



The organizing practices of a community festival

Practices of a
community
festival

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present a part of a research study, undertaken over three years, in which the author observed the organization of an annual, community-based, arts and crafts festival in rural central Sweden. By examining the participation of a specific village community group in the organization of the festival, this paper sets out to explore links between the practices of organizing and the culture of a community group engaged in them.

Design/methodology/approach – The research study was conducted over three annual cycles of the festival, and its methods reflected the author's position as both a tourist visitor to the festival and a volunteer participant. This paper presents a "thick-description" of the work of a single community volunteer group in the annual organization their village's festival contribution, based on observational and informal interview data from the author's position as a member of that group, and some of the photographic data gathered.

Findings – The account presented in this paper offers an examination of the annual routines of a small village community group in organizing their contribution to the broader multi-site festival event observed in the research study. The introduction of anthropological concepts linked to ritual practices extends the understanding of organizing in this setting.

Originality/value – A contribution to the development of an understanding of organizing in recurring, group-organized event settings through a detailed consideration of a micro-level ethnographic study data.

Keywords Community, Practice theory, Festival, Organizing, Routines, Ritual symbolism

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Introduction

Linstead (1997) has argued that "organizing any sort of activity, information or informal group", is an inherently social process which involves "the negotiation and construction of meaning to get things done" (p. 87). In this process he includes the recognition of thought and emotion, the deployment of symbolic artefacts, symbolic and rhetorical expressions of meaning, and the improvisational construction of identities. In order to explore this fully he advocates "event studies [...] investigated by immersion methods to pursue the ambiguous relationship between the symbolic and the concrete, and the meanings which members attribute to the events". The self-organized, community festival offers an interesting example of such an event, allowing us to examine the practices of organizing outside the confines of reified formal structures associated with bureaucratic organizations. Instead we are able to focus on the "practical ordering of heterogeneous human, material and symbolic elements" (Nicolini, 2009) by an organizing group.

The notion that organizing may be viewed as a set of practices is one which connects with two apparently contrasting literatures relating to the nature of practice. The practice theory view of organizing, developed in recent years by a number of social and organizational theorists (e.g. Schatzki, 2001; Feldman, 2000) is linked to sense-making, practical intelligibility and the development of routines based on prior experience. This may be set against an anthropological view of organizing (e.g. Douglas, 1996; Turner, 1969) linked to deep-rooted cultural understandings of the role of ritual in determining social order in a community, and the search for symbols of



stability to counter the uncertainties associated with increasingly complex social conditions.

This paper presents part of a research study, in which the author observed the organization of an annual, community-based, arts and crafts festival in rural central Sweden, conducted over three annual cycles of the festival. The festival is organized in and by several village communities spread around an area of managed forest and this paper offers a “thick-description” of the work of a single community volunteer group in the preparation and delivery of part of the festival, based largely on personal observations and informal interview data from the author’s position as a member of that group. It also draws to some extent on photographic data gathered and on data from the author’s reflexive journal. The account presented examines some of the empirical findings of the study to develop a deeper understanding of the temporal pattern of organizing which draws on both approaches to practice outlined above.

Theoretical context

Routines and ritual symbolism

The concept of organizing practices is linked partly to Weick’s (1969) call to focus on processes of organizing rather than reified, formally structured socio-economic entities we have named “organizations”, and partly to the development of practice theory by a number of leading social theorists including Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984), Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) and latterly Schatzki (2001, 2005) emphasizing the importance of practice to the development of social processes and structures. Building on these interests, a number of organizational theorists (Feldman, 2000; Barley and Kunda, 2001; Pentland and Feldman, 2008; Becker, 2004; Howard-Grenville, 2005) developed the notion that organizational processes and structures are built on recurrent patterns of activity, referred to as routines. Feldman and Pentland (2003) define a routine as “a repetitive, recognizable pattern of interdependent actions, involving multiple actors” (p. 96). However, while routine theory may help to explain continuity and adaptation of practice in a range of pre-structured organizational settings, it provides relatively limited insight into the emergence of organizing in previously unstructured group settings.

Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) refer to “the constitutive role of practice in producing organizational reality” (p. 1240), positing the view that the performance of routines which constitute practice have a performative function in enacting organization, highlighting the mutually recursive relationship of structure and agency. In Austin’s conception of performativity certain speech utterances perform that to which they refer. For example, the expression “I apologize” is an explicit performative, in Austin’s terms, as its utterance conducts the act. Similarly, expressions such as “congratulations” and “I promise” are also performative utterances. D’Adderio (2008) explored this to some extent by examining how the codifications of routines in artefacts such as process documents, act as performatives, but Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) go further to suggest that the embodied actions involved in the performance of a routine are themselves performative.

The recent interest in performativity amongst theorists suggests a recognition of the symbolic significance of routines as collective accomplishments. However, Dionysiou and Tsoukas (2013) recently state that “although the nature of routines as collective phenomena has been widely acknowledged [...] our understanding of how individual participants interrelate their individual lines of action [...] is still limited” (p. 182). Their suggested adoption of a symbolic interactionist perspective developed

by Mead (1934) and later by Blumer (1969) draws attention to the detailed, relational “microprocesses” which lead to the creation (and recreation) of routines. While the adoption of this perspective is readily accepted, in the setting of this study where structural constraints to group action and interaction are notably lacking, Goffman’s (1959) suggestion that new social order is constructed through patterned forms of shared expression, which he terms “interaction rituals”, would appear particularly apposite.

Cultural anthropologists have for some time viewed the way in which communities organize themselves as part of a broader process of social ordering governed by collectively established rituals. Douglas (1996) posits the view that much of the way we organize ourselves, both as individuals and with others, is governed by deep-seated cultural belief systems within which right and wrong ways to act are established. The patterns of action associated with culturally correct or good behaviours forms the basis of a ritual ordering process. The community event may be seen then as an important example of organization as “public ritual practice (which) enacts, without explicitly describing, the community it creates” (Swidler, 2001, p. 83). This allows us to view the development of practices of organizing as part of a cultural process associated with the symbolic creation of community within a group.

Cultural symbolism: cohesion, diversity, renewal and resistance

Getz *et al.* (2010) view festivals as “themed public celebrations” which acquire a recognizable organisational culture representing an active celebration of “community values, ideologies, identity and continuity” (p. 30). Similarly, De Bres and Davis (2001) place community identity firmly at the centre of festival practice. They put forward a model of community identification comprising the construction of a combination of group and place identities amongst community members, which is strengthened by involvement in community events. In Douglas’ (1996) view the community’s work on elaborating their symbolic representation through the organization of an event is a “way of bringing order into experience” (p. 53). These events, with their multi-sensory modes (verbal, visual and embodied performance) of symbolism, are “capable of creating a structure of meanings which individuals can relate to one another and realize their own ultimate purposes” (Douglas, 1996). Following this view the festival becomes an integral to the broader symbolic practices of community organizing, affirming the community’s solidarity amongst members and signalling its cultural cohesion to the outside world.

Edyvane on the other hand, highlights the fundamentally pluralistic nature of communities, constantly changing over time and pulsing with conflict. Rather than communities as “havens of peace, stability and permanence in a potentially chaotic world”, his exploration of literary narratives of community allows us to view them as “in a range of different shapes and also to see that it is inappropriate to conceive of a community as a static social entity” (p. 50). This offers support for a differing interpretation of the festival-community relationship displayed in other studies (Jackson, 1988; Marston, 1989; Lewis, 1996) which examine how participating stakeholder groups use festival settings to assert their own previously established notions of identity as a valid part of the broader community. Swidler’s (2001) assessment of the development of the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade showed how the symbolic actions (and interactions) of constituent stakeholder groups in organizing an event constitute changes in the way in which the community organizes itself.

Elsewhere (reference removed for review) it has also been argued that the temporary loosening of conventional order experienced during the festival period itself is an example of a liminal phase in community life. Seminal work on liminality by anthropologist, Turner (1969) focused on observations of rites of passage and rituals in which individuals experienced three phases: the pre-liminal or separation, the liminal and finally the post-liminal or reincorporation phase. Turner (1982, p. 55) went on to examine liminal experiences in formally structured social settings such as preparatory activities for membership into churches, clubs, fraternities and movements. Organization studies scholars have focused on liminality as a temporary suspension of organizational norms and conventions (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003; Simpson *et al.*, 2010) to allow members' engagement in a range of creative, experimental and reflective activities prompting the redrawing of existing boundaries and the adoption of new behaviours. Modern-day festivals as sites of organizing, may thus be viewed as liminal phenomena, an opportunity for members of a community to act annually, reflexively and in coordination, leading in turn to changes in the ways in which they organize themselves – a form of annual renewal, in which they may incorporate or reject emerging practices and shed or retain continuing ones.

Some studies of contemporary festivals are based on the assumption that festival symbolizes and celebrates the informal, non-work aspects of community life – what might be termed community “disorganization”. In his influential study of contemporary festivals, Falassi (1987) described festival as “a sacred or profane time of celebration marked by special observances” (p. 2). As with many subsequent studies, this echoes Bakhtin's (1984) concept of carnival – a suspension of everyday working life to engage in “ritual activities for the purpose of popular folk merriment” (p. 219) – drawn from his historical examination of the European carnival tradition. In this study he elaborated several examples from historical records of symbolic behaviours and activities he described as “carnavalesque” which imply that festivals are an opportunity for enacting practices of resistance. Costa (2001), in assessing modernist sociological approaches, developed the concept of festive sociability to describe these distinctive behaviours, only evident amongst participants during festival times. These incorporate particular forms of “humour, play, communal eating, sociable work, satiric criticisms, parades etc.” (p. 542), the combination of which symbolizes the festival's distance from the pattern of established, everyday community practices and some measure of cultural resistance.

Method

Between 2009 and 2011, I undertook a field research study to observe the organization of an annual cultural festival – which I will refer to as S Festival – which takes place in 15 different villages and sites over a large area of forest in a central region of Sweden. It is one of many such cultural events whose growth in popularity across Europe and rural USA during recent years, has also been specifically documented in rural Sweden (Ekman, 1999; Aldskogius, 1993). Its broad goals, understood by the volunteers, participants and visitors alike, are to highlight the rich folk-culture heritage of the region, which continues to attract artists, musicians, performers, photographers and crafts experts with regional, national and in some cases international standing, and to promote the development of tourism to the area. My initial interest was in how the organization of the festival related to the social, cultural and economic relations embedded in the routine life of the host communities, but this has developed into a preoccupation with temporal, spatial and aesthetic aspects of organizing. This paper focuses on how the temporal aspects may be theorized. Spatial and aesthetic issues are

currently being explored elsewhere (reference removed for review), however, it is touched on in this summary of methods adopted.

One of the first methodological challenges of the study is that the festival in question is a multi-site one which stretches across quite a wide geographical area with no discernible population centre – indeed a number of interviewees have noted that part of its purpose is to celebrate the “spaciousness” of the area. While the study itself was not a multi-site ethnography as such, some data drawn from a number of other participating villages has enabled me to engage in what Nicolini (2009) refers to as “zooming out”, or maintaining a sense of the overall context and scope of the research subject. It provides contextual information on the overall impact of the festival on the regional supra-community of which all the participating sites comprise.

The research method overall may be characterized as a “triangulated” ethnographic study (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2009), which is made up of three main forms of primary data collection: *in situ* field notes which record my immediate observations of events, conversations and “interviews” during the three annual periods of the festival; photographs which attempt to capture the sensory experience of being part of the festival; and reflexive/reflective entries into a personal journal kept all year round. The research design may also be viewed as an evolving one. The practical and ethical evolution of the study has stemmed partly from opportunistic necessity, as I have been for the last three festival celebrations, part of one of the volunteer groups whose practice I have been documenting, and as I have a long-term commitment to the community as a regular visitor and holiday homeowner. It is also, however, evolving in an epistemological sense. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) attest “the processes that define the practices of interpretation and representation are always ongoing, emergent, unpredictable and unfinished” (p. 563).

The study focused largely on the work of a single village community group during three iterations of festival planning and delivery. As I have also been a member of the group whose practice I have been documenting (as a peripheral community member), I have benefited from access to their work during the festival period, and to member interactions at various points during the three organizing cycles. The study data have included written descriptions of all aspects of the groups’ activities in which I have participated (and thus observed), the transcription of *in situ* interviews with co-participants and organizers based on this and other festival sites, personal notes of events and informal conversations, and a wide ranging collection of photographs documenting practices, artefacts, spaces and interactions from the festival delivery.

While providing me with excellent access my position as a participant in the practices being studied, the study also offered a challenge in attempting to understand my own subjectivities and their impact on the research itself. Moeran (2009) referred to this as the “observant participant” position, which requires the researcher to consider themselves as part of the research. All ethnographic research requires a degree of reflexivity on the part of the researcher. As Altheide and Johnson (2011) assert, “the ‘ethnographic ethic’ calls for researchers to substantiate their interpretations and findings with a reflexive account of themselves and their methods” (p. 587). This is partly reflected in Alvesson’s (2003) strategy for close-up studies, which he termed self-ethnography, in which recommended a thorough-going, reflective self-criticism in the writing up to counter the highly subjective process of data construction, and to ensure an appropriate balance is struck in between social authenticity and academic rigour. The decision to maintain a reflexive log of my own emotional and intellectual responses to involvement in the festival, was, however, influenced more by

Davies' (1999) injunction to express "an awareness of the reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants". This log, despite being highly fragmentary, has proved important in providing me with material for the assembly of an auto ethnographic account which unfortunately cannot be covered in this paper (reference removed for review).

This mixture of methods, all firmly qualitative in nature, distinguishes the study from previous examinations of community festivals. These have tended to be of two types – macro-level studies linked to quantitative indicators of the community's socio-economic development or intermediate level studies drawing on more conventional qualitative interviews with representative members of the stakeholder groups involved. This study has focused on observing, at the micro-level, the practices, behaviours and interactions of an organizing group. For the participant observer, access to these practices comes with an obligation to pay careful attention to ethical considerations around the privacy of other community members. In addition this implies a need for a detailed examination and sensitive interpretation of historical data relating to the cultural development of the community in which the group is working.

Organizing the festival: findings

Regional culture and the development of the festival

This paper is focused on examining the annual routine practices of a small volunteer organizing group of which I was a part, based in one of the villages producing S Festival. I shall refer to the village and its organizing group as G village. The group's work is aimed at providing their village community's contribution to the wider festival. There is a framework of agreed rules around the resourcing of their work, and a liaison and reporting process to the festival's central organizing committee, but very little else by way of formal organizational structures and processes. Hence much of the work of all the participating villages is self-organized with the majority of roles and practices linked to the culture of the community based in that village.

The region in which the festival takes place (and which is celebrated in the festival name), and G village itself, have interesting histories. The region encompasses a large tract of managed forest which straddles the border of two of Sweden's administrative regions (Län). It is one of several parts of Sweden which was settled in the seventeenth century by inward migrants from eastern Scandinavia, who brought with them and developed a number of distinctive cultural traditions. A number of the villages and hamlets of the region were originally established during this period and their contributions to the festival reflect some of these traditions. During the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries much of the land was bought from the settlers' descendants by a Swedish trading company, linked to metal manufacture. This in turn led to the development of a number of other settlements, including G village, to house the now landless forest inhabitants and the influx of new workers, many employed by the trading company and its suppliers to work the forest. The period immediately after the Second World War saw a huge boom in the Swedish economy driven by the growth in manufacturing, and this led to a growth in the population of the region, concentrated in the more modern, concentrated village developments such as G village. The long post-war boom finally came to an end in the late 1970s. The trading company had already reduced its reliance on timber and the forest workforce gradually dwindled. Since that time the village has been slowly depopulating and the cultural routines of post-war industrialization have declined.

The festival was established in 2001 by a locally based photographer with keen interest in celebrating the folk culture and inhabitants' working lives in the area of forest in which he lived. It is partly funded by a European Union grant for the encouragement of tourism in economically depressed regions. It takes place over three days in late July each year, at the height of the Swedish summer holiday season, when many middle class Swedish families migrate from their urban winter homes to forest and coastal areas for lengthy vacation periods. It is also the middle of the holiday season in many northern European states when many (if not all) of the holiday homes in the region will be occupied, either by their owners or on a rental basis. Many of these are from Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as from more urbanized parts of Sweden and Norway.

There are around 15 villages or hamlets which participate in the festival, although the exact number changes from year to year. Some of the villages, like G village, host a single festival site with a small number of craft displays, art exhibitions or second hand stalls, while others house several sites. Sites include the grounds and barns of private houses (usually with some historic interest), community centres (bygdegårds) and historic homestead buildings (hembygsgårds). The S Festival Organizing Committee (FOC) consists of a chair, a secretary, a treasurer and two other permanent members plus a representative from each of the main participating villages. Each participating village has its own festival planning group including their representative on the FOC. The festival encompasses a range of practices including artistic and craft production, performance, exhibition and display, food, marketing and selling, all of which represent aspects of regional culture. Each participating village community organizes its own festival contribution to reflect their own interests and capacities.

Routine practices: context and experience

The volunteer group whose work is explored here is made up of a mix of local friends, family and a small number of holiday homeowners based in and around G village. Most volunteers spend some of their spare time, in some cases in leave time from their normal work, in order to participate in the organization of the village's contribution. The group comprised 16 members, all with differing geographical and emotional ties to the village, and differing roles in the festival's planning and delivery. Nine members are permanent year-round residents (from a total of 17), four are holiday homeowners and three are related family members. Integral to their practice as organizational members are a number of behaviours, interactions and material artefacts which, I argue, are integral to the way in which the group interprets the festival and its goals.

Each member of the organizing group has varying degrees of involvement, based on their residential status. Following Schatzki (2005), a number of routines can be identified in the practices of festival organization. These are linked to the different temporal phases of the festival's planning and delivery, and these can be used to assess member involvement and degree of influence on the annual performance and development of the routine:

- Village representation on and liaison with the FOC – this is undertaken by one member at a time and necessity dictates this must be a permanent, year-round resident as there are at least six committee meetings per year between January and July, with a post-festival meeting to agree final financial matters.

- Roster planning and assembly – while this can be shared, again it requires some liaison with the FOC and draws on regional social and business connections. Hence it is undertaken by six or seven of the permanent residents.
- Site clearance and preparation – this happens over a period in the early summer months of May and June. It involves ground clearance and removal of obstacles which have either grown since last year or are part of the site which has been adopted for use since the previous year. This tends to involve whoever is around, usually a mixture of permanent and holiday residents who can contribute to the physical work.
- Site layout and organization – in the weekend prior to the festival the site is laid out with marquee plots designated and exhibition spaces allocated. This also includes the erection of the second-hand sale marquee and food servery bar with seating and overhead awning. The precise layout can take three or four days to agree and at various times involves almost all of the volunteer group.
- Running the stalls – during the days of the festival itself, the second hand sale and food servery is staffed on a rota basis by all the Swedish speaking members of the group.
- Taking down and clearing away – this is generally done on the Sunday after the festival has ended by broadly the same group who cleared and prepared the site in early summer. Many of the older members and members of their family do not tend to take part in this.

The logic of Schatzki's (2002) argument indicates that G village group draw upon their prior experience and sources of practical intelligibility to develop these routines. Hence it is important to understand the economic and historical context in which the group members live and work. G village was part of the development of the industrial supply chain of a large steel company during the mid-twentieth century, whose economic status has declined considerably since the 1970s. Consequently it has slowly depopulated to its current level of 17 permanent, year-round residents occupying nine of the 21 residential dwellings. The rest are owned as holiday homes and/or short-term rental dwellings. Only eight of the permanent residents are below statutory retirement age. There are three small businesses based in the village but none provide a stable source of employment beyond their respective owners. Hence there is little economic power in the village. Though some older members of the group have greater stocks of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) at the individual level because of their practical skills or knowledge of forest history and folklore, no specific individual claims leadership of the G community and the nature of the group's practice indicates a philosophy of inclusivity and mutual responsibility. S Festival, for our volunteer group, represents an opportunity to socialize with each other, meet friends from neighbouring villages and regular visitors and generate some additional funds for further community activities.

Two further influences on the nature and patterns of organizing are the socio-demographic profile of the community and the climate. The annual, cyclical nature of social life in such a rurally isolated region, is acutely affected by the extreme seasonal weather variations. The patterns and volume of social interaction during the lengthy, extremely cold winters experienced by the regions' communities differs significantly from that of the short, intense, light-soaked summers. In part this is because the village population and its festival volunteer group comprise a proportion of holiday

homeowners, whose visits are mainly focused on the summer period between May and September. In part it is also because a high proportion of the permanent, year-round residents are ageing and consequently less mobile during the winter months. For both these groups the festival is one of the fundamental “routines” of their community practice. For the holiday residents it supports their integration into this small, intimate community, reflecting their evolving emotional attachment. For the older residents, most of whom are retired, it is a focus for their social interaction with younger residents and in-comers, and the involvement of four retirees in the planning activities symbolizes the continued desire for such community routines. This is very significant in the development of the festival as a whole. As one of the participating artists at a neighbouring village noted, the older, retired residents involved in the festival bring “idealism and enthusiasm” which provides significant impetus to the planning and running of the festival. They also bring a significant reservoir of working experience from a wide variety of sectors and professions, from forestry to accounting to electrical engineering. The routines they adopt in organizing the festival is the results partly from the division of labour required to provide continuity in the planning activities across the year, and the appropriate allocation of skills in the festival delivery.

The humour and friendly banter with which the group members conduct their tasks cannot disguise the fact that members of the group have simply replaced the paid labour of their normal jobs for the unpaid labour of their voluntary festival roles. Six of the group take time out of their working lives and seven give up part of their formal leave from work period in order to participate in the organization of the festival. This implies that the festival’s value to the community goes much deeper than providing a break from everyday routines. Several aspects of the group’s practice, particularly the links between the planning group and the volunteer group indicate that the organization and delivery of the festival is an important focal point in the social and cultural life of the community. The village inhabitants have emotional ties to each other and to the physical maintenance of the village infrastructure which bears out in considerable ongoing work. A further element to this commitment lies in the economics of the festival. Any profits generated by the second-hand stall goes towards the village community fund (byalag), which funds a number of other community activities across the year, including visits to a well-known regional winter market and the renovation of the fishing club building. This suggests the festival is firmly embedded within the social and economic life of the village.

A useful comparator in the assessment of practical considerations is a larger neighbouring village of N. N village is the most populous in the region housing around 50 or so permanent year-round residents and at least as many holiday home/second home owners. It is also a key centre of tourism growth in the central forest region with two companies owning camping and holiday cabin sites, whose owners work hard to offer services and maintain networks for year-round outdoor activities such as multi-site canoe expeditions, wildlife “safari” tours and winter sports holidays. N village also houses a substantial public community centre building which hosts a variety of activities from adult classes to a small gym, and a picturesque eighteenth century wooden church which attracts touring visitors in its own right. For this village the festival is an opportunity to leverage its relative economic dynamism and promote its tourism potential. The main site used plays host to around 35 participants from outside the region each year, most of whom are small, commercial craft businesses using it as a retail market for revenue generation and promotion. In part this is testament to the entrepreneurial experience and networking skills of this village’s

organizing group in attracting stallholders from quite a wide area of central Sweden. It is consistently by far the biggest site of the festival and the layout and atmosphere of the main site, with its market place character, reflect the entrepreneurial character of the community.

One of the key aims of the festival is to support the creation of a coherent regional community identity linked to a heightened sense of place, the notion of “place identity” noted by De Bres and Davis (2001). Set against this, however, is the view that festival organization provides a platform for groups such as our volunteer group to assert their community identity at the more local, village level. The tension between the two competing conceptions of community conveyed here, and the relative degrees of identification with each can be viewed as an important factor in explaining some aspects of the practice of the group. Gieryn (2000) summarizes this tension in his examination of place in sociological analysis. His assertion that “people and groups organized into coalitions actively accomplish places” (p. 469) offers insight into the organization of the festival and its goal of strengthening place identity, but as he also recognizes, places are made “when ordinary people extract from continuous and abstract space a bounded, identified, meaningful, named and significant place” (p. 471). So while a “place” can be constructed through socio-political means, in this case in celebration of a shared cultural history in a festival, it is ascribed meaning by the individual actor based on their experience of it, in this case as part of their village community.

The annual S Festival brochure and promotional materials offer a strong sense of the construction of place identity. The evocation of the forest region as a place of natural beauty, ecological significance and historical tradition are all familiar themes from previous studies of rural community festivals. The natural and ecological elements are evident in a very high proportion of the art – mostly painting and some sculpture – exhibited at various festival sites, while there is a predominance among the exhibition sites themselves of historic, semi-restored agricultural buildings. Exhibitors and sellers display their artefacts and products amongst the worn and rusting agricultural tools hung and propped thoughtfully around these spaces in a cleverly curated experience. Many craft producers focus on the production of “traditional” artefacts, reflecting some of the major historic traditions and pre-occupations of the forest inhabitants, timber-craft, hunting, black-smithing and home-weaving. In addition many of the musical and poetry performances of the festival highlight the history and folk-culture of the region, as does the food menu on each site, with its emphasis on the staples and specialities of the forest workers of the past.

Latterly researchers such as Quinn (2003), and Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) have conceptualized festivals as “contested fields of meaning, in which different groups or stakeholders try to utilize the symbolic capital of the event for their own ends” (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007, p 292). These differing interpretations of a festival’s meaning amongst the groups involved in organizing it, often sit in tension with aims of engendering the groups’ identification with common cultural traditions. The aims of the S Festival, as represented in its official promotional material, are linked to the construction of a distinctive place-identity rooted in the region of forest in which it is enacted. This emphasizes the artistic connections and a heritage linked to the social history of the forest. However, particular organizing groups draw their meaning from the perspective of their own village community, and their routine practices reflect the social and emotional ties to their neighbours as much as, or perhaps more than an abstract sense of place.

In G village the volunteer group is committed to promoting this sense of place amongst its exhibitors and stallholders, in particular through the roster of stalls and activities which they are responsible for assembling. There are always a small number of craft exhibitors specialize in artefacts which signify the traditions and interests of the region, such as decorative wooden, elk-horn and black-smithed metal items, bark-woven storage boxes and hunting knives. The village has also hosted several artists over the three festival cycles observed, all of whom are landscape or wildlife painters tending to focus on forest scenes and animals.

However, despite their commitment to the S Festival theme, and the co-construction of a regional identity/tradition with its neighbouring villages, the G village group also seeks to assert their own independent community identity in a variety of ways. As has been stated, the organizing group which make up the permanent core of the volunteers are responsible for the roster of exhibitors and stalls. Like all the village festival planning groups they draw upon personal and business contacts to assemble the majority of these, and do so semi-autonomously. A core part of the delivery of the festival involves the running of a food stall and a loppis stall, and most villages have at least one of each. Each food servery has a fairly limited menu but the G village menu contains a fairly distinctive range of sausages and burgers— mainly elk and wild boar – associated with the hunting tradition. It is the only servery to offer such a range – most other food sites concentrate on reproducing the traditional forest workers fare, and several G group members have expressed pride in the positive feedback from visitors about both the distinctiveness and the quality of the menu. Consequently the positioning of the food servery bar is a key part of the site layout routine for G village

Festive sociability: symbols of renewal or resistance?

The liminal influence of the festival, symbolized in the suspension of everyday routines, particularly those associated with work, may be seen in the adoption of different forms of social behaviour and interaction amongst participants, which Costa (2001) termed “festive sociability”. The creative and playful elements of this notion, are emphasized as a core value of S Festival as evidenced in the front cover of the festival brochure with its strap-line celebrating the “art, photography, decorative crafts, music and food of (the region)”. It is an arts-based event comprising a range of exhibitions and performances across the region, particularly of folk-culture and place-related pieces.

In G village, liminality can be seen in the ways in which the group’s routine practices are conducted – at a leisurely pace and with considerable good humour. The organizing group meetings and all the group’s work periods in preparing and clearing the site are light-hearted affairs, each session interspersed with obligatory “fika” breaks for coffee, snacks and further friendly banter. During a meeting in 2010, the task of determining of food prices for display at the food servery bar was undertaken by two members who could not help provoking a mock debate about the relative merits of moose burgers (älburgare) and ordinary hamburgers in order to establish precisely how much price difference there should be between the two. The älburgare always sell out during the festival period, so there was some humorous speculation from the rest of the group about profiteering by the group members involved in the food servery.

The G village festival site layout is also constructed to maximize festive social interaction between villagers, stallholders and visitors, accompanied by food and drink prepared by the villagers. Visitors are welcomed into an al fresco food area flanked

on two sides by market-type stalls and sitting adjacent to a marquee housing a charity second-hand (loppis) sale. Many visitors take a break from their tour of the festival for something to drink or eat at the village, and feedback from several 2011 visitors indicated that this was a particularly valued aspect of it as a festival site.

There is some evidence then that the group's practices display a liminal form of "festive sociability", and is aware of the need to support this in the way in which the village site is organized and run. This liminal behaviour becomes integral to the cyclical pattern of community routines, bringing with it adaptation and new practices for the next phase of organizing. As Ekman (1999) notes the "revival of cultural celebrations in regional Sweden", incorporates some traditions are created more recently than others by "innovative thinking and development in local communities (with a) [...] combination of enthusiasts who have the courage to embark on new ventures and those who are aware of cultural heritage and local culture", for example, during the festival weekend itself, group members have adopted the wearing of plain black T-shirts printed with a humorous, self-mocking cartoon symbolizing the quiet nightlife/animal wildlife of the village.

However, some of these new practices may also be viewed from the Bakhtinian tradition of carnival, as subversive or resistant to the dominant cultural discourse of S Festival. One of the clearest examples of this is seen in the development, by two of the G village group's members, of an aligned social event for snow scooter enthusiasts, involving trick riding across a stretch of lake close to the village. This was "tagged on" to the roster of S Festival events on the closing afternoon for the first time in 2010, partly as a novelty entertainment and partly as the revival of a previous event organized by a former resident of the village. By 2011 it had become a paying spectator event which lasted well into the evening and was almost certainly the best attended performance of the festival period. The event is not formally part of the festival programme and could hardly be described as being in the spirit of the festival by drawing on social history or utilizing artistic modes of expression to evoke a sense of place. Indeed the noise shatters the relative tranquility of G village, and the crowd attending seem just as interested in drinking beer as watching the entertainment. However, there is no doubting the enthusiasm of a significant proportion of the younger population of the region for motor sports and particularly snowmobiles. Rates of ownership of snow scooters amongst the younger population of the region is very high and this event could be viewed a way of expressing their cultural commitment to one of the newer "traditions" referred to by Ekman (1999).

Conclusions

The intention of this paper, has been to contribute to the development of an understanding of organizing in the context of annually recurrent, community-based events such as the festival studied. What this paper suggests is that current temporal views of organizing based on routine practices offers limited insight beyond the contribution of individual practical experience in certain activities. The introduction of anthropological concepts such as ritual, liminality and carnival may add to our understanding of why and how routine (and non-routine) practices emerge in group organizing as part of a much broader set of cultural practices rooted in the symbolic construction of meaning.

The organizing practices discussed in this paper are basically a set of annual routines, adopted and performed by the group for the collaborative production of their festival. They accords with Feldman and Pentland's (2003) definition of "a repetitive,

recognizable pattern of interdependent actions, involving multiple actors” (p. 96). But in the emergent organizational setting of a community event, where “organic” processes of organizing are in evidence, there are a number of questions about where such activity patterns originate which influence how they are performed. Schatzki’s (2001) view is that new working routines emerge from the application of “practical intelligibility”, i.e. sense-making based on prior experience, to a new context, implies that practitioners bring their prior experiences of work routines and how they are organized, and creatively adapt them to contribute to the group’s work. The context of the group’s work – geographic, historical and socio-cultural – and the work experiences of the respective G village members all indicate a process of practical sense-making, particularly in the development of planning routines. The size of the group and their commitment to mutual welfare also indicate an interdependence borne of ongoing close coordination, but each individual member brings their own practical experience and sensibilities of the work. However, this still leaves a question about the extent to which the routines adopted symbolize the group’s purpose.

Douglas (1996) would view the activity patterns observed in the study as arising from the group’s striving for symbolic order. For her the basis of organization is the community’s desire for social order in a reality which is symbolically constructed. This is a particularly compelling argument given the evident ritual significance and symbolism of S Festival itself, and the changing socio-economic conditions impinging on the community which it signifies. From this view point the organizing behaviours and practices adopted by G village are an attempt to create a degree of stability rooted in the public ritual practices of the festival. Prior to this community rituals may have been based around past agricultural activities and religious practices, and in the late twentieth century the work-life routines of the dominant industrial employer. The decline of these may be associated with a search for new ritual practices. Producing the festival offers meaning to the group and its constituent community by enabling them to create, through their own work, a ritual performance with an associated set of such practices. So the routine “organizing practices” examined here may be seen not simply as experientially based templates for practical action, but as symbolic, communicative acts of ordering by the group.

The production of S Festival as a whole involves the generation and utilization of a variety of resources to symbolize the cultural cohesion of the region. All the constituent village community volunteer groups are clearly committed to the S Festival goal of the co-construction of a new “place identity”. However, the absence of an externally derived organizing structure or regulation of their practices offers flexibility in the interpretation of the festival ideal, which is displayed in the differing enactments of the festival at each participating site. Underlying this variety of performance, a set of stakeholder identities and interests linked to volunteer groups’ various attachments to their own village community is clearly evident. The influence of these “village identities” is strong in the organizing practices of each group, providing a variety of examples from the mundane, such as who regularly appears on the roster of stalls and activities, to the occasionally quite dramatic, such as the illicit addition of a new event. While remaining committed to S Festival’s aim of constructing and conveying a sense of cross-community tradition rooted in the region-place, groups also strive to maintain a distance from it. Indeed the tension between festival and group cultures is evident in several villages, where cultures of entrepreneurial individualism or artistic free expression vie with the festival’s place-identity message, and it plays out in the development of the organizing practices of each village group.

The organizing practices of the S Festival have, over time, become an intrinsic part of the routine life of the community. As Swidler (2001) has suggested they now constitute an aspect of community as well as allowing it the opportunity to symbolize its character. In the context of the very pronounced temporal cycle of community social interactions, it can be seen that the organizing practices of the festival now contribute to the underlying cultural and social development of the community. For the G organizing group the work of organizing is physically tiring, requires commitment of time and emotional engagement to each other, as well as to mutually agreed processes, reflecting the serious practical obligations of contributing to the community's survival as a social unit. The performance of the festival itself offers a brief liminal phase (Turner, 1969) in this cycle. The G village's own values of egalitarian inclusiveness, free-spirited exuberance and commitment to each other's welfare come through in this phase and are symbolized just as strongly as its connections to a more abstract place identity rooted in a broader social history. What this study suggests is that the G village group has established, through its festival performance and all the organizing which goes into it, its own meaningful, symbolic "text" of community life based on the broader cultural schema of the festival (Sewell, 1992). This text comprises corporate elements of S Festival such as traditional crafts and forest-themed art, as well as distinctive elements such as the food menu and more subversive "traditions" such as snow-scooter trick riding. The patterns of social interaction observed in the G group, as well as their site organization, also appear symbolic of both the liminal suspension of routine community interaction in favour of a more free-flowing and creative "festive sociability" (Costa, 2001), and the adoption of more subversive "carnavalesque" behaviours discussed by Bakhtin (1984) and of the members' ongoing community identities and relationships. The implication of this is that organizing may not be such a routine practice in this setting after all. The combination of liminal and carnival influences indicates that renewal and resistance are just as much a part of organizing practices as consistency and conformity.

As has already been stated, the outcomes of the study set out in this paper indicate that, in the context of recurring, group-organized events, a more detailed consideration of the practices of ritual symbolism (Douglas, 1996), and the concepts of liminality (Turner, 1969) and carnival (Bakhtin, 1984) offer a useful addition to our understanding of temporal patterns of organizing in combination with recent work on routines (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Dionysiou and Tsoukas, 2013). It is intended that this use of anthropological themes of temporal organizing provides a contribution to the development of theories of organizing and supports future ethnographic research work in the areas of community and event organization.

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