

Imagining the City of Festivals:  
Festivalization and Urban Space in Montréal

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Résumé .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1	
Spectacular Tensions: Festivals and Festivalization in Academic Literature .....	9
Chapter 2	
Image and Imaginary: The Evolution of Montréal's Festival Landscape .....	39
Chapter 3	
Reminders, Residues, and Blurred Boundaries:	
The Presence of Festivals in Montréal's Everyday Urban Life .....	72
Conclusion .....	101
References .....	105

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the concept of festivalization as it applies to the situation in Montréal, with particular attention to the domain of everyday life. As cities around the world find themselves pressed to respond to economic troubles by developing continuous events, festivals, and other cultural tourism attractions, scholarly examinations have begun to address this phenomenon as “festivalization.” However, many studies tend to view contemporary urban festivals as mostly overcommercialized, spectacular, and inauthentic, and by extension festivalization as an erosion of a pre-existing everyday life. In response, I argue for the importance of understanding the ways in which festivals participate in and continually construct everyday urban life, constituting an everyday dimension of festivalization. Examining the development of Montréal’s festival landscape, particularly official administrative and policy-based articulations of its urban imaginary as the “City of Festivals,” demonstrates the thoroughgoing influence of festivals upon the development of Montréal as a material and immaterial construct. Meanwhile, the placement of festival advertising and materials such as programs and posters, festivals’ use of everyday vocabularies of routine movement around the city, and the simultaneous demarcation and destabilization of festival territory through banners, signs, and digital technologies trouble the notion of festivals as separate from or corrosive of everyday life. In Montréal, festivalization involves an oscillation between the imaginary of a City of Festivals and an enduring hum of the festival fact in the city’s circulatory flows, a movement through which festivals are implicated in local conditions and terrains of negotiation. Festivalization, I suggest, might be best understood in Montréal’s case as the fact of ongoing change, imbrication, mediation, and modulation between the festival and the city such that, rather than one displacing or eroding the other, both are changed.

## Résumé

Ce mémoire porte sur le concept de la « festivalization » tel qu'il s'applique à la situation de Montréal, en se concentrant sur le domaine de la vie quotidienne. Au moment où les villes à travers le monde sont contraintes de répondre aux pressions économiques par le développement continu d'événements, de festivals, et d'autres attractions de tourisme culturel, les études académiques ont commencé à aborder ce phénomène en utilisant le terme « festivalization ». Cependant, de nombreuses études tendent à considérer que les festivals urbains contemporains sont généralement hypercommercialisés, spectaculaires, et inauthentiques, et par extension la festivalization est considérée comme l'érosion d'une vie quotidienne qui existait avant ce processus. En réponse, je vise à souligner l'importance de comprendre les façons dont les festivals participent à et, d'une manière continue, construisent la vie quotidienne urbaine, ce qui constitue une dimension quotidienne de la festivalization. Une analyse du développement du paysage des festivals de Montréal—en particulier les articulations officielles et administratives, et ceux qui reposent sur les politiques urbaines, de l'imaginaire urbain de Montréal en tant que « Ville de festivals »—démontre l'influence profonde de festivals sur le développement de Montréal comme une construction matérielle et immatérielle. De plus, la localisation de publicité de festivals et celle des matériaux tels que les programmes et les affiches, l'utilisation de vocabulaires quotidiens qui régissent le mouvement de la routine urbaine, et les actions simultanées de déstabilisation et délimitation du territoire festif à travers des bannières, des enseignes, et des technologies numériques contestent la notion de festivals comme séparés de, ou même corrosifs, de la vie quotidienne. À Montréal, la festivalization implique une oscillation entre l'imaginaire d'une « Ville de festivals » et un bourdonnement constant du fait du festival dans les flux circulatoires de la ville, un mouvement par lequel les festivals sont impliqués dans les conditions et les terrains de négociations locales. Dans le cas de Montréal, je soutiens que la festivalization serait mieux comprise comme le fait continu du changement, de l'imbrication, de la médiation et de la modulation entre la ville et ses festivals tel-quels, plutôt qu'un déplacement ou une érosion de l'un à l'autre, les deux sont modifiés.

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## Introduction

In July 2010, I moved from one festival city to another. Edmonton, Alberta, my hometown, stakes an earnest and optimistic claim to being “Canada’s Festival City.”<sup>1</sup> Among others, it boasts North America’s oldest fringe festival, which along with its folk music festival enjoys a solid international reputation and arrives each year with a great deal of local fanfare. Nonetheless, Edmonton’s thirty-something festivals pale somewhat when set aside Montréal’s hundred-plus.<sup>2</sup> Having participated in various festivals as an attendee, volunteer, and performer, and having seen through those experiences the ability of festivals to transform and transmit impressions of a city, I was curious about how this process operated in Montréal. Like many Canadian musicians, I was well acquainted with stories of Montréal’s artistic vibrancy, bohemian character, low cost of living, and abundant *joie de vivre*;<sup>3</sup> it seemed fitting to me that the city also be known as a mecca for festivals. Living in Montréal, my curiosity increasingly piqued by the question of festivals as urban phenomena, I began to notice festival programs and pamphlets strung through the bars of wrought iron fences, lying trampled on sidewalks, wedged into mirror frames in café bathrooms, and abandoned on tables in restaurants and any number of other places. I also began to run into festivals by accident while moving around the city, whether walking, riding my bike, or taking public transit. After a time, I found this experience elicited an odd mix of surprise and indifference due to the ubiquity of festivals in the city’s central

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<sup>1</sup> “Edmonton Festival City,” Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, accessed August 25, 2012, <http://www.edmonton.com/for-visitors/festival-city.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> Except when converted to certain measures of festivals per capita. Both cities, for instance, have one festival for roughly every thirty-nine or forty thousand residents of their respective census metropolitan areas (calculated using Statistics Canada figures from the 2011 census [accessed August 30, 2012, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/demo05a-eng.htm>] and assuming 100 festivals in Montréal and 30 in Edmonton).

<sup>3</sup> Geoff Stahl has investigated the presence of this mythology among anglophone independent musicians in Montréal (e.g. 2001).

neighbourhoods in the warm months in particular and year-round to some extent.<sup>4</sup> It sometimes seemed to me that Montréal was saturated with reminders of festivals—that its official City of Festivals branding was continually reinforced as a fine grain of urban life, as evidence of festivals wound its way through the city's everyday circulatory flows. I wanted to investigate and explore these impressions.

As a result, my research questions began to form around these preliminary observations, and took much of their shape through related academic work.<sup>5</sup> Eventually the concept of festivalization presented itself as, to my mind, a fascinating prism through which to investigate the shifting boundaries between Montréal's festivals and its everyday urban life, and more generally the relationships and tensions between the entities we know and understand as festivals and cities. It is with these concerns at the forefront, and with specific reference to the case of Montréal's festival landscape, that this thesis investigates the following questions: To what extent is it possible to understand festivals as separate from everyday life? How are Montréal's festivals differentiated from, and integrated into, its everyday urban spaces? What kinds of ideas do Montréal's festivals circulate about its identity as a city, and how do they affect shared understandings of what Montréal is like? Can we speak of boundaries between Montréal and its festivals, and if so, has festivalization strengthened or weakened these boundaries, or changed them in other ways? And, more broadly, what does the case of Montréal have to tell us about the implications of festivalization for our understanding of both cities and festivals as objects of study and experience?

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<sup>4</sup> According to a 2007 study commissioned by the Bureau des festivals, the festivals it regularly supports are nearly equally distributed among spring (17), summer (17), and autumn (15), while winter hosts nine festivals (Leclerc 2007). However, this selection accounts for just over half of the total approximate number of festivals occupying Montréal's calendar; in addition to many small events, most festivals requiring street closures and traffic rerouting take place during the warmest months, as do four of the city's five 'mass' events.

<sup>5</sup> This work included a report on small festivals and festival associations that was part of a research document produced by my supervisor Dr. Will Straw for Le Regroupement, a collective of festivals in Montréal that will be mentioned later in this thesis.

I begin my examination of these questions by way of a review of the literature on festivals and festivalization. From classical anthropological literature to the relatively recent identification of the festivalization of urban space, policy, and even everyday life, festivals have offered a rich and often contradictory puzzle for scholarly thought. I approach this puzzle first, as it seems one must, through a discussion of the difficulty of defining what exactly a festival is, particularly in contemporary contexts. Next, I discuss some recurrent themes, tensions, and questions in the literature on festivals: their relationship to everyday life, their encouragement (or discouragement) of transgression, and their connections to spectacle. The final part of this chapter discusses the question of festivalization, a theme which has become increasingly common in academic literature on festivals and urban cultural development but which is used in a variety of ways. Making a preliminary attempt to sort through this variety, I identify three common uses of the term. Throughout this chapter, I attempt to construct a theoretical foundation for approaching festivals and festivalization as complex and fluctuating phenomena. In particular, I highlight understandings of contemporary urban festivals which take seriously their effects, for better or worse, upon our experience and understanding of cities, and which move beyond simplistic equations of contemporary festival with commercialized spectacle and the corrosion of authentic urban life.

The second chapter offers a historical account of the development of Montréal's festival landscape from the late nineteenth century to the present. From early tourist-oriented Winter Carnival and Saint-Jean-Baptiste celebrations through Expo 67 to the festival boom of the late 1990s, I argue that in Montréal's case "City of Festivals" cannot be simply brushed off as a catchy but meaningless marketing moniker. Rather, it has much to offer when understood as an expression of a facet of Montréal as a city, one which has decisively shaped both its material and its immaterial characteristics. Montréal as "City of Festivals" is produced and reproduced through administrative articulations of identity in policy and municipal branding schemes, the support of private and public funders, and the encouraging actions of cultural, business, and political elites, but this does not



mean that this identity has no bearing upon Montréal as it is experienced by many residents of and visitors to the city. Through a discussion of the notion of the urban imaginary, I argue that the idea of Montréal as “City of Festivals” is not ‘just’ a façade it wears for the purposes of global intermunicipal competition, although that is certainly an important part of what it is. “City of Festivals” is a strategic stabilization of the shifting and circulating flows that compose what we know as Montréal, and while it is a largely centralized articulation of urban identity, it expresses a certain shared experience of the city that generates agreement, participation, debate, and resistance. Theoretical discussions of the urban imaginary point us to an understanding of festivalized articulations of Montréal’s identity as just as much a part of the city as the human-made islands in the St. Lawrence River or its cracked and crumbling traffic arteries.

The third chapter further links the material and immaterial infrastructure of festivalization in Montréal by discussing only a small sample of the multitude of connections between festivals and the city’s everyday life and urban space. It begins with an overview of the great variety of organizational, temporal, and spatial arrangements demonstrated in Montréal’s festival landscape, in which festivals take a variety of forms in the city’s territory and calendar. Next, I examine how festival reminders and residues infuse urban space through their participation in well-established, fine-grained circulatory flows that traverse the everyday experiences of many Montréalers. Festivals are both woven into and dependent upon systems of advertisement, visibility, signaling, diffusion, and way-finding that characterize and regulate Montréal’s everyday urban life. Their boundaries are disrupted and marked by vocabularies of everyday movement, located and dislocated through paper maps and digital apps. Ultimately, Montréal’s case suggests that the consequences of festivalization are more multidimensional than is implied by the notion of a displacement of everyday life by the modulations of festival, or the assertion that festival erodes everyday life altogether. Rather, festivalization involves and implies a detailed interweaving of festivals into the everyday circulatory flows that compose the city itself (Boutros

and Straw 2010), and through which the urban imaginary of Montréal as a City of Festivals is reinforced in a decentralized and dislocated fashion.

In some sense, I must admit, my conclusions land in a place similar to that reached by many prior examinations of festivals in the literature: their relationship to everyday life and urban space in Montréal is paradoxical, contradictory, and unstable. However, in Montréal's case, I argue that festivals cannot be sufficiently understood as times out of time (Falassi 1987) nor places out of place (Reilly 2009); likewise, processes of festivalization cannot be sufficiently understood as ever more escapist departures from community, from reality, or from the troubling aspects of city life. From its beginnings, festivalization in Montréal, as in many other cities, has been motivated in part by the exigencies of competition between cities, by the search for private sponsorship and profit, and by the desire to establish Montréal's worth as a cultural metropolis on the world stage; these processes have undoubtedly had some undesirable consequences. I hope to show throughout my discussion that to understand processes of festivalization, even at their most commercially driven, as superficial, 'merely' spectacular, or corrosive of the city itself is to deprive our understanding of Montréal, and possibly other cities as well, of the full significance and gravity of these processes as very real and very important determinants of contemporary urban reality, and to risk overlooking the ways in which they participate in everyday urban life—for better and for worse.

## **Methods**

To enter the rather amorphous 'everyday life of festivals' that so strongly piqued my interest in the gestational stages of this work, I have employed a few different methods of research. Perhaps the best way I can find to describe what I have tried to accomplish—the thread running through my efforts, which I have felt at times to be rather amorphous themselves—is a constant 'tuning in' to the fact of festivals in Montréal, paying attention to the ways in which they peppered conversation, arose in political debates, and linked themselves into channels of diffusion and distribution.

This tuning-in has been informed by an extensive though inevitably not exhaustive literature review of scholarly writing on festivals and festive cultural development, particularly regarding the so-called ‘festival boom’ in the last decades of the twentieth century, as well as works that employed the idea of festivalization. To flesh out my fledgling ideas about festivalization and urban space, I further consulted recent theoretical literature from urban studies and cultural studies. Discussions of circulation (Boutros and Straw 2010; LiPuma and Koelble 2005; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003) and the urban imaginary (Bélanger 2005; LiPuma and Koelble 2005; Çinar and Bender 2007) were particularly influential in shaping my account of festivalization in Montréal, and I have incorporated them at length.

The theoretical tendencies of my discussion are grounded in experiential observations, both in my own version of everyday life in Montréal and in visits to the sites of several festivals of varying sizes and types, undertaken with the goal of gaining a sense of festivals’ interaction with and demarcation from the urban environment. I took photographs of festival-related signs, fences, banners, barriers, and poster and brochure placements, and engaged in an ongoing collection and review of festival paraphernalia such as brochures, programs, and flyers. Scans of weekly and daily newspapers and online media coverage, investigation of provincial and municipal policy documents, and searches of the websites of festivals and related organizations have provided a crucial supplement to my observations and interpretations. The more I saw, learned, and noticed, the more I was able to fill in the gaps of my initial curiosity; other points of interest, such as the similarities between festival and construction boundaries, began to emerge through my observations.

However much I ‘tuned in’ through these methods, though, the fact remained that as a relative newcomer to the city I was missing a certain thoroughgoing understanding and experience. I was fortunate to conduct semi-structured in-person interviews with five actors in Montréal’s festival landscape,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The interviews were conducted as follows, all in Montréal: Anne-Marie Jean, Executive Director of Culture Montréal, May 18, 2012; Gregory McCormick,

whose observations and explanations gave me a fuller sense of the history, characteristics, changes, and challenges at play in the relationships between Montréal and its festivals. Participants chosen were either intimately involved in planning and coordinating festival-related policy and procedure in Montréal, or were themselves festival organizers or members of festival-related organizations. Because of the small number of interviews, I cannot claim to have captured a representative or exhaustive view of the way policymakers or festival organizers see things, as many previous studies have done (e.g. Sassatelli 2008b). However, interviewees' recollections of key events in the festival landscape as well as their reflections upon issues it currently faces have proven an invaluable supplement to my other approaches, and have helped me to better understand and situate many of my impressions.

With what has emerged from these endeavors, I cannot possibly claim to have compiled a definitive or objective picture of festivalization in Montréal, nor was this my aim. Rather, my goal is to address some persistent tensions in scholarly discussions of festivals and everyday life by offering an account of festivalization and urban space in Montréal. What follows is an inevitably subjective and highly localized discussion, based in a city whose mythology has long held a certain personal fascination for me—indeed, absent this fascination, this thesis would have been entirely different. It is my hope that the subjective frequency of this work, inevitably and inescapably present in the fruits of my ‘tuning in,’ will enrich the discussion to follow. Comparing the observations I have made of Montréal’s festivals with the results of my literature review, I do find that there is an opening for the type of account I will construct here: one that attempts to explore the ordinary, as well as the extra-ordinary, operations of festivals in urban space and everyday life. I can only hope that this thesis will

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Director of Programming at the Blue Metropolis Foundation, May 22, 2012;  
Alain Petel (Commissioner) and Diane Régimbald (Agent of Cultural  
Development) at the Bureau des festivals et des événements culturels, Ville de

contribute to the discussions that inspired it in accordance with its modest scope and subjective foundations, and perhaps even provide a basis upon which future research—extensive interview projects and systematic, perhaps cartographic or GIS-based logs of festivals’ presence in Montréal are two particularly exciting examples—might be built.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Spectacular Tensions:**

### **Festivals and Festivalization in Academic Literature**

#### **Introduction**

As objects of research, festivals have been approached, constructed, and critiqued from an intimidating variety of angles. Sifting through the fragments of literature on festivals, one encounters work from anthropology, sociology, urban studies, communication studies, event management studies, geography, tourism studies, and many other disciplines old and new. This work takes form in ethnographies, surveys, participant-observation studies, critical-theoretical examinations, media analyses, meditations on literary theory, and various other hybrid forms. In this kaleidoscopic array of presentation and representation, festivals shape-shift constantly, playing very different and frequently contradictory roles depending upon (and often within) the analysis at hand.

Nevertheless, it is possible to describe certain patterns in the ways in which festivals are understood as particular phenomena in the context of urban space. In what follows, I will assemble an account of common themes and issues running through representations of festivals in academic literature, from the classic observations of Mikhail Bakhtin, Guy Debord, and other oft-cited figures to present conversations. Reading accounts of festivals with an eye to the interface between festivals and cities, I have pieced together four cross-cutting axes of discussion: festivals' relationship to everyday urban life, their capacity to facilitate and encourage transgression, their status as commodified spectacles, and their participation in processes of festivalization. Following these axes will allow me to describe in some detail the complex relationship between festivals and cities, while also engaging with differing interpretations of festivals in the spirit of dialogue and critique. Last, to attempt to address lingering tensions in the literature, I will move into a discussion of the potential of the concept of

festivalization to reflect the continuous process of mutual constitution, reflection, and mediation between festivals and cities. Tending to festivals in this way could, I suggest, help unlock the potential to think of festivals not simply as bounded cultural texts existing in a time and place apart, but simultaneously as messy and mundane features of urban life that overspill and undo the seams between the everyday and the extra-ordinary, even as they confirm the existence of those seams. This preliminary, open proposition will find itself further developed in the remaining chapters.

### **Defining Festivals**

Like many terms that float in and around studies of culture and urban space (including those terms themselves), the precise characteristics of a “festival” have eluded widespread agreement (Getz 2010). An anchoring entry point into this discussion is necessary, and Alessandro Falassi’s oft-cited definition provides a good one. In the introduction to his widely cited edited collection on festivals, *Time out of Time* (1987, 2), Falassi traces the etymological origins of the English word *festival*, as well as its Italian, Spanish, French, and Portuguese siblings, to the Latin word *festum*. This word was itself a merged form of *festum* (“public joy, merriment, revelry”) and *feria* (“abstinence from work in honour of the gods”), the latter of which lay the groundwork for the evolution of the word *fair*. Falassi offers his own definition:

In contemporary English, festival means (a) a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances; (b) the annual celebration of a notable person or event, or the harvest of an important product; (c) a cultural event consisting of a series of performances of works in the fine arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre; (d) a fair; (e) generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness. (2)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Falassi also offers a definition specific to the social sciences: “a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical

In terms of discussions about festivals in current research, some aspects of Falassi's quite broad formulation apply more than others. Most commentators would probably agree upon (e), which points to the inherently positive mood of festivals (Waterman 1998, 57). For instance, writing from an anthropological perspective, John J. MacAloon identifies joy and happy anticipation as festival hallmarks (1984, 246). More recently, Bernadette Quinn has picked up on positivity as a key aspect of festivals' appeal for modern place-marketing schemes, noting the suitability of festive images for efficiently communicating an upbeat message (2005). Her analysis suggests that this aspect of festivals may actually overshadow the others in Falassi's definition, since city administrations and other actors involved in place marketing are apt to recruit festivals into this "narrow" function "[e]ven when the festival or cultural event has been strongly culturally orientated at the outset" (932). Indeed, one of the most consistent debates in the literature concerns the nature of the happiness to be found in contemporary urban festivals, and whether their use as tools of cultural development taints the pleasure they afford. Aside from a positive atmosphere, observers have identified various other characteristics compatible with those in Falassi's list as the special ground of festivals: an ephemeral or momentary quality, which is paradoxically accompanied by lasting effects for the host communities or cities (Waterman 1998; Belghazi 2006); a consistent theme (Gold and Gold 2005); collective public expressions of meaning, importance, values and ideologies (Autissier 2008); and so on. Though some researchers would probably place fairs in a category different from that of contemporary urban festivals, owing to the latter's focus on consuming thematized artistic and cultural experiences, these types certainly share a kind of malleability, hybridity, and focus on commercial exchange that would justify their inclusion within the same

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*bonds, and sharing a worldview*" (2; italics in original). This definition seems more appropriate to traditional work in anthropology and sociology, as Monica Sassatelli notes (2008a), and most contemporary views would dispute its focus on a homogeneous group of participants. I have used Falassi's other definition as a starting point, as it provides more of a level footing upon which to start a conversation with current research.



family of phenomena (Stallybrass and White 1986). Close cousins of festivals, such as carnivals, parades, and celebrations of specific communities which happen not to explicitly self-identify as festivals (e.g. pride weeks) are often included in studies of festivals, and Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque is cited consistently in this body of work (e.g. Stallybrass and White 1986; Jamieson 2004; Quinn 2005).

With the term operating as an umbrella for such a wide range of phenomena, crystallizing a stable definition is not, on the whole, at the forefront of the goals of festival research. In their report on festivals in Hungary, Zsuzsa Hunyadi et al. acknowledge the expanding breadth and flexibility of the word, arguing that "a festival is whatever its organisers regard as a festival," as long as specific criteria for things such as grant programs are made clear to all involved (2006, 8). Stanley Waterman concurs, noting that "festivals mean different things to different people" (1998, 60). Dragan Klaic, meanwhile, writes that the designation of an increasingly motley group of events as festivals "forces us to wonder about the very relevance of the term" (2008, 211, my translation). This feeling of futility is linked to the observation, also common in the literature, that festivals and festiveness are found in an increasing number of urban spaces, times, and domains (Gravari-Barbas 2007). Often termed 'festivalization,' the question of this spread of festival informs a central line of inquiry for the discussion at hand. Here, I aim to offer some theoretical observations on collisions between festivals, festivity, and cities in preparation for a more specific discussion of Montréal's festival landscape and its potential implications for our understandings of festivals and cities as entities. This being the case, I will take self-described 'festivals' at their word for the most part, while recognizing the significance of festival-like characteristics of other urban phenomena.

### **Everyday Life**

Even beyond the issue of definition, contemporary festivals are notoriously contradictory phenomena. They easily frustrate attempts to enclose them in even relatively porous conceptual boundaries. Their relationship to

everyday urban life—itself an elusive and indefinite domain (Blanchot 1987)—falls right in step with this pattern.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, festivals are said to be a source of escape from the mundane, places in which play and revelry overtake the predictable routine of everyday life (Jamieson 2004). Yet festivals draw upon and confirm the everyday in the very act of leaving it behind, and depend upon the assured continuity of everyday life to sustain their relationship of difference and parenthetical status. Indeed, at stake here is the question of whether festivals are in fact much closer to the everyday than they have been in the past, or than we have tended to think of them all along; or, on the other hand, whether they have drifted far from their everyday moorings. The relationship between festivals and everyday life as it appears in the literature can be configured in terms of three processes: transcendence, escape, and imbrication. These processes are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but the ways in which they are catalogued and aligned with the causes, effects, and characteristics of contemporary urban festivals in the literature have much to say about dominant understandings of these festivals as simultaneously mundane and exceptional.

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<sup>8</sup> As many theorists, including Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, and Maurice Blanchot have noted, everyday life is a domain, a concept, and an object of study that escapes definition, and it is misguided to assume its preexisting sameness amongst groups of people with different routines, different movements, and different experiences of the city (Murthy 2005). In this sense, throughout my project and as others have done (see Highmore 2002), I understand notions of everyday urban life as situated at the highly charged intersection between individual experience and shared understanding—between the irreducible variety of everyday lives on one hand, and on the other, our (but whose?; see, again, Highmore) ability to discuss something called everyday life as though it exists and is shared. I explore this tension further in my discussion of the urban imaginary in Chapter 2; I have found that the urban imaginary is a very useful concept for navigating the difficult task of talking about what is at once held in common in urban life and yet utterly particular to urban lives. For now, the definition of “everyday urban life” remains, as I feel it must, impressionistic and unfixed.

### *Transcendence*

For many theorists, especially those working from older anthropological theories of ‘traditional’ festivals, the relationship of festivals to everyday life is one of a desirable and generative transcendence. Emile Durkheim’s work, still commonly cited in festival literature, is a classic example. Durkheim views the traditional festival as “a space and time separated from the profane dimension of daily life [and which actualizes] the sacred” (Sassatelli 2008b, 19). He understood the festivals he observed as ritual releases from the mundane; in the process of ‘collective effervescence,’ the bonds of a community were renewed and restored (Sassatelli 2008b). Anthropologist Victor Turner (drawing on Arnold van Gennep) also writes of “separation from antecedent mundane life” as a crucial phase in rituals or celebrations marking a group transition or transformation (1984, 21). This separation is followed by liminality (a state of exception from the everyday, a hovering-in-between in which “almost anything goes”) and finally “reaggregation into the daily world” (21; Falassi 1987). Falassi writes that regardless of the fragmentation and dissolution of the tight traditional “festive complex” throughout the calendar year, the festival still retains a special power to place “the human social animal ... in tune with his world” by virtue of its very separation from that world in its own ‘time out of time’ (1987, 6–7).

Such classic anthropological frameworks have been highly influential. However, in her study of public cosmopolitanism in contemporary European festivals, Monica Sassatelli notes that these frameworks’ lingering influence can lead researchers today to saddle contemporary, urban, secular festivals with normative expectations that are usually disappointed (2008b, 19). Studies that suppose a unilateral transition from sacred-rural-traditional to secular-urban-contemporary festivals—a rather simplistic proposal, as Sassatelli points out—are sometimes drawn into the position that contemporary festivals hold no potential, or only false promises, for deeply affecting experience. This position has much to do with the role of spectacle and commercialization, which I will discuss in detail at a later point, but for now we can note that its suspicion and unwillingness to grant the possibility of meaningful experience in contemporary festivals is not

wholly warranted. Waterman, for instance, proposes that contemporary festivals are not totally unlike their folkloric counterparts in their ability to enable participants to “transform” everyday space into an experience that is “otherworldly and spiritually uplifting” but also “serious”—provided they are not saturated with signs of commercial opportunism (1998, 58). While much of the literature justifiably denounces the use of festivals as urban vitality generators without concern for issues of long-term viability or the vagaries of context, many researchers have also found potential in festivals to strengthen social and cultural identity (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007, in their study of stakeholder perspectives in Catalunya), provide opportunities for socialization (Prentice and Andersen 2003, in their study of the Edinburgh Festival), and general quality of life (Quinn 2005), and to lend meaning to shifting social and economic realities (Picard and Robinson 2006). Contemporary urban arts festivals, for their part, can provide occasions for artists, organizers, and attendees to explore and reappropriate underused or overlooked urban spaces (Pejovic 2008).

Attending to the specificities of festivals in the late twentieth century, Waterman wonders if “[p]erhaps the festival landscape is the ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’ landscape, whereas during the remainder of the year, the place is simply preparing for ‘the event’” (Waterman 1998, 62, drawing on Gallup 1988). This musing could be dismissed as rhetorical, but I would argue that it cuts to the heart of one of the strongest critiques of festival-as-everyday-transcendence that our contemporary situation offers: If, as is often proposed, festivals are more and more common—growing in number, spreading festivity to new domains, employing greater numbers of workers, circulating in advertisements and media coverage, forcing street closures, and driving policy decisions—is it still productive to approach them as a realm of exception from everyday life? This question will arise throughout the coming pages. For now, as far as transcendence goes, we may summarize that contemporary urban festivals are met with high expectations derived from specific understandings of what their forbears were. If our current discussions take for granted that festivals supply only overcommercialized, superficial experiences rather than truly redeeming

transcendent ones, we may lose our ability to take seriously the validity and potential of festival experiences, as well as our capacity to imagine solutions to the detrimental effects of commercialization and instrumentalization of festivals in urban space.

### *Escape*

Along with transcendence, festivals are often said to facilitate escape as a mode of separation from—and mediation of—the everyday. Having discussed anthropological views of transcendence as a regenerative, collective break from the mundane, I note that, in many accounts, escape comes off rather like the other side of the coin. Transcendence renews collective spirit in anticipation of a return to the mundane, while escape satisfies the individual consumer-citizen's appetite for fantastical spectacle that provides a controlled and predictable set of aesthetic experiences. Yet as David Picard and Mike Robinson suggest, the metaphor of escape may also imply “the individual's (re)introduction to a magical time where all things appear possible,” a process that could elevate festivals beyond logics of ‘mere’ consumption (2006, 17).

Unlike transcendence, escape is often readily mapped onto contemporary festivals from the perspective of social-theoretical critiques. Competition among large-scale tourist-oriented festivals has led to the emergence of a particular kind of festival atmosphere that tailors itself to the expectations of tourists for globalized “forms of transnational festivity, spectacle and consumption” (MacLeod 2006, 235). Waterman writes that festivals “of the people and by the people,” under pressure to provide glitzy grist for the urban vitality mill, face the threat of “metamorphosing into a sort of busman's holiday, the exact opposite of renewal” (1998, 58). Meanwhile, in her study of small- and medium-scale urban arts festivals in the UK, Rebecca Finkel has found that they risk becoming “carbon copies” of one another—the aggregate effect of each one vying to compete for funding and attention (2009, 20). Homogenization may also occur with regard to place, as festival organizers attempt to create a consistent image of their host city (as Belghazi finds with regard to the Fez Festival, 2006; and as

Johansson and Kociatkiewicz suggest in their “vignettes” of the Stockholm Culture Festival and Warsaw’s Nowy Kercelak festival, 2011). Kirstie Jamieson sees escape from Edinburgh’s everyday in festivals’ “framed spontaneous play” (2004, 65) which, intending to satisfy tourist appetites, streamlines the messes of everyday life into a theatrical display that “avoid[s] contradictions” (70). It is this relentless “transformation of time and space” that Colleen K. Reilly names “the festival impulse”—the creation of tourist-friendly “*places out of place*” (2009, 1, italics in original)<sup>9</sup> which have become all too formulaic since the festival boom began. Indeed, festivals’ highly charged relationship to place is a key theme in the theorization of contemporary festivals. Even as festivals mine their localities for potential significance or grounds of differentiation, they must mold their representations of place to the specifications of a competitive stage that spans a potentially global scale (Waterman 1998; Johansson and Kociatkiewicz 2011; MacLeod 2006). In current literature, then, festivals are understood to both mediate and manipulate our relationship to urban identity, sometimes to the point of extinguishing “real opportunities for genuine engagement with culture and multiple realities of the place, for both local and visiting populations” (Quinn 2005, 936).

Because of this, the notion of escape out of everyday urban life and into a specific festival space and time opens up room for debate about contemporary urban festivals’ neglect, and sometimes even active harm, in the realm of the everyday. Writing in 1990, David Harvey incisively linked the spread of festival-like consumption spaces in the 1970s and 1980s to a ‘bread and festivals’ method of urban entrepreneurialism, spurred by the spread of interurban competition, that glosses over troubling class divisions while linking consumption and pleasure (265–266). Local actors may modify and invent festivals in order to better fit entrepreneurial development schemes, but Quinn wonders if, insofar as festivals are narrowly understood by these actors as panaceas for urban revitalization, they “may be both compounding the social difficulties that necessitate renewal and

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<sup>9</sup> Here, Reilly draws upon Falassi’s notion of festivals as ‘times out of time’ (1987).

regeneration programmes in the first place, and heightening tensions in already contested arenas” (2005, 934–935). Along these lines, several commentators have pointed out that the event-centric focus of much municipal policymaking tends to overshadow and, as panacea, even assume indirect responsibility for more mundane municipal governance matters like housing, social programs, site rehabilitation, and even less-spectacular cultural programs (as Waitt finds in his review of the literature, 2008, 522; Quinn 2010, 273).

Meanwhile, those people and urban spaces from whom escape is engineered are marginalized, unable to make an appearance in the often centrally focused and sometimes highly regulated festival space. As Jamieson notes, in Edinburgh, “social worlds that are not neatly assimilated to a festival gaze and exist beyond the boundaries of Edinburgh’s spontaneous festival atmosphere [in the central city] are eclipsed by the dominant order of seeing the city” (2004, 70). Many commentators have noted the tendency of festivals to be explicitly or implicitly recruited into the project of maintaining and strengthening social and economic boundaries between groups of people (Waitt 2008). This is true of the content and programming aspect of festivals as much as of their spatial, temporal, or socioeconomic inaccessibility; they have often been nodal points at which social elites’ consumption of art and culture allows them to implicitly “exert their dominance and demarcate social boundaries between themselves and the population at large” (Quinn 2005, 929; Waterman 1998). The act of bounding festival space, of setting it apart from everyday life and from routine time, is part of what sets the stage for festivals’ particular appeal, but boundaries also provide security and predictability for festivals and official bodies whose risk-management concerns admit only the safest escape (as Jamieson suggests is often the case in Edinburgh; 2004, 69–70).

Overall, while many contemporary understandings retain the idea of festivals as bounded spectacular worlds in which everyday social boundaries or

experiences of urban space may be at least temporarily escaped,<sup>10</sup> the literature cautions against taking this boundedness to imply that festivals have only neutral or positive effects. In fact, a notable tension remains in the most critical strain of works: it seems that the more bounded and spectacular the festival ‘interior’ is purported to be—the further from the everyday, the more complete the escape it provides—the more concerning and alarming its potential harms to everyday urban life are said to be. Yet incursion and invasion are not the only possible modes of interaction between festivals and everyday life.

### *Imbrication*

The literature leaves little doubt that where contemporary urban festivals are instrumentalized to suit the economic or political ends of local actors, there are potentially serious consequences for the everyday urban life of many citizens. Festivals present opportunities to edit out unpredictable or undesirable elements of a city, divert attention from seemingly insoluble problems, and extract certain local characteristics to create a kind of escapist experience at once linked to place and abstracted from it. However, some of the literature arguably focuses so intently on the extremes of festival and of the everyday that it overlooks ways in which the two are closely interwoven. In addition to the view that festivals and everyday life sustain each other’s oppositional presence, certain arguments see festivals and everyday life as more and more integrated, albeit often in the interests of spectacle and consumption.

First of all, drawing upon the ‘traditional’ theories of Falassi and Turner, festivals and everyday life may be understood to share a mutually reinforcing relationship, from the most commodified spectacle to the most modest neighbourhood affair. Festivals, as moments of separation from everyday life through transcendence (and perhaps escape), oppositionally confirm the place of everyday life as the non-festival, the mundane, the ordinary. Festivals draw upon

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<sup>10</sup> Even the notion of festivalization of urban space is potentially compatible with the idea of festival as escape, in the sense of festive escapism spreading to more and more areas of urban life.



modifications of everyday behaviour in order to provide a context for their separation from the everyday (Falassi 1987), while the presence of modulated everyday behaviours and heavily mediated markers of locality and place confirm our separation from everyday life. Henri Lefebvre describes the importance of festival to French rural society as an “explosion of forces which had been slowly accumulated in and via everyday life itself” (2008, 202). Everyday moments “were reunited, amplified, magnified in the festival,” he writes; festivals effected a renewal of community, and could not be separated from everyday life although they “contrasted violently” with it (205). In these formulations, festivals may be understood as sustaining everyday life by providing an alternative experience to it. The everyday, meanwhile, can be understood as the condition for perceiving festivals as exceptional.

A frequent proposal in recent literature, and a primary line of inquiry throughout this project, concerns the growing integration of festival and everyday spaces onto the same plane of experience. This proposal does not necessarily reject outright the idea of festivals and everyday life as the sustaining conditions for each other’s existence, but rather transposes this thought into the context of contemporary urban revitalization schemes. George Hughes is one of many observers who notice a systematic “extension of festivity” into everyday urban life through ‘festive time strategies’ that disrupt traditional temporal and spatial boundaries around leisure (1999, 128). Maria Gravari-Barbas proposes that the festival-likeness of postindustrial urban space attracts and rewards property owners recruited into gentrifying inner-city neighbourhoods (2007): they want to be reassured of amenity, vitality, and quality of (everyday) life, and festivity in our time has become both panacea and proxy measure for all three (Hughes 1999). In Montréal, as in other cities, festive potential is almost literally built into the urban environment, infusing the city with the expectation of festival and bringing the fulfillment of this expectation into the realm of normalcy. This type of imbrication between festival and everyday life is often diagnosed as festivalization, which I will discuss in greater detail in the final section of this chapter.

In the span of this section, we have seen that festivals are accused on the one hand of being not bounded enough—of spreading a kind of spectacular, commodificatory mode of relation to urban experiences—and on the other of being too bounded, transporting attendees in a touristic mode of engagement far from the complications of everyday urban life, and thwarting the possibility of committed relationships to local history and context in the process. Yet we have also seen proposals that the everyday and the festival are engaged in mutually upholding each other as modes of experience. Depending upon one's disciplinary affiliation or theoretical perspective, everyday life and festivals may relate as opposites, symbiotic partners, enemies... It is no wonder the literature as a whole has a difficult time squaring festivals with everyday life. It wrestles with a similar kind of ambivalence in the matter of festivals' potential to revolutionize expectations of authority and propriety.

### **Transgression**

Much of the classic anthropological or folklore-based work on festivals configures them as exemplary sites of transgression of norms *and* preventive or curative moments that control transgression by localizing it—a kind of sanctioned transgression. In their widely cited book *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White offer an explanation of Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque (1986). Bakhtin's contribution, they write, was to shift the carnivalesque into a mode of cultural analysis that denoted “a potent, populist, critical inversion of *all* official worlds and hierarchies” (7). In this formulation, the carnivalesque represents both the specific inversion of social and symbolic hierarchies during the calendar-regulated carnival itself, and also a “mobile set of symbolic practises, images and discourses” which can generally be employed in the political struggle against power (15). Yet while inversion might be used to send a message about inequality or social stratification, they argue, it ultimately reasserts the binary relationships of high and low by reversing them, rather than carrying festival participants and spectators beyond such a system, as hybridity might do by troubling these relationships. In contrast to Stallybrass and

White's analysis, the presence of disorder and difference within contemporary festival contexts is often considered a concession to aesthetic cosmopolitanism and the inevitabilities of crowds, rather than an active, transformative experience of true disorder. Picard and Robinson, for instance, write that "what once passed for occasions of real struggle, inversion and transgression as Bakhtin (1984) extolled, have since been socially and physically displaced and politically diluted" (2006, 7).

### *Disorder and Difference*

There is a distinct tension in many mentions of festival-induced disorder in urban space. On the one hand, festivals' relationship with disorder appears as almost a synecdochic communion with the essentially urban; the qualities of crowdedness, difference, sensory overload, and confused milling through defined spaces are repeatedly evoked as some of the most powerful characteristics of both festivals and cities (e.g. Stevens 2007, 81). Jamieson, for example, describes "jostling crowds, overspilling bars, and cacophonies of multilingual conversations" as par for the course during Edinburgh's festival season (2004, 64). Rather than providing a transgressive encounter with and concentration of difference, however, Edinburgh's official festival gaze (to use Jamieson's term) processes difference into a smooth array of delights and dazzlements; it hints at difference by way of a spectacular aesthetic, rejecting real difference and its inevitable messes (70–72). Jamieson contests that this festive ambiance "plays *with* disorder rather than *through* disorder," producing at best a pseudo-transgressive space (69). In his study of festivals in New Orleans (2005), Kevin Fox Gotham acknowledges the contradictions of urban spectacles, but in the course of doing so he nonetheless assigns to them a rather negative set of characteristics (commodified/homogenized space and time, contrivance, encouragement of "political indifference" and pacified subjects; 242), while ascribing a very positive one to their traditional forbears (locality, indigenous input, genuineness, spontaneity). Gotham argues that urban spectacles are created "as means to persuade large numbers of people to spend money" (233); they are

mostly toothless affairs whose subordination to clock time, profit, and other stringencies of capitalism leave them ripe to be challenged through local dissent. Far from channeling a kind of “primordial chaos” (Falassi 1987, 3) or exemplifying urbane encounters with difference, many contemporary views see festivals’ flirtations with diversity and disorder as instrumentalized, mere echoes of their ancestors’ true transgressive potential (as suggested in Sassatelli’s analysis, 2008b).

### *Authorization*

Another issue at stake in discussions of urban festivals’ transgressive potential is their relationship to structures of authority. The level of public or private organizational control that a festival exhibits is often proposed to have an inverse relationship to its ability to effect true transgression. Jamieson delves into this issue, arguing that experiences within “licensed” festivals “are guided by bureaucratic structures that are believed to disempower the *disordering* and *reordering* potential of the carnivalesque spirit” (2004, 68, italics in original). Hence, she writes, ‘licensed’ or ‘authorized’ festivals like those in Edinburgh’s festival season effect an atmosphere consisting of “regulated complexities and ambiguities” that can only approximate the true transformative power of the grassroots carnival (68). She finds a framed, orchestrated version of spontaneity in Edinburgh, “the result of painstaking planning by a city administration that seeks to control the ways in which public spaces change” (65). Her notion of ‘framed’ play, spontaneity, and revelry seems to imply that sanctioned festivals impose restrictions upon what would otherwise be an unrestricted experience. In line with this, Gotham argues that “[b]y reifying clock time, modern spectacles are the antithesis of spontaneity, creativity and originality” (2005, 234).

Leaving aside for this paragraph the problems with the above descriptions, it seems clear that festivals’ role in urban revitalization and place marketing schemes often involves a co-optation of transgressive power. In the name of “vibrancy, vitality and sophistication,” transgressive activities, places, and times, previously marginalized, may be milked for their potential appeal, swept into the

fold and repackaged “to render them more appealing to mainstream culture” (Hughes 1999, 125). Hughes describes in detail the role that these processes of incorporation play in engineering the appeal of inner-city nightlife spaces for revitalization schemes. Incorporation, however, can entail regulation and control, and festivals and celebrations have been incorporated into states’ authoritative measures since the hazy time of ‘traditional’ festivals (Stallybrass and White 1986). Indeed, Muir reminds us that in Europe in the Middle Ages, city states like Venice “used festivities to exert control over their territories” and to “consolidat[e] civic identities” (1997, cited in Quinn 2005, 929). As Hughes suggests (and as is the case in Montréal), cities as complex, multidimensional administrative and policy-making entities have long had deeply ambivalent relationships to transgressive practices and places, appropriating the allure of their liminality with one hand while slapping their progenitors with noise fines and bylaw tickets (or worse) with the other. Using the language of creativity and innovation that has come to dominate municipal policy on a global scale (Evans 2009), the boundaries of transgression can easily be drawn to suit the situation, or the authority, at hand.

Returning to the issue of critiques of contemporary festivals, their capacity for challenging authority is often given the same treatment as their relationship to disorder; the ghosts of spontaneous festivals past haunt many accounts of the planned-ness afflicting modern celebrations. This seems especially strange given that traditional festivals are equally praised for their adherence to natural cycles of seasonal celebration—perhaps the ultimate concession to predictability broadly speaking, and a fact that underscores the tension between spontaneous atmosphere and cyclical recurrence in festivals. Quinn, for her part, maintains that festivals “are social constructions that bear heavy signs of authorship” (2005, 937). Waterman reminds us that “[f]estivals in general are never impromptu or improvised events, and arts festivals, in particular, are never spontaneous” and, furthermore, that participation in these heavily planned events can have effects that their participants take very seriously (1998, 59). Picard and Robinson agree that contemporary festivals, even with their carefully managed transgression, can

be symbolically significant for locals and tourists (2006). These points hold important insight into the tendency to dismiss contemporary festivals by the standards of traditional ones. Quinn notes that where successful festivals do maintain a strong relationship to the cultural traditions from which they emerge, “[t]here is nothing inevitable about this.... Rather, it reveals the nurturing of specific broad-based objectives and deliberate efforts to achieve certain outcomes” (2005, 935)—perhaps, we might say, the presence of a certain kind of authority. She likewise sees inadequacies in festivals’ difference and originality as the fault of local actors who ultimately fail to take seriously the potential of festivals as anything other than vessels of economic development. In short, there must be a way to critically evaluate careless implementation of festivals as arms of cultural-economic policy and flimsy or co-optive concessions to difference, culture, and context (for all its arguable claims, the literature leaves little doubt that these, where they do occur, are worth criticizing) without asking festivals to emulate a kind of ideal form that, if it ever existed, would probably have its own set of attendant problems. The exploration of robust alternatives and the full array of potential that festivals currently offer would benefit from directly addressing, rather than nostalgically glossing, the ‘pseudo-transgressive’ results of overgrown official festiveness.

Transgression does not exit the picture altogether with most accounts of contemporary festivals. Though they criticize the entrepreneurial neoliberal logics in whose service festivals often operate, they also find that festivals provide crucial opportunities for participants and local groups to resist these logics (Gotham 2005; Waitt 2008). Gotham, for instance, stresses the fact that urban spectacles present powerful opportunities for attendees and locals to appropriate and expose the more troubling aspects of the events’ mechanics. Festivals in New Orleans, he finds, are “conflictual and contradictory” (236), “contested terrain, with different groups and interests attempting to produce and use them for their own purposes” (241). In Gotham’s and Waitt’s views, however, it sometimes seems that it is not so much the festival itself that is seen as contradictory (as indicated above, it is often seen as commodified and deceptive), but rather the

opportunities it presents by virtue of its existence, openings which are taken up among participants or protesters who challenge official discourses and uses of urban space. There is a tendency in some contemporary critiques to see transgression as something that can correct the negative aspects of today's urban festivals, rather than a corrective quality of festivals themselves. The place of transgression with regard to festivals is to act *against* their more insidious characteristics, fighting the worrying encroachment of commodified and controlled festival space in order to give voice to understandings of the city which are excluded from that space. I will take up the implications of this understanding in further detail in the next section, as I discuss the relationship between festival and spectacle.

## **Spectacle**

This is a highly charged term in scholarship on culture and cities, and as a result there is much at stake in the relationship between festival and spectacle. Depending upon whether we conclude that festival has been overtaken by spectacle, that spectacle is inherently bad, or that it is one technique among others for the mediation of culture, we may take an entirely different path in the exploration of festivals as contemporary urban phenomena. In any case, we can begin discussing most contemporary discussions of spectacle by embarking in the company of Guy Debord's infamous work, *Society of the Spectacle* (1977).

### *Debord and Spectacle*

Whether clearly articulated or simply implied, many descriptions of spectacle in the context of festival are heavy with Debordian influence. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord sharply differentiates festival and spectacle. While festivals were once used to celebrate a community's rooted, enduring connection to time and experience,<sup>11</sup> their form as such is suffocated by the arrival of the

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<sup>11</sup> Debord gives us a concrete example of the 'past' or 'prior' festival situation, unlike many of his descendants: Renaissance Italy, where "in the art of the

spectacle, which “as the present social organization of the paralysis of history and memory... is the false consciousness of time” (1977, thesis 158). In the society of spectacle, time is “displayed... to itself” through “the sudden return of multiple festivities”; but these festivities are also the mark of “an epoch without festivals” (thesis 154). The titular society leaves room for nothing but “vulgarized pseudo-festivals, parodies of the dialogue and the gift” (thesis 154). For Debord, then, spectacle presents itself as “a theatrical presentation or controlled visual production that is the antithesis of a spontaneous festival” (Gotham 2005, 227). Ultimately, Debord sees spectacle as a correlate of reification, “a social relation among people, mediated by images” (1977, thesis 4). Mediation, in this case, acts to place the spectacle at a deceptive remove in comparison with the truer celebration of festival. Here we find a similar claim to that of Jamieson (2004) and others regarding festival—that it operates in part via a warped or conciliatory mediation of reality, which itself becomes all too real (Debord 1977, thesis 8). Under the deceptions of the mediating image, whatever potential festivals hold for true social relations is interrupted by false relations to the realities of time, labour, and other people.

### *Debord's Shadow*

Like Debord, many critical takes on spectacle characterize it as the culprit behind contemporary festivals' dearth of community participation and true social meaning. In MacAloon's words, “the ever aggrandizing ethos of the spectacle, with its generic maxim ‘more is better,’ tends to destroy the symmetries of balance, harmony and duration that distinguish traditional festivals” (1984, 246). MacAloon's anthropological account differs from much Debordian commentary, however, by seeing festival and spectacle as possibilities that can potentially coexist and even benefit from each other, despite spectacle's destructive tendencies. For the most part, recent critical commentaries tend to distinguish between festival and spectacle on different grounds, often following the picture

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festival, life is experienced as the enjoyment of the passage of time” (1977, thesis 139).



Debord paints of a gradual historical transition from authentic festival to disingenuous (but contradictory) spectacle. Gotham, for example, writes that the form of festivals, which were once “locally unique gatherings, indigenously conceived, rich in distinctive content, based on local consumption and organized around localized geographic ties.... is eroding” at the hands of spectacle (2005, 242). Greg Richards, for his part, notes that one of the questions at stake is the degree to which festivals include either spectacles, which he sees as “staged and basically nonparticipatory” events oriented to outsiders, or rituals rooted in community traditions (2007, 259). While he concludes that festivals include a mix of both, and gives a very optimistic evaluation of festivals in Catalunya, he repeats the general narrative of “a shift away from the original ritual functions of festivals, toward an increasing spectacularization” (261). In some accounts, however, the possibility of contemporary urban festivals having meaningful significance is all but written off, as noted by Sassatelli (2008a); the result is often a kind of absorption resulting in festival becoming a ‘mere’ species of spectacle.

Following the chain of implication from festival to spectacle to commodification, the question of authenticity arises repeatedly. As I have suggested, critical discussions of contemporary festivals often have great difficulty getting away from the sense that, first of all, authentic festival exists at some point in time (usually the past) or space (usually places untouched by modern capitalism and tourist appetites); and second, that commodification usually precludes authenticity, whether measured at the scale of an individual festival or an international trend. This difficulty persists even where the discussants are careful to note its problematic implications. Gotham, for instance, specifies his intention to avoid “stigmatizing urban spectacles as inauthentic” (2005, 226), but one cannot help but feel the ashes of authenticity haunting his descriptions of commodified festivals in New Orleans. Though many urban festivals undoubtedly make strategic use of spectacle to “pacify people, ferment political indifference and stimulate consumption,” as Gotham argues (242), Waterman reminds us that “festivals are cultural artifacts which are not simply bought and ‘consumed’ but which are also accorded meaning through their active

incorporation into people's lives" (1998, 56, citing Jackson 1993). To some extent, I would include the experience of spectacle in Waterman's observation—and not only in cases where spectacles are accorded meaning through dissent and contestation. It is absolutely the case that failing to take seriously the detrimental effects of spectacle and commodification would mean, in some sense, failing to grasp the role of contemporary festivals in urban public life—and, indeed, failing to grasp the significance of their strategic deployment in this historical moment. However, many analyses of festival-as-spectacle overshadow both the potential of festivals and their pragmatic effects, conceived in all the complexity and particularity of their contexts and relationships to people and to urban environments (Sassatelli 2008b, 2008a).

### *Alternative Species of Spectacle*

Spectacle is not always configured as the destroyer of festival. Stripped of its Debordian weight, the word's Latin root, *specere*, "to look at," might simply imply a performance, something to be seen, the viewing of which makes one a spectator. Even now, the English usage of the adjective "spectacular" admits a wide range of nouns and both positive and negative meanings. Along these lines, anthropological analyses tend to give more leeway to the range of possible relationships between festival and spectacle. In Ping-Ann Addo's review of recent anthropological works on festivals and carnivals, she concludes that spectacle deserves more attention as a significant part of ritual's relationship to power (2009, 231). Meanwhile, as noted above, anthropologist MacAloon takes a somewhat ambivalent view. Though he preserves a distinction between joyous festival, on one hand, and spectacle, which elicits awe and suspicion in equal measure, he sees both spectacle and festival as "'megagenres' or 'metagenres' of cultural performance. Neither specifies directly what sort of action the participants will engage in or see" (1984, 250). He concludes that spectacle "is, in itself, neither good nor bad, neither liberating nor alienating" and that its "moral value" can only be judged by taking into account the precise situation and context of "particular spectacles" (272). Though not anthropologists, John R. Gold and

Margaret M. Gold define spectacle rather openly as “any form of public display put on for the entertainment and benefit of a large crowd of spectators” (2005, 15) and insist on understanding it as “the expression of conscious thought and contrivance rather than as a consciousness-numbing feature of ordinary life” (16). To them, it is in one sense a “*medium of communication* that operates within a particular cultural frame” (17; italics in original). We can end on the note of MacAloon’s highly relevant proposal:

If, instead of taking spectacle exclusively as the breakdown and ‘heterogenization’ (‘hetero-genre-ization’) of prior cultural conditions, we ask in addition what spectacle points toward, what generative potentials and auspicious beginnings might lie within it, certain facts previously mentioned emerge in a new light. (267)

We needn’t take a naïvely optimistic view of spectacle, nor indeed of festival, to see these ‘generative potentials.’ We may, however, wish to be on guard against assuming that all festival has slid into spectacle, that all spectacle is bad, or that any mediation or contrivance is harmful to ‘authentic’ communities, relationships, or indeed cities.

### *Ways Forward*

We have seen that some critical understandings of contemporary festivals see them as increasingly bound up with illusory spectacle; this view would seem to support an understanding of ‘festivalization,’ the next and final topic of this chapter, as the invasive encroachment of commodified festival space onto a city that exists prior to and separate from it. There is little doubt that festivals often actively propagate a selective and exclusionary experience of the cities in which they take place, and that this exclusion carries the potential for great harm. Yet, understanding the city as something threatened by the festival rather than something already and necessarily changed by it preserves a notion of the city as stable, prior, and ultimately perhaps even redeemable from the festival. As Sassatelli notes, “the line between ‘image boosting’ and deeper issues of identity, place specificity and representivity is not so clear cut” (2008a, 73). In the

coming chapters, I wish to provide an account that sees both festival and city as highly unstable and mutable phenomena. I propose that festivalization would be more pragmatically, and more productively, understood as the fact of ongoing change, imbrication, mediation, and modulation between festivals and cities such that, rather than the former imposing itself on the latter, both are changed.

### **Festivalization**

For ears attuned to discussions of urban revitalization, privatization of urban space, and the instrumentalization of cultural policy, ‘festivalization’ carries a familiar ring. Like those terms, mentions of festivalization in academic writing often evoke a sense of active change, process, or transformation, and its use often accompanies or suggests a strong sense of concern about this change. Its fairly frequent appearance in scholarship on culture and cities suggests that it fills a certain need—that the process (or family of related processes) it is used to identify are deemed important enough to warrant their own efficient word-signal (Getz 2010). Though mentions of ‘festivalization’ can hardly be said to have taken discussions of contemporary urban festivals by storm, the term often appears in connection with topics they hold in highest concern. Moreover, for the purposes of this project, the term is significant for its implication of process and action, and as a delineation of verbal territory specific to festivals as contemporary and, much of the time, urban phenomena.

Like many other words at play in these discussions, ‘festivalization’ is a bit of a chameleon. Often, the writer’s understanding of the term is not clearly articulated, leaving the reader to infer or assume.<sup>12</sup> It is sometimes used conspicuously and at length (e.g. Roth and Frank 2000; Hitters 2007; Richards 2007), and sometimes just in a passing phrase (e.g. Quinn 2010). This lends it a slight whiff of neologism; left undefined, it can act as a mirror for whatever appears around it. In the last section of this chapter, I will attempt to give some structure to its current usage by outlining three threads of meaning to which it

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in Taieb Belghazi’s article (2006), the term makes its sole appearance in the title: “Festivalization of Urban Space in Morocco.”

most commonly refers: the festival ‘boom,’ the rise of festivals as tools of urban policy and marketing, and the expansion of festivals and festivity beyond their traditional charted domain. Mentions of festivalization tend to include or at least imply more than one of these, but for the sake of examination, this section will take a closer look at each one separately.

### *The Festival ‘Boom’*

This first group of references to ‘festivalization’ uses the term to refer to the fact of the festival ‘boom’ of the past twenty to thirty years, a consequence of which is logically an increased temporal and spatial presence of festivals in urban space and its associated channels of circulation (e.g. media, advertisements, grant programs, conversation, etc.; Herrero et al. 2007; Fjell 2007). In many cities, including Montréal (Schmidt 2010), cultural and artistic forms are increasingly rolled into festival programs that take their place alongside a burgeoning group of other festivals. Though this blossoming of festivals has mostly been discussed in European and North American contexts, it is increasingly present on a global scale (Waite 2008, 516), and its causes and significance are sometimes emphasized differently depending on the context at hand. European perspectives, for instance, often note the importance of twentieth-century festivals on that continent in facilitating access to (often elite) culture at interlinked scales (Jamieson 2004; Sassatelli 2008b), and emphasize festivals’ role in community-oriented cultural development and planning (Stevenson 2003, cited in Sassatelli 2008b, 31). In the United States, festivals are seen to play a greater role in city marketing rather than strengthening cultural or community identity (Ward 1998 and Ashworth and Voogt 1994, cited in Quinn 2005, 10). Another explanation, common throughout many contexts, traces the festival boom to globalization, emphasizing the importance of festivals for cultivating regional and local identities in the face of shifting cultural, social, and economic realities (Fjell 2007; Picard and Robinson 2006). Greg Richards, for example, describes the case of Catalunya, in which festivals acted as a unifying and affirming presence following the end of the Franco regime (2007). Richards even proposes that the

“festivalization of society” might be reframed in this context as “the socialization of festivals,” whereby festivals in the region “have increasingly become tools of social integration” (269). Richards’s formula provides an interesting near-inversion of narratives of festivalization that, we will see, configure the process as a threat to cultural integrity, independence, and authenticity.

Yet another explanation of ‘festivalization’ in terms of this festival boom rests more on the spectacularization and commodification afoot in festivals’ increasing presence, and their inherent suitability for urban marketing schemes. Many sources explain the festival ‘boom’ as an aggregate result of cities seeking to differentiate themselves in a competitive globalized market (Quinn 2005; Belghazi 2006; Waitt 2008)—a drive that lends a kind of predictable sameness to the contemporary festival form across locales (Finkel 2009; MacLeod 2006). Once again, we find a strong tension in the relationship of festivals to place: on the one hand, they are viewed in the literature as ways to reassert the identity of a group or territory; and on the other hand, they are seen as agents which absorb local identity into a globally familiar repertoire. This tension is at the heart of the second thread of meaning to which “festivalization” refers.

### *Instrumentalization*

One of the earliest mentions of ‘festivalization’ appears to have been “the ‘festivalisation of urban policy’ hypothesis by Häußermann and Siebel (1993), which describes the instrumentalisation of large-scale cultural and sports events to support image building and catalyse urban development in European cities” (Steinbrink, Haferburg, and Ley 2011, 16).<sup>13</sup> Under this definition, festivalization refers to the increasing tendency of governments, cultural organizations, and private interests to engineer festivals in an effort to spur a city’s economic activity, often as a critical part of place-based image marketing campaigns (and certainly not only in Europe).

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<sup>13</sup> Marco Venturi put forth a very similar proposal in 1994 (cited in Muñoz 2010, 79).

Nearly twenty years after Haüßermann and Siebel's proposal, uses of 'festivalization' still connect the term's implied processes of change to festivals' increasing role as vessels of urban economic development (Hitters 2007). Here, festivalization is configured as a contemporary form of boosterism intended to create jobs and attract investments (Roth and Frank 2000). The hopes of those in power for their city's transformation from a postindustrial ugly duckling into a shining cultural swan are pinned in particular on mega-events and large-scale, tourist-oriented festivals whose development is often undertaken without a set of coherent goals (Quinn 2010) and without meaningful public input (Roth and Frank 2000; Waite 2008), while their financial failings are often fixed by opening the public purse (Gold and Gold 2005). To further complicate matters, the purported long-term benefits of policy 'festivalization' seem to be in fact mixed at best—both for cities and for festivals themselves, as those that fail to adequately fill the demand for visibility-friendly spectacles find themselves with dwindling support in an increasingly crowded market (Quinn 2010; Finkel 2009). In this vein, Finkel gives the name "McFestivalization" to the processes by which urban arts festivals, conscripted into place promotion by local entrepreneurial actors and forced to compete for increasingly scant resources, become commercialized and homogenized to the point of sameness (2004, cited in Sassatelli 2008a, 71).

This particular 'festivalization' theme tends to investigate the various roles played by governments, business interests, the media, public and private organizations, and policy-makers in driving the festival frenzy, with authors generally offering quite a grounded account of the roles of particular actors in the process (e.g. Roth and Frank 2000; Belghazi 2006; Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007). It focuses largely upon the decisions by urban elites to recruit festivals into the larger project of creating a specific image for their city, and the tensions and views of differing stakeholders. One may justifiably ask whether the creation of such an image is not only tethered to, superimposed upon, but *part of* the city itself; the third common usage of 'festivalization' can potentially be understood to answer in the affirmative.

### *Encroachment Into Other Domains*

In the last of its common guises, ‘festivalization’ refers to a change in everyday urban life whereby a wide range of experiences become, or are approached as, somehow festival-like. This may involve festival’s displacement or erosion of an implicitly previously intact, festival-less everyday life, or it may involve the becoming-everyday of festival itself. Rather than ‘traditional’ festival hallmarks like ephemerality, extraordinariness, or joy, many uses of ‘festivalization’ in this context most strongly imply commodification and spectacle, in step with the tendencies of current critiques. For instance, Maria Gravari-Barbas uses the term in the context of discussing the encroaching presence of festivals and festiveness in every domain of urban life, describing a “gradual shift from the *supportive city of specific festive events* (which has always been the case in cities of all eras) towards the *festive city*” (2007, 393, my translation, italics in original). She sees festivalization as a crucial dimension of the increasing role of cultural consumption in defining individual identity, and emphasizes the importance of understanding its spatial implications. P.L. van Elderen offers a similar view of festivalization as “the symbolic transformation of public space to a particular form of cultural consumption” (1997, quoted in Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007, 106). In an early article, Greg Richards warns cities to “guard against the development of ‘festivalisation’ which threatens their cultural sustainability through the commercialisation of everyday life,” alienating local populations at the expense of tourist-oriented spectacles (2000, 179).<sup>14</sup> As with some critiques of contemporary festivals discussed previously, these uses of ‘festivalization’ seem to imply that, in the wake of the festival boom, the festival/spectacle distinction is weakened; the logic of capital and the search for individual entertainment overtake the classical anthropological understandings of festivals as joyous, collective celebrations. With this account of festivalization we seem to be in danger once again of overlooking important social and collective potential for festivals—just as those actors who instrumentalize festivals without

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<sup>14</sup> Richards’s later discussion of festivalization in Catalunya offers a more nuanced account of the concept (2007).



due care may be accused of doing (Quinn 2005). Festivalization on this view does sometimes veer towards one side of the “dichotomic vision” that relegates festivals to the ‘lost’ pile of consumer capitalism rather than taking them, commodification and all, as “significant expression[s] of contemporary public culture” (Sassatelli 2008b, 24).

In fact, in addition to its attraction as an explanatory term for the commodification of urban cultural experiences, the idea of ‘festivalization’ offers us a suggestion about the function of festivals as a sense-making frame or technique of navigation in urban space that is quite revealing. This thread of meaning suggests that as festivals become common occurrences in cities, their strategies for attracting and managing attention are more readily absorbed and employed to organize and control other urban experiences. A particularly helpful elucidation of the potential of this use appears in Marijke de Valck’s book on film festivals (2007). In contrast to accounts of festivals that belabour their disorienting and chaotic effects, de Valck draws on Jonathan Crary’s work on the management of attention to suggest that festivals “are very well equipped to ‘guide’ people through the sensory overload they encounter in their daily lives” (196). People may attend a festival without knowing exactly what to expect since, as de Valck notes, there is a carefully choreographed itinerization and reassuring structure that somewhat paradoxically enables spontaneous, last-minute decisions. Marjana Johansson and Jerzy Kociatkiewicz also understand the urban festival as an “organizational form” that facilitates choreographed experiences of a city which contribute to the impression of a “distinctive identity” (2011, 393–394). Their analysis of the Stockholm Culture Festival finds that “[a] new map is in effect drawn up by the festival, where the designated main locations constitute the nodes of an experience-based topography” (399). Understood as temporary topographical reconfigurations of urban space, festivals provide “a focal point for the reorganization of the flow, pace and navigability of the city space” (396). The tension between festivals and the everyday persists, however; as Johansson and Kociatkiewicz assert, “the festivalized city can be seen as existing outside, or perhaps parallel to, the everyday” (394). This particular inflection of

festivalization, then, could be extended to the adoption of particular ways of experiencing phenomena that are not typically included in the category of festivals, including everyday urban life, while leaving the normative value of the term open to be determined by examining particular situations.

In her dissertation on the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., Reilly proposes that “‘festivalization’ refers to the transmission between the audience and theatrically framed events through the tourist gaze” (2009, 93). The tourist gaze, in John Urry’s oft-cited formulation, seeks “features of the landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience,” which are “taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary” (1990, 3). Festivalization as it relates to the tourist gaze suggests a scaffold for experiencing urban spaces that seeks the extraordinary with a particular “interest and curiosity” but also a specific set of expectations (Urry 1990, 3), whether or not one is actually a tourist. What’s more, these expectations seem to arise from a mutually reinforcing dance between the consumer-citizen or tourist’s expectation of extra-ordinary entertainment, and the expectation of the cultural producer, architect, planner, or official of gaining benefits in ‘ordinary’ policy areas by reproducing a festive atmosphere. This understanding of ‘festivalization’ brings us once again to a question posed earlier: if being somehow out of the ordinary is a characteristic of festival, how are we to understand the framing of the ordinary *as* festival (and of the festival *as* ordinary)? Muray provides us with one possible answer: “In the hyperfestive world, the festival [*la fête*] is no longer in opposition, or in contradiction, with everyday life; it becomes the everyday itself, all the everyday and nothing but the everyday” (1999, quoted in Gravari-Barbas 2007, 390, my translation). Muray’s provocative assertion calls us to the project of tracing the patterns of imbrication between the festival and the city and challenging the classic notion of a ‘time out of time.’ It is also an invitation to consider carefully the effects of festivalization upon our understandings of festivals and cities as objects of enquiry, theorization, and experience.

## Conclusion

Following her comprehensive review of literature on mixed urban arts festivals (the sort which are most prone to accusations of being mere spectacles), Sassatelli issues a call for “analytical concepts that can account for the complex, relational and processual nature of festivals, both as organizations and as experiences,” in contrast to the “fixed, stable dichotomies” this literature most often supplies (2008a, 74). In its barest form as an English word, festivalization implies change and process, the becoming-like-a-festival of an entity—usually a city’s culture, everyday life, policy, or the city itself—and possibly even the oscillation of identification between a city and a festival. The concept of festivalization may well have as much to say about cities as it does about festivals; either way, I hope to demonstrate its potential as a candidate to answer Sassatelli’s call. Beginning with the uses of this term that I have outlined, I will build an argument throughout this project that exploring different dimensions of festivalization can allow us to address some of the lingering questions in current conversations about festivals and urban space. I propose that the concept of festivalization provides a way to understand how festivals spill through their spatial and temporal boundaries to participate in mundane urban life while also helping to crystallize particular visions of the city within the urban imaginary (Çinar and Bender 2007; LiPuma and Koelble 2005; Bélanger 2005). Perhaps a way to get beyond the dualistic discussions of festival that are criticized by so many commentators (Sassatelli 2008b, 2008a; Waterman 1998) is to shift the area of focus from festivals’ content and meaning, or their threats to authentic experience, to the ways in which they come to infuse urban imaginaries and circulate in urban metabolisms. Of course, this is empirically very difficult to study; in the chapters to follow, I can only offer an exploration of this rather theoretical question grounded in and guided by the specific context of Montréal.

## Chapter 2

### Image and Imaginary:

#### The Evolution of Montréal's Festival Landscape

“Montréal n'existe que de façon quantique, de sursaut d'énergie en sursaut d'énergie ou, pour le dire dans les termes mêmes de la rumeur urbaine, Montréal n'existe que de festival en festival. ... N'espérez ni faire des affaires ni oeuvrer dans le culturel à Montréal si vous ne *pensez* pas *festival*, si vous ne créez pas de festival, si vous ne possédez pas votre festival.”

(“Montréal exists only in a quantum fashion, from burst of energy to burst of energy or, to put it in the very words of the urban rumour, Montréal exists only from festival to festival. ... Don't hope to do business or work in the cultural realm in Montréal if you don't *think festival*, if you don't create a festival, if you don't possess your own festival.”)

Pierre Popovic (1995, 123, my translation, italics in original)

### Introduction

Festivals rely heavily on the resources of cities in which they occur, and as far as festival sustenance is concerned, one of the most precious resources is arguably the identity of a city. Stories, histories, conflicts, and shared understandings that circulate in and around a particular place provide festivals with resources to fashion for themselves—and, of course, for the city in question—a coherent image that appeals to both tourists and locals. In much the same way, urban branding campaigns are often crafted to showcase a city's festive colours at their very best, confirming the close ties between the presence of festivals and the city's desirability as it is understood by the administrators, politicians, and organizations behind these campaigns. Festivals act as prime

examples of a city's particular celebratory spirit, communicating something intangible yet indispensable about its character. Likewise, the fact of taking place in a given city imbues a festival with an aura of interest that exceeds its time and territory. This process of mutual mediation and identification between cities and festivals has been widely noted (e.g. Johansson and Kociatkiewicz 2011; Reilly 2009; Schmidt 2010), and is very much in evidence in Montréal. To take one rather symmetrical example, an English-language radio spot promoting the 2012 Montréal International Jazz Festival mentioned, in French, the city's famous "*joie de vivre*"; meanwhile, the 2011–2012 official tourist map and guide produced by Tourisme Montréal (a private nonprofit organization that works to develop and promote Montréal as a tourist destination)<sup>15</sup> display on their covers a photograph of a crowded Place des Festivals in all its Jazz Festival finery.<sup>16</sup> Showcased as such, Montréal and what is arguably its premier festival seem suited to vouch for one another.

If an image of one festival (albeit the cream of the massive summer festival crop) can be chosen to communicate Montréal's particular *je ne sais quoi*, we can imagine the promising potential of a whole "City of Festivals." This slogan has become one of Montréal's most frequently invoked identities, and persists even with the addition of "City of Design," thanks to the city's UNESCO designation as such, and "Montréal, Cultural Metropolis," which as the title of the city's present cultural policy project seems equal parts affirmation and aspiration. Credit for "City of Festivals" has been claimed by Alain Simard, proprietor of

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<sup>15</sup> Tourisme Montréal is funded by three levels of government as well as membership dues, "fees for promotional and advertising campaigns," and the City of Montréal's accommodation tax, a 3.5% rate levied on accommodation bookings (except campsites) of more than six hours and less than 31 days. See "Mission," Tourisme Montréal, accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/Montreal-Tourism/About-TM/Mission>; and "Legal Notice," Tourisme Montréal, accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/Notice-Regarding-Bookings>.

<sup>16</sup> See "Official Tourist Guide 2011-2012," Tourisme Montréal, accessed August 4, 2012, <http://docs.tourisme-montreal.org/doc/tourisme-montreal/guide-2011-2012-en/2011062101/#0>.

Equipe Spectra, a multi-pronged entertainment company that produces three of Montréal's largest and most well-known festivals: the Jazz Festival, Montréal en lumière, and Les FrancoFolies de Montréal. At the time of its proposal, in 1996, Simard was a member of the Board of Directors of Tourisme Montréal (Simard 2005b). The moniker has since been taken up, either word-for-word or in spirit, by the Ville de Montréal,<sup>17</sup> Tourisme Montréal (whose website as of this writing trumpets Montréal's "Endless Urban Festival"),<sup>18</sup> Montréal International (a non-profit created to attract external business activity and investment),<sup>19</sup> the Québec government's online tourist portal,<sup>20</sup> and various other actors—including hotels,<sup>21</sup> building developers,<sup>22</sup> business associations,<sup>23</sup> post-secondary institutions,<sup>24</sup> and

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<sup>17</sup> See "Festivals and Events," Ville de Montréal, updated continuously, accessed July 20, 2012, [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?\\_pageid=4517,7008714&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=4517,7008714&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL).

<sup>18</sup> "An Endless Urban Festival," Tourisme Montréal, accessed July 24, 2012, <http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/Press/Itineraries-by-theme/Events-and-Entertainment>.

<sup>19</sup> "Cultural Life," Montréal International, accessed July 20, 2012, <http://www.montrealinternational.com/live-cultural-life/>. Montréal International receives private, institutional, and government funding. See "Mission and Mandates," accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.montrealinternational.com/mission-mandates>.

<sup>20</sup> "Montréal," Bonjour Québec, accessed July 20, 2012, <http://www.bonjourquebec.com/qc-en/montreal0.html>.

<sup>21</sup> See for example "Downtown Montréal Attractions and Events," Le Westin Montréal, accessed August 4, 2012, <http://www.westinmontreal.com/montrealattractions.html>.

<sup>22</sup> See for example "Festival and Events," Lofts des Arts in the Quartier des Spectacles, accessed August 4, 2012, [http://www.loftsdesarts.com/lofts/en/festival\\_events.html](http://www.loftsdesarts.com/lofts/en/festival_events.html).

<sup>23</sup> See for example "Events," Crescent Street Merchants' Association, accessed July 20, 2012, [http://www.crescentmontreal.com/en\\_crescent\\_events.htm](http://www.crescentmontreal.com/en_crescent_events.htm).

<sup>24</sup> See for example the prospective student recruitment web pages of HEC Montréal (accessed August 4, 2012, [http://www.hec.ca/en/prospective\\_student/montreal/index.html](http://www.hec.ca/en/prospective_student/montreal/index.html)) and LaSalle College (accessed August 4, 2012, <http://www.lasallecollege.com/future-students/international-students/living-in-montreal.aspx>).

certain festivals themselves in their marketing materials.<sup>25</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, many accounts suggest that this kind of strategic relationship between festivals and cities is, almost paradoxically, what allows festivals to act as ‘times out of time’ and ‘places out of place.’ Just as slogans might be thought of as optimistic, selective representations of the tangled realities of urban identity, so festivals may present heavily edited and perhaps even censored experiences of their host cities. The massive festivals held at Place des Festivals, a 100 000-capacity plaza cradled in Montréal’s recently revitalized downtown entertainment district, the Quartier des Spectacles, exemplify this tension of connection and disconnection between a festival and its urban environs. The plaza’s delineated space acts as a scaffold for each new festival to decorate with elaborate lighting designs, staging arrangements, and vendor stalls. Access to its grounds, even during free events, can be controlled with temporary fencing and security personnel conducting bag searches. Functioning as a centralized and carefully planned node of the city’s festive effusion, the Place des Festivals does often feel once removed from its surroundings, even as it draws Montréalers and tourists alike to the city centre on warm summer nights.

The boundaries of the Place des Festivals, however, are far from coterminous with the boundaries of festivalization in Montréal. When mapped onto the evolving relationships between cultural policy, pursuit of international attention, and image-building, in Montréal’s case the idea of festivals as pseudo-connected ‘times out of time’ or ‘places out of place’ calls out for examination. Like many official slogans, “Montréal, City of Festivals” centralizes a complex set of associations and trades in self-aggrandizing pithiness while somehow touching upon a perception that is shared and recounted by many citizens and visitors alike, whether with adoration or irritation, and not only by those with a

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<sup>25</sup> See for example the 2011 International Startup Festival (“Venue,” accessed August 4, 2012, <http://www.startupfestival.com/2011/en/attend/>) and the 2012 (inaugural) Montréal Uke Festival (“À Propos,” accessed August 4, 2012, <http://montrealukefest.com/a-propos/>).

direct interest in putting Montréal on the cultural tourism map.<sup>26</sup> The links between Montréal and festivity are longstanding and strong; as suggested by the article from which this chapter takes its epigraph, they have even left a noticeable imprint upon novelists' depictions of the city (Popovic 1995).<sup>27</sup> Filtering the dimensions of Montréal's identity as "City of Festivals" through the concept of the urban imaginary, it becomes difficult to speak of an unedited Montréal as existing prior to, or outside, festivalized articulations of it—and to imagine how Montréal might have been, or might still be, protected from festivalization without crucial elements of its history being edited out altogether.

### **A Short History of Montréal, City of Festivals**

The use of festivals to attract tourists and investors is often understood as symptomatic of the particular challenges facing postindustrial cities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, we can reach back to Montréal's nineteenth-century industrial zenith for stories of festivals mobilized in the name of business and prestige, and to see their longstanding use in the project of crystallizing Montréal's identity in strategic ways. Setting the stage for his study of Montréal's public memory from 1891 to 1930, historian Alan Gordon follows Pierre Nora in describing public memory as "internalized and felt by individuals as intrinsic to their own experience," even where elite gatekeepers select its contents and expression (Gordon 2001, 6). Both public memory and festivals, Gordon writes, are concerned with connecting "a specific past" with "a certain site," thus "contest[ing] ideological terrains as they compete to claim spatial territories" (10). Festivals have long been occasions during which

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<sup>26</sup> When I tell a friend or new acquaintance for the first time that I am writing a thesis on festivals, nine times out of ten their immediate response is something along the lines of: "Oh, well, you're in the perfect city for that!"

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, Popovic suggests that the "festivalesque" might be a more appropriate theoretical lens with which to examine novelistic depictions of Montréal than the popular choice of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque (1995). In his view, festivals negotiate a kind of shared materialistic emptiness, exemplified by



identities are performed, linked to material urban sites, and strengthened or contested among attendees and observers. Their power as such makes them an attractive medium through which various actors in Montréal have attempted to stabilize the identity of the city and its constituent groups, seeking to effect or capitalize upon changes in its economic and cultural fortunes.

*Late 1800s to Mid-1900s: From Winter Carnival to Sin City*

In the late nineteenth century, boosterist sentiment and hopes of increased sales led businesses in Montréal to begin organizing tourist-oriented festivals (Gordon 2001, 151). Gordon writes that this drive was inspired by the success of the 1874 Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day celebrations (June 24, Québec's national holiday), which flooded Montréal's hotels with 250 train cars full of francophone Americans. With this promising precedent, festivals took hold "as tourist attractions" with the support of the city's cultural and economic elite (151). Yet as Gordon notes, these early tourist festivals were influenced, and sometimes impeded, by divisions of Montréalers along linguistic, religious, ethnic, and cultural lines.<sup>28</sup> Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, for instance, was an identity-building nexus primarily for French Canadians, and was molded over the course of its existence to reflect the shifting purposes of political reformers, the church, temperance advocates, and the ruling classes, while retaining a more boisterous and populist dimension through parish community and working-class celebrations, as Gordon describes. Even as the *fête nationale* demonstrated its value as a tourist attraction in the 1890s, and as corporate and media sponsorships entered the picture in the first years of the 1900s, the holiday festival was still a meaningful locus of reinforcement for local French-Canadian identity.

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the commercialized city, which is a better fit for Montréal than the uninhibited festive laugh and true social inversion of carnival.

<sup>28</sup> This mythos finds expression today in modified form through references to the city as a cosmopolitan crossroads of languages and cultures, whether at the level of neighbourhoods like Mile End (Germain and Radice 2006), in the discourse of creative cities and classes (Stolarick and Florida 2006), or in service of neoliberal business interests (Paul 2004).

Meanwhile, as Don Morrow writes, the city's Winter Carnival, one of the tourist festivals developed in the 1880s, was "dominated by anglophone interests" (1996, 176). This event, run by a committee of powerful local businessmen, saw anglophone Montréal's penchant for winter sports converted into a grand festival. Organizers sent invitations to important American figures, and festival activities were covered in northeastern American newspapers in addition to extensive coverage by local outlets.

At this stage, local actors were quite conscious of the ways in which festivals could represent their city and Canada to the rest of the world, for better or for worse. Gordon writes, for instance, of Montréalers' concern that too much winter imagery at the Winter Carnival would lead Europeans and Americans to imagine the city and its country as frozen wastelands (2001, 152). Meanwhile, judging by Morrow's description (1996), the self-congratulatory tone of promotional material for the Carnival that was circulated to the United States would be only slightly out of place in most present-day festival or city marketing campaigns. In fact, the Winter Carnival appears to have demonstrated some attributes which are often listed, not without a hint of disappointed nostalgia, as characteristic of festivals in postindustrial urban contexts: it was choreographed, commercialized, carefully planned, and covered in near-obsessive detail by the media of the time. Morrow argues that the Carnival's "hollow dramas of Montréal sporting myths" were a mere means to serve the spirit of carnival; the emphasis was not on sport, but rather "an attitude of revelry, of celebration, of street festival with expression, form and process" (187). As much as festivals circulated and strengthened specific ideas about Montréal and Montréalers, then, festival organizers incorporated aspects of the city's identity for the purpose of nourishing the festival. Montréal and the Winter Carnival had entered a deal not unlike those that would flourish a century later, in which city and festival "trade on each other's reputations" (Schmidt 2010, 87), drawing upon each other's mythological vocabularies to strengthen their appeal under the deliberate guidance of local media, politicians, businesses, and cultural and economic elites. As mediators of identity, both of Montréal itself and its constituent cultural groups, festivals were

implicated in the relationships of actors, stakes, and distributions of power that composed the city, even as their organizers increasingly set their sights on exterior tourist markets.

Montréal further developed its reputation for revelry well into the mid-twentieth century. In the 1920s, during Prohibition, the city famously became a watering-hole for Americans and Canadians who flocked there to take advantage of Québec's comparatively lenient liquor laws and Montréal's de facto tolerance of gambling (Darroch 2003; Bélanger 2005; Weintraub 1996). Anchored in nightclubs, casinos, cabarets, and brothels near the southern stretch of Boulevard St. Laurent, or "the Lower Main"—an area which, thanks to its history and symbolic stature, has become an anchorage point of the Quartier des Spectacles—this vibrant nightlife secured Montréal's reputation as Canada's Sin City over the course of the following decades (Straw 1992). Although this risqué urban identity was not part of an overt administrative branding scheme, local authorities were bought out by graft and sometimes even developed chummy connections with madams and other characters of the underworld (Weintraub 1996). The subversive appeal of the city during these years, in Michael Darroch's words, "has been engraved into Montréal's urban imaginary ... and remains a part of Montréal's place-myth as a city of festivity" (2003, 133). Festivals themselves seem not to have been primary foci for that place-myth during this era, however. The year 1936 did see the establishment of a fledgling festival, the Festival de musique de Montréal, which by 1939 was connected to an official organization hoping to provide Montréal with its own annual summer festival to rival those of Europe (Huot n.d.). However, the organization folded in 1965, in debt from its support of the construction of the Place des Arts in 1963 and overshadowed by preparations for Expo 67 (Huot n.d.), itself a consequential moment in the development of Montréal's festival landscape.

### *1960s to 1980s: Expo, Openness, and the Search for Investment*

In addition to its success as "the highwater mark of the international exposition movement" (Gold and Gold 2005, 106), Expo 67 was a moment of

purposeful administrative redirection of festivity in Montréal's international reputation. By the 1960s, Montréal was in the process of receding from its own highwater mark of economic influence in Canada, with much of its economic activity, including many anglophone businesses, moving south to Toronto. Annick Germain and Damaris Rose contend that Montréal's economic decline had been in progress since the 1920s, with Toronto quite well established as the top choice for corporate headquarters by the 1960s (2000). Yet with the modernizing changes brought into place during the Quiet Revolution, Montréal's elites—most notably, then-mayor Jean Drapeau—were ready to open its doors to the world. Conscious of the powerful symbolism of the project, Drapeau and his allies lobbied forcefully for the city to host Expo 67 (Paul 2004). They also undertook a “moral and physical cleaning” of the strips of nightlife around the Lower Main, intending to reconfigure the area as “certainly still festive, but from then on proper, moral and safe” (Bélanger 2005, 23, my translation). Montréal's festive character was a crucial pivot point in official attempts to revise its reputation, converting the city's infamous openness to iniquitous revelry into a more respectable openness to the world and to the pockets of potential business investors.

Even an exposition that sought to evoke nothing less than “Man and His World” could not escape the specific physical and symbolic geography of Montréal, which shaped and was shaped by Expo 67 in definitive and enduring ways. Waste land matter from the construction of the city's underground metro—itsself a statement of Montréal's forward-thinking urbanness—was conscripted to elongate Île Sainte-Hélène and to build Île Notre-Dame; together, in the Saint Lawrence River close to Montréal's main island, the two small islands comprised the exposition site. Metro paths to the islands were redesigned at extra cost to ensure adequate connections to the eastern, predominantly francophone, part of Montréal (Gold and Gold 2005, 119). Preparations for Expo 67 also saw the construction of characteristic features of Montréal's downtown, including Place Ville-Marie and the underground city (Gold and Gold, 122). Key elements of the city's vehicular traffic infrastructure (for example, Autoroute Décarie and the

Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine bridge and tunnel) were also built in expectation of the event (Library and Archives Canada). In addition to these landmark projects, which laid important groundwork for the city's physical circulatory flows, Expo 67 left a legacy of ludic infrastructure. The two islands, renamed Parc Jean-Drapeau in memory of the visionary mayor, live on as a site for festivals whose size, character, and need for secured boundaries mesh with the connected isolation its environs provide, such as Osheaga (alternative music), Heavy MTL (metal and hard rock), and the Formula 1 Grand Prix.<sup>29</sup> Expo 67 left an indelible imprint through the physical infrastructure that was built to support—and still feeds—Montréal's identity as a world-class metropolis, but it also symbolically imprinted those physical structures already in existence which were designated as incompatible with that vision of the city. As Will Straw writes, "Expo '67 left clear distinctions in the city's imagination between those buildings and institutions that partook of its forward-looking sensibility" and those, like the Palais du Commerce—or, in the view of city officials, the nightlife of the Lower Main—that did not (2009, sec. 3 para. 14).

The international welcome of Expo 67 was echoed, though in a less grandiose form, in the 1980s through an increasing interest in Montréal's cultural tourism potential. After a prolonged dip in tourist numbers following the disastrous 1976 Winter Olympics and in the midst of a continuing economic rut, city administrators, economic elites, and provincial government committees looked to cultural industries and tourism to assuage Montréal's economic woes, albeit in a more diffuse manner than the mega-events of the Drapeau era

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<sup>29</sup> The 2012 Formula 1 Grand Prix, which took place against a backdrop of nightly protests over proposed tuition hikes and the Liberal government's controversial anti-protest bill, reinforced Parc Jean-Drapeau's potential to be essentially sealed off from undesirable attendees. Following word of a possible protest, the practical boundaries of the festival site were extended as far as the metro line connecting to the island, as riders deemed suspicious by city police were in some cases questioned, detained, or turned away before they reached the festival gates (see Ravensbergen 2012). The situation provided an important reminder of the contingency of the publicness of many festival spaces. I will discuss these protests, and festival boundaries as well, in Chapter 3.

(Germain and Rose 2000; Levine 2003; Paul 2004). Cultural production already enjoyed an enviable base level of governmental support. As a mainly francophone island in a predominantly francophone province, which is itself an island in a predominantly anglophone country and continent, Montréal benefited in the 1960s and 1970s from the Québec government's focus on culture as a means of nourishing the province's distinctive identity in Canada, largely by way of promoting cultural expression in French (Saint-Pierre 2011). The budget of the province's cultural ministry grew from \$94.5 million in 1980–1981 to about \$260 million in 1990–1991, and reached \$652 million in 2009–2010, notwithstanding government cutbacks and economic struggle in other areas at various points in time (Saint-Pierre 2011, 219–220). As the largest urban area in Québec, Montréal hosts the production of a large share of Québec's cultural offerings, and directly or indirectly partakes of a large amount of its funding dollars. Since the 1980s, the allocation of these funds has been increasingly guided by neoliberal—or, as Monica Gattinger and Diane Saint-Pierre have suggested, “quasi-neoliberal”—principles, emphasizing market-friendly cultural industries, profitable cultural enterprises, and employment-generating sectors (2010, 285). Whereas the Parti Québécois government elected in 1976 focused on festivals as expressions of traditional Québécois cultural symbols, the Liberal government elected in 1985 shifted the focus from festivals' symbolic content to their forms of management and potential as drivers of tourism (Schwimmer 1994, 160–161). As part of a project of cultural policy decentralization that spurred autonomous public arts agencies and an increased focus on partnerships with the private sector (Gattinger and Saint-Pierre 2010), Québec's cultural policy of 1992 stressed municipalities' role in encouraging local cultural engagement and participation, and tied funding to this responsibility through provincial-municipal agreements which have continued to be renewed (de la Durantaye 2002). Urban cultural tourism was a strong fit for this policy climate, with the spotlight shifting to economic imperatives and municipal-level approaches. It captured public and private sector hopes as a potential “major motor of the new Montréal economy” (Germain and Rose 2000, 155).

The 1970s and 1980s had seen the establishment of some of Montréal's foremost festivals and events, among them the Festival du nouveau cinéma in 1971, the Montréal World Film Festival in 1976, the Jazz Festival in 1980, Just for Laughs in 1983, and Festival International Nuits d'Afrique in 1986. They were not necessarily welcomed on all fronts; early editions of the Jazz Festival were greeted with indifference from potential funders and resistance from the municipal administration—notably from Jean Drapeau, still mayor, for whom jazz was an unpleasant reminder of the city's erstwhile vice-ridden period (Simard 2005a, 24). In time, however, with festivals' growing contributions to the international visibility of Montréal and its cultural and artistic communities, they were recognized as attractive means of connecting the promising puzzle pieces of tourism, culture, and economic development. After the Montréal Economic Summit of June 1986, a Task Force on Cultural Industries was created; it released a report the following year, published by La Chambre de commerce de Montréal and the Montréal Board of Trade (The Cultural Industry and an International Vision for Montreal: Report of the Task Force on Cultural Industries 1987). The report praises the tourist draw and economic revenue of the city's large festivals, along with two major artistic and museum exhibitions that had been mounted in 1985, calling them “major cultural ‘leaders’ from the perspective of reputation, and on economic impact as well as financial autonomy” (45). Further, the Task Force specifically “asks the Board and La Chambre to promote the development of the International Film and Jazz Festivals” (45). In August 1991, the Québec government's Ministry of Cultural Affairs released a report titled *La culture : partenaire dans la relance du Grand Montréal* (Culture: A Partner in the Revival of Greater Montréal; 1991) which names major events such as the Jazz Festival, Just for Laughs, the Festival de théâtre des Amériques (predecessor of the current Festival TransAmériques), the Montréal World Film Festival, and FrancoFolies as important tourist attractions and vehicles of distribution for the work of Montréal's artistic and cultural communities. These documents point to an interest in festivals on the part of influential provincial and municipal actors which would find itself further developed in the 1990s.

As this overview has so far suggested, festivalization, at least in the sense of the instrumentalization of festivals for prestige and profit, has deep roots in Montréal. In terms of festivalization as an increased number of festivals and festive events—the notion of a festival boom—Montréal presents what is in some ways a textbook case. The interest in Montréal’s economic development by way of tourism and culture, evident by the late 1980s, was followed by a significant festival boom in the 1990s. Broadly speaking, this timeline aligns with accounts of festivalization in general and notably in European cities, which around this time were also placing a greater emphasis on tourism and culture as mechanisms to hoist themselves out of periods of economic drought. Quinn, for instance, pinpoints the onset of a widespread rise in urban arts festivals in the late 1980s, as cities faced increasing pressure to differentiate themselves from the pack in the face of rising interurban competition (2005, 931). Along these lines, Anne-Marie Autissier writes that regional and municipal festivals in Europe began to occupy increasingly strategic roles with regard to tourism, regional image-building, and quality of life in the 1980s (2008, 36), all of which were concerns in Montréal as well around this time period. Montréal’s festival boom placed it in good company with a cohort of cities undergoing similar challenges, in a climate of rising consciousness of and concerns around cultural tourism, and yet there were particular factors at play in Montréal’s development as a City of Festivals—for instance, with regard to municipal cultural policy, locally developed infrastructures, and the auspicious timing of a major event—that merit examination.

### *1990s: Onset of a Festival Boom*

While the 1980s saw the establishment of a solid crop of festivals in Montréal and a growing interest in their potential cultural and economic power, the 1990s saw Montréal’s festival offerings gathering momentum that would in many ways sustain the development of its festival landscape to the present day. A study commissioned by the Bureau des festivals et des événements culturels (Festival and Cultural Event Office)—an office of the Ville de Montréal that



offers centralized promotional, technical, and financial support to festivals, as well as coordinating the use of outdoor urban space for performances and other events—indicates that as of the 2006 festival season, half of the 58 festivals that were receiving regular support from the Bureau had been established within the preceding ten years (Leclerc 2007, 13). Newly founded festivals as well as those already in existence began to establish a greater presence in urban public space during the 1990s, and the specific importance of festivals as part of Montréal's identity—both from a local perspective and, as ever, with an eye to the international stage—began to rise.

The year 1992 in particular brought a catalyst of sorts for the city's blossoming festival landscape: its 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary, an occasion for which much federal, provincial, and municipal funding was injected into cultural tourism projects (Germain and Rose 2000, 154). The Ville de Montréal intended to celebrate in memorable fashion with a budget to match, and charged the Bureau des festivals (which had been established in 1987) with overseeing a year-long program of events and artistic projects in honour of the occasion.<sup>30</sup> While the city already boasted a number of highly regarded discipline-focused artistic festivals by 1992, some of which had begun to inhabit outdoor urban space to fulfill the artistic needs of specific performances (Tourangeau 1988),<sup>31</sup> less than a dozen had made a habit of installing themselves in outdoor public space for their duration.<sup>32</sup> The 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations helped both existing and new projects, festivals, and events to grow,<sup>33</sup> as various public and private actors began to realize some of the advantages that festivals in general, and outdoor events specifically, had to offer. Artists and festival organizers found great benefit in

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<sup>30</sup> Petel, Alain, and Diane Régimbald (respectively Commissioner and Agent of Cultural Development, Bureau des festivals et des événements culturels, Ville de Montreal), interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> This fact was also mentioned by Diane Régimbald (interview with author [with Alain Petel], Montréal, July 11, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

festivals' capacity to act as professional laboratories in which connections could be created and nourished in a relatively cost-effective manner, launching opportunities for international and intramunicipal networking.<sup>34</sup> In addition to contributing to the visibility of a particular artistic discipline or cultural community, festivals' potential to make Montréal itself visible at an international level became widely recognized during this decade.<sup>35</sup> Audiences, meanwhile, were afforded access to free and often prestigious festival events held in public spaces; accessibility to culture remains part of the motivation of the Ville de Montréal in facilitating festivals' presence in public space.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Germain and Rose mention the level of free access to festival events in spaces like closed-off city streets as a distinguishing factor of Montréal's festival offerings compared to other North American cities (2000, 157). However, they also note that with the increasing presence of festivals in public spaces during the mid-1990s, groups of homeless youth and 'squeegie kids' who had sought some form of seasonal refuge downtown found themselves pushed even further to the margins (158).

As Montréal's festivals began to bloom, structured approaches and partnerships began to take shape in the interest of stabilizing and buttressing the developing festival landscape. Among these were a number of festival-themed working groups and organizations. The Bureau des festivals, for instance, convened a coordinating committee of public partners starting in 1990 (Leclerc 2007, 34). In 1996, the body that would become the Conférence régionale des Élus (Regional conference of elected officials of Montréal) created the Groupe de travail sur les festivals et les grands événements de l'île de Montréal (Working group on festivals and major events of the island of Montréal). This working group eventually led to the establishment of a representation and lobby group called Festivals Montréal (later renamed Les Événements artistiques unis de Montréal, roughly translating to United Artistic Events of Montréal) that would

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<sup>34</sup> Régimbald, Diane, interview with author (with Alain Petel), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

exist until 2002 (Leclerc 2007, 34). Meanwhile, following the events of 1992, the Bureau des festivals had recognized the need for emerging events and festivals to capitalize on their momentum and build a measure of permanence, and in 1997 it introduced a publicity, promotion, and financing program aimed at festivals and cultural events.<sup>37</sup> The Bureau also worked with various city departments to coordinate a system of services adapted to the needs of festivals and events taking place in outdoor public spaces.<sup>38</sup> Private sector suppliers, increasingly called upon to serve the particular needs of outdoor events, also developed services to suit them.<sup>39</sup> Although some of the formal organizations created during this time did not last, the drive to create partnerships and structures to take full advantage of Montréal's festivals continues to this day.

The 1990s festival boom was ushered along by the actions of governments, festival promoters, artists, and other organizations, but it did not take place under the banner of an overarching municipal cultural policy. As mentioned above, the Québec government had released a cultural policy in 1992 that decentralized its responsibility for the cultural sector, both within the provincial government (amongst some 20 ministries and public arms-length agencies) and between the provincial and municipal governments (Saint-Pierre 2011, 207). At this time, the province also encouraged municipalities to develop municipal cultural policies, with the result that about 80% of the municipal cultural policies studied in a provincial survey in 1998 had been adopted after 1992, with over half of that group instituted between 1995 and 1997 (Gouvernement du Québec 2000). Montréal, however, appears not to have been one of these. Although it is listed in a 1997 municipal cultural policy implementation guide as one of the municipalities having instituted such a policy (Gouvernement du Québec 1997), the aforementioned government study specifies

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<sup>36</sup> Petel, Alain, and Diane Régimbald, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

that Montréal's cultural policy was in fact an assortment of sectoral policies rather than one unified document. The Ville had been entering partnerships with the provincial government in the areas of culture and heritage for some time; it concluded agreements with the provincial culture ministry in 1992 and 1995 which addressed the areas of interculturalism, cultural animation, assistance to museums, and citizen access and participation.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, the province invested in large-scale cultural development and economic stimulus projects, including the protection and valorization of the district of Vieux-Montréal;<sup>41</sup> the Cité du Multimédia, an information technology cluster; and the Cité des arts du cirque (later renamed la TOHU) in the neighbourhood of Saint-Michel (Gattinger and Saint-Pierre 2010). Nonetheless, despite a generally supportive policy environment for cultural development, Montréal would go without a central cultural policy of its own until 2005, when a unified articulation of its identity as a cultural metropolis—pinning its international aspirations, once again, in part upon its festivals—was developed.

#### *2000s: City of Festivals Meets Cultural Metropolis*

Preliminary discussions for Montréal's municipal cultural policy took place in a climate of uncertainty regarding the city's administrative boundaries. As part of a province-wide municipal reorganization project under the Parti Québécois government elected in 1998, the patchwork of formerly separate municipalities on the island was merged in 2002 (prior to this, the territory of Montréal proper had been located mostly on the island's central and western parts). This was a contentious project, since both the city and its environs had been comprised of relatively fragmented neighbourhoods with distinct cultural and linguistic features, in part a lasting result of annexations in the late 1800s and

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<sup>40</sup> "Montréal : les premières ententes," Ministère de la Culture, des Communications, et de la Condition féminine, Gouvernement du Québec, accessed August 8, 2012, <http://www.mcccf.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=1481>.

<sup>41</sup> The Ministère invested about \$145 million into heritage projects, particularly focusing on Vieux-Montréal, through six agreements concluded with the Ville between 1979 and 2000. Ibid.

early 1900s as well as during Drapeau's mid-century tenure as mayor (Germain and Rose 2000). These years were further marked by shifting in Montréal's cultural organizations, with the new city's Service du développement culturel (SDC) mandated to harmonize its activities and funding programs with those of the Conseil des arts de Montréal (Montréal Arts Council) and with individual boroughs (Leclerc 2007, 32). Although the arrangement of *une île, une ville* was dissolved in 2006 under the new Liberal government (leaving Montréal proper with a net gain in territory and population), the municipal reorganization attempts had the overall effect of further tying Québec's local actors and territories into the project of determining their municipalities' cultural trajectories (Breux, Collin, and Négrier 2007). In Montréal, just after the 2002 merger, representatives from municipal and borough governments, business, culture, and various civil society groups participated in a two-month-long visioning process called the Montréal Summit to identify priorities and plans of action for the new municipality (Ville de Montréal 2005b). Discussions on the topic of a municipal cultural policy took place among those in attendance, leading to the creation of an advisory group, the release of a report and draft policy, and an extensive process of public consultation. These efforts culminated in the 2005 release of the current cultural policy, titled *Montréal, Cultural Metropolis*.<sup>42</sup>

The initial policy document released under *Montréal, Cultural Metropolis* links culture as a mediator between Montréal and the world, on the one hand, to its function as a mediator between Montréalers and their everyday environments, on the other, while preserving its significance for the particular situation of Montréal in Québec (Ville de Montréal 2005a). In terms of Montréal's intermunicipal competitiveness, its status as City of Festivals is invoked as something to be proud of and to protect. Noting the precariousness of festival funding and the spectre of increasing competition from other cities' festival slates,

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<sup>42</sup> The initial policy document had a timespan of 2005-2015. In 2007, following another process of consultation and discussion among representatives of community, business, education, arts, government, and civil society sectors, the

the policy proposes two long-term development plans: one for major festivals, a task which would fall to Tourisme Montréal, the Ville, and its “public partners”; and one for world-class artistic festivals showcasing contemporary works, delegated to the Conseil des Arts de Montréal, the Ville, and its “public partners” (Ville de Montréal 2005a, 44–45).<sup>43</sup> Echoing and deepening the hopes articulated in government reports over a decade earlier, *Montréal, Cultural Metropolis* demonstrates the confidence of policymakers and stakeholders in festivals’ ability to communicate Montréal’s cultural vivacity to the world, and to attract cultural and artistic offerings from around the world to enrich and inspire Montréalers in turn. Indeed, in recent years concerted efforts on the part of political, business, and cultural actors have sought to maximize the effectiveness of Montréal’s festival landscape as a constant nexus of international visibility, partly by filling perceived empty niches either in content or calendar. Montréal en lumière, whose first edition took place in 2000, was founded by Equipe Spectra with the support of Tourisme Montréal and l’Association des hôtels du Grand Montréal. It represented a conscious bid to lure Montréalers and tourists downtown in the wintry off-season, and in doing so to bolster the year-round livelihood of the City of Festivals brand (Simard 2010). Montréal Complètement Cirque, an eagerly awaited circus-themed addition to the festival landscape, was established in 2010 by la TOHU in collaboration with several circus organizations. It received over \$3 million in provincial and municipal funding before its first edition had left the ground (Montréal Gazette 2010), and the Ville expressed excitement for the festival’s potential to further cultivate Montréal’s international reputation as a

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timeline was revised to cover the years 2007-2017 and a concrete action plan was agreed upon with regard to the policy’s objectives (Brault 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Two festival categories are further specified in a report commissioned by the Bureau des festivals (Leclerc 2007, 11–12, 24–26). “Festivals de masse,” or major cultural events, have the occupation of outdoor urban space as a main goal and include the Jazz, Just for Laughs, FrancoFolies, Montréal en lumière, and World Film festivals. “Festivals disciplinaires,” or disciplinary festivals, meanwhile, focus mainly upon promoting the work of an artistic discipline or multidisciplinary milieu, but may also involve a certain presence in public space.

center of excellence not only in circus arts, but also in festivals (Ville de Montréal 2010c).

The festival boom of the 1990s spilled over into the following decade not only in the form of the continual sprouting of new festivals, but also in the form of funding, organizational structures, policy commitments, and centralized administrative articulations of festivals' role in contributing to and circulating Montréal's international reputation as a cultural hub. For instance, whereas festivals taking place downtown had previously made use of patchwork arrangements of public space, the Montréal Summit consolidated the political and economic will to create the Quartier des Spectacles in part as a centralized anchor for those festivals' activities.<sup>44</sup> Efforts to centralize major festivals have been undertaken in an organizational sense as well. In 2010, under the leadership of Just for Laughs founder Gilbert Rozon, the Collectif de festivals montrealais (CFM) was formed with the intent of creating a promotional platform to enhance Montréal's attractiveness as a tourist destination, a City of Festivals to rival Edinburgh's crown (Clément 2010). The CFM has the participation of influential actors in Montréal's business and cultural promotion sectors, and is funded with municipal and provincial dollars as well as by the participating festivals themselves (Clément 2010). According to the group's plan, approximately eleven major festivals taking place between mid-July and mid-August (membership has varied somewhat since its inception) are united under one umbrella, maximizing media exposure and promotional clout. Named Montréal Festimania, this group of festival juggernauts held its first edition as an entity in 2011. The injection of new government funding into the Festimania project under the Imaginer-Réaliser 2025 municipal-provincial agreement freed up funding that the Bureau des festivals now allocates to other festivals through its regular grant program.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

In an important sense, these developments suggest that festivalization in Montréal is marked by movements of centralization: finessing administrative control and logistical approaches, creating structures and organizations, securing a stable location, and crafting policy-related statements of direction for the City of Festivals as part of a Cultural Metropolis. Recently, there are indications that these centralized efforts are shifting focus slightly. Montréal's large-scale, downtown, tourist-oriented festivals are undoubtedly crucial for administrative articulations of the City of Festivals, but mid-size and small neighbourhood festivals also harmonize with certain policy goals. Beginning a few years before *Montréal, Cultural Metropolis* came to light, the provincial and municipal governments funded cultural revitalization efforts in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, one of the city's poorest neighbourhoods, where disused industrial sites rub shoulders with residential areas (Géronimi 2006). Festivals featured in these efforts as ambassadors of cultural democratization and ingredients in a "hyperfestive recipe" for vibrant neighbourhood atmosphere (Géronimi, 58, my translation). Although these attempts largely fell through, the Comité de base pour l'action et l'information sur le logement social d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (roughly, Grassroots Committee for Action and Information on Social Housing of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve) has since organized a festival that seeks to transform the neighbourhood in a more community-oriented fashion, "occupying and animating a public space" in the hope of "offering neighbourhood residents a free and convivial setting to reclaim their living environment."<sup>46</sup> This is only a single example, but generally speaking, the number of local festivals, both in terms of size and vocation, has grown in recent years,<sup>47</sup> and influential actors are paying attention. Culture Montréal, an independent non-profit organization that has been intimately involved as a facilitator of research, reflection, and discussion in the city's cultural scene and policy negotiations, has recently identified

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<sup>46</sup> "Qu'est-ce que c'est?", Hochelaga en fête, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://hochelagaenfete.wordpress.com/quest-ce-que-cest-hochelaga-en-fete/> (my translation).



neighbourhood ‘micro-festivals’ as important points of access to and participation in culture in the everyday lives of all Montréalers (Plamondon-Emond 2012), but it also hopes to encourage the organic growth of other cultural events and infrastructure throughout the city.<sup>48</sup> While the Quartier des Spectacles will remain the nerve center where festivals are concerned, the Bureau des festivals is also turning its attention to artistic and cultural activities that enrich communities and neighbourhoods farther afield, which could potentially encourage a more decentralized distribution of festive activity on Montréal’s territory.<sup>49</sup>

### *Upsides and Downsides*

Viewed as points of visibility, positivity, and intensified experience, festivals dovetail with centralized articulations of Montréal as a City of Festivals, though this project does not always involve or benefit all festivals and citizens equally. Speaking in economic terms (as is often the imperative where festivals are concerned), efforts in the 1990s and 2000s to inject Montréal’s urban space with a constant rhythm of festivity have borne fruit. In his 2003 analysis of tourism investments in Montréal, Marc V. Levine listed the city’s summer festivals as worthwhile bright spots in a tourism-development field otherwise riddled with red ink, with their contribution to the city’s overall quality of life as a redeeming factor. As of his writing, summer festivals sparked about \$50 million in annual tourist spending in exchange for “relatively modest public investments” and with “considerable corporate sponsorship” (114). While there is little question of the will of Montréal’s powerful business, political, and cultural actors to breathe continued life into the City of Festivals, many other Montréalers contribute their own enthusiasm to the picture. Even the largest summer festivals, which are a “a major rite” among local residents (Germain and Rose 2000, 156), can only be called tourist-oriented destinations in a relative sense, as the average proportion of Montréalers and tourists among festival crowds is about 80% and

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<sup>47</sup> Jean, Anne-Marie (executive director, Culture Montréal), interview with author, Montréal, May 18, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

20% respectively.<sup>50</sup> The oldest crop of festivals has been active and growing for long enough that many Montréalers have grown up alongside it,<sup>51</sup> and the progression of well-known festival stalwarts provides a kind of rhythm to city life in the summer.<sup>52</sup> Though naturally not all festivals are universally adored, Montréalers often express their excitement for something by attending or throwing a festival, and the frequency of appearances of the word ‘festival’ in or on banners, newspapers, television and radio reports, advertisements, overheard conversations, pamphlets, weekly alternative magazines, postcards, posters, t-shirts, sandwich boards, and the windows of restaurants and cafes, is staggering. In fact, the dizzying array of festivals on offer can be exhausting, especially for core audiences of festival devotees, and it can be difficult to achieve a balance between abundance and nonstop animation.<sup>53</sup>

Festivals offer an appealing mix of advantages for cultural development, but they come with a particular set of problems, and this is no less the case in Montréal. Although festivals can enrich and inspire artistic and cultural communities, their high level of visibility sometimes runs the risk of overshadowing regular-season offerings.<sup>54</sup> Festivals’ economic impact is easy to measure, which makes them attractive to funders,<sup>55</sup> and the free public performances they often offer can have the unintended effect of conditioning audiences to expect free events in non-festival contexts.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Petel, Alain, and Diane Régimbald, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Petel, Alain, and Diane Régimbald, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Jean, Anne-Marie, interview with author, Montréal, May 18, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> This was suggested by Alain Petel, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012; and Jean, Anne-Marie, interview with author, Montréal, May 18, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Régimbald, Diane, interview with author (with Alain Petel), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Jean, Anne-Marie, interview with author, Montréal, May 18, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

However, not even festivals are automatically guaranteed an easy path. Montréal's major festivals, for their part, have dealt in the last decade with losses of income from tobacco sponsors due to the federal government's Tobacco Act (Leclerc 2007, 29). Within Montréal's varied festival ecology, small- and medium-sized discipline-focused or 'challenging' festivals can find themselves caught in the shadow of giants, as they are sometimes unable to apply for certain pools of tourism-specific federal grant money<sup>57</sup> and must vie with larger festivals for attention, legitimacy, and support from public and private realms (Schmidt 2010, 75; Simard 2010, 138). Discipline-focused festivals have suffered from an overall shortage in public funding,<sup>58</sup> and they frequently rely on volunteer labour and the passion of dedicated but overworked staff to arrive at next year's edition. In 2009, a festival organization called Le Regroupement emerged in part to address some of these issues. With its members culled from a cadre of well-respected yet modestly sized independent festivals such as Mutek, the St. Ambroise Montréal Fringe Festival, and Suoni Per Il Popolo, Le Regroupement aims to act as a collective advocate for these festivals, which often have difficulty individually articulating their importance in economic terms that help to gain crucial support and financing.<sup>59</sup>

Visibility, economic clout, and access to funding go a long way toward stability and permanence where festivals, and indeed cultural production in general, are concerned. However, stability and permanence are privileges that have not, for the most part, been afforded to the old nightlife of the Lower Main.

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<sup>57</sup> For example, Industry Canada's two-year (2009–2010) Marquee Tourism Events Program allotted funding to "significant" events in two tiers, with minimum requirements of 250 000 attendees and a \$2 million operating budget (Tier 1) and 50 000 attendees and a \$500 000 operating budget (Tier 2). "Marquee Tourism Events Program," Industry Canada, accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/066.nsf/eng/00161.html>.

<sup>58</sup> In 2006, the provincial government closed its Fonds de stabilisation et de consolidation des arts et de la culture du Québec (roughly, Fund to Stabilize and Consolidate Arts and Culture; FSCACQ), which had formerly supported festivals and cultural organizations whose resources were lacking (Leclerc 2007).

The Place des Festivals indelibly marks the expectation of festival just blocks away from the former nerve center of the Main's illicit entertainment offerings at Rue Sainte-Catherine and Boulevard St. Laurent, an intersection which is itself marked by the disappearance of longstanding venues as development pressure has steadily increased. This jarring contrast is emphasized by the use of red lights in the Quartier des Spectacles visual branding scheme as a way to evoke the area's past life as the red light district. Meanwhile, for residents of the Quartier des Spectacles, including the Habitations Jeanne-Mance subsidized housing development located near Place des Festivals, the amplified sound of festivals is an often unwelcome fact of everyday life in the summer (Table de concertation du faubourg Saint-Laurent 2011).<sup>61</sup> The next chapter will discuss these pressures in more detail with regard to festivals' presence in everyday urban life.

### *Conclusion*

This section has outlined the evolution of relatively centralized efforts to establish Montréal as a City of Festivals. Administrative articulations of Montréal's identity harmonize well with buzzwords of municipal cultural development in the era of the creative imperative and the entrepreneurial city, but as this discussion has shown, they also flow in a long tradition of using festivity and festivals to stabilize certain understandings of Montréal for strategic purposes. Even as Montréal's reputation as a City of Festivals is consolidated in policy and urban branding efforts, it is spatially and temporally diffused in the evolution of Montréal's cultural landscape and built environment, in the attitudes and expectations of visitors and citizens, and in the increasing desire of cultural and artistic groups throughout the city to claim presence and legitimacy by way of a festival. As such, and as the next chapter will reinforce, the relationship between

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<sup>59</sup> Burton, Peter (co-organizer of Suoni Per Il Popolo and member of Le Regroupement), interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>61</sup> The Ville attempts to mitigate problems of this kind by requiring that organizers issue a written notice and gain the agreement of 75% of neighbouring residents and businesses before holding an outdoor event (Ville de Montréal 2012a). I will return to the topic of noise in Chapter 3.

Montréal's festivalized disposition<sup>62</sup> and its everyday life cannot be adequately captured by a concept of festivalization as a merger or displacement of the authentic Montréal with placeless times out of time. It is true that the evolution of Montréal's festival landscape has been guided in large part by attempts to crystallize specific notions of the city in support of administrative ambitions for its economic ascent, selectively taking up, taking down, or ignoring certain cultural milieux in the process. Yet this dance of tension and contradiction, the specific arrangement of actors and narratives in a given historical moment, shapes the urban imaginary (Bélanger 2005). Festivals and festive events have structured important notions of Montréal, and their influence lives on in the telling and retelling of its *joie de vivre*, openness, readiness to celebrate and, of course, its identity as City of Festivals. The concept of the urban imaginary invites us to understand this history and its continuation—as commercialized, spectacular, and problematic as it can sometimes be—as very much part and parcel of the real city.

### **Temporary Stabilizations:**

#### **The Urban Imaginary and Cities as Circulatory Objects**

In the introduction to their edited collection *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City*, Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender write that even as the external and internal boundaries of cities become destabilized by sprawl and migration, and even as their citizens negotiate shifting arrangements of affiliations and commitments, “the city is nevertheless imagined as at once indefinite and a singular space... [and] understood as a distinct entity” (2007, xi). This feat is accomplished, they write, through “orienting acts of imagination, acts grounded in material space and social practice” (xii). Daily urban life is marked by experiences of “popular media, film, art, and trade and market relations or personal networks” that “function as the media through which certain collective narratives are produced and disseminated” (xiv). These experiences nourish a “shared, if not unitary” imagination of a city which coexists with the fragmentary, partial encounters that compose each person's day-to-day experience (xiii). Even

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<sup>62</sup> The phrase “festivalized disposition” is Jamieson's (2004).

though these collective narratives allow us to locate the city in some tenuous sense, they are fluid and malleable, and as such are incompatible with many of the ways in which scholarly traditions have tried to understand cities (for example, through the unquestioned application of paradigms derived from one ‘exemplary’ city such as Los Angeles or Chicago to others; King 2007). They allow Montréalers, for instance, to have a shared vocabulary of that city as a common factor of their everyday lives, despite the fact that one person’s everyday routine within the city may have very little territorial or experiential overlap with another’s. Competing public or private actors may encourage competing narratives in an “attempt to direct the collective imagination” in their favour (Çinar and Bender 2007, xv), and the influence of politics is always present in negotiations over the urban imaginary (xvii). Still, the contingency of these narratives troubles attempts to articulate a single “characteristic urban experience,” while at the same time providing a collective and provisionally coherent counterpart to highly fragmented individual experiences of urban space (xvi).

In their own similar explanation of the concept of the urban imaginary, Edward LiPuma and Thomas Koelble highlight its suitability for the task of negotiating the existence of a city as something enduring and commonly understood despite the fluidity, movement, and change that mark everyday urban life (2005, 154). The urban imaginary evokes the experience of knowing (albeit conditionally) what we are talking about when we talk about a city even where its own features and fortunes are inextricably tied to other places, as in LiPuma and Koelble’s case study of Miami, which is “positioned... in the interstitial social, mental, and geographic space connecting North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean” (154). In other words, the notion of the urban imaginary helps us understand the city as unstable and contingent, and simultaneously as an entity to which characteristics and qualities may be provisionally affixed by different groups for different purposes. LiPuma and Koelble conceptualize the urban imaginary as a contingent act of temporary stabilization of the flows of intra- and inter-urban circulation such that “the postmodern city can imagine and represent

itself as a totality” despite its instability (2005, 154). As Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw have emphasized, circulation—whether of people, ideas, stories, objects, or cultural forms (Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003)—is “not simply something that happens *to* the city, nor ... even something that happens exclusively *in* the city”; circulation in some sense constitutes the city itself (Boutros and Straw 2010, 9). The urban imaginary is a processual and partial stabilization of the processes of circulation that constitute a city, a “necessary reification” of the city as a “circulatory object” (LiPuma and Koelble, 157), which allows inhabitants of that city to share in a matrix of “overlapping, partially translatable, situationally interchangeable ways of being in the (urban) world” and ultimately to craft “a ‘from there’ or ‘being there’ identity” (156). LiPuma and Koelble cite ethnic festivals in Miami as exemplary strategies of stabilization, since they both presuppose and articulate the presence of a unified ethnic community “in the face of highly deterritorializing and culturally dissembling forms of circulation” (171). Cautiously extending this observation outside the context of Miami, it seems safe to suggest that festivals often act as temporary points of stabilization of identity—of an ethnic group, an artistic community, a neighbourhood, and both collectively and individually in certain cases, Montréal itself—and in so doing, contribute to that matrix of practices which allow people to locate and describe a shared understanding of Montréal.

In her discussion of Montréal’s Faubourg St. Laurent, Anouk Bélanger also employs a notion of the urban imaginary that emphasizes its processual and constructed nature (2005). For Bélanger, the urban imaginary is an ongoing negotiation of a city’s identity through stories, historical connections, and narratives which become “the indicators of that which is imaginable and unimaginable for a city” (15; all translations mine). In her understanding, it is not only the vernacular realm of everyday practice and grassroots culture that contributes to the urban imaginary; the spectacular, too, participates in forging the urban imaginary through an ongoing and ambiguous negotiation with the vernacular. In this process, “the spectacular neither encompasses nor destroys the vernacular; it integrates itself into it in the course of changing it and, having

integrated, it changes itself, in a dialectic of exchange modulated according to the circumstances” (18). Articulated as such, the urban imaginary calls for us to understand the spectacular as something that has a relationship with the city that is more nuanced than simple denial, erosion, or absorption—even if that relationship is often marked by the pursuit of profit and uneven distributions of power. As Bélanger notes, developers, investors, and other actors driving what can be safely called the spectacularization of Montréal’s Faubourg St. Laurent via its official reinvention as the Quartier des Spectacles have called up local histories, tales, and affiliations, albeit in standardized and simplified ways, in order to establish themselves and gain Montréalers’ support. The red lights dotting the sidewalks of the Quartier des Spectacles are a prime example of this. Although the vernacular is taken up by the spectacular in this process, Bélanger argues, it is not rendered mute; small-scale shows, events (including festivals), and popular retellings and reenactments emerge in response to development. A recent example can be found on the website of the group “Save the Main,” which contains descriptions of hypothetical populist festivals that could sprout around Boulevard St. Laurent if funds allocated to the city’s long-established festivals were redistributed.<sup>63</sup> Overall, Bélanger understands Montréal’s reputation as a “festive and open” city, recounted in both institutionalized and marginalized stories, as emerging through “the historical relationship between vernacular and spectacular” that oscillates within its particular urban imaginary (17). In addition to furnishing us with a vocabulary that accommodates the complex relationship between spectacle and urban space, Bélanger’s analysis reinforces the important point that, in a certain sense, the spectacularization of urban space in Montréal is neither ahistorical, a time out of time, nor simply an escapist place out of place. Montréal’s history and identity as a centre of cultural vitality in North America is certainly strategically appropriated by present-day administrative bodies and city marketing schemes calling potential tourists to the City of Festivals. These appropriations draw on a long history of vernacular and spectacular festivity,

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<sup>63</sup> “Festivals,” Save the Main, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://www.savethemain.com/intro.htm>.



confirming Montréal's own specific festivalized disposition and integrating it into its urban imaginary as well as its material dimension.

These understandings of the urban imaginary, I submit, have much to offer to discussions of festivalization and urban space. Perhaps most importantly, they imply that the urban imaginary *is* (part of) the real Montréal; it is Montréal as we know it, since we can only hope to know it through specific arrangements of its contingent and shifting qualities. The notion of the urban imaginary implies that the city as an object of experience and knowledge *is* contingent, shifting, unstable, and nonetheless real in some important sense. Characterizations of cities in branding campaigns, myths, and clichés are not 'only' or 'merely' abstractions; they might be viewed in Rob Shields's formulation as virtualities, intangible and immaterial but very real indeed, and they affect the everyday lives of inhabitants as much as the social and economic forces that shape urban existence (2005).<sup>64</sup> "The urban," Shields writes, "is a medium of interconnection which allows unlike, dissimilar objects to be coordinated into a whole—a city" (n.p.). Festivals are intimately involved in mediating the urban imaginary and the stories that nourish it. As participants in the ongoing constitution of the urban imaginary, festivals and those who control them have the power to shape influential understandings of a given city; in Montréal's case, its reputation as a festive city is rooted in history, fortified through policy, and reinforced in the experience of running late for an appointment because of a Jazz Festival street closure (to take one of many possible examples). Festivalization is often understood to be largely synonymous with urban branding, threatening a situation in which the real city is

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<sup>64</sup> Although I have not strictly observed Shields's proposed distinction between "the city" as the material form and "the urban" as its intangible character and qualities, I believe the notion of the urban imaginary allows us to investigate one dimension of the urban, as well as its connecting points to the material form of the city. I am indebted to Shields for sharing some unpublished work on the topic of festivals and public space, which discusses many of the connections between festivals, boundaries, and intangible urban realities (Rob Shields and Ondine Park, 2011, "Politics of Public Space." Based on a paper for the Politics of Public Space Conference, School of Architecture and Planning, Technical University of Delft, March 18–19, 2009).

overshadowed or pushed to the edges of a place out of place, a time out of time, customizable and defined by those with a vested interest in the ludic commercialization of urban space. The terrain of identity negotiation represented by festivals is, of course, dependent upon contingencies of power and dynamics of oppression, and certain contributions to the urban imaginary are left out of the dominant picture altogether. With regard to Montréal's public memory, as Gordon notes, the stories and memories of First Nations are routinely marginalized (2001). In the process of engineering a preferred imaginary in hopes of transforming a city through festivalization, not all stories are included or acknowledged (Muñoz 2010). Yet viewing festivalization through the prism of the urban imaginary provides a compelling alternative to simplistic understandings of festivals as misidentified, rearranged, and sanitized versions of urban life for the purpose of international pageantry. Without neglecting the problems posed by festive commercialization and privatization—and in fact, I would argue, with the intent of better understanding the detrimental effects of these processes as an important part of intangible urban experience, a dark shadow cast by the contingencies of urban competition—the notion of the urban imaginary implies that “[t]he imagined city is as important as the experienced city” (Bender 2007, 270). The urban imaginary of Montréal, City of Festivals, like the features of urban life which are interpreted and rearranged in its continual construction, is already and necessarily an element of the real city.

## **Conclusion**

As this chapter has argued, processes of festivalization in Montréal have followed a common arc in comparison with other cities subject to the same exigencies of international competition in the late twentieth century. However, both prior to and during this period, local communities, business interests, economic aspirations, cultural policy conditions, and fortuitous timing have inflected Montréal's evolution as the City of Festivals. Its status as such has influenced policy goals, strategic positioning on the global stage, and even the city's built form. Any project of separating out the influence of festivals and

festivalization from the city ‘itself,’ whether physical or imagined, would be both very difficult and, I would argue, misguided. Montréal certainly presents ample evidence of all three types of festivalization: in policy, quantity, and everyday life (which I will explore further in the following chapter), the presence of festivals is firmly established, with both positive and negative consequences. In Montréal’s case, festivalization might be understood in part as a process of oscillation between local and international factors that has shaped both the urban imaginary and the material city. Conceived in this manner, the idea of festivalization throws into question our ability to cleanly distinguish the city from its festivals as they influence one another’s very shape and behaviour, for better or worse. The complex imbrication of festival and city—the weaving of a connective tissue between its festive bursts of energy—is very much part of Montréal. The City of Festivals, even as a centralized articulation of the urban imaginary, is a necessarily provisional yet very real stabilization of Montréal.

The preceding account has made clear the influence of Montréal’s business, economic, cultural, and political elites in engaging festivals to shape the urban imaginary; their actions do not come about without tension, as certain groups or cultural milieux have been relegated to the margins by one city administration only to be taken up by another forty or fifty years later, or left to fend for themselves. There is more to be said about the relationship between Montréal’s festivals and its everyday urban life in this regard—its instability and ambiguity, and its propensity to be appropriated and contested, merit further examination. The next chapter will attempt to show that festivals come to infuse Montréal’s urban imaginary through circuits of diffusion which, although still linked to centralized articulations of its identity as City of Festivals through regulation, opposition, or acquiescence, attest to an important dimension of the concept of festivalization. Even a tentative tracing of festivals’ presence in mundane channels of circulation reveals traces of festivals woven into the fine grains of urban experience to an extent that further troubles the possibility of defining festivalized space as something that displaces or replaces everyday urban life. Taking account of festivalization in Montréal, I argue, entails tracing the

ways in which Montréal's festivals frustrate attempts to draw their boundaries, and leave reminders and residues in their wake.

## Chapter 3

### Reminders, Residues, and Blurred Boundaries:

### The Presence of Festivals in Montréal's Everyday Urban Life

#### Introduction

As the previous chapter suggested, Montréal as a City of Festivals, and many of its individual festival offerings, cannot be easily cleaved into spheres of “insider ‘folk,’ on one hand and outsider ‘fake,’ on the other,” to use Picard and Robinson’s words (2006, 21). Rather than understanding festivalized spectacle as a costumed substitute for a culture lying behind it or pushed to its periphery, Picard and Robinson make the case that researchers must “understand the festival as a *particular* and located event, but also as a dis-located event capable of reproduction, relative to, and subject to, wider social changes in audiences and political agendas” (21). I hope to show in this final chapter that Montréal’s festivals exist in relation to processes of dis-location and diffusion not only on this “wider” scale, but also—and inevitably in dialogue with macro-level social and political processes—at the scale of mundane urban spaces and circulatory flows. Considering festivals as part of Montréal’s urban imaginary implies that they provide valuable raw material for stabilizing and locating impressions and ideas of Montréal as a city, but they also set in motion innumerable tiny reminders and humming presences that circulate in the city’s everyday flows. These presences show us a dimension of festivalization that is often overlooked, and call into question ideas of festivals and cities that are sometimes taken for granted in scholarly discussions on the topic. Before describing these residues and reminders in greater detail, it is worth painting a picture of the temporal, spatial, and organizational variety present within Montréal’s present festival landscape. Although this project’s scope will not admit a definitive categorization or systematic analysis of various festival characteristics—which I should note as an enthusiastic suggestion for future research—the process of sifting through the

species in Montréal's festival landscape has made clear to me the difficulty of cleanly delineating festival from city from the very beginning.

### **(Dis)Location and (Dis)Organization: Montréal's Rich Festival Ecology**

Montréal is host to an impressive array of performances, gatherings, and periods of celebration which name themselves festivals. Altogether, the Bureau des festivals estimates on its website that there are more than 100 festivals and similar cultural events taking place in the city, while Tourisme Montréal gives the figure of 106 festivals (Elliott 2011). Having compiled a tentative list from my own scans of the websites of the Ville de Montréal and its Accès culture network, weekly arts and culture magazines, newspaper and blog coverage, collected pamphlets and programs, and observations of posters between 2011 and 2012, I would estimate that this number could balloon to 150 or more depending on one's methods of classification.

To begin with perhaps the most telling example, festivals in Montréal spawn new festivals and take shelter under other festivals in ways that make classification somewhat difficult. For example, Week-ends du monde, an event that takes place at Parc Jean-Drapeau during two weekends in July, acts as an umbrella festival for a large number of one-day events billing themselves as individual festivals. This organization is mirrored in the physical location, as Parc Jean-Drapeau provides interconnected pathways between events as well as some relatively isolated spots where stages and tents can be set up. Some festivals, Pop Montréal being a notable example, have organized smaller-scale offshoots at other times of year which could conceivably be categorized as festivals in their own right. Others organize concert series, fairs, exhibitions, fundraisers, or any number of other types of events outside of the main festival that are often promoted using the name and logo of the festival's chief incarnation; for instance, M for Montréal, a festival that aims to showcase Montréal-based and Canadian musical acts, presents regular-season events using linked monikers like "Mini-M," along with a world music festival called Mundial Montréal. Some festivals, meanwhile, are just one endeavour among a number of others to which a

promotional company or artistic organization lends its stamp of identity. Suoni Per Il Popolo, for instance, shares organizing staff with some of the city's beloved alternative music venues in the Mile End and Plateau neighbourhoods. Most of the festival's shows take place at these venues, but the festival also depends financially upon the venues' year-round profits.<sup>65</sup> The Blue Metropolis Foundation, which mounts an eponymous literary festival, also runs a variety of programs oriented to youth, public education, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Another oft-pursued strategy is collaboration among different festivals, often through partnerships and co-presentations, which are becoming more and more common according to Diane Régimbald of the Bureau des festivals.<sup>66</sup> Working together allows festivals to share personnel and expertise,<sup>67</sup> combine their often scant resources,<sup>68</sup> and organize events they could not manage on their own.<sup>69</sup> Collaborations between festivals also increase diffusion,<sup>70</sup> as partner festivals attain visibility among each other's audiences.<sup>71</sup>

Then there are a multitude of events that, while not adopting the name of 'festival,' are thought of in this manner. 'Fests' are advertised on posters dotting lampposts, mailboxes, and other surfaces throughout the city's central neighbourhoods, especially the Plateau and Mile End; these are often (though not always) punk or experimental music events, and they span anywhere from one to several nights (e.g. Pouzzafest, Psych Fest, Couscous Fest). Holiday celebrations such as the St. Patrick's Day and Saint-Jean-Baptiste parades, special events such as the province-wide Journées de la culture (Culture Days), and biannual events such as the Mois de la Photo (Month of the Photo) are all listed on the Ville de

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<sup>65</sup> Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with author (with Alain Petel), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Régimbald, Diane, interview with author (with Alain Petel), Montréal, July 11, 2012; and Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> McCormick, Gregory (Director of Programming, Blue Metropolis Foundation), interview with author, Montréal, May 22, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

Montréal's online festival calendar.<sup>72</sup> The weekly Tam-Tams drum circle at the foot of the city's namesake mountain—a famous festive event beloved by Montréalers and tourists alike—is not an official festival but a free gathering of spectators, dancers, drummers, and vendors. It nonetheless attests to a kind of grassroots festivity, and as with many festivals, its insistent sound pulses into nearby neighbourhoods every summer Sunday afternoon and evening. Indeed, Tam Tams is often thought of and described as a festival, such as on the Tourisme Montréal website.<sup>73</sup>

Compounding this variety, festivals—or at least festiveness—are often invoked as a ploy for commercial purposes in Montréal, as one might expect. Perhaps the most common type of festive commercial pitch, at least in sheer quantity, involves *festivals du homard* (lobster), *des pâtes* (pasta), and the like, a promotional tactic propagated by restaurants all over the city which is sometimes but not always linked to the seasonal availability of the ingredient being fêted. At the city's street fairs, outdoor performances and a passably festive atmosphere seem secondary to the draw of discounted goods and special deals at retail stalls and restaurant patios lining the edges of closed-off streets. Advertisements in the Montréal metro system as of May 2012, rendered in the distinctive visual brand identity of the STM (Société de transport de Montréal, the city's public

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<sup>72</sup> Ville de Montréal online festival calendar, updated continuously, accessed June 5, 2012, [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?\\_pageid=4517,7008705&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=4517,7008705&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)). In terms of funding, the Ville de Montréal's offerings through the Bureau des festivals are divided into three categories: festivals with budgets of less than \$500 000, more than \$500 000, and “festive cultural events.” In 2010, recipients in the latter category were the Saint-Jean-Baptiste festivities and the St. Patrick's Day parade (Ville de Montréal 2010b). Cultural festivals that “promote the expression and sharing of Montréal's cultural diversity” are funded under a cultural diversity program (Ville de Montréal 2012, 2, my translation). The Ville also holds various funding agreements with festivals and their organizing bodies outside of these programs.

<sup>73</sup> “Les Tam Tams du Mont Royal,” Tourisme Montréal, accessed September 5, 2012, <http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/What-To-Do/Events/les-tam-tams-du-mont-royal>.



transportation agency), show figures holding shopping bags and dancing against a cityscape background, the sky full of fireworks. The copy reads “Festive shopping by public transportation: Participate in activities, take advantage of special promotions” (my translation), and is followed by the coordinates of four commercial fairs taking place in May and June. Economic motives nearly always have a role to play with festivals, of course, and can affect accessibility to audiences based on ticket price or cost of transportation to the festival site. But they may also delimit accessibility in practice. In 2011, for instance, there were reports of certain outdoor festivals’ security personnel refusing entry to those carrying outside food or drink, a practice that contravenes municipal regulations (Béland 2011). Especially when faced with overuses and abuses of festive atmosphere, warnings of festivals’ potential to fall into commercialized unidimensionality and critiques of the economic imperatives increasingly driving festivals worldwide are unsurprising.

Yet festivals and festiveness are also deployed in Montréal as a measure of protest and critique. A handful of alternative festivals (e.g. Un-Pop Montréal, the Montréal Infringement Festival, Pervers/Cité) have been established as critical responses to larger and more commercialized, yet arguably still alternative festivals. However, perhaps the most symbolic example of festiveness as protest took place in the spring of 2012, as nightly protests against the Québec Liberal government’s proposed tuition hikes, the failure of its subsequent negotiations with student associations, and its implementation of a restrictive ‘special law’ (which was intended to quell protests) made their way through the city. Though the protests had a strong presence in neighbourhoods outside the city centre, particularly Villeray in the northeast, downtown festival headquarters, particularly Place Émilie-Gamelin and the Place des Festivals, as well as the Crescent Street centrepiece of the Formula 1 Grand Prix, served as both spontaneous and preplanned places of departure and convergence. These protests, I would argue, touched a nerve in the City of Festivals urban imaginary. Certain politicians, newspaper columnists, and festival organizers—notably Gilbert Rozon, the founder of Just for Laughs—voiced fears that Montréal’s 2012 festival season

would suffer as a result of the protests' perceived damage to the city's image, couching their arguments in the familiar units of hotel bookings, ticket sales, and economic spinoffs (Cardinal 2012; Schwartz 2012). Indeed, certain protests were planned to target the 2012 Formula 1 Grand Prix precisely for its highly commercialized environment and encouragement of overt displays of wealth (CBC News 2012). And yet the protests were often described and experienced by participants as festive, and sometimes even reported as such in the media (e.g. A-Trudel 2012; Lortie 2012).<sup>74</sup> These protests may well have been, to borrow the title of Carrie Rentschler's article describing their festive atmosphere, "The Music Festival that Wasn't"—an outpouring of shared joy, frustration, and dissent to the populist beat of wooden spoons on kitchen pots (Rentschler 2012). As Jonathan Sterne has written (2012), the festive space of these protests was both an inversion of urban order, with bodies filling streets built for cars, and an orderly (cyclical, rhythmic) yet quite spontaneous call to imagine alternative orders of urban life and social priorities.

Already, then, Montréal's case confirms the shapeshifting flexibility of festivals as urban phenomena. It is difficult to see how this ecology could be cleanly isolated from the city and citizens supporting it. This is even more the case when we consider the variations in spatial and temporal diffusion its member species demonstrate. While many festivals do take place in the warm months, and while many are nestled in the Quartier des Spectacles, distributed within the island's central boroughs, or concentrated in a very specific territory (such as Parc Jean-Drapeau or Igloofest's perch in the Old Port), the overall picture is more complex. Festivals in 2011 and 2012 took place over a span of a week or so (e.g. *Escales Improbables*, *Festival Temps d'images*); two or three weeks (e.g. *Suoni Per Il Popolo* and *St. Ambroise Montréal Fringe Festival*); weekly throughout the summer and into fall (*Piknic Électronik*); on one day only (e.g. *Festival Maturi*

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<sup>74</sup> Mostly in the French-language media. Generally speaking, English-language media reports were more focused on instances of vandalism or damage to business receipts rather than the festive feeling displayed at the protests. Carrie Rentschler addresses this discrepancy (2012).

Japon); for each of three consecutive weekends (Igloofest); or over a concentrated span of several days (e.g. Festival les Trois Jours de Casteliers, Festival Elektra, Pop Montréal). Outdoor festivals tend to be summer creatures, but there are notable exceptions: Montréal en lumière and Igloofest draw crowds into the cold air, while other fall and winter festivals like Cinémania, Art Souterrain, and Festival Bach de Montréal tend to keep their activities indoors. Spatial distribution also varies, although geographically peripheral neighbourhoods do not feature as many festivals as central ones. Recent editions of the Festival du Monde Arabe, Pop Montréal, Mois de la Photo, Pervers/Cité, and Montréal en lumière, festivals taking place at various times of year and demonstrating divergent target markets and degrees of commercialization, have in common the feature of relatively widely dispersed venue networks. Some festivals have a central hub venue, outdoor or indoor, with events distributed close to the central location (e.g. the Jazz Festival and the St. Ambroise Fringe Festival). Others take place entirely in one venue or within a fairly tight cluster of venues, which affords its own advantages in terms of logistics and coordination.<sup>75</sup>

All this organizational, spatial, and temporal variation makes for an environment in which it is often difficult to delineate one festival from another, or, as I will argue further, festival space from its urban environment—and this seems clear even before taking a detailed look at the ways in which they interact with Montréal outside festival time and festival space. Indeed, the question of the existence of festival time and festival space is in many ways at stake in examining festivalization, and is a crucial part of the discussion at hand. The exhausting prospect of sorting, classifying, and counting the species in this landscape only adds to the impression that Montréal is teeming with festive bursts of energy. No doubt this variety is a symptom of the forces of festivalization that have shaped the landscape to date in terms of policy and sheer number; it also contributes to a sense of festivalization as an increasing presence of festivals in Montréal's everyday life.

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<sup>75</sup> McCormick, Gregory, interview with author, Montréal, May 22, 2012; and Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

### **Circulation, Reminders, and Residues: Festivals and Everyday Life**

In the eyes of Montréal's cultural policy, everyday life is a cultural frontier. In line with broader trends of configuring participation in culture and creativity as part of a "new set of civic virtues" of the model citizenry (Grundy and Boudreau 2008, 350), *Montréal, Cultural Metropolis* emphasizes the importance of weaving cultural participation into everyday life in order to encourage "urban diversity," openness to the world, and "social and economic growth" (Ville de Montréal 2005a, 6). It seeks to implant culture in the city's built form, identifying public art and urban planning as focal points for the goal of making culture "present, manifest, recognized and valorized in every part of Montréalers' material environment" (Ville de Montréal 2005a, 56). The approaches and ambitions supported in *Montréal, Cultural Metropolis*, combined with the rising interest in neighbourhood festivals described earlier, contributes to the imaginary of Montréal as a city pulsating with cultural energy down to some of the finest threads weaving together its urban space. Indeed, in addition to their many and varied forms of temporal and spatial presence, festivals organize, infuse, and depend upon the city's everyday circulatory flows in myriad ways. Below, I attempt to discuss only a few of these: advertising, with a focus on the city's public transportation system; the distribution of paper paraphernalia like brochures, programmes, and posters; the use of everyday vocabularies of traffic circulation at festival borders; and the relation of these borders to technologies such as signage and smartphone apps which both delineate and dislocate them. In Montréal's case, festivals' participation in these flows troubles the idea of festivals as disconnected from the grit and grain of everyday urban life, and suggests a rich and contradictory dimension of festivalization which is very much worth exploring.

#### *Commercialization and Circulation: Advertisements in Public Transit*

The literature on contemporary festivals leaves little doubt that the links between festivalization and commercialization are strong. Festivals' contributions to the economic bottom line of sponsors, private contractors, local businesses, and

government are undoubtedly a crucial dimension of their appearance in public space. As ubiquitous as festivals are in Montréal, not all ubiquity is equal; festivals that secure major private sponsors (some common examples are TD Canada Trust, Astral Media, Rio Tinto Alcan, Loto-Québec,<sup>76</sup> Quebecor, and Videotron, among others) are afforded access to spaces like the Place des Festivals, a certain measure of financial stability and, along with these benefits, a disproportionate presence in local, national, and international media and advertising spaces. Indeed, private sponsorship is certainly not the only factor that shapes festivals' presence in Montréal's squares and streets, but it is an important one. Certain private sponsors now make a point of supporting festivals which occupy public space, since this offers a higher level of visibility for a relatively small investment.<sup>77</sup>

However, as outlined in the first chapter, accounts of festivalization *as* commercialization or spectacularization risk glossing over the complex relationships between festivals and everyday life. In fact, they risk offering only a partial account of the role of commercialization in the festivalization of urban space by relegating it to a realm of inauthenticity that invades, corrodes, or crowds out everyday urban life rather than recognizing it as a significant, while undoubtedly not neutral or wholly beneficial, *part* of it. Along these lines, Ash Amin writes, "[t]he iconography of public space, from the quality of spatial design and architectural expression to the displays of consumption and advertising, along with the routines of usage and public gathering, can be read as a powerful symbolic and sensory code of public culture" (2008, 13). Anne M. Cronin also calls for a nuanced view, noting that different localities have different regulations and receptivity to outdoor urban advertising (2006). Drawing on a

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<sup>76</sup> Loto-Québec has its roots in a lottery created to pay off debts from Expo 67 (Levine 2003). Its sponsorship of several major festivals throughout Québec—including Montréal's FrancoFolies, World Film Festival, Jazz Festival, First Peoples' Festival, and more—amounts to a strange way of coming full circle. (See "Festivals and Events," Loto-Québec, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://lotoquebec.com/rendezvous/nav/en/festivals-events>.)

Lefebvrian understanding of space as the product of social processes (Lefebvre 1991), and rhythms as embodied temporal-spatial mediations of urban space (Lefebvre 2004), Cronin argues that the logics of advertising placement “‘imagine’ cities, and these imaginings have a material impact as they are taken up and acted upon by the producers of commodities and services: they are regulated by local authorities, integrated into the lives of people moving through cities, and challenged by media activists and countercultural groups” (619). Festivals are bound up with commercialization not just by virtue of providing effective sponsorship platforms, and not only by virtue of a festival advertisement’s expressive content (and in fact, Cronin suggests, the content of advertisements is likely a secondary factor in their overall influence on urban experience; 625–626), but also by taking part in advertising as a form that punctuates the circulatory flows of a city, and whose industry professionals distribute it strategically in response to patterns of movement and stasis, and rhythms of everyday urban life (Cronin 2006; Iveson 2012). While the role of powerful media conglomerates in controlling these processes of integration is undeniable, an account of festivalization as a commercialized departure from the specificities of place could not fully account for the specific ways in which Montréal’s festivals are woven into its everyday rhythms, nor for the ways in which its urban imaginary is negotiated and renegotiated, through different methods of advertising.

A particularly relevant case study is found in the ways in which advertisements and festival reminders are integrated into Montréal’s public transportation network. The STM has created a limited partnership called Transgesco LP which is charged with increasing the agency’s revenue from sources other than transit fares.<sup>78</sup> Transgesco LP delegates the task of selling advertising space in the STM metro and buses to Cogeco Métromédia (formerly

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<sup>77</sup> Régimbald, Diane, interview with author (with Alain Petel), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> “About Us: Mission Statement,” Transgesco LP, accessed September 2, 2012, <http://www.transgesco.ca/>.

Métromédia Plus), a company that manages advertising in public transit networks in over one hundred Canadian cities.<sup>79</sup> In addition to controlling advertising space that is used by festival sponsors like Bell (Jazz Festival) and Capital One (Just for Laughs) who have each mounted enormous festival-themed ads at the Place des Arts metro station which is the access point to the Place des Festivals, Métromédia Plus has been a media sponsor of festivals including the 2011 Montréal Fashion & Design Festival, the 2011 Festival du nouveau cinéma, and the 2011 Montréal Ukrainian Festival. Meanwhile, the STM itself has pursued partnerships with festivals of varying locations and concentrations, including Osheaga at Parc Jean-Drapeau in 2011, the Festival du nouveau cinéma in and around the Quartier des Spectacles in 2011, and Igloofest in the Old Port in 2012. Some festivals have planned performances or installations that take place along bus routes winding their way throughout the city (Mutek in 2012) or in metro stations at peak hours (e.g. Festival du Monde Arabe in 2011, Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois in 2012). These types of installations implant festival territory into spaces of everyday circulation and, in the case of the ongoing Mutek installation, extend it long past the festival window. The STM, for its part, runs ads—both in public transit spaces and sometimes in printed festival programs—that filter a festival’s specific calling card (cinema, dance, music, etc.) through its own unmistakable visual brand identity, encouraging viewers to take public transit to festival sites. All of this comes in addition to festival coverage and advertisements in the commuter newspapers, *24 Heures* and *Metro*, which are handed out, read, and discarded at peak hours and throughout the day.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> “À Propos,” Cogeco Métromédia, accessed September 2, 2012, <http://www.cogecometromedia.com/apropos>. CBS Outdoor sells advertising on the STM’s transit shelters; “Activities: Media and Advertising: Transit Shelters,” Transgesco LP, accessed September 2, 2012, <http://www.transgesco.ca/>.

<sup>80</sup> The STM has entered into an exclusive distribution deal with Quebecor Media for *24 Heures*, once again in a bid to increase its non-fare revenues (“Quebecor joins forces with the Société de transport de Montréal,” *24 Heures*, press release dated December 16, 2010, [http://24hmontreal.canoe.ca/distributionexclusive/communiqu\\_e\\_en.html](http://24hmontreal.canoe.ca/distributionexclusive/communiqu_e_en.html)). STM’s predecessor, the Montréal Urban Community Transit Corporation, had entered a

Festival tie-ins played a part in the STM's recent efforts to overhaul its own brand identity, highlight its commitment to environmental sustainability, and increase its visibility among Montréalers (Mattos 2010). Partnerships with festivals help to support the STM's own brand imaginary as a privileged mode of circulation by tying discourses of environmental sustainability to the positive atmosphere of festivals. Of course, festivals also benefit from this kind of deal through broadening their potential markets.<sup>81</sup> The role of festivals in the project of enhancing the STM's brand identity, and by extension its potential value as a space of commercial revenue, is certainly one example of the close interweaving of festivals' presence in urban space with commercial tactics. Festival reminders, rendered through the visual identity of the STM, guide both residents and visiting tourists in planning their own movements to and from festival space. Through these commercial links, festivals come to occupy a steady presence within the web of "practical... and geographical competencies" that compose many Montréalers' everyday movements around the city (Binnie et al. 2007, 166), as well as what might be blithely termed the geographical incompetencies (or improvised competencies) of visitors and tourists. This mutual exploitation of the visual space in Montréal's public transit system weaves festivals, with their own rhythms of seasonal appearance, into the city's mundane rhythms of daily movement through the role of advertising as "one of those ordering forces that organises serial urban encounters, and that continually makes and remakes the city" (Cronin 2006, 629).

As Cronin notes, advertising is not immune to local acts of resistance. An article in the *Montreal Mirror* alternative weekly magazine, published just before the unofficial start of the 2011 festival season, announced the creation of Ad-Just, a "loose coalition" of cultural groups and local activists—including some involved with the Infringement Festival—created to challenge the saturation of

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similar deal with *Metro* in 2001 (Straw 2010a). *Metro* is still distributed by hawkers outside Montréal's metro stations.

<sup>81</sup> This advantage was mentioned by Gregory McCormick (interview with author, Montréal, May 22, 2012).



Montréal's urban space with advertisements (Faure 2011). Not surprisingly, coalition organizers named the mammoth festivals as primary targets. However, the Infringement Festival and many other festivals of all stripes, some of which seek corporate sponsors and some of which do not, become imbricated within the everyday rhythms of the city through another type of advertising—albeit one that involves a very different arrangement of actors, spaces, and rhythms.

*Brochures, Postcards, Programmes, and Indoor Posters: Movement and Stasis*

Paper paraphernalia in the form of brochures, programmes, postcards, and posters (the latter of which I will discuss in more detail in the following section) are another means by which reminders and residues of Montréal's festivals become integrated into everyday spaces. The entryways, doors, bathrooms, and window ledges of cafés, restaurants, libraries, retail stores, and the like are particularly common nodal points for the circulation of these colourful materials. Sometimes their appearance is purposeful and prominent, either the work of an agreement with the establishment or simply a cleverly improvised placement; sometimes, on the other hand, a program or flyer will be found lying on its own, appearing to have been forgotten or left behind. Occasionally, there seems to be an obvious connection between the business or interior space in question and the posters decorating its surfaces, as in the case of a poster for the 2011 Polish Festival hanging in the window of a Polish restaurant in Mile End, or a poster for the 2011 Week-ends du monde in the window of a Mexican restaurant in Petite Italie, displayed below a sign explaining that the restaurant will be closed for the weekend to take part in the event. In other cases, the assortment of paper lining an establishment's ledges and walls alerts patrons to an overwhelming variety of upcoming cultural events with no discernible direct connections to the establishment other than their presence.

These pieces of paper are distributed throughout urban space by way of a few different avenues. First, and worth noting in particular, is their adaptability—almost an invitation—to movement. Engineered for portability, these materials are easily forgotten, discarded, and left behind on benches, tables, or metro seats,

by accident or on purpose, contributing a small-scale unpredictability to the ubiquitousness of festival reminders. Before they reach this stage, however, these materials are distributed in more intentional ways that are determined by festival organizers and teams. In some cases, festivals take care of distribution themselves. For example, Suoni Per Il Popolo, a particularly prodigious distributor of paper festival reminders, has volunteers who visit businesses and other locations in neighbourhoods that are frequented by likely potential festival-goers, in order to ask whether they might display a poster or pile of brochures.<sup>82</sup> Festivals also have the option of involving a third party in the printing and distribution of these materials. In this venture the clear frontrunner is Publicité Sauvage, a local postering and distribution company that strikes deals with businesses, libraries, and other frequented establishments to put racks of materials as well as posters in targeted interior spaces. On its website, Publicité Sauvage describes the locations of its 525 distribution racks as having been selected “to reach an active clientele interested in cultural life,”<sup>83</sup> while its network of 800 interior postering locations targets “an urbane, active” clientele with an “interest in cultural events and products.”<sup>84</sup> The company focuses its distribution mostly in the city’s central areas, and reserves space in its distribution racks for clients from the cultural, touristic, and social sectors.<sup>85</sup>

Even beyond any content-related cuing of festive memory or anticipation, these materials link festivals to everyday uses of urban space in at least three ways. First, and perhaps most obviously, they take part in a fairly common and well-recognized mode of alerting users of urban space to events, projects, and happenings that are both collectively and individually part of the everyday urban

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<sup>82</sup> In terms of outdoor postering, the festival has paid staff who cover predetermined routes. Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> “Distribution en présentoirs,” Publicité Sauvage, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://publicitesauvage.com/distribution-en-presentoirs/>. My translation.

<sup>84</sup> “Affichage dans les commerces,” Publicité Sauvage, accessed September 3, 2012, <http://publicitesauvage.com/affichage-dans-les-commerces/>. My translation.

<sup>85</sup> “Distribution en présentoirs,” Publicité Sauvage, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://publicitesauvage.com/distribution-en-presentoirs/>. My translation.

environment that festivals have been classically understood to invert or depart from. Often, these racks of materials or rows of posters will sit near bulletin boards or walls featuring advertisements for cultural events, community gatherings, language tutors or music teachers, lost pets or personal objects, and apartments for rent. Much like certain forms of public address based around outdoor media landscapes (Iveson 2012), which I will address in further detail in the next section, festival materials join in clusters of information that take part in a kind of patchwork recruitment of everyday urban surfaces into a constant project of ephemeral communication and public, or semi-public, address. Also, as with outdoor media, third party distributors are able to appeal to potential clientele based on specific ideas about their own potential clients' everyday urban routines.

Indeed, as a second link to everyday uses of urban space, the initial patterns of distribution of these materials—exemplified by *Publicité Sauvage*'s descriptions of the culturally savvy clientele its networks are designed to reach—are revealing. Targeted distribution to locations in which posters and other paper reminders are most likely to reach the people who are, in turn, most likely to be interested in going to a particular festival is, of course, quite simply good sense.<sup>86</sup> But its being good sense depends upon a certain kind of understanding of, and strategic appeal to, the everyday urban routines of potential clientele: their haunts, hangouts, and typical routes of passage through the city. Furthermore, by appealing to these routines, we might speculate that a certain cycle of reinforcement could be set in motion; the presence of festival paraphernalia at establishments which attract a 'cultural' clientele would seem to reinforce its status as a 'cultural' establishment, thereby attracting 'cultural' clientele. By integrating paraphernalia into these places, whether as the result of actions undertaken by the staff or volunteers of festivals or deals between establishments and companies like *Publicité Sauvage*, festivals implicate themselves into a certain kind of passive but significant presence that exceeds and arguably expands the spatial and temporal window of their relationship to urban space.

Third, these clusters of flat or folded paper often sit at a liminal point: somewhere between the private place of business (or, if not privately owned—as in a library, for example—a space given over to a dedicated activity of some sort) and the public space of the sidewalk, between interior and exterior. Bulletin boards and racks of brochures catch the eyes of passersby in transition spots between different types of movement and stasis—between the constant flow of bodies on the sidewalk and the act of sitting down at a café table or slowly browsing store shelves. Their targeted dispersion into everyday spaces of gathering and commerce, whether through volunteers, *Publicité Sauvage*, or other means, is further evidence that they depend upon and reinforce certain patterns of everyday uses of urban space, taking advantage of familiar rhythms of movement and stasis to maximize visibility. While designed and placed to catch people's attention, their form strikes a balance: easy to take along, and easy to leave behind.

### *Outdoor Posters*

Posters in Montréal's outdoor spaces have been the cause of much debate among municipal and borough administrations, citizens, activists, festival organizers, and other cultural producers. This debate in some ways exemplifies the often contradictory relationship of Montréal's administrative bodies, like those in many other cities, to cultural activities which are marginal, subversive, and occasionally disobedient—yet which, in their own manner and often on their own terms, enrich the urban imaginary of the City of Festivals. It also reveals much about the role of street media in creating and negotiating a “local culture of communication and expression” (Murthy 2005, 12).

In addition to its network of interior spaces, *Publicité Sauvage* offers its clients—both commercial and cultural, but with priority to the latter—the opportunity to have posters mounted on wooden palissades that border construction sites, empty lots, and unused buildings, as well as temporary metal

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<sup>86</sup> Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

construction fences left in place over weekends.<sup>87</sup> This has not always been an option for the city's cultural producers. In fact, *Publicité Sauvage*, which was recently awarded a *prix Arts-Affaires* (Arts Business Prize) from the Montréal Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and the Conseil des arts de Montréal, was once an illegal operation subject to hefty fines. In 1994, founder Beaudoin Wart and his clients successfully lobbied the city administration to permit posterizing for cultural purposes on construction fencing and palissades, leading to the company's signature repeated symmetrical groupings of posters lining these underused and transitional spaces (Corriveau 2012). *Publicité Sauvage*'s control over these surfaces is dominant, to the point where some cultural producers feel it has a near-monopoly on legal posterizing (Laurence 2012). Festivals that cannot afford or choose not to employ the company's services often join underground cultural producers in affixing their posters to city-owned surfaces like lampposts and garbage cans, as well as mailboxes, parking stands, and the windows of empty storefronts. While the municipal anti-postering bylaw was struck down by the Québec Court of Appeals in 2010, the Ville de Montréal's cleanliness bylaw still classifies posterizing on public property as a violation (Harrold 2012), a view which seems to prioritize a specific notion of the "aesthetic integrity" of urban public space over what many would consider its "democratic accessibility," to use Iveson's words (2012, 159). As a result, although the Ville cannot technically prohibit posterizing (only regulate it),<sup>88</sup> the status of the activity is unclear in a practical sense (Laurence 2012), and police occasionally threaten to fine some posterizing personnel (Harrold 2012).<sup>89</sup> *Publicité Sauvage* presents an interesting grey area between the level of control of outdoor media landscapes often exercised by large multinationals and media companies, and grassroots forms of public address that make resourceful use of urban surfaces. Issues of publicness and accessibility come into play not only in terms of access to or exclusion from

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<sup>87</sup> "Affichage de rue," *Publicité Sauvage*, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://publicitesauvage.com/affichage-de-rue/>.

<sup>88</sup> Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

festival grounds, but also how festivals are able to be present and address multiple publics in channels of outdoor advertising (Iveson 2012).

Though these loosely defined channels of postering—one sanctioned, one whose status is in flux—festival reminders become tied into Montréal’s everyday urban rhythms in several ways. First, as Cronin writes, the material degradation of advertising structures “marks the passing of time and creates a dialogue between the temporality of commodity production, promotion, and consumption and other rhythms such urban decay and regeneration” (2006, 629). The tangible results of interaction with “environmental factors ... keep media objects in flux and motion well after their initial placement in the streetscape” (Murthy 2005, 74). Both sanctioned and unsanctioned posters are left to the mercy of the weather and passing pedestrians, often sporting signs of wear and tear, and sometimes getting covered over by other posters. However, whereas *Publicité Sauvage* maintains a constant and careful turnover of posters on the spaces it controls, posting and reposting to ensure its clients’ visibility within the rollout period of their campaigns,<sup>90</sup> posters on urban furniture are sometimes torn down before the festival in question has even begun and sometimes linger for weeks or months after it ends, leaving tattered residues scattered throughout the city’s central neighbourhoods and accumulating layers of colourful detritus lining sidewalks at pedestrians’ eye level. Compared to the highly controlled rhythms of corporate outdoor advertising, or even of *Publicité Sauvage*’s posterboards, the appearance of these posters in everyday spaces marks the passage of time in a very different manner, through a physical decay or persistence which is gently uncoupled from the temporal boundaries that exist, albeit often tenuously, around Montréal’s festivals. Like their more mobile cousins, they also join in a semi-democratized cultural form of addressing multiple urban publics (Iveson 2012), sitting on top of, underneath, and beside posters announcing lost pets, political demonstrations, activist campaigns, one-off cultural events, and community gatherings.

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<sup>89</sup> This was also mentioned by Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

Whether sanctioned or unsanctioned, the appearance of posters in underused and sometimes overlooked spaces also brings into contact the cycles of development that render Montréal's festivals and its urban spaces deeply interdependent. As gentrification has spread through the Plateau and Mile End neighbourhoods, some cultural producers and festival organizers have expressed concern that development pressures, increased living and rental costs, and new residents' complaints of noise and nuisance could threaten these neighbourhoods' longevity as nodes of artistic vibrancy (Ebbels 2009).<sup>91</sup> Prestigious condominium developments have also sprouted around the Quartier des Spectacles, with new residents voicing their own complaints about noise;<sup>92</sup> meanwhile, there is a recognized need to diversify uses of the area's urban space to achieve more of a balance between celebration and other types of activity.<sup>93</sup> Yet in addition to questions of accessibility and neighbourhood change, which are undoubtedly important, festivals are linked to larger-scale rhythms of urban decay and regeneration through the smaller-scale circulation of reminders and residues through urban space. Returning for a moment to the notion of festivalization as the use of urban policy based in part on festivals to make a city attractive to potential investors, we can see points of connection between spaces that lie empty or in transition and the cycles of use, disuse, and renewal that many municipal cultural policy approaches—including Montréal's—hope to regulate, directly or indirectly. Construction sites such as those in the Quartier des Spectacles suggest investment and development potential, whether because they have been enabled by it or because whatever is currently being constructed is hoped to spur it. Empty lots and empty buildings, for their part, are perhaps the experiential opposite of a festival. They carry with them overtones of economic failure, even the ghosts of

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<sup>90</sup> "Affichage de rue," Publicité Sauvage, accessed June 5, 2012, <http://publicitesauvage.com/affichage-de-rue/>.

<sup>91</sup> These concerns were also voiced by Burton, Peter, interview with author, Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

uses past, and possibilities for their appropriation or future uses are often restricted by authoritative and institutional frames (Tonnelat 2008)—something Publicité Sauvage and other cultural producers in Montréal know well. These spaces of interlocking cycles in the built environment are especially charged at the intersections around the Lower Main; near Café Cleopatra, one of the few remaining vestiges of the area’s illicit past, large legal posters on construction palissades face posters on lampposts. On one visit in May 2012, I observed a taped-up 8 ½” by 11” photocopy of an article in the *Montreal Gazette* about a mock funeral organized by Save the Main to protest development in the area. Transposing Cronin’s words into this context, we might see these material manifestations of development and dissent as points that “create new urban intensities where mobile currents of bodies, finance, and meanings interface and (provisionally) sediment around the physical structures holding the advertisements” (2006, 618). The appearance of festival posters decorating these urban spaces brings particular forms of festival and cultural event promotion in Montréal into direct dialogue with the spatial dynamics of development and revitalization that its festivals especially, and cultural development more generally, are hoped—and feared—to affect.

### *Festival Borders: Mundane Vocabularies of Rerouted Trajectories*

Just as Montréal’s construction sites are often bordered by reminders of festivals and other cultural events, its festival sites are often bordered by reminders of construction. A reporter for the Montréal daily newspaper *Le Devoir* jokingly describes the Quartier des Spectacles, where the first construction began in 2008, as “five years of the ‘orange cone festival’” (Plamondon-Emond 2012, my translation). One could be forgiven for having to look twice to delineate construction sites from festival grounds in this area in recent years. Construction of the Quartier des Spectacles has also overlapped with major roadwork on two of the island’s crucial north-south arteries, Avenue Bleury and Boulevard St.

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<sup>93</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.; and Jean, Anne-Marie, interview with author, Montréal, May 18, 2012.



Laurent, whose disruptions and delays have tried the patience of city-dwellers and business owners. With all this roadwork in the mix, planning for fluid circulation around events and festivals has been particularly challenging in recent years.<sup>94</sup> As is likely true in many cities, festivals and construction are regarded by some with deep ambivalence, as both are generators of nuisance (noise, street blockages, boisterous crowds), excitement (the prospect of a new building, the reorienting effect of a performance in an unusual space), and controversy (allegations of rampant corruption in the Québec construction industry that have implicated former municipal officials, or the “festival wars” ignited in 2009 when Alain Simard announced a scheduling change for FrancoFolies that was perceived to interfere with other festivals’ planning).<sup>95</sup> Montréal’s relatively narrow window of forgiving weather between May and October brings the joys and annoyances of festivals and construction to a head at the same time, causing frequent disruptions to the circulation of foot, bicycle, and vehicle traffic on the island. Interestingly, however, the apex of Montréal’s festival season also coincides with one of the most fallow construction periods. Since 1971, the Québec government has declared the last two weeks in July to be a period of holiday and rest for all unionized construction workers. Employees in other sectors frequently take time off in that same two-week window, pushing the total holidaying proportion of the Québec workforce to almost one quarter.<sup>96</sup>

While the direct similarities probably end there—it is not generally easy to mistake a construction site for a festival—the similarities of their effects upon everyday life and movement through urban space echo at the boundaries of festivals in Montréal, in that similar objects are used to mark both festival and construction spaces. In its guide to festival organizers, the Bureau des festivals

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<sup>94</sup> Petel, Alain, interview with author (with Diane Régimbald), Montréal, July 11, 2012.

<sup>95</sup> See *La Presse*’s online dossier of the incident and fallout: “Guerre des festivals,” last updated June 9, 2010, <http://www.lapresse.ca/arts/dossiers/guerre-des-festivals/>.

stipulates that yellow signs must be mounted around festival sites to notify citizens of street closures, traffic disruptions, and parking restrictions at least ten days in advance, with additional temporary signs mounted twelve hours before the event (Ville de Montréal 2012a). The guide also notes that the Ville can loan temporary barriers to festival organizers subject to availability in order to facilitate crowd control and security. Many festivals do use temporary construction-type fencing, some of which sports reflective panels with the city's distinctive logo, in addition to bright orange construction cones and construction-like road signs to separate performance from audience space, guide the movement of crowds, close streets in the vicinity of the festival, or otherwise mark their boundaries and direct the circulation of foot, bicycle, and vehicle traffic around and within festival spaces. The presence of familiar boundary-marking objects, bright orange and yellow colours, and words and symbols—*rue barrée*, *détour*, a no-parking “P”—ties festivals into the network of traffic interruptions that take hold during the city's warmer months. The STM, meanwhile, reroutes buses and disallows bicycles in the metro according to festival schedules, alerting passengers to these disruptions through signs at bus stops and on the doors of metro stations. Drawing upon Jon Binnie and colleagues' analysis of “mundane mobilities,” these objects can be understood as signals for “disruption [to] be woven back into the mundane,” and are an example of one means through which “we become habitually practised in dealing with modes of mobility where cancellation of trains, traffic jams, punctures, broken down lorries or unusual weather conditions are commonplace” (2007, 168). A festival's temporary occupation of a street, sidewalk, or bike path might depart from normal patterns of use as far as that particular space is concerned, but especially at the height of Montréal's festival and construction seasons, interruptions in routine movement are, in the aggregate, a common experience within the city's circulatory rhythms. Festivals are simultaneously marked off from the city and reintegrated into it

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<sup>96</sup> “Holidays and Vacations,” Commission de la construction du Québec, accessed June 5, 2012, [http://www.ccq.org/M07\\_CongeVacances.aspx?sc\\_lang=en&profil=Entrepreneur](http://www.ccq.org/M07_CongeVacances.aspx?sc_lang=en&profil=Entrepreneur).

through a shared vocabulary of rerouted trajectories, eliciting normalized reactions on the part of motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and festivalgoers that renegotiate the city's everyday circulation. In yet another sense, then, festivals are contradictory objects both connected to and disconnected from everyday uses of urban space; their presence both disrupts and reorganizes everyday movements according to predictable and mundane templates, but may still take individual commuters and other users of urban space by surprise.

*Signs, Maps, Apps, and Senses: The Imaginary of Festival Boundaries*

Official signs and banners are another frequent reminder of festivals that appear in Montréal's urban space. Subject to a number of restrictions and regulations, stipulated in a specific banner-related guide (Ville de Montréal 2012b), festivals and special cultural events may hang three large horizontal banners, which are usually strung across a road on or near the festival site. Sponsor logos or messages must play a secondary role, with the bulk of the banner devoted to the visual identity of the festival or event. The Ville reserves the privilege of these banners for festivals or special cultural events; performances that form part of a regular season or year-round offering are not eligible, and the banners' tenure is restricted to a window of seven days before and two days after the event, not to exceed thirty days total. Spread above vehicle traffic, sidewalks, and bike lanes, these banners announce the presence of a festival in high-traffic public space—even if that festival consists of mostly indoor paid events—and lend an aura of excitement and novelty to everyday places underneath, sweeping whole blocks into a vague festive feeling regardless of the precise distribution of festival venues.

In addition to these banners, the Ville de Montréal mounts small vertical pennants, *oriflammes* in French, onto lampposts lining streets with high amounts of foot and vehicle traffic.<sup>97</sup> Coordination of oriflammes is undertaken by the

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<sup>97</sup> The city's website directing visitors to further information about oriflammes notes that this information applies only to the original nine boroughs of the Ville de Montréal prior to its merger and de-merger ("Oriflammes: affichage urbain,"

Direction des communications et des relations avec les citoyens (roughly, Department of Communications and Citizen Relations). According to its guidelines document pertaining to oriflammes (Ville de Montréal 2010a), the Direction takes submissions from interested parties on a yearly basis and allocates placements depending on client preference and availability. Very specific guidelines apply to the oriflammes' design; commercial sponsors' logos and names are forbidden unless the sponsor's name is contractually obligated to be part of an event name. The Ville de Montréal, furthermore, must approve the design of each pennant before it is hung. Applications for use of these oriflammes, though approved on a case-by-case basis, are intended for "special events" such as "cultural festivals, athletic competitions, humanitarian campaigns."<sup>98</sup> As a result, festival-related oriflammes appear alongside those marking city-related anniversaries (e.g. the 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montréal); alerting residents to days of observance, charitable campaigns, nearby attractions, and non-festival special events; or offering neighbourhood-specific slogans and greetings (for instance, "Ciao! Petite Italie," "Quartier Latin: Lieu de Rendez-Vous depuis 1818," or various messages along the Main promoting its exciting mix of cultural offerings at all times of day and night).<sup>99</sup>

These oriflammes contribute to a sense of general diffusion of festiveness into Montréal's everyday spaces not only due to their wide distribution, high visibility, bright colours, and intermingling with sloganesque representations of neighbourhood identity, but also because their placement is not restricted to the territory of the festivals which they advertise. Visitors to the 2011 Pride Parade

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Banque d'information 311, Ville de Montréal, last updated January 25, 2012, accessed September 5, 2012,

<http://www1.ville.montreal.qc.ca/banque311/content/oriflammes-affichage-urbain>).

<sup>98</sup> "Oriflammes: affichage urbain," Banque d'information 311, Ville de Montréal, last updated January 25, 2012, accessed September 5, 2012,

<http://www1.ville.montreal.qc.ca/banque311/content/oriflammes-affichage-urbain>.

My translation.

<sup>99</sup> And, again, evoking the tensions between promotion, appropriation, and suppression of cultural activity.

searching for a street sign or simply taking in the sights may have noticed oriflammes on Boulevard René-Levesque, which runs through the city's downtown, for the FestiBlues festival happening on the same weekend in Parc Ahuntsic far to the north; an oriflamme near the Lionel-Groulx metro station advertising the 2012 edition of the electronic music festival Mutek is a fair distance from that festival's concentration in the Quartier des Spectacles; visitors to Petite Italie in October 2011 might have been greeted with a "Ciao!"-bearing oriflamme on one block and, on the next, an oriflamme advertising the Festival du Monde Arabe de Montréal, which took place in venues scattered around the city, from the nearby Maison de l'Afrique to a bookstore on Rue Masson in the eastern neighbourhood of Rosemont to the Place des Arts downtown. The discontinuity of these festival indicators with festival territories aggravates the question of how exactly to define festival territories, especially with so many combinations of clustering and distribution represented within Montréal's festival ecology. On the one hand, the generalized dispersal of festival indicators described thus far could be understood as an abstraction of festivals' relationships to physical location; one would think, perhaps, that an oriflamme advertising the Festival du Monde Arabe above a sign indicating that one is on Avenue Mozart would indicate that one is also 'at' the festival in some precise way. On the other hand, these oriflammes could be understood not as imperfect indicators of the location of festival territory, but as rather perfect indicators of the spatial diffusion of festival territory. In this case, diffusion of festive reminders are enacted through centrally controlled spatial expressions of identity that sweep festivals into a privileged group of organizations and events deemed worthy of municipal approval and promotion on the sides of the city's busiest thoroughfares.

Paradoxically enough, defining festivals' boundaries in some cases becomes harder considering the techniques used by festival organizers and promoters to define festival-goers' experiences, in the sense of organizing and structuring the physical space involved. Site maps appearing in many festival programs highlight specific venues against stylized backdrops of city blocks, organizing festivalgoers' experience of Montréal relative to the festival and

situating the festival relative to Montréal. As more and more festivals embrace mobile media and digital connectivity, attendees encounter an increasing number of opportunities to curate their own versions of a particular festival, for instance by adding venues to a customized schedule on a mobile phone app or website. Festival apps seem to be gaining traction in Montréal; recently, Greencopper, a technology startup specializing in developing smartphone apps for festivals and special events, has chosen Montréal as its home base. It counts among its past clientele Pop Montréal, the Jazz Festival, Nuit blanche (arguably the centrepiece of Montréal en lumière), and FrancoFolies. Greencopper touts the benefits that apps offer to festival organizers—including usage statistics tracking, integration of real-time updates and, crucially, increased visibility for sponsors—and promises to “put your festival in the hands of thousands of festival-goers.”<sup>100</sup> With apps connecting the dots from venue information to performer bios to social media updates to photographs to customized schedules, it does not seem so far-fetched to propose that a festival, or at least a good deal of its vital information, really can be placed in the hands of app users in some sense. Interacting with users’ own preferences and desires, their knowledge of urban spaces and places, and their varying levels of engagement with the festival itself, festival apps latch onto and profoundly amplify the role of festivals as organizational frameworks for experiences of urban space.

Interestingly, festival apps also provide scaffolding for the extension of festivals’ temporal windows. The founder of Greencopper, Gwenaél Le Bodic, explains in an interview that most users keep festival applications on their mobile devices from one year’s edition to the next, and emphasizes the importance of keeping up an active community of app users “by proposing all-year long [*sic*] features and communications,” for example leaking details of next year’s lineup through last year’s app (Le Bodic 2011). Festival maps, ‘analog’ or digital, underscore the tension between festivals’ ability to organize and facilitate experiences of urban space (de Valck 2007; Johansson and Kociatkiewicz 2011)

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<sup>100</sup> Greencopper Publishing, brochure for festivals, accessed September 3, 2012, <http://www.greencopper.com/brochures/goevent-festivals-en.pdf>.

and their oft-recounted powers of disruption, inversion, and escape. These technologies, and digital technologies in particular, push the boundaries of distinctive festival worlds through their portability and aesthetic synchronization with festivals' visual identities. Acting as mediatized forms at the edges of the city's built environment (Straw 2010b), these devices both destabilize and extend the notion of festival boundaries by distributing the festival's organizational functions at the multiple crossroads between urban and digital space and individual experience. Consequently, the same technologies intended to help festivalgoers locate, navigate, and organize festival territory also destabilize and blur the aesthetic, experiential, and physical boundaries of that territory, deepening the ambiguity of the relationship between festivals and urban space. Rather than searching for the 'real' city, or 'real' festival, effaced by or hidden behind the influence of these technologies, we can more fruitfully focus on recognizing and understanding the "radical transformation in what is understood and experienced as a city"—and as a festival—that they effect (Duarte and Firmino 2009, 547).

Expanding our discussion to account for experience and sense beyond the visual, the notion of festival boundaries continues to unwind itself. Amplified music and speech, the loud mixing of voices that rise up from a crowd, or the smell of food being sold from restaurant tents (street food vending is normally prohibited in Montréal) often announce the presence of outdoor festivities before either unsuspecting citizens or intent festivalgoers meet their visible boundaries.<sup>101</sup> As previously noted, this can be a significant source of excitement as well as tension, as a festival's acoustic territory can expand unwelcomed into the private spheres of neighbouring residents and businesses. The signature excitement of festival crowds, for its part, is also an agent of location and diffusion of the affective capacity of a festival; for example, when I visited Igloofest, an outdoor electronic dance festival, one weekend night in January

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<sup>101</sup> Alexandra Boutros notes a similar effect within the Berri-UQAM and Sherbrooke metro stations, with traveling sound creating a "permeable stage" for buskers at the bottom of escalators (2010).

2012, the area between the festival site on the quays of the Old Port and the orange line metro at Station Place d'Armes was abuzz with people, many of whom sported neon snowsuits and brightly-coloured Igloofest tuques, laughing, yelling, and dancing even as they moved purposefully to or from the site. When this example is placed alongside, for instance, an oriflamme I observed in May 2012 advertising the Old Port as a "*quartier festif*," the definitive feeling of festival space—even in cases such as Igloofest, which boasts a well-secured and relatively isolated grounds—becomes somewhat dissolved.

## Conclusion

The picture of festivalization in Montréal would not be complete without noting the fact that the bursts of energy stringing together its existence are often blurred at their experiential and territorial edges, and grouped together in constellations of varying spatial and temporal density. An understanding of festivalization in Montréal as, in part, the negotiation of a relationship between festivals and everyday life must take into account the unstable and often, ultimately, imaginary—though not to say disingenuous, fake, or un-real—delineation of festival boundaries. It must also account for the ways in which Montréal's specific context inflects the circulation of festival reminders through its everyday life—whether via advertisements in metro stations or flyers abandoned on the ground.

In the examples given above, the means of circulation in which festivals participate are sometimes exceptional. Oriflammes and banners, controlled by the Ville, are reserved for out-of-the-ordinary events and campaigns of note. And within the festival domain, capital often greatly influences levels of visibility, publicity, and presence in urban space. Yet festivals also depend upon everyday means of circulation that are used for ordinary and dependable features of urban life; spreading pamphlets and brochures, mounting posters, buying advertising space or creating it through use of surfaces in the urban environment is nothing special to festivals in particular. This fact is itself telling. Festivals participate in the sum of everyday circulatory flows that comprise the city, and whose



participation in both vernacular and administrative articulations of Montréal conditions understandings of the city's material and immaterial characteristics. Together, the unstable yet intricate, localized yet diffuse ways in which festivals are woven into the mundane mobilities (Binnie et al. 2007), stases, and uses of urban space in Montréal's everyday life invite us to understand the city's festival landscape as more—and less—than detached reimaginings of the preexisting spatial and temporal turf of the everyday city.

## Conclusion

We might return here to some of the questions posed in the introduction, but as I suggested when I posed them, we will not find definitive answers. To begin, allow me to call up some descriptions of festivalization from the literature. Johansson and Kociatkiewicz find that the three festivals they study “show festivals as bounded events clearly separated from the quotidian experience of the city” (2011, 402). Indeed, for many observers, festivals still represent a departure from the normal experience of a specific urban space—to the tune of consumption, escapism, and distraction. Real everyday life, with all its messes and incoherencies, is left behind or effaced in the process, and there is no transcendent redemption in this departure. On the other hand, Gravari-Barbas writes that “the festival [*la fête*] tends to dissolve into everyday life, and the festive to be encountered in any place and at any time” (2007, 388, my translation). Everyday life, in this view, is becoming indistinguishable from festivals. Festival logic, which encourages consumption, is overtaking everyday uses and experiences of urban space. Festivals are diluted, dissolved into everyday life, creating a festive city rather than a city with festivals in it. Once again, festivals appear as iridescent knots of contradiction, reflecting a different hue depending on the viewer’s angle and contextual surroundings. The extent to which it is possible to understand festivals as separate from everyday life is great, as is the extent to which it is possible to understand festivals as coterminous with it. However, in the present discussion, I have tried to show that thinking about the ways in which festivals are reliant upon and woven into the circuitry of urban space, in everyday life as well as during festival time, presents us with an underexplored dimension and a new world of questions, in which the relationship between festivals and everyday urban life cannot quite be captured by describing the degree of separation involved.

Closing her examination of festive events in Paris, Gravari-Barbas writes that the “festive city ... is an urban script and fiction, a narrative discourse of the city proposed by local actors, which aims to project the city into a permanent state

of festivity that erases or smoothes over urban problems and conflicts” (2007, 408, my translation). Montréal as City of Festivals is and does all of these things. Local actors count on festivals to be remedies for a better city, privileged nodes of cultural presence and diffusion, feathers in the city’s international cap, and tourism-friendly economic engines. But festivals also have the capacity to act as laboratories of discussion about Montréal itself. The Blue Metropolis literature festival prominently features local content and seeks to reflect and encourage reflection upon the city’s cultural life through its programming,<sup>102</sup> while Pop Montréal and Mutek have both hosted symposia and panel discussions about culture within Montréal and in comparison to other cities.<sup>103</sup> In Montréal’s case, while festivals help to engineer a favourable image of the city, this does not always seal them off from conflicts and problems—and this, I would argue, is true for their potential to act as venues of discussion and debate as much as they themselves are debated and discussed. Nor does their role in crafting an urban image seal them off from the daily spatial practices and everyday rhythms that figure into the negotiation of Montréal’s urban imaginary. Having described only some of the ways in which Montréal’s festivals participate in its everyday urban life, it seems to me that the notions of “time out of time” and “place out of place,” while capturing some truth about the experience of festivals, do not allow the room we need to explore the fine entanglements between festivals and everyday life in Montréal. Festivals in Montréal have an un-extra-ordinary, mundane presence which, although certainly linked to their growth in size and number and the support of political, cultural, and business spheres in the city, is not fully explained by these factors. Festival producers and organizers at all levels make strategic use of the city’s vocabulary of circulation, from traffic signs to posterizing practices. From these and other actions, the imaginary of “City of Festivals” gains a decisively consistent buzz, an ‘everyday edge’ that underwrites in a way its function as a big-picture marketing scheme.

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<sup>102</sup> McCormick, Gregory, interview with author, Montréal, May 22, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> In 2011, my supervisor Will Straw and I co-organized and moderated a session at Pop Montréal’s symposium on “Cultural Scenes, Creative Communities, and

I am not convinced that the boundaries between everyday life and festivals have collapsed in Montréal, nor that they are stronger than they have previously been. I am, however, convinced that these boundaries admit a great deal of fluidity and exchange, and that the similar ways in which they are marked make difficult the task of telling, firmly, which side one is on. Through the porousness and uncertainty of festivals' temporal and spatial demarcations, and through their imbrication into mundane patterns of movement and stasis, they are both deliberately and unintentionally woven into the modes of circulation which make up a crucial part of the city itself (Boutros and Straw 2010). Often precisely because of their relationship to commercial and administrative structures, festivals are directly and indirectly implicated in conflicts over the role of culture in constructing and preserving specific understandings of Montréal and its neighbourhoods. If we understand festivalization in one of its possible dimensions as the processes of relation between festivals and everyday life, in the case of Montréal we cannot limit its purview to an escapist reimagination of the city as it exists prior to, or outside of, the festival. Along with intensified experiences of entertainment and consumption in urban space, festivals invite joy, anticipation, surprise, irritation, confusion, critique (sometimes through the creation of more festivals), controversy—and even that familiar Simmelian companion of the urban everyday, blasé indifference. Viewing the relationship between festivals and everyday life through the lenses of circulation and the urban imaginary, we might understand contemporary festivals in Montréal, and possibly in other cities as well, as genuine participants in the continual creation and negotiation of everyday life.

Last, and if I may hazard a cautious extension of my observations, what does the case of Montréal have to tell us about the implications of festivalization for our understanding of both cities and festivals as objects of study and experience? Festivals come up against regulation, advertising, movement, and many of the everyday contingencies of life in the city. In a broad sense, they are more common, and may be becoming less special, but this does not always mean

that they are agents through which cities are being overtaken by disingenuously fantastical versions of themselves. The concepts of circulation and the urban imaginary invite us to understand the imagined city, the festivalized city, and the versions of the city we encounter on the way to work, to buy groceries, to meet a friend, or indeed to attend a festival, as threads in the complex web of relations that the city *is*. In Montréal's case, at least, the rhetorical construction of a city prior to its festivalized features would constitute a kind of fanciful escapism in reverse; we might caution, then, against thinking that festivals, as spectacular and commodified and even harmful as they can be, necessarily endanger something called everyday life which existed prior to them.

Festivals and cities are, and perhaps have always been, the complex and confounding collisions of particular decisions, movements, actions, and moments, whether the consequences of these decisions are positive or negative. In light of the concepts of the urban imaginary and everyday circulation, the project of delineating a city from its festivals becomes just as unstable as the project of rehabilitating the authentic (rural, traditional) festival apart from its dependence upon the (commercial, money-hungry) city. As far as Montréal's case may suggest, festivalization is perhaps best configured not as a process sealed off from the 'real' city, but as the oscillation between administrative and policy-related imaginings of the festival city and an enduring hum of the festival fact in the city's circulatory flows, a movement through which festivals are implicated in local conditions and terrains of negotiation. Taking account of this oscillation, we can come to understand a city like Montréal and its festivals as deeply interwoven—and, I believe, better take account of the importance of festivals as part of contemporary urban experience.

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