17 Diaspora Community Festivals and Tourism

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Introduction

Festivals that celebrate the identities, cultures and traditions of diverse minority, ethnic, diaspora communities are significant cultural and social phenomena. They may also contribute to the visitor economy, for example through increasing tourism income, government revenue and employment (Maclinchey, 2008; O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002; Picard and Robinson, 2006). Furthermore, diaspora community festivals may contribute to enriching the development of place-images and destination marketing themes that seek to reflect diversity and promote a 'globalised' image of the population of the area (usually city) where such festivals take place (Paradis, 2002). As a consequence, 'festival tourism' has entered the language of tourism studies, defined as "a phenomenon in which people from outside a festival locale visit during the festival period" (O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002: 325). This chapter contributes to festival tourism studies by exploring *Chinese New Year* festivals in the UK and their emerging prominence as tourism attractions. Research in this area examines its potential for building bridges between communities and cultures.

Some scholars problematise the term 'festival tourism' and resist defining it as a particular category of the tourism market. For example, Quinn (2009) refuses to employ this term, arguing that the primary purpose of festivals is not usually the generation of tourism. Some contemporary festivals do possess a strong place-marketing or tourism objective as part of their rationale. However, many 'traditional festivals' that celebrate community beliefs, social values and identities do not have tourism as a primary purpose (though this may be a significant secondary outcome). Examples include festivities associated with belief systems and annual cultural events such as those associated with the *Chinese New Year* (Bakhtin, 1984; Humphrey, 2001; Magliocco, 2006). Although these festivals have changed in their form over time and some

of them may have associations with tourism, they cannot be equated with events that are planned primarily for tourism.

Along with the mass international migrations that occurred throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and particularly from the 1960s, diaspora festivals have emerged as a comparatively recent classification of festival, though many have ancient antecedents (Green and Scher, 2007). Diaspora festivals include "festivals and events that have mobilised and recomposed, to varying extents, aspects of the culture of diasporic populations" (Carnegie and Smith, 2006: 255). Most diaspora festival research has emerged from social science and humanities disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, the visual arts, languages and literature (Crichow and Armstrong, 2010). Some are inspired by the inter-disciplinary field of diaspora studies (Green and Scher, 2007). These studies usually discuss the meanings and implications of diaspora festivals, for example, Labrador's (2002) research into the Filipino *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* festival in Hawaii and Cohen's (1982) studies of the *Notting Hill Carnival* in London.

However, systematic research into diaspora and/or ethnic minority community festivals in relation to tourism is limited. Do diaspora festivals have impacts on tourism that are comparable and/or distinct from other festivals or events? Are quantitative data, such as visitor numbers or tourism income that are more or less convincingly attributed to a festival sufficient to explain the association between diaspora festivals and tourism? If diaspora festivals do attract tourists to a city, does tourism impose constraints on the nature of the diaspora festival itself? How have diaspora festivals developed their programmes, organisation and audiences in the context of tourism?

Diaspora communities: theoretical perspectives

The word 'diaspora' has a rich historical lineage, deriving from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). It was first applied to people who had been forced to leave their national territories after suffering persecution and banishment (Cohen, 1997: ix). Scholars such as Cohen (1997), Safran (1991) and Clifford (1994) suggest that the concept of diaspora has most commonly been linked with the Jewish people's exile from their historical homeland and settlement worldwide. Others have developed the concept of the diaspora based on the forced migrations of black African and Irish peoples (Cohen, 1997; Gilroy, 1993).

However gradually, this traditional definition of diaspora has been enriched with greater meaning, as international migration has diversified in cause and

location from the mid-1960s. Voluntary migration has become a more common phenomenon, though still of course subject to constraint and legislation (Ma, 2003). Thus, the concept of diaspora now no longer has exclusive intimations of trauma (Cohen, 1997). Furthermore, a contrast to the pattern of migration that typically occurred before the mid-1960s, characterised by permanent, unidirectional and onetime movement from one country to another now implies more fluid and complex spatial mobilities, (Ma, 2003) with flexible locations, multi-directional movement and complex temporalities (Brinkherhoff, 2006; Clifford, 1994).

The word diaspora is also deployed at times as 'a metaphoric designation' (Safran, 1991: 83) to describe different categories of people and community identities: "Political refugees, alien residents, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic and racial minorities and overseas communities" (Shuval, 2000:41). The common feature of these diverse groups of people is their experiences of living through cultural differences (Hall, 1990). All diasporas live on cultural borderlands and share spatial experiences with 'porous boundaries' (Ma, 2003: 22). Thus, diasporas construct their identities through negotiation with the cultural influences of 'home' and 'host' countries and also the differences within and between diaspora groups (Shi, 2005). Chan (1999) goes further in this respect, suggesting that diaspora "does not need a country, a kingdom, or a state; it is a condition and that condition is sustained by its place in a community anywhere". In this context, Shi (2005) and Zweig et al (2008), use Chinese students and professionals in the United States as an example to insist that they belong to the global Chinese diaspora community. This is because they have engaged in the community's activities, linking the home and host countries, and share the consciousness of 'Chineseness' with Chinese diaspora communities all over the world. According to these studies, the conventional concept of the diaspora is challengeable and definitions of the word may be updated in relation to research on diaspora communities in specific contexts.

A key issue is whether diaspora communities are more or less actively involved in the life of the host societies (which may, of course, involve engagement with other diaspora communities as well as with the indigenous population) as opposed to focusing their social lives within their communities. The extent to which there is a collective sense of nostalgia for 'home' – an 'imaginative geography and history' (Said, 1978: 55) or an 'imagined community' is also pertinent (Anderson, 1983). Esman (2009) suggests that there are levels of interaction between diasporas and their home and host countries concerning mobilities, education, political activity and culture and that these play an important role in international and inter-communal relations. Zweig,