Chapter 24
Crank It to Eleven:
Music Festivals Breathe New Life into Cities

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ABSTRACT

Music festivals' popularity has exploded, boosting revenues for host cities, artists, businesses, and a struggling recording industry. They also provide an environment very conducive for community development, for both locals and visitors alike. This research attempts to fill a literature gap by building on urban policy and arts policy theories to show how music festivals and music, in general, fit into the academic public administration discourse. These festivals have the potential to increase host cities' residents' quality of life and allow residents and visitors alike to experience new culture and showcase their own. However, a city that considers hosting a music festival cannot dive into the situation without careful considerations of significant challenges others have faced. Given these significant implications for cities for the better or worse, public administration scholars should examine this topic carefully and continue to monitor the new information about these festivals as it develops.

INTRODUCTION

Peaceful city parks known for people playing Frisbee and rural farms with a few grazing cattle are about to be radically transformed. Outdoor music festivals are coming. In one location, a thrash metal band's angry and shouted lyrics, shredded guitars, and double-bass drums practically deafen a crowd in the thousands who scream, flash the sign of the goat, slam into one another in mosh pits, and crowd surf. Elsewhere, a superstar rapper spits aggressive rhymes while another massive crowd pumps their fists in the air. In another location, a DJ spins electronic music as people wearing neon and flashing glow sticks jump and wave their hands way above their heads. Then, yet another crowd thrilled to see a legendary rock band together since they were teenagers just happily sing along off-key to one of their favorite songs.

These scenes may cause a person unfamiliar with outdoor music festivals to be frightened of them or ridicule them. However, scholars in public administration should examine music festivals with a very sharp lens. The festivals' impacts go beyond giving those who attend them the thrill of seeing their fa-

vorite artists live and the adrenaline rush of being in a concert pit. Festival economic impacts can bring in literally hundreds of millions of dollars (McGovern, 2012), and host cities' public and private sectors have benefitted — some, significantly — from the increased tax revenues and business income. The benefits go beyond monetary ones, though, in that they become casual, free-spirited public gathering spaces where citizens bond with one another (Hawkins & Ryan, 2013; Oldenburg, 1999). Such spaces and the music in them are seen as being major components of a healthy and desirable urban environment (Oakes &Warnaby, 2011; Oldenburg, 1999; Timberg, 2015).

While evidence supporting a serious benefit of music festivals does exist, scholars must still answer pertinent research questions, namely what it takes to create the very necessary citizen buy-in for a major undertaking like a music festival, how and to what extent local government is involved, what the benefits and risks are for host cities, and how any risks can be mitigated. The author of this work seeks to contribute to the literature by answering these questions and adding to the growing body of work in arts and cultural policy, particularly in describing policy issues unique to music that are not a factor with other art forms. To answer these questions and with the large literature gap in mind, I will be using descriptive cases with information largely pulled from journalistic sources.

The first section of this paper will review the relevant literature, which will center around Ray Oldenburg's "Third Places" (1999) and the need to have casual and free-spirited public gathering spaces. Such environments can be critical in building civic engagement. The review will then identify the literature gap of music largely being absent from even the arts and cultural policy discourse. The second is an overview of large-scale music festivals in the United States, in regards to their popularity, revenue, and how they have become attractive for fans, musicians, and local governments. The following section is a typology of music festivals, with emphasis on who controls them and what they offer for both cities and fans. The fourth section provides information as to how some music festivals can be ones that showcase a city and its citizens, reflecting their unique culture and history. After that, I will discuss challenges and controversies that have hurt festivals, host cities' citizens, and host cities' governments alike. The section after that will detail how cities can and have remedied these situations. Then, I will discuss my findings in the terms of the existing literature and provide general recommendations, as well as guidelines for future research.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Twenty years ago, the arts' role in public discourse was traditionally reserved to the First Amendment arena. Now, the arts are getting attention from scholars outside fine arts fields, particularly those in public administration. When examining the role of music festivals and their role in civic engagement as opposed to economic development, the urban studies field provides a very appropriate lens. Strong social ties to place are linked to the concept of "third places" (Oldenburg, 1999). "Third places" is a major theoretical concept that arises when examining how live music venues can contribute to community development and to creating a healthy urban environment.

Oldenburg writes about "third places" (places away from home or work) and their importance in our society (1999). These are casual places where people are on equal social footing. He writes that these places are where people often go to learn about their communities and do more "in behalf of community, public conversation, and civicism" (1999). He points to third places as a cornerstone of urban life and neighborhood development. Bars, as well as cafes, bookstores, hair salons, and other hangouts fit

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