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Emanuele Giordano, Chin Ee Ong

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LIGHT FESTIVALS, POLICY MOBILITIES AND URBAN TOURISM

Emanuele Giordano*

ART-Dev UMR 5281, Université Paul Valéry Montpellier III, Site Saint-Charles, Route de
Mende, cedex 5, 34199 Montpellier, France

Tél./Fax : +33 4 11 75 71 07

ema.giordy@gmail.com

Chin-Ee Ong

Department of Geography, National University of Singapore, National University Of
Singapore, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, 119260 Singapore

Cultural Geography Group, Wageningen University, Gaia, building number 101, 6708 PB
Wageningen, The Netherlands

geooce@nus.edu.sg

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Light festivals, policy mobilities and urban tourism

Abstract

This article is an attempt to introduce a policy mobility perspective in the field of tourism. Focusing on the development of light festivals around the world, the paper shows how tourism policies are not reproduced in a straightforward serial way but they are constantly adapted under local circumstances. As such, the paper reveals that despite the recent accounts on the shift toward forms of urban tourism characterized by a quest for a more mundane and authentic experience of the city, elite-endorsed and often top-down attempts to re-stage the tourism city are still persistent and points to the existence of a wider range of tourism motivations in which the simulation and the staging of the tourism experience are accepted and appreciated.

Keywords: light festivals; serial reproduction; tourism cities; policy mobility; urban tourism, Lyon

Introduction

The use of illumination as form of spectacle and as tourist attraction is not a recent fact (Edensor and Millington, 2009; Gravari Barbas, 2007). Yet in the last years, this trend has taken on an unprecedented relevance, and the use of illumination to attract tourists now extends around the world (Guo et al., 2011). Particular examples of this phenomenon are light festivals. Events characterised by the installation into the public place of artistic lighting installations and the projections of holograms on the buildings' façades, light festivals have become an increasing feature of city entertainment and tourism and have produced spectacular, fantastic urban landscapes, which attract millions of visitors yearly (Alves, 2007, Ederson, 2014). Crucially, the extraordinary success experienced by light festivals like Lyon or Eindhoven has brought numerous local authorities to implement similar events. While Lyon's Fête des Lumières, created in 1999, was arguably the first light festival, more than 100 festivals are nowadays active all around the world.

Accounts on how creative strategies and paradigms have been copied and circulated from one city to another are not new in tourism studies (Evans, 2003; Richards and Wilson,

2006). However these policy mobilities perspectives are traditionally characterized by arguments of serial reproduction that tends to conceptualize the process of policy circulation like a linear adoption of exogenous prescriptions copied by another city. As such they tend to share a negative viewpoint on the results of this strategy of policy emulation as accordingly to many authors the uncritical emulation of a few renowned ‘best practice’ cases, often results in unattractive forms of serial reproduction that led to increasing ‘placelessness’ (Smith, 2007). Conversely, this corpus of work argues that the counterproductive effects produced by these attempts to stage the tourist city are generating a shift toward new forms of tourism characterized by a an active search for a more ‘authentic’ experience of the city, often associated with a stronger engagement with the distinct characteristics of the everyday life of the destination (Pappalepore et al., 2014; Richards, 2011; Richards, 2014; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Tan et al., 2013). Yet, the emergence of light festival events at a global level does not conform to such theorisation. While almost all the light festivals around the world experience a constant growth both in revenues and number of visitors, these events are far from being forms of tourism based on endogenous creative capital. Despite the fact that most of these events claim to be inspired by local traditions and know-how, recent accounts that have emerged in French literature have shown that international consultants and networks play a key role in the spread of the light festival concept around the world (Hernandez, 2010). Crucially here we do not contend that all light festivals are necessarily large events, instrumentally and artificially organized by city managers and marketers in order to attract tourists and shoppers and contribute to the rebranding of place. As Steven and Shin (2012) have pointed out this narrative does not take into account the proliferation of smaller, more locally organized and participatory festivals that are often not motivated by commercial drives but instead support “the redefinition, rediscovery and expansion of local social file and meanings of place” (p.1). Edensor (2014) has recently remarked that several light festivals around the world lack the commercial drives and top-down administration of the large urban events and instead contain potential to engender positive values and outcomes while attracting numerous visitors. Yet, at the same time, we argue that the spectacular global proliferation of light festivals in recent years is not fully understandable without considering the role of international networks of experts and lighting professionals and how commercial imperatives largely prevail in many settings.

As such, rather than adopting a traditional “serial reproduction” viewpoint towards understanding light festival and urban tourism policies, the paper employs a more nuanced

perspective to examine the mechanisms, actors, concepts, strategies and artefacts related to light festivals which have (or have not) circulated globally. Following Ashworth and Page's (2011) argument on the need for an approach to urban tourism that interconnects with the wider domain of social sciences, we make a cross-disciplinary connection with urban studies and explore the progressive establishment of light festival at a global level adopting a "policy mobilities" perspective (McCann, 2011:109). Rather than considering the diffusion of light festival as the results of a linear reproduction, the process is approached as a socially constructed one, associated with increasingly intense forms of institutional layering and embedded power relations.

Such a perspective allows us to go beyond the vision of a simple serial reproduction of tourism policies and to reveal the increasing "local globalness" (McCann, 2011:120) of tourism policy transfer. Even if the circulation of light festivals reflects a strategy of policy emulation, largely inspired by few "best practice" cases, these events are not replicated in a serial and unproblematic way, but are selectively acknowledged and appropriated by local actors. Crucially this process of adaptation allows light festivals to be successfully transplanted from one city to another, escaping the problem traditional related to the "serial reproduction" process.

At the same time revealing how tourism policies could effectively circulate from one city to another, the paper shows how rather than simply a move towards a "new urban tourism" (Füller & Michel 2014) characterized by the increasing quest for a more mundane and relational experience of the city, the multiplication of light events at a global level points to still existing sets of tourism staging and more importantly, an elite-endorsed and often top-down re-staging of the tourism city for the tourist experience.

The paper first introduces how, in the field of urban studies, the analysis of the process of policy circulation has evolved from a serial reproduction perspective to a more articulate "policy mobility" approach. The next section examines the mechanism and network that have allowed light festival concepts and artefacts to travel globally from Europe to the other continents. Next, the paper discusses how the concept of light festival is not reproduced in a completely or straightforwardly serial way but is constantly adapted under local circumstances. Finally, the paper offers a cultural perspective on how urban tourism, despite the rise of forms of tourism characterized by a quest by visitors for 'typical' mundane experiences in everyday spaces of the visited city, goes beyond this search of "authenticity"

and points to the existence of a wider range of tourism motivations in which, under specific conditions, simulation and staging of the tourism experience are still accepted and appreciated.

Serial reproduction, policy mobilities and tourism

The de-industrialisation of cities and the exacerbation of the inter-urban competition had produced a set of circumstances in which policy-makers throughout Europe and beyond have desperately sought to explore the possibilities for a post-industrial future. Following the rise of the Creative City paradigm, numerous cities have seen, in the development of creative strategies and cultural investment in capital-intensive projects, a tool to distinguish themselves in a globalized world characterized by a growing inter urban competition. Such an idea has also permeated the field of tourism, as culture has been seen as an increasingly important element of tourism experience in the city and as a way to gain local distinctiveness. As Zukin (1995:1–2) writes, “with the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crisis in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities: the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique competitive edge”. In this context of intense competition, policy makers are constantly under pressure to develop new innovative policies and therefore are perpetually in search of new trends and best practices that can be applied quickly locally.

As a result, many new ideas or policy innovations are quickly transferred from one city to the others with increased regularity (Peck and Theodore, 2001; Theodore and Peck, 2000). Yet in the field of tourism, this strategy of “fast policy” has been often accused to be counterproductive as the race to produce distinction often has resulted in the adoption of similar creative development models. For instance, Richards (2014:119) asserts that “adopting forms of ‘fast policy’ and copying ideas from other ‘creative cities’ through ‘policy tourism’, the result is often a form of serial reproduction, unattractive to the very tourists cities seek to attract”. According to many authors, the growing ineffectiveness of this strategy of policy emulation is contributing to the decline in staging and to the emergence of a trend toward forms of tourism based on local and embedded knowledge that are able to offer experiences perceived as more authentic by tourists (Maitland, 2010; Pappalepore et al., 2014; Richard, 2014; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Tan et al., 2013). With regard to this, Richards asserts that urban tourism is moving “towards more intangible culture and greater

involvement with the everyday life of the destination” (2011:1255) a process that allows visitors and tourists to “escape from the serial reproduction of mass cultural tourism, offering more flexible and authentic experiences which can be co-created between host and tourist” (2011:1255).

While reviewing and discussing the ways in which creative gurus’ ideas, such as Richard Florida and Charles Landry, has been quickly and uncritically adopted by numerous cities, this abovementioned literature resonated with the broader corpus of work in urban studies regarding policy mobilities and policy emulations without actually referencing them (for example, Bunnell & Das, 2010; Bunnell, 2015; McCann, 2011; McNeill, 2009). Here, we argue that such sidelining of a broader literature on urban policy emulations may have contributed to this focus on an increase in personal tourism networks in tourism places. Crucially the phenomenon of policy learning and policy transfer should not be understood as a simple process of serial reproduction of standardizes policies around the world. Analysis of policy transfer has evolved from the perspective of a linear transaction to a much wider and flexible notion of policy mobilities. As remarked by McCann (2011: 111) “policies, models, and ideas are not moved around like gifts at a birthday party or like jars on shelves, where the mobilization does not change the character and content of the mobilized objects”. Rather they are continuously muted and transformed by the specific local circumstance under which they are implemented.

In the last years, numerous accounts have explored the process of circulation and adaptation of different typologies of policies like creative city programs (Lee, 2012) and the so called Bilbao and Barcelona models (González, 2011) from this perspective. Yet, until now, very few attempts have been made to adopt a policy mobility approach in the analysis of the mobility of tourism strategies and events. As a result, tourism studies are still dominated by a more simplistic serial reproduction perspective. This vision falls short of recognizing the increasingly “local globalness” of urban policy transfer (McCann, 2011:120). Policies do not flow around the globe unchanged but they experienced a process of adaptation to the peculiar economic, political situation in which they are adopted. Crucially, this process allows them to be successfully transplanted from a city to another as demonstrated, for example, by the proliferation of events like the Nuit Blanche. Yet, even if partially adapted to the local condition of each case, these tourism city policy travels reflect a “further serialisation and commodification of city spaces through an international brand – touristic rather than community/cultural-based” (Evans, 2012:47). Alongside development of new

relational forms of tourism, the proliferation of expert-managed cultural events, often with the collaboration of international networks and under a recognized brand, remains a major strategy adopted by both capital and smaller cities showing how, instead of a decline in staging and a rise of co-creation in tourism cities and their associated tourist experience, efforts and attempts at re-staging the tourist experience and in the construction (usually top-down, elite-centred) at tourism cities are still present and persistent.

Research Methods

Research began by unraveling the key networks and organizations that have allowed festival concepts and artifacts to travel globally. Previous research on the international circulation of light festivals around the world highlighted the role of Lighting Urban Community International organization (LUCI) which is located in Lyon and of the city of Lyon itself in this process (Fernandez, 2009). Initial contacts with these organizations and academics that have previously worked on this topic have on one hand confirmed the role of this associations in the global circulation of light festivals, on the other hand revealed the existence of another network, the International Lightfestival Organization (ILO) which instead is located in Eindhoven. Once these networks were identified, the research employed a mix of methods and data sources to explore the amount and nature of the global circulation of light festivals and light festivals' contents and rationalities vary and evolve accordingly to local situation and aspirations.

When the research began, no centralized or comprehensive dataset on existing light festivals was available. Some of the organizations have compiled their own data set but they were limited to the cities that participate in their network. As such we compiled ours own dataset that combines the lists that different stakeholders accepted to share with us and data archived through further archive and internet researches. In compiling the dataset we utilize a large definition of light festivals. Some of the stakeholders considered as light festivals only events characterized by the presence of artistic light installation, while events characterized by lighting projection mapping (a projection technology used to turn objects, often architectural feature, into a display surface for video projection) were considered a different type of events. Due to the fact that most of the light festivals, including Lyon, employed both these types of installations and the Lighting Urban Community International organization does not adopt this distinction we employed the broader definition. Crucially, the compiled data do not offer

a complete overview of all the existing light festivals around the world but presents a useful snapshot of the geographical spread and quickness of the spread of temporary light events at a global scale.

The circulation of light festivals' concepts and artefacts at global scale was uncovered through a mix of methods and data source. The diffusion network was uncovered through interviews with several key actors. Members of all the three networks and organization involved in the circulation of the light festival were interviewed about the actions and initiatives they developed, what kind of visitors participate, what were their motivations and what they were normally interested in. At the same time, the way in which light festivals light festivals' contents and rationalities vary accordingly to local situation and aspirations was uncovered through semi-structured interviews with light festival directors who were questioned about: 1) which events or ideas inspired the creation of the light festivals, 2) which features differentiate their light festival from another and which features are similar, 3) how their light festivals have evolved over time and 4) which international or local elements have caused this evolution.

The festivals of Lyon and Eindhoven were selected due to their status of international benchmarks, often cited as an example as a source of inspiration and due to their status as "urban policy tourism" destinations. In particular, the fact that the Lyon's Fete des Lumières has been hired by several cities around the world to organize new light festivals is of particular interest in the framework of the research. At the same time, the fact that these two festivals are some of the oldest allow us to investigate how they have evolved according to the local conditions for almost twenty years. The festival of Barcelona was chosen to offer the insights of a recently organized festivals. These information were complemented by interviews with light designers who were selected for having showcased their light installation to several light festivals around the world. All interviews were formal and pre-arranged. They were recorded, transcribed and were then subjected to a mixture of inductive and deductive analysis (Yin, 2003). The interviews were complemented by the data analysis of secondary information, mainly the organizations' and light festivals annuals reports and academic literature.

Table 1 Designation and affiliation of interviewees

1	Director of the International Light Festival Organization (ILO)
2	Director of the Lighting Urban Community International (LUCI)
3	Member of the organization committee of the Lyon's Fête des Lumières
4	Director of the Barcelona Light festival LLUM

- 5 Director of the Eindhoven Light Festival GLOW
 - 6 Professor at the University of Lyon and member of the LUCI network
 - 7 Professor at the University of Lyon
 - 8 Ex-director of the Lyon's Fête des Lumières
 - 9 Deputy mayor of Lyon
 - 10 Light designer
 - 11 Light designer
-

Festival of lights and the circulation of urban lightscapes

The role of Lyon and international networks

Numerous studies have recognized that festivals and cultural events can enhance destination image, and promote and stimulate tourism development (Quinn, 2005). A particular manifestation of these 'eventful cities' (Richards & Palmer, 2010) are the late night cultural festivals (Evans, 2012; Jiwa et al., 2009). These events has been perceived by local authorities on one hand as a valid alternative to the traditional night time economy based on drinking and on the other as an attraction capable to extend temporally and geographically the distribution of tourism activity. Particular examples of this type of festivals are the light festivals.

The most well-known light festival is without doubt the Fête des Lumières in Lyon. The first city to fully adopt the new lighting principle developed in the last '80, Lyon rapidly became an urban laboratory in which new lighting design methodology and tools were firstly developed. A new generation of lighting designer, the so called Lyon's school, emerged playing a fundamental role in spreading the new urban lighting principles around the world while Lyon started to be consider as an international benchmark in term of urban illumination (Hernandez 2010). Therefore in 1999 Lyon's local authorities decided to exploit the existing know-how in terms of lighting design and policies to enhance city image and tourism appeal by creating the Fête des Lumières. The festival takes place each year three nights in December around the Christian Feast of Immaculate Conception and draws on a tradition of putting lit candles on window ledges to propitiate the Virgin Mary. During the festival, the installation of lighting displays, spectacles and large-scale installations, including coloured and dynamic lighting created by international artists transforms the city into a phantasmagorical landscape and creates affective and evocative atmospheres. The Fête des Lumières has had an immediate success, transforming a city traditionally perceived as boring

and unattractive into one of the most important tourist destination of France that in the three days of the festival is visited by millions of tourists. Lyon’s success has acted as a catalyst in the progressive development of new light festivals. An increasing awareness of the potential of lighting festivals as touristic attraction and for city marketing has emerged. Accordingly, numerous cities in the last years have organized their own light festivals due to their capacity to attract people. As Edensor remarks, “the Fête des Lumières acts as an international showcase to demonstrate the potential for illumination to transform space and is a global magnet for those planning light festivals” (Edensor, 2014 p. 88). In the last decade, this phenomenon has continuously expanded and new light festivals have been developed starting from lighting technology-based trade fair in Frankfurt, educational programme for student in Alingsås or from the strong technical history of local lighting manufacturers such as Philips in Eindhoven and ERCO in Lüdenscheid (Pearce, 2013; Schielke, 2013).

Table 2
Light festivals around the world (Source: compiled by authors, 2016)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Name of light festival, City, Country</i>
1994	La Nocturne des Coteaux de la Citadelle, Liège(Belgium);
1998	Luci d'Artista, Turin (Italy);
1999	Fête des Lumières, Lyon (France)
2000	Lights in Alingsås, Alingsås (Sweden); Montreal en Lumières, Montreal (Canada);
2001	
2002	Gothenburg Christmas town, Gothenburg (Sweden); LichtRouten, Lüdenscheid (Germany);
2003	City of Light, Jyväskylä (Finland); Hikari Renaissance, Osaka (Japan);
2004	Chartres en Lumières, Chartres(France)
2005	Festival of lights, Berlin (Germany)
2006	Illuminating York, York (United Kingdom); Luci d’Artista, Salerno (Italy); Glow, Eindhoven (The Netherlands)
2007	Leipzig Festival of Lights, Leipzig (Germany);
2008	Staro Riga, Riga (Latvia); Luminale, Frankfurt (Germany);
2009	Bella Skyway Festival, Torun(Poland); Lux Helsinki, Helsinki(Finland); Lights in Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Israel); Vivid Sydney Sydney (Australia);
2010	Como Magic Light Festival, Como (Italy); i Light Marina Bay, Singapore (Singapore); Art in the Dark, Auckland (New Zealand); Circle of Light, Moscow (Russia);
2011	Ghent Light Festival, Ghent (Belgium); Illuminate Bath, Bath (United Kingdom); Light.Move.Festival. Łódź, Łódź (Poland); Lumina Light Festival, Cascais (Portugal); Rendez-vous Bundesplatz, Berne (Switzerland); Switch on light, Beijing (China); Guangzhou International Light Festival, Guangzhou (China); Sharjah Light Festival, Sharjah (United Arab Emirates);
2012	Amsterdam Light Festival, Amsterdam (The Netherlands); Lausanne Festival of Lights, Lausanne (Switzerland); LLUM BCN, Barcelona (Spain);
2013	Brussels Light Festival, Brussels (Belgium); Lichtströme, Koblenz(Germany); Signal, Prague (Czech Republic); Lumière, Durham (United Kingdom); Talling Light Biennale, Tallin (Estonia); New York’s Festival of Light, New York (USA); Festival of Lights of Quebec, Quebec (Canada); Medellin Light Festival, Medellin (Colombia); White Night Melbourne, Melbourne (Australia); Spectra, Aberdeen, (Scotland);
2014	Geneva Lux Festival, Geneva (Switzerland); Longbridge Light Festival, Birmingham (United Kingdom); Nattljus, Eskilstuna(Sweden); Dubai Festival of Lights, Dubai (United Arab Emirates); Rio Mapping Festival, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil); Lampu, Putrajaya (Malaysia); Filux, Mexico City (Mexico); Festival Internacional de Mapping de Girona, Girona, (Spain).
2015	Bucharest Light Festival, Bucharest (Romania); RGB Outdoor Light Festival, Rome (Italy)
2016	Lumiere London , London (United Kingdom)

Lyon's success and international visibility play a key role in the progressive diffusion and the city quickly assumed a prototypical status. Numerous festivals explicitly cited the Fête des Lumières as a source of inspiration (for example, Osaka, Dubai), as a term of comparison (for example, Berlin, Amsterdam) or used lighting installations previously shown in Lyon (for example, Beijing, Osaka). Yet, not only has Lyon's success inspired other cities to develop new festivals of light, the French city has also actively contributed to the rise of new lighting events. In 2002 the city of Lyon created LUCI (Lighting Urban Community International), an international network bringing together cities and lighting professionals engaged in using light as a major tool for urban, social and economic development, with a concern for sustainability and environmental issues. The association has since been well-entrenched in Lyon and has the Deputy Mayor of Lyon as its permanent Honorary President. It technically supports cities that want to develop urban lighting design policies and organizes international conferences that bring professionals, lighting companies and public authorities from all over the world together to discuss issues of innovative lighting technologies, policies and events. Since the beginning, festivals of light have been a main focus in LUCI activities. The association created a permanent commission to explore the potential benefits of light festivals for host cities and how the success of such events could be measured and developed a toolkit to support and justify the organization of such events. It also organized a support service that provides assistance to cities from developing countries that require support to conceive and /or implement new city lighting strategies and initiatives. According to the association, nearly 40 of its 70 city members are organizing some form of lighting festivals, all of them created after the association foundation in 2002 (Pearce, 2013).

To facilitate the development of light festivals, the LUCI association developed a light festival database opened to cities and lighting professionals that provides key information as budget, organizer, dates, artist involved on the festivals organized by the network members in 2014. Moreover, every year LUCI association organizes conferences and events that unite local authorities, lighting professionals and academics to discuss

challenges related to lighting politics and events. Through the siting of most of these activities in Lyon, LUCI not only provides “key relational sites that are central to the social process of teaching and learning about policy and, thus, to the contingent, cumulative, and emergent knowledge production processes that co-constitute urban policy mobilities” (McCann, 2011 p. 120) but also reinforces the city’s role as international benchmark. For instance, since 2012, LUCI in collaboration with the city of Lyon organized the “Lyon Light Festival Forum” an annual discussion of light festival organisation as part of the Fête des Lumières. Local authorities and professionals come from all over the world to the French city to visit the festival and learn from its experience. During the three editions that have been developed until now, more than 200 delegations from all over the world attended, sometimes resulting in the signing of collaboration agreements to support the development of new light festivals (Lyon, 2013).

However these forms of “urban policy tourism” (González, 2011:1398) are not only limited to the Lyon festival but is of interest to all the most important light festivals. For instance, the project manager of the Eindhoven Glow festival revealed that every year during the festivals he received several request from local authorities to visit the festival and have the opportunity to discuss about the advantages and problem related to the organization of such events.

“We have a lot of requests during the whole festival from cities that want to learn from our experience...not only from Europe but also from other continents” (Interview, June 2015).

Alongside this form of study visit, a more stable network allows ideas, strategies and artefacts related to light festivals to circulate. In 2013 the International Lightfestival Organization (ILO) was founded as an open platform that, according to the creator, aims to support light festival organization providing opportunities to collaboratively address curatorial challenges and delivers production solutions for outstanding light art projects. The association, that reunited 16 light festivals around the world, represents an arena where the organizers could share best practices about different issue related to the organization. Not only has the organization \ created an open-platform where organizers of light festival can share opinions, problems and best practices, it also incentives the participation of the members to all the light festivals that compose the network. In doing so, it promotes the development of key relational sites that are a crucial element in the process of teaching and learning that characterizes policies mobility. Moreover, the organization not only promotes the collaboration between

festivals through the circulation of idea but also supports the co-funding of the creation or transportation of art installation that will be exposed in different festivals.

Crucially the role played by these international networks reaffirms Stone's (2004) view that policies not only circulates through bilateral relation between public authorities but that also through the actions of international organizations and/or transnational non-state actors. However, alongside these international actors, the role of local authorities in the process of policy circulation remains central (Lee, 2012; González, 2011). For instance, the city of Lyon not only acts as a member of international networks but has autonomously developed forms of policy boosterism and acts as a "transfer agent" (Stone, 2004:545), giving technical and artistic support to numerous festivals like Moscow, Riga and Rio de Janeiro. More recently, the technical team of the Fête des Lumières has started to act like a consultancy firm, having being hired to collaborate with the organization and development of light festivals and events all around the world. For instance, in 2014, the city of Lyon collaborated with the Emaar Group, a real-estate conglomerate in the Gulf, to create a light event in Dubai inspired by Lyon's Fête des Lumières. The resulting agreement saw the Lyon Light Festival team provide support to Dubai with artistic and technical know-how while the Director of the Lyon's festival took on the role of Artistic Director of the Dubai events. In exchange for the assistance, Dubai has become a financial partner in the Fête des Lumières. More recently, in 2016, the Lyon Light Festival team was hired by the city of Quito to organize the first edition of the Quito Light festivals as part of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. According to the Lyon Deputy in Charge of Culture, the international collaborations have generated 150 000 euros of revenue in 2013 - an amount that covered 7% of the next year events costs (La Tribune, 2014). Crucially, the combined action of these "scalar and network architectures" (Peck 2004: 399), has resulted in the creation of an increase of the number of light festivals. At the point of writing, almost 100 light festivals are active around the world, most of them developed in the last 5 years.

Different cities, different light festivals

Analysing the recent progressive development of the light festivals, two different trends have emerged. First, light festivals are becoming a global phenomenon. Originally light festivals were developed by European cities that, following the Lyon model, were trying to enhance their image and develop tourism. Nowadays, they're increasingly organized by

cities in all continents. In the last 5 years new light festivals have emerged in South America, Oceania and Asia and some of them like the Sydney's Vivid have already gained international relevance. At the same time light festivals are also becoming a metropolitan phenomenon. Originally, light festivals were initially developed by medium and small size cities due to a simpler logistic requirement and the difficulty in quantifying the festivals' benefits in big urban area—a fundamental knowledge to attract sponsor and financial partners (Pearce, 2013). However due to the increasing success of light festivals around the world in the last 5 years, cities as Barcelona, Singapore, Dubai, New York and Sydney have also started to organise their own festivals.

Such a trend, constituted within a strategy of developing light festivals as a mass tourism attraction, is motivated by the process of circulation of policies that characterised the increasing competition between cities to attract touristic flows. Underlining such desires for increased recognition, visibility and tourism flows are the workings of aspirations on the part of a constellation of urban actors (Amin, 2007; Appaduria, 2004; Bunnell & Goh, 2012; Bunnell & Miller, 2011; Kearns & Paddison, 2000; Moser, 2012; Ong, 2011) and the relational effects of urban actants (Bunnell et al., 2012; Ong & du Cros, 2012b). The manager of the Light Festival Organization explicitly recognized how the main motivation that has brought a growing number of cities to organize their own light festival is:

“the great number of visitors in every festival and they grow more and more every year” (Interview, July, 2015).

However this process should not be understood as a simple serial reproduction of a standardized event. Light festivals' contents and rationalities vary broadly accordingly to local situation and aspirations. They tend to be increasingly differentiated in terms of duration and typologies of installations they expose as they focuses on different market segments and scopes— whether as an economically-orientated tourism event or an ambitious fine art exhibition or something in-between (Schielke, 2013). As Edensor remarks (2015a:340) “at a global level, a profuse number of light festivals are being established, varying in scale, intention, venue and design, and ranging from showpieces for the most advanced lighting designs and spectacular techniques to stages for vernacular creativities and local identities”. Crucially, this progressive differentiation reflects not only how the appreciation of particular designs, colours and levels of illumination is culturally inflicted (Edensor, 2012) but also local power relations.

For instance, Lyon's Fête des Lumières in the last years has increasingly developed into a mass tourism event, attracting every year millions of visitors in only 3 days. While the desire of local authorities for increased visibility and tourist flows has played an important role in this development, the justification for this shift has been offered by visitors' negative response to the development of a more "creative" and "interactive" kind of festival. In 2004, the organizers decided to change the festival format, in order to reduce the focus on the traditional spectacular and colourful light installations and introduce new and innovative elements into the programmes in order to enhance the visitors' role in the co-production of the event. As such, they decided to present more artistic and interactive light installations, often created by local artists, and to include in the program, participatory workshop and live spectacles designed to be co-created between artists and spectators. However visitors' reactions to this new format were extremely negative. This approach was considered too elitist and "too conceptual, the 2004 edition of the Festival of Lights will remain the worst memory of the festival's history" (Le Monde 2004, cit. in Hernandez, 2010 p.120). As a result, local authorities decided to return to a more traditional format based solely on the adoption of less innovative, easily understandable light installations. While this trend has been clearly appreciated by tourists, as demonstrated by the constant growth of the number of visitors in the following years, numerous light designers express disenchantment toward the festival. For instance, Roger Narboni, a leading figure in light design from both a professional and intellectual perspective (Narboni, 2004; 2012) and the old artistic director of Lyon Fête des Lumières was extremely critical about this trend. In a recent interview, and with reference to the France festival, he stated:

"The program is intended primarily to please and attract the greatest possible number of visitors. In this approach there is no room for the invention of a new urban lighting or to question our relationship with the night space. Nowadays, light festivals are reduced, unfortunately, to the projection of giant images or videos on the facades that transform the city into a shocking night decoration" (Lightecture, 2012).

However, not all the light festivals have followed the same path toward massification. For instance, the Eindhoven's Glow, another major festival is trying to maintain a more interactive and innovative dimension. As stated by the project manager of the festivals about Lyon's festival, "We absolutely don't want that. We want much more in the art way. It's always a discussion with our board because they want millions of people and we only want the art part." (Interview, June 2015). All the respondents confirmed that local authorities'

aspirations to attract a growing number of tourists, often collide with the desire of the directors and organizers to maintain a more innovative and artistic approach in determining the festivals' scale, intentions and design. As a result, each festival is the final outcome of power relations that are shaped by local, economic and political conditions that are mediated through tourists' responses to the event. The director of Eindhoven festival clearly admits how visitors' reactions, which contrary to Lyon have been positive, have allowed to maintain a more artistic approach "We won (in the discussion with the board) because people are still coming" (Interview, June, 2015). Shaped by every time unique local conditions, the outcome of this struggle varies greatly and constantly provokes the unique recombination of the artistic and organizational elements that constitute such events (Alves, 2007).

This process of differentiations does not imply that the festivals are evolving in different kinds of event. Best practices and art installations continue to circulate among different light festivals at a global level. Instead, this process reflects the increasing "local globalness" (McCann, 2011:120) of policy circulation. Rather than a serial reproduction of a standardized format, ideas, practices and artefacts related to light festivals circulate globally and are recombined locally each time under specific local, cultural and economic conditions. Despite the fact that the diffusion of light festivals around world is produced by a strategy of policy emulation, largely inspired by few "best practice" cases (Lyon, Turin, Eindhoven) these models are not replicated in a straightforward and unproblematic way, but are selectively acknowledged and appropriated by local actors. For example, while the director of the LLUM festival of Barcelona admits that she was inspired by her visits and contacts with the organizers of Lyon and Turin festivals she also acknowledges that the Barcelona event is not a straightforward reproduction of one of these events but rather a combination of some elements inspired by these two festivals with the local expertise in terms of light design and events management. The result is an event based on light installation, which aspires to be recognized as a light festival, but also diverges from the original models that have inspired its creation. This process of differentiation is also expressed by the manager of the ILO. Describing his intention to organize an annual reunion of light festivals organizers in order to promote the circulation of best practices and mutual learning he clearly acknowledges the differences that exist among different light festivals:

"We are thinking of inviting every light festival (organisers) this year because ...they (light festival organisers) are all the best in their own way, they're the best in their budget and they're the best in their city." (Interview, July, 2015)

Specifically, he explicitly recognized that every organizer acts under specific local condition, producing a multiplicity of different light events that vary in duration, scale, design and objectives. The existence of such a broad range of formats and aspirations is also reflected in the wide range of reasons that motivated the process of “policy tourism” (González, 2011) related to light festivals. As confirmed by the project manager of the ILO, motivations and scopes for studying existing light festivals and circulating the ideas and practices varies broadly. While certain delegation are interested in understanding the entire process of development of such events and in develop collaboration, arguably with the intention of reproduce a similar format, others are instead exclusively interested in very specific areas such as crowd management or fund-rising. However, despite the fact that local culture and knowledge influence the development of light festivals, such a trend is hardly related to forms of tourism based on endogenous creative capital or on interactive experiences directly related to the everyday life of the location.

Light festival creations are often characterized by a strong top-down approach. They are big budget events originating from the will of public authorities and private sector and endorsed by international networks and agreement. Often, they tend to adopt templates and installations that have circulated globally and may even have the tendency to deploy the same lighting installation in different festivals around the world (Schulter-Romer, 2013). For instance, the Cloud project have travelled from the Signal Festival in Prague (October 2013) to GLOW Eindhoven (November 2013) and later has been visible at the I Light Marina Bay light festival in Singapore (March 2014). Also, the project of the Dutch artists Collective Afterlight, that was permanently visible in the Molenstraat in Eindhoven since GLOW 2011, has been restaged in the festivals of Ghent, Jerusalem and Cascais.

Crucially this process of emulation, reproduction and circulation of light festivals and installations contrasts with the idea of a shift toward forms of urban tourism based solely on creativity and embedded knowledge distinctively linked to the destination. Like urban policies (Bunnell & Das, 2010; McCann, , 2011) and political-cultural objects (Moser, 2012; Ong & du Cros, 2012a; Pow, 2007), concepts and artefacts relating to light festivals have travelled widely and have led to the proliferation of expert-endorsed, public-funded and professionally-managed cultural events based on the attraction of light and illumination (Hernandez, 2010,). Thus, what we are seeing in light festival based tourism is a new form of conventional tourism, happening alongside more novel forms of tourism (Richards, 2011; Richards, 2014). Instead of a decline in staging and a rise of co-creation in tourism cities and

their associated tourist experience, illumination practices and light festivals demonstrate the permanence of efforts and attempts at re-staging the tourist experience and in the construction (usually top-down, elite-centred) at tourism cities.

Urban tourism and tourism stagings

The use of light and illumination to stage a spectacular experience (Edensor, 2015a; Mallet, 2010) should be seen in relation to a genealogy of staging and theming in tourism. From conserved heritage sites to purpose-built cultural attractions, the process of staging plays an important role in touristic purposes (Dicks, 2003; Lukas, 2007). While innovative or new forms of lighting are important for the staging of experiences at light festivals, other/older approaches deploying popular culture, traditional values or utopian visions can be found at work in tourism places around the world too. Such production and consumption of spectacular experiences often evoke discussions of reality versus fantasy. For example, Tucker (2002) examined how Goreme's tourism entrepreneurs and residents deploy popular American cartoon 'The Flintstones' in the marketing and development of tourism in the central Turkish village. Branded 'Flintstones-land' because of its sublime natural caverns and chimneys, Tucker (2003) argues that Goreme's tourism are practiced in a hypo-reality (or hyperfakality) where Goreme's natural and real geological features are experienced as more fake than fake. Rather than a shift towards relational forms of tourism, tourism experiences at light festivals are likely to centre on the aesthetical, artistic and 'hyperreal' (Baudrillard, 2007; Eco, 1990) qualities that new modes of lighting bring to the monuments, buildings, streets and cities.

As such, light festivals are likely to evoke forms of urban tourism that are beyond the current theorization of an on-going transition toward new forms of urban tourism where a growing "part of tourism deliberately avoids staged experiences in officially sanctioned tourist spaces" and "the passive consumerist notion of former urban tourism...is increasingly replaced by an active search for new and unusual personal experiences and for being part of the visited place and the lifestyle ascribed to it" (Fuller and Michel, 2014: 1306). According to this narrative urban tourism shows an increasing disenchantment toward the "staging" of many tourist destinations and locations and is instead characterized by a quest for more "ordinary" and "authentic" experiences of the city (Maitland, 2010; Richards, 2011; Richards, 2014; Richards and Wilson, 2007; Tan et al., 2013)

Yet Edensor (2014) remarks that critiques that focuses on the intensified commodification and theming of urban space fail to acknowledge that this events “are not necessarily experienced passively but are occasion for pleasure and fun” (pg. 87). In a similar vein, several studies (Dicks, 2003; Lukas, 2007) have revealed that visitors do not always see theming as an endeavour at creating the authentic. Instead, visitors often accept simulations so long they know these are based on partial-truths and that the simulations enrich their experiences. Crucially this resonate with the recent works on the enchanting and affective qualities that innovative forms of illumination possess (Edensor, 2012; Edensor, 2014; Edensor, 2015b). For instance, the work of Edensor and Lorimer on the experience of Speed of Light, a performance event staged in Holyrood Park, during the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival reveals how the carefully choreographed staging of artificial light effects, producing a new experience of topography, terrain and atmosphere is able to generate enchanting effects that contain the power to “dramatizes the experience of looking, listening and feeling.” (Edensor and Lorimer, 2015 p.1).

Illuminating sites, thus, can work towards a greater sense of navigation for visitors at night and a greater appreciation of the thematic elements of the city and its elements - highlighted and facilitated via the spectacle of calculated illumination. As acts and practices geared towards theming urban places and simulating fantasy-scapes, light festivals and their enchanting lighting schemes are appreciated and consumed for the ways in which they add to the experience of cities and urban areas. Consequently, the authentic presentation of buildings and sites are not always a concern to visitors.

Conclusion

The circulation and copy of policies from one city to another is by now a common practice that characterized an increasingly globalized world. Yet, in the field of tourism this strategy has hardly been considered effective. Conceptualized as a linear reproduction of external ideas and policies, this strategy of policy emulation has been accused to produce negative effects as the attempts to stage the tourism city has been often defined as counterproductive (Smith, 2007; Richard and Wilson, 2007). As a result, many authors have argued that urban tourism is experiencing a turn toward new forms of urban tourism characterised by a quest by

visitors for ‘typical’ mundane experiences distinctively linked to the destination. Rather than adopting a similar approach, the paper has adopted a policy mobility perspective (McCann, 2011) that approaches the circulation of policies as a socially constructed process, associated with increasingly intense forms of institutional layering and embedded power relations. This entails the analysis of how ideas, concepts and artefacts have circulated globally and the demonstration of how tourism policies are adapted and improvised from one city to another in intricate and complex ways. The success experienced by all the light festivals around the world shows how forms of fast policy studied in Urban Studies and allied social science disciplines could also be successfully adopted in the field of tourism

However, despite the increasing “local globalness” (McCann, 2011:120) that characterises the circulation of light festival at a global level, these events could hardly be described as related to bottom-up forms of tourism based on embedded knowledge or tourists’ desire of authenticity driven by the will to “live like a local” (Richards, 2014:126). Light festivals are often big-budget events, characterized by a strong top-down approach and endorsed by international networks and agreement and increasingly rely on the presence of internationally well-known artists (Edensor and Millington, 2013). Specifically, the spread of light festivals around the globe offers a new insight on the process of development of urban tourism, revealing how that in spite of the recent accounts on the emergence of more relational form of tourism, elite-endorsed and often top-down attempts to re-stage the tourism city are still persistent. Rather than simply a move towards new forms of urban tourism characterized by a search for a stronger engagement with the everyday and mundane experience of the city, the diffusion of light festivals confirms the persistence of a wider range of tourism motivations in which under specific conditions, the simulation and the staging of the tourism experience are accepted and appreciated.

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