

## Call for Papers

### “Stadtfeste – Urban Festive Places and Practices in the European Cultural Space”

The conference aims to be part of a long term interdisciplinary and international debate on European feasts and festivals, reflecting specifically on the role of urban festive traditions in forming a European cultural space. “Traditional” European feasts – looking at decades if not centuries of practice, which are often symbiotic with the city identity and considered by the hosts as “traditional” or “original” – will be the focus of the conference. Particular attention will be given to the terms “place”, “space” and “practice” and their interconnection with city life and governance.

*Stadtfeste*, feasts of the city, are mostly organized by the administration of the city in cooperation with neighborhoods, such as the Fallas in Valencia (Spain) or the Palio in Siena (Italy), or by local associations such as the Fastnacht in Mainz (Germany). Thus, these “traditional” feasts share several traits: they show a high degree of civic participation in their realization; during the feast the participating parties occupy certain places (often the historic centre) in the city at special times; they convert public places temporally into private and specialized areas. These feasts are often of interest for national and international media (online and in TV), get visibility around the globe and attract international tourism. In many cases, this media and international attention goes hand in hand with UNESCO policy. While these urban feasts are undoubtedly successful there remain the question of their legitimation and the ongoing debate on their authenticity.

The conference seeks to couple careful scrutiny of assumed mechanisms of identity building, and of the economic regulations surrounding these feasts, with a focus on the role of specific places in the system of festive practices and the process of the creation of cultural spaces.

"Place", "space" and "practices" are terms which are frequently used in studies on festivity, though not so much theorized in this same field nor as frequently utilized as analytical tools for comprehending festive systems. At our conference, they will be debated in research reports and historic accounts of urban feasts which lie between the public and the private, the local and the global and perhaps converge in a (possible) European cultural space. We propose two main issues for discussion and debate:

1. Places and practices: media attention and festive re-semantization of urban areas:

What role do mass media and mass tourism play in the festive systems? Which parts of town or areas are in use as traditional festive settings? Which practices turn public places into semi-private places and which areas are reinterpreted during the feast? What does the temporary appropriation of places signify for the participants and non-participants living in the city? Are there territorial patterns in the city or in the relation of city and periphery during the feasts that can there be identified? And are there complementary or conflicting relations between different feasts in the same town, or between different domains of public sociability and entertainment (sport, political or religious performances)?

2. Cultural Comparison: cultural and organizational patterns of urban feasts and the possible emergence of a European cultural space:

Are there common patterns in the realization of “traditional” feasts in Europe? What differences can be observed between the use of places and of practices? Is there a profile that can be identified when one compares different feasts from various European regions? Is there a European city life that brings forth a European cultural space for festive traditions, and, if so, does the urban feast help to maintain particular models of city life?

Empirical studies of feasts in different European cities and various theoretical frameworks will be welcome with the goal of enabling the conference to make intercultural comparison of festive systems, and so to help the conference to critically assess the question of a European urban festive model or pattern.

One possible first hypothesis is that the festive heritage is a powerful tool for the reproduction of a long-term urban management and social life (along the lines of urban historic centre – historic feast –

city identity); another possible hypothesis is that feasts are crucial tools for constructing new and inclusive urban identities, thought of as plural and hybridized by the fusion of different urban ways of life and urban social subjectivities.

The conference is open to creative and critical proposals which aim to integrate or discuss further theoretical perspectives. Conference language is English. It will take place at Mainz University, **29 and 30 September 2016**.

The organizers are currently working to obtain sufficient funding and will apply for the complete funding of the conference, listing the accepted papers and contributors. The acceptance of proposed papers will take place within two weeks' time. The conference will take place if reasonably funded and, once this funding has been given, the final dates/ venues/ program will be effective and operative.

Proposals of no more than 350 words should be sent till **15. November** to:

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