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Galway International Arts Festival: What's behind the internationalisation of a name?

Silvia Guglielmini

Introduction

Galway International Arts Festival (GIAF) takes place in July in the West of Ireland and combines different art-forms including theatre, music and the visual arts. It comprises comedy and street spectacle, as well as a discursive strand centred on creativity called *First Thought Talks*. The festival was established in 1978 as an outlet for professional artists living in the area and a stage to showcase national and international artwork. It was originally called *Galway Arts Festival* and added the term 'international' to its title in 2014.

This name change could be interpreted as a strategic marketing move to position *GIAF* in a broader circuit of international events, but is also an interesting starting point to discuss *GIAF's* transformation as informed by globalisation. Globalisation is a complex interplay of economic and cultural dynamics shaping the sense of the world as a smaller place, where 'new global elements coexist alongside existing and established local or national cultural forms' (Robins, 1997: 19). Globalisation goes hand-in-hand with technological progress and the information economy, which is based "on the capacity to create new knowledge and to apply it rapidly, via information processing and telecommunications, to a wide range of human activities in ever-broadening space and time" (Carnoy *et al.*, 1993: 6). As the world becomes interconnected, there is increasing competition to gain financial resources and hold a share of people's attention. This emerged quite clearly in an interview held with John Crumlish, who has been *GIAF's* Chief Executive since 2002:

[As a festival, you have to] be interesting and engaging, which ... creates a massive challenge because so many people have much bigger budgets and are attempting exactly the same thing. You are no longer competing with festivals; you are competing with Google and whoever else wants somebody's attention.

While globalisation pushes towards homogenisation, it does not erase specificity. Specificity survives in tradition, in hybridity – the crossover of cultures or 'glocal' models – and also in tensions and frictions (Robins: 18). This chapter contends