



Burning Man and Transformational Event Cultures

A 2-day symposium at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, Nov 29–30, 2018.

This event is hosted by the University of Fribourg, the home of Burning Progeny, a four-year multi-sited study of the European adaptation of Burning Man and its ethos. With non-exclusive attention to Burning Man and its movement, the symposium is intended to explore the wide parameters of transformational event cultures.

Over its three-decades of operation Burning Man became the prototypical transformational event culture. Originating as a small effigy burn on San Francisco's Baker Beach in 1986, Burning Man evolved into a temporary city rebuilt annually in Nevada's Black Rock Desert (with a 2017 population of approx. 80,000), before becoming a global movement with dozens of Regional Events worldwide. Through the actions of community leaders within its transnational diaspora, and actively cultivated by the Burning Man Project, the ethos of Burning Man has been transposed within events now held in over thirty countries.

As a forum for the exploration of a variety of perspectives on Burning Man and other event cultures, this symposium host scholars and practitioners discussing the social, cultural, religious, economic and political dimensions of eventculture movements.

The symposium is supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation, in collaboration with the University of Fribourg, the Swiss Society for the Study of Religion, and Aalto University School of Business. The event is produced by a team consisting of Prof Francois Gauthier, Dr. Graham St John, and Dr. Botond Vitos, from the Dept. of Social Science, University of Fribourg.



Sessions, Abstracts and Biographies

The Cacophonous Roots of Burning Man

Thu 10.30–11.15

Presenter: *Stuart Mangrum (Director of Education, Burning Man Project)*

Biography: Burning since 1993, Stuart helped produce Black Rock City's first newspaper, radio station, and live webcast, and was an organizer of one of its first theme camps. In 2013 he rejoined the Burning Man Project to focus on community learning and leadership development. He has co-authored the last seven annual event art themes.

Abstract: Stuart's talk will explore the evolution of Burning Man through the lens of its cultural antecedents, and trace the lineage of key elements of today's global movement to the individuals and groups who first brought the Man to the Nevada desert. The 10 Principles were based not on the utopian ideals of a single visionary but written after 18 years of thoughtful observation of the community and its behaviors. So who were those early Burners and why were they behaving that way? What were their influences, and what cultural values did they bring with them to the middle of nowhere? Unraveling the answers begins with a close look at San Francisco in the 1990s, where the Cacophony Society formed the nexus of a thriving underground milieu devoted to the pursuit of experiences "beyond the pale of mainstream society."

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Regional Burning Man Culture and Transformation

Thu 11.15–12.30

Chair: *Megan Miller (Director of Communications, Burning Man Project)*

Biography: As Director of Communications of the nonprofit Burning Man Project, Megan oversees media and public relations for the organizational hub of the growing global phenomenon that is Burning Man. Megan helps to set priorities for the organization and shape the perception of Burning Man in the public eye.

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Bloom: Burning Man Inspired Communities in Switzerland and How Burner Culture Can Transform Trauma into Growth

Nic Laz (Suisse Romande Burners)

Biography: Having been co-creating Burning Man inspired events on four continents since 2012, Nic Laz is an Artist, Camp Lead, Gate Lead, Builder, Counselor, and Prankster. A polymath based out of Geneva, active in the pan-European community and the European Leadership Summits, with an academic background Social Psychology and Military Psychiatry.

Abstract: A two part presentation, showcasing Burning Man and the culture it has inspired throughout Switzerland, and a personal meditation on its power to transform trauma into growth. Starting with a brief overview of our cross-Cantonal community from 2010 till now including a summary of the events, diverse communities, and associated projects created within this blooming Confederation. This presentation will then lead into a psychosocial meditation on how the art and culture of Burning Man can be a catalyst for the transformation of trauma into growth. Drawing from the speaker's experience as a participant, artist, and trauma survivor this meditation will touch on the impact of the event and community with a Post Traumatic Growth theory understanding of grief and trauma transformation.

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Identity & Transformation in Regional Burning Man Communities: Contrasting the Chinese Case.

Judith Schossböck (Media and Communication, City University, Hong Kong)

Biography: Judith Schossböck is a HK PhD Fellow at the Department of Media and Communication at City University Hong Kong and affiliated researcher at Danube University Krems, Austria. She is managing editor of the open access e-journal JeDEM.org, scientific co-director of the symposium paraflows.at, and loves participatory-, sub-, and alternative cultures.

Abstract: This paper describes the production of locality in the context of a global(ized) cultural phenomenon: the regional variants of Burning Man from a comparative perspective. On the basis of semi-structured interviews with community-leads in different responsibilities of regional Burning Man events in Europe and Asia (specifically the Chinese region), regional characteristics will be described with view to three events in China: Dragon Burn, Nanjing Decompression and Burner fundraising events in Shanghai. The author describes the expression of a local culture with view to self-identification and the transformational experience as self-reported by community-leads and compares and contrasts these findings to the European case. Results showcase the transformative potential for the individual embedded in the specific locality and social morphology of the Chinese regional community.

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Midburn and Rapid Growth

Iris Ronly Riklis (VP Strategy & Development at Midburn)

Biography: BA in Theatre from Tel Aviv University, MA in Arts Management, City University, London. Professional Director of Arts Management Program in Lahav Executive Education, Collier School of Management. Iris has vast operating experience in large scale international production and bookings, project management and artistic consulting. Lives in Tel Aviv and addicted to Pilates.

Abstract: Midburn is a young regional event, young and fresh. It started as a 2400 participants event and in 6 years grew to be the second largest regional in the world with 12,000 participants and almost 3000 volunteers. The rumor was out that something good is happening in the Israeli desert, community, creation, inspiration, joy... more and more people wanted to take part, the tickets demand exceeded supply and a non for profit association was formed. However, what price do we pay for such a rapid growth? How can we embed the culture and roots without losing our unique identity? What impact do we create? Midburn had faced challenges from its first event and still does. It also celebrates successes, cultural and communal development. It is a very involved vivid, creative and verbal community in a country full of challenges. So, where should we go from here?

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Radicals, Regionals & Rhizomes: Towards a Transformational Geography of Burning Man

Thu 2.00-2.30

Presenter: *Ian Rowen (Geography, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)*

Biography: Ian Rowen is Assistant Professor of Geography and Urban Planning at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and a Fellow at the World Economic Forum serving on the Global Future Council for Agile Governance. He served as the Burning Man Regional Contact for China and Taiwan between 2004 and 2016, and is currently a Meta-Regionals Representative (International).

Abstract: Burning Man has always been difficult to describe and direct. 'That Thing in the Desert' may still be the most precise term ever applied to Black Rock City. With the mushrooming of regional events across the globe, 'That Thing' has mutated and multiplied beyond its Black Rock bounds. The metaphors of 'region' and 'network' are a vital part of Burning Man's past and present. However, manifestations of

Burning Man are now everywhere, whether or not they receive official legitimation as parts of the 'Regional Network'. While still salient, the spatial imaginaries of 'region' and 'network' deserve augmentation to account for the complexity of the present. This paper, based on long-term participant-observation, thinks of, with, and for Burning Man towards a transformational geography beyond regions and networks. Drawing conceptual inspiration from assemblage thinking, it presents the 'global rhizome' as an analytic for apprehending the emergent topology of a globalizing Burning Man. This radical reconceptualization aims both to stimulate scholarship and inform the theory and practice of event participants and community members.

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The Spirit of Burning Man

Thu 2.30–4.00

Chair: *Assoc. Prof. Katherine Chen (Sociology, CCNY)*

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Altars to Ashes: Transfiguration & the Material Culture of Grief at Burning Man

Dr. Sarah Pike (Comparative Religion and Humanities, CSU Chico)

Biography: Dr. Sarah M. Pike is Professor and Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities at California State University, Chico. She has written numerous books and articles on contemporary Paganism, ritual, the Burning Man festival, spiritual dance, environmentalism, and youth culture. Her latest book is *For the Wild: Ritual and Commitment in Radical Eco-Activism* (2017).

Abstract: Drawing on seventeen years of research at Burning Man's temples, this paper explores the ways in which matter and emotion are transformed and reformed through sensual bodily experience and ritualization. The new materialism of Jane Bennett and others that challenge our assumptions about the relationships between humans and nonhuman substances like dust and ashes shape my interpretation of Burners' experiences at the Temple. Attending to transfiguration and material culture at the Temple furthers our understanding of the ways in which participants experience Burning Man as both an extraordinary place apart from ordinary life and in continuity with the vibrant things that make up the world in and outside of the event's boundaries.

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Box Braids, Buddhist Altars, and Native Headdresses: Radical Self Expression vs. Cultural Property at Burning Man

Assoc. Prof. Amanda Lucia (Religious Studies, UC Riverside)

Biography: Amanda LUCIA (MA, PhD, University of Chicago), Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of California-Riverside. Her research engages ethnicity and gender in transnational Hinduism. She has published numerous articles and *Reflections of Amma: Devotees in a Global Embrace* (2014). Her current project focuses on appropriations of Indic religions in festival cultures.

Abstract: In globalization, cultures abut rapidly and religions and ethnicities blend and hybridize. However, the imbalanced power relations between cultures and ethnicities have also created controversies over cultural property rights. Critics of "cultural appropriation" attempt to restrict access to cultural and religious forms and expressions to their source cultures. Burning Man is a social microcosm in which cultural appropriation clashes with the community's commitment to radical self-expression. Such clashes are compounded by the predominant whiteness of the festival. This paper analyzes Burning Man's principle of radical self-expression as it stands in conflict with contemporary debates around cultural property. It questions the extent to which Burning Man can and should operate as a utopian environment, distanced from and immune to social forms of ethnic, cultural, and religious conflict.

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Burning Spirits: Gift, Play & Ritual

Prof. Francois Gauthier (Social Science, Université de Fribourg)

Biography: François Gauthier is Professor at the Social Sciences Department of the Université de Fribourg. Quebec-born, he bridges between an ethnographic approach to alternative event-cultures such as Burning Man and the analytical heights of thinking global religious and political changes in modernity. Main research themes are the gift, consumerism and neoliberalism.

Abstract: This paper investigates some of the religious (some would say “spiritual”) dimensions of Burning Man from the perspective of an anthropology of the gift. While the gift principle and its corresponding ethos is arguably a structurally determining feature of Black Rock City, it has paradoxically been neglected as such in the literature. I argue that the gift allows for fresh and heuristic insights into the religious as well as political dimensions of Burning Man. Connecting gift theory with that of play, it is possible to sketch two ideal-types of religion: a more archaic, spirit-type of religion, corresponding to tribal and shamanic cultures, which play, and God-religions, corresponding to stratified and State-led societies which do not play, but rather ritualize according to defined scripts and fixed meanings. Giving substance to the claims that it operates a “beyond belief” and “radical ritual” type of religiosity/spirituality that values experience over dogma and ascribed meanings, this approach shows how the gifting and playing ethos situates BM at the forefront of a wider cultural shift from God-religion back to spirit-religion in post-industrial late modernity.

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Burning Research

Thu 4.30-6.00

Chair: *Josh Lease (Burning Man Project)*

Biography: A member of the nonprofit programming team at Burning Man, Josh is responsible for managing the development of new program offerings, collaborations, impact measurement, and grant processes. With a Masters in International Policy and a BA in Foreign Language, Josh previously held positions with the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program, Tostan, and the World Affairs Council. Josh's first year on playa was 2013 when he was lured by the idea of skydiving over Black Rock City. Josh joined the Burning Man HQ staff in 2014.

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Artopia: Art, Drama & Redress in Burner Culture

Dr. Graham St John (Social Science, Université de Fribourg)

Biography: Graham St John, PhD, is a cultural anthropologist specialising in event-cultural movements. He is Senior Research Fellow on the project Burning Progeny: The European Efflorescence of Burning Man, in Dept Social Science, University of Fribourg. He is the author/editor of eight books and Executive Editor of *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*.

Abstract: The presentation will explore how the culture of Burning Man evolves and mutates at home and abroad. It will address the way its principles have been challenged in recent times, and the artful means arising to redress the discord. How the “sherpagate” controversy of recent years highlights the tension between artists and tourists (insiders and outsiders) in Black Rock City and regional events is given specific attention. I turn to Victor Turner’s “social drama” to help explain this process and explore how an artistic heterotopia — an *artopia*? — enables the dissolution of complex differences in-situ. Various art projects demonstrate that collaborative and interactive art is the redressive weapon in the Burner arsenal.

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Burning Stories: A Shared Platform Combining Science & Arts

Dr. Jukka-Pekka Heikkilä (School of Business, Aalto University)

Biography: Dr. Jukka-Pekka Heikkilä from Aalto University School of Business, Finland, focuses on entrepreneurship and creative organisations in extreme settings. In regards of Burning Man community, he was as the lead in Space on Fire project and now focusing on Burning Stories research project. Jukka-Pekka is a Fellow of Royal Society (UK), a Fellow of British Academy, a Postdoctoral Fellow of Academy of Finland and a visiting scholar at Stanford University 2019.

Abstract: The presentation sheds light in the deep and unknown intersection of social sciences and arts by adopting a dual case study approach. The content of the presentation is based on the introduction of Aalto University's (Finland) core mission of radical discipline mixing between the schools of Arts and Design, Business, Chemical Engineering and Engineering. This is followed by the presentation of the Burning Stories research project's alignment to this mission. Through the application of these two cases, and with the global Burning Man community as the audience in mind, the talk seeks to answer how and via what kind of artistic means can the results of a "traditional" scientific investigation be disseminated to the wider international audience? How can art, in turn, support social science in the traditional (interviews, surveys) data collections, both on playa and off-playa? The presentation is concluded with a preliminary data illustrations from the Burning Stories project's 11/2019 data collection and ideas for future collaboration venues.

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Surveying a Movement

Fri 9.00-10.30

Chair: *Prof. François Gauthier (Social Science, Université de Fribourg)*

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Black Rock City Census: Research Methods & Ongoing Collaborations

Dana DeVaul (Census Manager, Burning Man Project)

Biography: Dana "DV8" DeVaul is a California native who has been volunteering with BRC since 2011. She spent several years as the team's Volunteer Coordinator, and stepped into the Manager role in early 2016. Before finding Burning Man and BRC Census she earned her B.A. in psychology and spent eight years working as a professional dog trainer, gaining experience in behavioral psychology, education, and clear communication. Later professional roles required an understanding of databases, data analysis, and data visualization, and she has continued to expand her understanding in these areas throughout her work with BRC Census.

Abstract: In 2013 BRC Census moved to an updated data collection process: in addition to a yearly post-event survey of the BRC population (aka the Census), the project now includes a shorter random sampling process during ingress to correct the post-event survey for non-response biases. Our results are used to produce a public report each year, and our data are used by the media, the Burning Man project, and academic researchers. Specialized reports are also produced in cooperation with academic collaborators and the Burning Man organization. We have also begun to help Regional teams adapt our survey methods to fit their data collection needs and event logistics. This session will present an overview of our method, a brief discussion of the types of data we collect, and a few examples of past and current research collaborations.

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From Burning Man to Transformational Festivals: Sexuality, Community & Experiences of Personal Transformation

Prof. Dominic Beaulieu-Prévost (Sexologie, Université du Québec)

Biography: Dominic Beaulieu-Prévost is a professor at the department of sexology of the Université du Québec à Montréal. He is also a burner since 2010 and an active member of the Black Rock City Census Lab since 2012, where he is mainly involved as the lead analyst and a research collaborator.

Abstract: Burning Man is a socially immersive artistic mass gathering that promotes a strong feeling of belonging and experiences of personal transformation. We investigated the diversity of social and intimate experiences of Burning Man participants, and the factors predicting safe sex practices in the context of that event. The study was based on data from the Black Rock City Census (N=19,512). Five profiles of social and intimate experiences were identified. Profiles with high levels of emotionally and physically intimate experiences were associated with strong feelings of belonging and a high proportion of personal transformation. Sexual risk taking was predicted by variables associated with one of three factors: (1) a lower level of preparation and practice in using protection, (2) sex education and/or subcultures, and (3) the perceived costs and benefits associated with protection. The results also indirectly suggest a positive effect of the event on safe sex.

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Midburn: Community Successes & Challenges in the First Five Years

Shawn Saleme (Burners Without Borders)

Biography: Shawn Saleme is from Silicon Valley and has been Burning since 2011. Through his years participating in the Burning Man community, he has lead several theme camps, built art installations, traveled to international regionals and worked for the Burning Man Project helping coordinate the Burners Without Borders program. A cultural anthropologist, Shawn is fascinated at the social experiment that is Burning Man and how it is transforming society today.

Abstract: This research explores the evolution and explosion of the Midburn community. In the years of its existence, it has grown from nothing to become the largest festival in Israel and the fastest growing Burning Man regional community. What were some of the successes and challenges in its growth? What has significantly changed? As someone who has participated as an "outsider" with the Midburn core community since 2014, I am attempting to examine the Midburn movement through a global burn culture lens, and to draw lessons that can serve as resources to future international Burner and/or festival communities. This data is primarily collected through a questionnaire, previous surveys and unstructured interviews. It will serve as a contribution to the ongoing community dialogue about the social experiment that is Midburn, the official Israeli regional burn and Burning Man as a transformative event that is leading what is now a global transformative culture.

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Surveying EuroBurners: Regionals, Values & Motivations

Dr. Botond Vitos (Social Science, Université de Fribourg)

Biography: Botond Vitos is a cultural anthropologist and research assistant on the Burning Progeny project at the University of Fribourg. His research interests include event-cultures, popular music studies, electronic dance music culture, the mediations of aesthetic experiences and the cultural meanings of drug use. He is part of the editorial team at *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*.

Abstract: The Burning Progeny project is a four-year collaborative multisited ethnography focused on the European adaptation of Burning Man, which also includes two mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) surveys conducted among Euroburners in 2014 and 2017. The presentation reports some of the findings from the qualitative survey components measuring Burner values, motivations and identifications. My starting inquiry is: why are the participants attending European Regionals; what do they gain from visiting these events? Relating to these questions, the second focus of the presentation is on the way Burner values may ignite changes in the way of life of the respondents and lead to the transposition of the Ten Principles into daily life.

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Euro-Burners

Fri 11.00–12.00

Chair: *Meghan Rutigliano (Regional Network Associate Director, Burning Man Project)*

Biography: Meghan “Megs” Rutigliano leads Burning Man’s Global Network Program. She has produced 16 conferences for the Burning Man Project including 10 annual Global Leadership Conferences (GLCs) and 6 European Leadership Summits (ELs) and is currently in production for an ELs to be hosted in Aarhus, Denmark in April 2019. She manages a network of over 300 Regional Contacts in 40 countries.

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From Event Production to Year Round Movement

Mathias Gullbrandson (Borderland)

Biography: Mathias loves co-creation and participatory cultures. He has grown up with roleplaying games and co-created 2002 his first burn-a-like event Futuredrome. In 2010 Mathias took the initiative to The Borderland, that has become a Scandinavian regional burn with 2500 co-creators by 2018. His is also an entrepreneur with extensive experience from service design, game development and film production. Worth mention is the award-winning computer game *Brothers: a Tale of Two Sons*, Story Lab (sold to Dentsu Aegis) and Dreamler, a digital platform to organize and run management initiatives built as a multiplayer game.

Abstract: The major festival in the Nordic burner community has since 2010 been The Borderland, that has grown from 12 co-creators into 2500 co-creators 2018. The Borderland is a playground between realities and dreams, where we co-create prototypes of our dreams. The Borderland idea has grown with inspiration from both Burning Man and Live Action Role Playing games, where the event Futuredrome (2002) was an important first merge. Burning dinners, smaller festivals such as After Glow and The Garden of Burning Delights, permanent spaces such as Noden and Illutron have offered the community year around activities. More and more members want to move from just building dream prototype into building something more stable for living. Recently new initiatives have been taken by community members to rent larger year around spaces, build houses, buy land and properties, and create digital platforms to support a growing year around movement. With this move arise new opportunities, but also challenges such as ownership, economy, organisation and how to apply our values and 10 principles to these new circumstances.

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Radical Networks: What do online communities and the ancient Silk Road have in common?

Hugi Ásgeirsson (Dreams Platform)

Biography: Hugi Asgeirsson creates software tools and methods for creative and decentralized communities and leads projects in social innovation and community building. He is on the board of The Borderland, co-founder of Urban Burn, Director of Edgeryders Participio development lab and Edgeryders Nordic unit.

Abstract: Why does the playa provide? And how do we foster year-around communities online that provide that same abundance? In developing the Borderland community, we've built online tools that help us create denser networks, allowing for empowered community members and decentralized decision making. In my work with Edgeryders, I've drawn upon network theory and the history of the Silk Road networks to understand and guide this process of building strong online/offline communities. In my talk, I'll give a summary of what I've found, introduce tools and results from the Borderland and give a peek into how this work is shaping the new Edgeryders Participio development lab for decentralized organizations and participatory culture in 2019, seed funded by the Swedish Arts Grants Committee.

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Festivals, Culture & Transformation

Fri 1.30–3.00

Chair: *Dr. Graham St John (Social Science, Université de Fribourg)*

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Entering the Realm of Avalon at Whirl-y-Fayre: Myth, Magick & the Micro Festival

Prof. Alice O'Grady (Performance Studies, University of Leeds)

Biography: Alice O'Grady is Professor in Applied Performance and Head of the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of Leeds. Her research is concerned with open forms of participation, play and performance within a range of contexts, including festival and club cultures. Her latest book, *Risk, Participation and Performance Practice: critical vulnerabilities in a precarious world*, was published by Palgrave in 2017. She is a long standing member of the *Dancecult* editorial team.

Abstract: Starting out in 1981 in collaboration with the Association of Humanistic Psychology, Whirl-y-Gig is London's longest running night club. With a deep commitment to the principles of transformational dance it has more recently branched out and established itself as one of the best small events in the UK's festival calendar. Whirl-y-Fayre takes place each summer in the Vale of Avalon, a place deeply imbued with myth and magick and home to Glastonbury Tor in the sacred realm of Avalon. With a capacity of 499 the event is intensely intimate and, by virtue of its size, echoes the micro-festival movement of contemporary theatre which asks important questions about the nature and function of participation, spectatorship and relational aesthetics. Bringing Whirl-y-Fayre to life in pictures, film and story, this paper will explore the significance of site and scale in relation to festival participation and transformative practice.

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Festival Places: Ephemerality, Continuity & a Sense of Place

Dr. Chris Anderton (Media, Arts, Technology, Southampton Solent University)

Biography: Dr Chris Anderton is a music industry researcher at Solent University, UK, who recently published the book *Music Festivals in the UK* and is co-author of the book *Understanding the Music Industries*. He established Solent Music (solentmusic.com) in 2011 and is co-executive producer of Solent's annual SMILEfest event (smilefest.co.uk).

Abstract: Music festivals may become intimately associated with the locations which host them. For a few days each year, these sites take on a life of their own, with their own accommodation, entertainments, social experience, retail opportunities and policing. They form temporary villages or towns that are constructed and annually re-constructed in their own image by festival organizers and attendees, and increasingly mediated through traditional and online media by organizers, sponsors, broadcasters and festivalgoers. Drawing primarily on British examples and theoretical developments presented in *Music Festivals in the UK. Beyond the Carnavalesque* (Anderton, 2019), this presentation examines the spaces and places of such events in terms of their ephemerality and continuity, and of the distinctions made by cultural geographers between space and place. It also introduces the new concepts of 'cyclic place' and 'meta-sociality' which emerged from the research and, it is argued, can be applied to a wide range of outdoor festivals.

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Muddying the British Pop Festival: Dirt, Mud, Landscape, Criticality

Prof. George McKay (Media Studies, University of East Anglia)

Biography: George McKay is Professor of Media Studies at the University of East Anglia, UK, and Arts and Humanities Research Council Leadership Fellow for its Connected Communities Programme (2012-19). His research interests are in popular music from jazz to punk, festivals, alternative culture and media, social movements and cultural politics.

Abstract: At Stonehenge Free Festival on the 1984 summer solstice there were numerous ceremonies taking place, drumming, chillums, I remember horses, a pagan priest looked up to the skies and commanded the clouds to clear—and, to massive cheers and laughter from all, they really did, and we felt the sun. Or, we felt that ‘the sun machine is coming down, and we’re gonna have a party’, as David Bowie sang in his ‘Memory of a free festival’. That same elder then circulated through the crowd, bearing a pint beer mug containing thick watery earth from inside the stones (thus, magick). He dipped his finger in and dabbed it on people’s foreheads, like tilak or bindi, a West Country exoticism. He did it to me; I was blessed by Stonehenge mud, in Orwell’s year in England, as we tried to make a different world while police helicopters buzzed overhead. That dot of festival mud has stayed with me. I mentioned it in my first book, from 1996—that is, for some reason I considered it worth writing about in my very first major piece of public text. It is part of my criticality and, indeed, my theoretical and political positionality. Is it possible to say that mud made my theory? (Is there, as Dona Haraway has argued, ‘theory in the mud’?) That fingerprint of Stonehenge earth, fixed on the casing of my thought, carelessly wiped away by sweaty hand, a temporary tattoo that never goes. I was marked, it was my confirmation. From this perspective, my festival experience was more “transformation” [than] “temporary escape” (Hitchings et al 2018). What follows are further thoughts, hopefully not in a muddle.

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Moral Change at Transformational Events

Dr. Daniel Yudkin (Psychology, Yale University)

Biography: Daniel Yudkin is a postdoctoral researcher in the Psychology Department at Yale and the Associate Director of Research at More in Common. He received his PhD in social psychology at New York University, was a Fellow at Harvard University, and has been a contributing writer to the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Scientific American*.

Abstract: While transformative events can produce experiences of profound personal significance, the psychological mechanisms underlying these experiences, and their consequences for moral attitudes and behavior, remain unknown. I present the results of a longitudinal experiment involving 1,305 onsite and 10,568 online participants examining the effects of attending one of six “transformational festivals” in the US and UK. Using a variety of newly developed empirical methods, my colleagues and I observed significant changes in a range of attitudinal and behavioral measures, including social inclusivity, moral evaluation, connectedness to others, and generosity. So-called “gift economies” (i.e. those barring the use of money) are associated with a particularly significant increase sensitivity to the “warm glow” of prosocial behavior. Follow-up studies in the weeks, months, and years after attendance demonstrated the persistence of certain changes over time. Overall, these data provide a clearer picture of moral change at transformational events.

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Stop Thinking and Burn Already: Action & Creative Tension as the Foundations of Burning Man Culture

Fri 3.00–4.00

Caveat Magister (Philosophical Center, Burning Man Project)

Biography: A member of the Burning Man Project's Philosophical Center, Caveat worked closely with Larry Harvey and served as the lead writer for Burning Man's education program. He is the author of a forthcoming book on the philosophy of Burning Man, to be published in the spring of 2019.

with Molly Rose (Program Coordinator, Burners Without Borders)

Biography: Molly Rose first touched down on playa in 2010. She supports the volunteer-driven community leadership work of BWB, unlocking the innate skills of local communities to solve problems that bring about meaningful change. Before joining Burning Man, Molly worked as Program Director of Clowns Without Borders USA.

and Steven Ra\$pa (Community Events Associate Director, Burning Man Project)

Biography: Steven Ra\$pa is Burning Man's Associate Director of Community Events. He is an artist and producer, community organizer and international speaker on the arts and urban planning. As a founding member of the Burning Man Regional Network Committee, he supports Burner communities and official Regional Events around the world. He has 20+ years of experience supporting this growing, and globally dispersed community of artists and freethinkers.

Abstract: Why is it that Burning Man and its participants seem to be able to find compelling responses to problems, individually and collectively, that the world struggles with? This presentation suggests that it's because of a combination of factors basic to Burning Man that, when combined, create a fundamentally different approach to both culture and problem solving. This enables us to achieve what would otherwise be improbable results, only beginning with 75,000 people volunteering to co-create a temporary city in the desert.

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Burning Man in the World

Fri 4.30–5.30

Chair: *Dr. Jukka Pekka Heikkilä (School of Business, Aalto University)*

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Makerspace Magic: The DIY Surge of New City Economic, Social & Environmental Progress

Cheryl Edison (CEO/Founder, Edison International)

Biography: Cheryl Edison drives socially responsible emerging trends to sustainable business models. Quoted by CNN, New York Times & NPR, her global GTM strategies have launched products & services across 47 industries on 5 continents. Entrepreneurs, corporations and governments deploy Edison's methodologies to transform large-scale industrial properties into purposeful new cities.

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Abstract: What happens when the walls of the industrial revolution and the mammoth steel of the factories no longer serve their intended purpose? When the whir and clank of turbines is silenced by the ricocheting whispers of zeros and ones? These are the mundane questions that form the backdrop of our continued advancement away from colonialism, wherein success is measured in the losses of others conquered through us/them, right/wrong, win/lose business models, and our steady advance towards share-economy sustainability, hive-mind thought and self-government. Barcelona, Brexit, Burning Man. It's not just the bees. We are being drawn evermore towards and away from one another through technological advancements, murmurings of interdependence and dependence to create the new cities where selfhood and belonging merge. Blockchain and 'bots. Play that is work. In the repurposing and upcycling we are choosing to build Happy Cities. Purposeful places where we can

thrive. None of these patterns are new. As history has shown at every turn, this is our way: First the products, then the services, all the while tinkering with life as it ever was. Disbelief is phase one. The internet of things? In orbit, the cloud floats below us, even the land and sea borders blur. I'll meet you there.

Burning Man in the Default World? Learning Communities at Burning Man & a Democratic School

Assoc. Prof. Katherine Chen (Sociology, CCNY)

Biography: Katherine K. Chen is an organizational researcher; her ethnographic studies includes her award-winning book, *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event*. She is associate professor in sociology at The City College of New York and the Graduate Center, the City University of New York.

Abstract: What could Burning Man's principles and practices look like in the default world? I compare the activities of two learning communities using (1) on-going participant-observations and observations of the activities of Agile Learning Center (ALC), a small, democratic school, and (2) participant-observations, observations, interviews, and archival research collected between 1998 through 2001, with follow-up research through 2012, of the organization behind the annual Burning Man event. This talk focuses on how prefigurative organizing practices can enable members to realize their individual and collective interests while also interrogating potential inequalities generated by organizational processes. Burning Man leaders used pre-meeting conversations to expand decision-making by consensus and also emphasized members' taking action through "do-ocracy." Similarly, ALC augmented democratic processes by encouraging routinized, reflexive experimentation during deliberation and everyday activities. Through such democratic practices, members of both communities not only learn how to exercise voice, but also to productively pursue individual and collective interests.

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Burning Man, FIGMENT & the Regionals: Inside, Outside & Out There

David Koren (Founder, FIGMENT Project)

Biography: David Koren is the founder and executive producer of FIGMENT, a free large-scale volunteer-led participatory arts event, based on Burning Man principles. FIGMENT started in NYC in 2007, and has since spread to other cities. FIGMENT has taken place 69 times in 20 cities in 5 countries on 4 continents.

Abstract: Burning Man is at the center of a global network of creative communities in cities around the world. In each community, a creative ecosystem forms through the events that local creators and organizations produce. A small number of these events are directly related to Burning Man, and are official "regional" events. The vast majority of events in each local ecosystem are not related to or affiliated with Burning Man. These may include art and music festivals, gatherings, celebrations, etc. The greatest impact of our global creative network is in the people we engage and empower through these unaffiliated events. One example of an unaffiliated but conceptually related organization is FIGMENT, which creates free local participatory arts events in cities around the world, inviting the people in our cities to engage, create, and share. FIGMENT has taken place 69 times in 20 cities in 5 countries over the past 12 years.

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Closing

Fri 5.30-6.00

with Marian Goodell (CEO, Burning Man Project)

Biography: Marian leads the nonprofit Burning Man Project's efforts to extend the Burning Man ethos globally. Marian oversees the organization's employees and budget, and provides strategic direction and leadership to a network of nearly 300 ambassadors in 44 states in the US and 36 countries. Marian first attended Burning Man in 1995 and has held leadership roles since the organization was created in 1997.