy and complete possibility of uncovering the truth of our emotions, the direction of our thoughts, of guiding the development of our values. All this shared excitement tends to renew a shredded social fabric. Can festivals, however, continue to be great laboratories of the creativity and community mobilization in view of leveling impact of globalization and the assaults of the commercial, industrial cultural goods? What is the creative function of arts in a drastically changing globalized society? Art has always aimed at unifying individual emotions in an integrated feeling of collective identity, through an experience of self-truth through beauty. This transcendence is not always possible. However, people join the festive events to meet, share and reaffirm their status of citizens.

It is worth mentioning that when Europe was still divided by the “iron curtain” into two separate parts the existence of arts festivals was particularly important. The turnovers of 1989 were the beginning of a “flood” of festivals on the Eastern side of the former “iron curtain”.

Our panel, the academic conference and the EFRP research workshop, all with ample discussions, shall seek to answer the question: do European international artistic festival have a chance to enrich European public sphere and contribute to the emergence of a Europe-wide civil society?

Many of the festivals' organizers quit nowadays the idea of “artistic competition” and try to build the program of events they run as a kind of intellectual stimulus which can help to cope with some concrete, particular problems, as reflected in the festival program and concept. When many of the organizers give up the idea of an artistic ranking or of a “hit parade” and choose to shape the artistic event as the encounters and the occasions to integrate the local community, can such complex events stimulate not just a society of “art consumers” but also a society of disputing, critical culture and a society of civility?

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Focroulle, “At the heart of European identities”. In *The Europe of Festivals. From Zagreb to Edinburgh, intersecting viewpoints*. Ed. Anne-Marie Autissier, Toulouse: L'attribut 2008, p. 11.

**Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (PL)** is the part of the Faculty of Social Sciences (<http://www.amu.edu.pl/en/about-us/faculties/faculty-of-social-sciences>) in the third biggest Polish university, also third in ranking. Its research and teaching are focused on the critical analysis of contemporary culture and civilization in all aspects, particularly the artistic ones. It has eight units: 1) participation in culture, 2) methodology of scientific research, 3) business ethics, 4) culture of the city, 5) semiotics of culture, 6) visual culture, 7) artistic culture, 8) performance studies.

**The European Festival Research Project (EFRP)** is an international, interdisciplinary consortium, which is focused on the dynamics of artistic festivals in contemporary life. One of its principal aims is to understand the underlying causes of the current proliferation of festivals and its resource implications and diagnostic perspectives. EFRP focuses on those festivals that are driven by a firm artistic vision, involving international programming and which benefit from substantial support from public authorities.

The consortium instigates research papers, studies, trainings, publications and debates and articulates tentative conclusions, trends, forecasts and recommendations for festival operators, public authorities (as subsidy givers) and potential sponsors. All research outcomes are being made accessible in a public depository at the web site of the European Festivals Association (<http://www.efa-aef.eu/efahome/efrp.cfm>). Periodically EFRP organises intensive research workshops on specific topics where the results of research are presented and discussed. Such workshops have taken place in Nitra (2005), Leicester and Le Mans (2006), Barcelona (2007), Helsinki and Moscow (2008) Novi Sad and Leeds (2009). Further workshops are being planned for 2010. An edited book on festival politics, programming, impacts and governance will be produced by the consortium and associated researchers in 2009/10. Contact: Dr Dragan Klaić, EFRP Chair ([draganklaic@gmail.com](mailto:draganklaic@gmail.com)) or Christopher Maugham, EFRP Coordinator ([ccm@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:ccm@dmu.ac.uk)).