



## Special Session Proposal

### The Impact of Festivals on Local and Regional Development

Organisers:

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The origins of festivals lie in the depths of antiquity. As events, festivals are closely connected with the development of human culture. The earliest festivals were those events connected with seasonal occasions such as sowing and harvesting (Cudny, 2014; Davies, 2015). More advanced festivals, containing elements of higher culture or art, took place in ancient Greece, often connected with celebrations associated with Greek gods. These festivals invariably included feasts, singing songs, reciting poems, theatre performances, and competitions (e.g., for the best piece of literary art). In Asia, religious festivals were commonplace in the Early Middle Ages (Cudny, 2016). In contemporary societies, festivals are commonplace and vary considerably in their focus and purpose. Some festivals have been running for centuries, while others are just a few decades old.

For example, since 1591, Pamplona, Spain, has celebrated the Festival of San Fermin. It is a celebration that combines two medieval events: 1) commercial secular fairs within the cattle-raising industry (which derived into the bullfighting and bull-running traditions) and 2) religious ceremonies honoring the saint. Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany, described as the “world’s largest folk festival,” dates to 1810 (Oktoberfest Magazine No Date). The San Marcos National Fair (FNSM by its acronym in Spanish) in Aguascalientes, Mexico, started in 1828, is recognized as one of Mexico's oldest and most important fairs, which provides a significant spillover effect to the State’s economy. In contrast, the New Hampshire Pumpkin Festival has existed since 1991. In the Internet age, festivals' market and trade aspects, such as Amazon's Great Indian Festival and Alibaba’s 11.11 Global Shopping Festival, have been highlighted and promoted.

A festival can be defined as a “themed public celebration” (Getz, 2005, p. 21), while Cundy (2014, 653) defines it as “an organized socio-spatial phenomenon that is taking place at a designated time – outside the everyday routine – increasing the overall volume of social capital and celebrating selected elements of tangible and intangible culture.” All these elements and activities could have socio-economic impacts outside the designated timeframe.

This special session aims to explore festivals from the perspective of Regional Science. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the socio-economic impact of festivals
- festivals as a tourism generator
- festivals and urban regeneration
- festivals and place-image, place-branding, and place-making
- the norms, culture, and institutions of festival traditions
- festivals and the experience economy
- festivals and negative externalities (e.g., environmental impacts)
- modern festivals in the cyberspace

## References

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