Chapter Three

Mapping Waiheke Island's Festivalscape

Community Activism and Festival Reclamation

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WAIHEKE ISLAND IS THE THIRD MOST POPULATED ISLAND in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Situated in the Hauraki Gulf and its Marine Park, and close to the most populated city, Auckland, the island has played many roles. Before colonization, it was a food basket for the region and after colonization it has been a forest to plunder, a holiday and retirement community and a bohemian retreat that is increasingly attractive to the moneyed class, which has contributed to a higher cost of living. The island's vineyards and art studios, pleasant microclimate and many beaches attract weekend visitors and increasingly unsustainable numbers of cruise ship day trippers throughout the year. Along with its expanding tourism, wine industry and rural gentrification, the island is also known for its growing significance as a maritime suburb as well as a "political hotbed" with an activist culture (Baragwanath 2010, 15).

Waiheke was chosen as the focus for this study because festivals have always been an important and integral part of this island's community life and are often linked to the island's rich activist culture, which has used festivals as a way of community building and protesting on social issues. Waiheke's island identity and economy also contribute in a significant way to the tourism product of the Auckland City. In recent years there has been an increase in cultural tourism events organized by the Auckland

Tourism Events & Economic Development, which has resulted in some events taken over from their local island focus to a regional, national and even global cultural festival tourism market, including the *Sculptures in the Gulf* biennial festival and the *Jazz Art and Music Festival* that attracts thousands of visitors annually.

In this chapter we explore island festivals and related forms of public culture as performance events that construct and negotiate meaning for the hosting island community and the visitors that come to the island to participate (Magliocco 2001). Through the mapping of Waiheke Island's *festivalscape*, we explore related concepts like *festivalization* and *festival reclamation* and we discuss the contribution of the island's festival culture to its identity and community organization. We conclude by linking these to the interconnected concepts of *strange island* and *island imaginaries*. Data for this research was collected through in-depth interviews with island inhabitants who have been involved in organizing and volunteering for festivals and ethnographic observations, partly participatory, by one of the authors, John Stansfield, who has been a Waiheke Island community member and activist for over three decades.

AN ISLANDS AND FESTIVAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

> "When you are on an island you are in quite a unique position where everyone is kind of together by the fact that we are surrounded by a body of water so . . . although sometimes it feels like quite a great battle to get stuff up and going, once you do people will want to come on board." (Waiheke Island inhabitant)

Conkling's (2007) well known definition of islandness seems to reflect partly what the Waiheke Islander quoted above tries to convey in their description of island life. For Conkling, islandness is a "metaphysical sensation that derives from the heightened experience that accompanies physical isolation" that is "reinforced by boundaries of often frightening and occasionally impassable bodies of water that amplify a sense of a place that is closer to the natural world because you are in closer proximity to your neighbours" (201). He continues by providing another important feature of islandness, a "sense that is absorbed by islanders through the obstinate and tenacious

hold of island communities" that visitors to the island can also experience "as an instantaneous recognition" (201). It is this unique sense of islandness that, according to Conkling, helps to sustain these island communities in spite of often challenging conditions.

The strong sense of community is among Putz's key features of islandness. One notices not only essentially practical attributes, like earthy common sense, independence, vigilant cooperation, and polydextrous and multi-faced competence, but also a tolerance of eccentricity and a complex oral tradition (1984, 26–27). He went on to argue that,

> "Island institutions are deep and traditionally effective, for they seldom operate solely for the advantage of their members. What is gained in them is a celebration of identity and fellowship. They are a blend of romanticism, of oral literature, of forum, of unity in rites, of security, sharing of wit, art, and commiseration – all the truly important things in life." (Putz 1984, 27)

One of the Waiheke Island festival organizers aptly described how these island features translate in reality and how island life shapes festivals:

> "because we live on an island and we don't have reticulated water and sewerage, for example, we live a bit more close to the environment and that has become part of our identity. Certainly I felt like Junk to Funk [Festival] was another expression of that artistic, clever, can do, supportive community that makes living here so nice." (Festival organizer)

When we come to study such cultural events as festivals on islands, all these features play an important role in shaping them to unique island events, reflecting aspects of the island's identity and weaved through the island's communicative ecology. This ecology refers to the various activities, forms, resources, channels and flows of communication and information unique to an island context and identity, as well the topics of communication and the ways in which things are communicated (see Papoutsaki and Kuawaha 2018; Hearn and Foth 2007). It also refers, perhaps most importantly in this context, to a milieu of island agents and island storytelling networks that island events like festivals are part of. These island networks are created through a storytelling process in which island inhabitants, organizations and local media work with each other to construct a reality for their island communities as places where they belong and in which they create events

that express this islandness (Papoutsaki and Kuwahara 2018, adapted from Wilkin et al. 2007).

In an island like Waiheke, which has a rich activist culture and high community engagement, these storytelling networks become vehicles for island storytelling agents to not only articulate in unique ways how festivals form part of the island's life but also to raise their voice about their impact. Waihekians are well aware of the unusually high number of festivals on their island. When, for instance, *Sister Shout*, Waiheke's all-woman choir, performed their show aptly titled WAIMAD in 2019, their intention was to provide a satire on the "astounding array of festivals that seem to continuously arise on Waiheke's shores, valleys and hilltops" (Caitcheon and Johnson 2019, 24). Attendees were issued festival wristband "tickets", asked to scrub their shoes upon entering – In imitation of the island's ecosystem protection efforts for kauri tree disease that is often applied in festival venues – and were entertained by several festival themed songs and skits, one of which featured a lost *Walking Festival* tramper who turned up at every other festival, poking fun at how *festivalization* has permeated island life. And in a typical Waiheke fashion, the performances raised funds for a worthy cause, Living Without Violence. This pertinent satirical performance stands as an example of the island's rich storytelling culture expressed in a milieu of island agents, in this case, the women's choir performers, that seek to take ownership of and, indeed, reclaim their island's *festivalscape*.

Having explored some of the features of islandness and how they shape island identity and activities, we now turn to how festivals have been defined in the literature and some of the features that make them distinctive events. Wilson et al. (2016) defined festivals as public, short, themed celebrations that are held regularly, while Uysal and Gitelson (1994, 3) saw them as traditional events staged to increase the tourism appeal to potential visitors. Getz, Anderson and Carlsen (2010, 30) considered them a celebration of community values, ideologies, identity and continuity ("When we celebrate our values together we build collective identity. We are saying, 'this is us, this is what we believe, this is who we are, this is what sets us apart'", Waiheke Island Junk to Funk festival volunteer). Julien (2007, 246) argued that they create a sense of belonging and pride among local residents, thus fostering the sharing of local resources and local purchases. For Turino (2008,

quoted in Johnson 2015, 18), festivals, like other "public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, which are, in turn, basic to survival". More specific to the islands, Magliocco (2001) saw festivals as performance events that construct and negotiate meaning for the island community and the visitors, a type of cultural celebration that comes under events tourism. Island festivals, according to Magliocco, can be seen as "arenas where the combination of ideologies, coordinates of power and performances of identity that characterize cultural contact and conflict on the island are played out". This definition adds a level of complexity to festivals that Magliocco saw as more representative of the context of small islands.

The benefits festivals bring to their hosting communities are well documented. Tull's (2012, 2014) festival model has identified both benefits and constraints for the hosting community. Festivals, according to Tull (2014), construct and showcase social and cultural experiences through ritual and traditions, cultural and artistic objects, aesthetics, performance, and engagement to create unique, public celebrations. In this case, we could say that the island culture is seen as a driver of development led by the growth of the creative economy. Festivals are often seen as tools that enhance their communities' economies and landscapes, but their success often depends on whether volunteers can be encouraged to dedicate their time to these events (Getz and Frisby 1988; Gursoy, Kim and Uysal 2004). The strong cooperation characteristic of island communities often translates to a strong volunteering culture, which has been a key feature of the Waiheke Island's festival scene, both community- and commercial-focused:

> "one of the great things with Waiheke is, especially with Junk to Funk, once it got up and running and it had been on a couple of times, it was very easy to rope in volunteers. It was something that was focussed primarily at young people and Waiheke has a great culture for supporting its young people and for wanting to make that happen, so lots and lots of people – mums, dads, uncles, aunties – all put their hands up and helped." (Waiheke Island festival volunteer)

But this is where the constraints become visible. Festivals often fall within the domain of the creative economy and, in islands, festivals can become

an instrumentalist tool in tourism and economic development as well as in place marketing and the selling of attractions and venues. When linked to such an instrumentalist approach, art festivals can generate tensions for the island hosting communities, as one Waihekean shared: "You know, I love Waiheke but the problem is it has become known as the island of wine and dance parties. I wish it was something else" (Waiheke Island inhabitant).

The island context, with its unique characteristics, and the specific events nature of festivals all contribute to shaping an island's *festivalscape*. Referring to Getz, Anderson and Carlsen's study of *festivalscapes* as contact zones that reinforce group identity, Johnson (2015) further added that they bring together aspects of culture that celebrate and display under one banner an idea of solidarity or distinctiveness. Lee et al. (2008, 56) saw this "scape" as an amalgam of the tangible factors and the intangible "atmosphere" associated with a festival which informs how people relate to it. Lee et al. (2011) m identified a set of dimensions for this scape that could include, in the context of island festivals, the island's ambience, aesthetics, functionality and socio-cultural factors. Gursoy, Kim and Uysal (2004) mentioned that festivals are highly dependent on the driving forces of key individuals acting within festival networks, who support their emergence and occurrence on a regular basis. Attachments to a certain cultural community can have a significant impact on intentions to revisit festivals. Festivals also provide a context for social relationships and shared experiences that represent one's values. When asked about the social benefit for participating as a zero waste volunteer at the Jazz festival on Waiheke, one volunteer said, "As a zero waste volunteer I met new people…I also got to meet up with other volunteers that I had met at previous zero waste events I had helped with. I was then able to meet up with friends after my shift." Felsenstein and Fleischer (2003) referred to the "perceived destination image" as a crucial factor in encouraging repeat visits to festivals. As one Waiheke festival volunteer said, "If you go to a [Waiheke Island] festival and it's not zero waste, go find the event organizer and ask them why!", alluding to the island's sustainable eco-friendly image that adds significantly to the perceived destination image Felsenstein and Fleischer spoke about.

WAIHEKE ISLAND: THE "JEWEL IN THE CROWN" OF THE HAURAKI GULF

> "I have an identity as an islander because I know that we won't take shit. I know that we will stand our ground and fight on anything that is fair. I know that we have strong environmental values but also, it is the artiest place I have ever lived." (Waiheke Island inhabitant)

Popularly referred to by locals as the jewel in the crown of the Hauraki Gulf, Waiheke Island is just seventeen kilometres away from central Auckland to which it is connected by a forty-minute ferry ride. But its status as a contemporary tourist hotspot (Campbell, McNair, Mackay and Perkins 2019) belies a much more interesting and vibrant past. Waiheke Island was traditionally called *Te Motu Aria Roa* in Māori ('the long sheltering island'). Seen by many as a residential maritime suburb of Auckland, it is the most populated of New Zealand's smaller islands (aside from North Island and South Island). It has been occupied since the earliest phase of Māori presence in Aotearoa and there is archaeological evidence of headland *Pa* (fortresses) predominantly occupied by the *Hauraki* and *Te Arawa* tribes but periodically contested from both North Island and South Island.

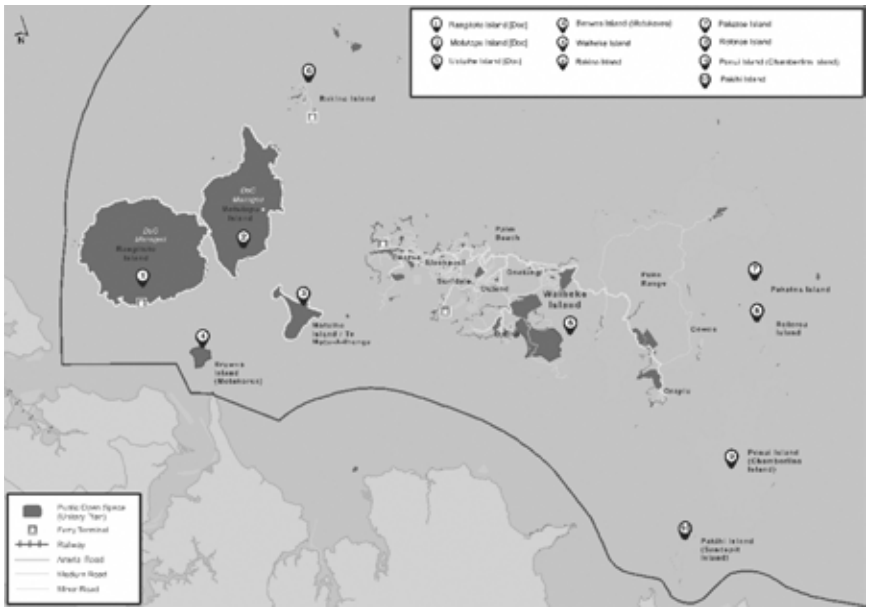

Figure 1: Waiheke local board boundary map (Auckland City Council n.d.)

Indigenous history and early European writers identify Waiheke as rich in natural resources sitting at the centre of North Island's busiest waterways in pre-European and early colonial times (Monin 2012). The abundant fish in the area's protected waters were an important food source for the region. As one early photograph shows, three thousand sharks were dried over a period of six weeks in preparation for a major feast (Peart 2016). Much *Mana* or prestige was accrued in traditional societies by being able to lavishly feed visitors to such events, which celebrated and preserved identity (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007).

The first recorded festivals on Waiheke were coastal sale days where farmers would gather to sell their stock. The sale yards on the southern foreshore of Man-of-War Bay were served by scours and barges and were a great occasion of gathering where auctioneers, visitors and locals could lunch upon cold meats, vegetables and desserts prepared by local women (Day 1989). With the advent of a regular ferry service, homesteading declined and its importance to the island community was reduced as regular food supplies became available from offshore. From the 1970s there has been an influx of those seeking a quieter lifestyle outside of the city (Baragwanath and Lewis 2014). While pastoral farming continued, residents became alarmed at the loss of forest and habitat, and agricultural enterprises began to diversify. Kim and Jeanette Goldwater established the first vineyard and thus began the thriving Waiheke Island wine industry, which produces some of the most sought-after and expensive wines in the country. With the development of the wine industry came the first of the wine festivals, which served not just to celebrate the vintage but to establish the island as a significant winegrowing area (Hall and Sharples 2008).

The 2012 census and its subsequent interpretation by local government provide us with a snapshot of what was once a loose collection of small villages. While in the 1970s the island population was under 3,000, by 2013 it had grown to 8,340, 28 per cent of which had been born overseas, with another 3,000 non-residents who kept holiday homes on the island (Statistics NZ 2013). This number increases dramatically in summer, with estimates up to 30,000 to 40,000 people (Waiheke Island Community Board 2009). Households are predominantly single family and with a higher proportion of single person households than in Auckland. The median

age of residents, at 45.3 versus 35.1 for Auckland, reflects the substantial retired population, with 19 per cent of the population being over 65 versus 12 per cent in Auckland (Statistics NZ 2013). Some would argue that this has implications for festivals as the dominant generation is used to making its own entertainment rather than having this provided by the market.

The island has three schools and, according to the 2012 census, over 1,200 businesses employing 2,250 people. Tourism (accommodation and food services) is the largest employer of both resident and non-resident islanders. For all its reputation as a place for moneyed people to go, the island had a modest median household income of NZ$51,100 versus $76,500 for greater Auckland (Statistics NZ 2013). Contemporary Waiheke is enjoying a boom both in settlement and tourism, and it has developed somewhat of an international reputation, with the Lonely Planet Guide listing it as the fifth best island in the world (NZ Herald 2018). Some of its contemporary festivals are clearly aimed at the tourist market, while others less clearly as they have evolved towards this, though there remains a very strong tradition of festivals by the island for the island.

MAPPING WAIHEKE ISLAND'S *FESTIVALSCAPE*

Festival sites, according to Johnson (2015), are "contact zones that reveal not only the content of the performances on display, but also meaning that is embedded in the purpose of the events in the first place" (18). One way of mapping festivals is through their hosting community. As Mackley-Crump (2012, quoted in Johnson 2015) suggested, studying festivalscapes "can be used to help understand the cultural geographies of particular localities" (107) like small islands, in this case, and their distinctive communities. Another way of mapping is through the type of festival event. Mapping them according to their perceived benefits to and impact on island life and identity can also provide a nuanced analysis.

Mapping Waiheke's festivals through their primary focus (that is the type of event) resulted in the following descriptive categories: food and wine, music, film and dance, art, heritage, sports, seasonal, community, gardening and nature, and sustainability. The table below attempts to group them thematically, with some, like the *Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta,* fitting under

more than one theme as it is both seasonal and community-focused and also has a strong sustainability character. While some of these festivals are no longer being held, like the *Junk to Funk* , and while some are coming back to life with a different focus, like the *Santa Parade*, the majority of these festivals still take place, demonstrating a distinctive island festival culture. Waihekeans seem to thrive around community events that are used not only to celebrate the island's arts, culture and nature but also as a form of fundraising for community causes, like the *Fossil Bay Spring Festival*, and protecting and celebrating their island's natural habitant, like the *Junk to Funk* festival, a unique expression of Waiheke Island's eco-friendly values.

Table 1: Waiheke Island Festivalscape

Food/Wine
• W Vintage Festival – W Olive and Artisan Food Festival • Oyster Festival – Island Styles Events
Music/Film/Dance
• W Jazz, Arts, Music Festival – Dance Party – Latin Film Festival • W Playwright Festival – Waiheke Radio Dance Party
Art
• W Sculpture on the Gulf – Storytelling Festival – Sculpt Oneroa • Poetry Jam on National Poetry Day – W Winter Arts Festival
Heritage
• Auckland Heritage Festival on Waiheke
Sports
• W Beach Races – Rocky Bay Regatta – Fullers Festival of Football – Beach Sports Day
Seasonal
• Fossil Bay Spring Festival – Harvest Kai Festival – Guy Fawkes Fireworks – Mid-Winter Ball – Santa Parade/Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta – Matariki – Carols by Candlelight – Easter Book Fair – Harvest Fair
Community
• W Primary School Fair – Santa Parade – Waitangi Day – Teddy Bears Picnic – Carols by Candlelight – Blackpool Fair – Easter Book Fair – SKP Impromptu Festival for Fundraisers – WICOSS Annual Celebrate Volunteering Day
Nature/Gardening
• W Garden Festival – W Walking Festival
Sustainability
• Junk to Funk – Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta

Waiheke's rich and highly diverse *festivalscape* is mostly focused around six villages – Oneroa, Blackpool, Surfdale, Ostend, Rocky Bay and Onetangi – that are home to most of the island's population. Each of these villages has its own community gathering point, usually a community hall, and its own distinct entertainments for village-, island- and visitor-focused events and festivals. Onetangi village, for instance, has a much loved Community Hall with kitchen and outdoor facilities where community music theatre and celebrations are held regularly. It is also home to the *Onetangi Beach Races,* an annual celebration of island culture and a fundraising event hosted by the Rotary Club. The seaside spectacle is a smoke-free and zero waste event which attracts more than 5,000 attendees, mostly locals. The other sports festival held on Waiheke is the *Rocky Bay Regatta,* a popular annual community sailing event that has been running since 1948. It is organized by the Waiheke Boating Club and staffed completely by volunteers. The strong focus on community has contributed to the creation of a unique volunteering culture that sits at the core of all festivals on the island, both commercial and not-for-profit.

Surfdale also has a popular Community Hall and Youth Centre whose grounds are used for community picnics beside the sea. The shallow waters of Shelley Beach host a regular regatta for young sailors and small craft and the Shelley Beach community holds a regular beachside neighbours' day. Ostend is home to the regular weekly Waiheke-wide market and its sheltered harbour is home to the Waiheke Boat Club immediately adjacent to the Waiheke Sports Club, which is a busy focal point for events such as the annual fundraiser, *Show and Shine* and numerous well attended sports tournaments. Blackpool village boasts its own monthly pop-up pub, The Dog and Pony, and a regular car boot sale as well as events associated with its old school reserve. The *Blackpool Fair*, an annual fundraising and volunteer-run event, is held by the Blackpool Residents Association targeting the local suburb.

Oneroa, the main village closest to the ferry terminal at Matiatia Bay, hosts several events including the *Waiheke Easter Book Fair*, the *Sculpture on the Gulf Festival*, the *Sculpt Oneroa Festival*, the *Waiheke Santa Parade* (in its various manifestations) and the *Gulf News Trolley Derby*, as well as events focused around a Sustainability Centre, the Community Hall and

the galleries, cinema and theatre. The *Sculpture on the Gulf*, held every two years, was originally a small fundraiser for the Waiheke Art Gallery located in Oneroa but has now grown to an international art event supported by locals both as volunteers and as participants. It is increasingly dominated by offshore and international artists and attracts big crowds from the city. The *Sculpt Oneroa* festival, a free not-for-profit event, is run by local sculptors and began in response to the commercialization of *Sculpture on the Gulf*. Primarily aimed at locals as a way of sharing local artists in a space easily accessible to all, it is hugely popular, particularly with local businesses along Ocean View Road, where most cafes and restaurants are, which benefit from the festival because this is where it is held. It also attracts a following from the arts community in the city. The seasonal *Waiheke Santa Parade,* funded by the local board, has been one of the most popular annual festivals on the island. It is predominantly a local event, with local community groups and clubs spending weeks preparing their floats. Following the island's long tradition of environmental activism, the event has become a *Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta* that challenges local groups and businesses to consider the environment as part of their entries: "Bikes, horses, skateboards, roller-blades, scooters, prams, wind, solar and electric vehicles, are all okay, and people-powered entries are especially welcome" (OurAuckland 2018).

Aside the villages that host festivals closely linked to their communities, the island also hosts several other festivals that embrace the island's solidarity spirit, like the annual *Garden Festival* that began in 2001. It is supported by the Jassy Dean Trust, which was formed in 1993 when the Dean family needed support for the costly medical care of their teenage daughter. It attracts visitors from the island as well as many from offshore, with participants spending months preparing gardens as exhibits and festivalgoers visiting various island gardens over the weekend of the festival. This community spirit also manifests in several other fundraising-focused festivals like the *Fossil Bay Harvest Festival*, hosted at the popular communal farm in Fossil Bay, which attracts locals along with some visitors to the island. It has been held annually for twenty-five years and is an important part of the funding of the Fossil Bay kindergarten, although many islanders who not associated with kindergarten donate their timebecause they are sympathetic to environmental and sustainability issues. Similarly, the

Fossil Bay Spring Fayre, mostly a local event and running with the backing of the highly successful harvest festival, is another fundraising venture by the Waiheke Steiner Kindy group.

Along with the community-focused festivals, the island also has a large number of commercially oriented events that focus on the branding of the island as a tourist destination, particularly for day trip visitors. These events, like the *Waiheke Olive Festival* and *Wine and Food Festival*, generate income for island businesses. The latter, previously known as *Vintage Festival,* was a creation of the Waiheke Winegrowers Association catering mostly to visitors and was always commercial in nature. Islanders, however, have been unhappy with the level of drunkenness at the festival in recent years, which was held in the hot sun without free water and with expensive food.

Part of Waiheke's image is linked to its vibrant art community, which has played an important role is shaping several festivals around the arts, culture and music, including the island-grown *Waiheke Playwright*, the *Storytelling Festivals* and *Sculpt Oneroa*, but also festivals that mirror bigger local events like the *Waiheke Poetry and Song Love Jam*, formally *Waiheke Poetry Festival*, or *Poet Jam*, held on National Poetry Day each year, hosted by the library in Oneroa village and organized by an informal group of poetry volunteers. The *Auckland Heritage Festival on Waiheke* is the local branch of an Auckland regional festival hosted by the Waiheke Library and its staff and is attended primarily by locals, features local historians and historic artefacts and has included a heritage feast. The *Waiheke Latin and Spanish Film Festival*, a free not-for-profit event sponsored by the Spanish and some Latin American embassies in Wellington, is very popular among the locals, partly reflecting the multicultural population of the island, as Waiheke has a large population of Latin American, particularly Argentinian, young people on working holidays.

Many Waiheke festivals reflect the involvement and representation of different island generations. Young people often find island life restrictive, with one report identifying that "preliminary results [Youth2020] show that youth who feel 'trapped' on the island due to their financial and family circumstances are more vulnerable to issues relating to drugs, petty crime and others" (Boladeras 2020):

> "One of the problems that we have here on Waiheke is that in the wintertime the beaches are not a whole lot of fun so that takes away the young people's main source of fun during the winter and means that a lot of them turn to other sorts of mischievous fun such as alcohol and parties. So, we wanted to show that Waiheke could have an event for young people that was drug and alcohol free, that was still a whole heap of fun and where people could get together and just hang out." (Waiheke Island youth)

While festivals like *Junk to Funk* had a particular focus on the younger population of the island in an effort to educate them about waste management and substantiality in a fun way, other events like *Super Awesome Mega Epic Day/Night* (*Same Day/Same Night* for short) are organized by the youth themselves. Part of the Waiheke Youth Voice and supported by the Home Grown Youth Change Makers programme, this event acted as a ground for youth self-organization:

> "It was run by young people and it was set up by young people and it was participated by young people – for youth by youth – and if you want to have festivals on your island later on and more adult events, you need to invest in these young people festivals as well because if they learn the skills how to organise, then they can continue those on later in life and hopefully, the biggest thing is that they will feel valued in their community and they will want to stay there and they will want to continue to partake and to organise these festivals later on in life as well." (Waiheke Island youth member of organizing committee)

The above quote not only indicates the multiple benefits of festivals for young people – serving as a space to build community learning skills ("amazing opportunity to learn about funding applications and to really grow and develop these skills in organising and delegating") – but also reflects the particular nature of island life that requires strong community participation. This leads us then into the following section discussing the benefits festivals bring and the impact they have on islands.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND IMPACT: *FESTIVALIZATION* AND *ISLAND RECLAMATION*

Following Tull's (2014) festival benefits typology, we could link several Waiheke festivals to the perceived benefits they bring to the community but also the adverse impact they might have on island life. Festivals like the

Waiheke Jazz, Arts and Music Festival act as image makers and destination branding with an urban, regional outlook, while the *Waiheke Walk Festival* contributes to diversifying the island's tourism product and economic development by focusing on the island's natural assets. Whereas festivals like the outdoor *Sculpture in the Gulf* have transformed the island's physical landscape and *Sculpt Oneroa* have contributed towards retaining the island's artistic expression and heritage, others like the *Garden Festival*, *Junk to Funk* and the *Santa Parade* have significantly contributed to community building and act as a model for a sustainable environment. The latter, being community grounded, showcases island ingenuity, community spirit, social cohesion and sustainability.

While the largest number of festivals on Waiheke are island-grown and focused, with local community volunteering and attending, there are also festivals that, while island-grown, now cater mostly to visitors from the Auckland region, like the *Waiheke Jazz, Arts and Music Festival*. There are also festivals that, although locally initiated, have now become major global events that are attracting international visitors, like *Sculpture in the Gulf*. There is another emerging category that falls under island festival reclamation, like *Sculpt Oneroa*, referring to events the community felt the need to reclaim or recreate with an island focus.

The *Waiheke Jazz, Arts and Music Festival* was originally launched as the *Montana Waiheke Island of Jazz Festival* by Jazz musician David Paquette in 1996. It stopped in 2006 and was restarted by another musician, John Quigley, as *Waiheke International Jazz Festival*, a three-day event that was renamed a third time to the *Waiheke Jazz, Arts and Music Festival* and took on a different format: "while retaining many inspirational jazz performances, a new focus is on contemporary music, demonstrations of abstract and figurative painting and collaborative performance art involving painters, musicians and the audience" (Worthy 2018). Staged across the island in different venues, including a vineyard, a winery and a wine bar, it is evident that this new format is aimed at maximizing the island's revenue from the event and cleverly building a destination brand that pairs art and music with an island lifestyle that is associated with its winemaking image. It attracts large visitor numbers with many locals volunteering:

> "This is a long running iconic Waiheke festival and it is great to see that it is still going today. It creates events at multiple venues on Waiheke showcasing our wonderful vineyards, restaurants and bars. The festival definitely contributes to Waiheke's culture of lounging around with a glass of wine in hand, and a bit of a boogie." (Waiheke Island festival volunteer)

Figure 2. waiJAM Festival 2020 poster (*Source:* authors)

Festivals of this scale are often commercialized and contribute significantly to the regional tourist product. As one of the managing directors of the regional iTicket event booking company indicated, "the festival will add interest, colour and excitement to the Auckland regional events scene" (Worthy 2018). Nevertheless, despite its commercialization, the festival still reflects some of the island values about sustainability. Some of the venues have had Zero Waste stalls and volunteers:

> "I helped make sure there was enough zero waste volunteers onsite to support the event. I helped to speak with participants about reusing their cups instead of single using them. I supported participants to sort their own waste at the waste station and spoke to them about the on-island composting facility that processes all of the food scraps and PLA cups from the event." (Waiheke Island festival volunteer)

What we see with this type of festival is an ambivalence about what image of the island is projected to outsiders. Here we have juxtaposed images of "island coolness" ("lounging around with a glass of wine in hand, and a bit of a boogie") and the island self-projected eco-friendly values with herding large numbers of visitors to venues that have a commercial character.

This brings us to festivals as sites of *(re)presentation* and the *politics of*

(re)presentation, a combination of presentation of self and representation by and for others (Odermatt 1996, 85, in Magliocco 2001). The festivals that are most strongly associated with the politics of (re)presentation are *Sculpture in the Gulf* and its counter response *Sculpt Oneroa*, which emerged as a result of the *festivalization* of the island's festival culture. Getz, Anderson and Carlsen (2010) defined *festivalization* as an over-commodification of festivals exploited by tourism and place marketers. The biennial *Sculpture on the Gulf* was originally a small fundraiser for the Waiheke Art Gallery but has now grown to an enormous international event supported by locals both as volunteers and participants, but increasingly dominated by offshore and international artists and attracting huge crowds from the city.

Figure 2. Scupt Oneroa Festival 2020 poster (*Source:* authors)

> "It used to be something that the locals had a lot more access to and now it has become a major art event which is fine but its connection to the community is more removed and the ones who benefit from it are basically tourism operators rather than the wider community." (Waiheke Island inhabitant)

Waiheke is known for its distinctive community that values its unique culture and is prepared to protect it from inappropriate change (Baragwanath and Lewis 2010). *Sculpt Oneroa's* key message on bringing Waiheke art to Oneroa village over summer is a political statement and an act of self-presentation. When asked by the authors what they hoped to

achieve with *Sculpt Oneroa*, Paora toi Te Rangiuaia, one of the festival's driving forces, pointed to a strong need to self-represent through self-recognition:

> "I guess self-recognition, Tino Rangatiratanga, the idea that you have it within yourself and within your network to stand forward and be assured that you can do that with that support around you. In a Maori sense of Tuakana Teina – to be there to assist others… Even if they don't sell, it is still that recognition of being part of something that is intrinsically our village, our island – it is us, we are doing it." (Paora Toi Te Rangiuaia)

Island inhabitants recognize its value to their community but also express an awareness of how this festival is an act of self-representation and a reflection of the island's identity, a form of self-identification:

> "You know, the exhibition here is by far better than the larger exhibition. It has so much heart, it is very honest and we love seeing people within the Waiheke Community, their artistry, their expertise and the engagement. The engagement not only of our own community but of people coming in, the tourists" (response from the community)

In a similar tone, the organizer of the *Junk to Funk Festival* expressed the importance of self-identification when asked about the uniqueness of this event in relations to the island:

> "One of the things that was really cool was it was definitely one of those uniquely Waiheke things. Out in the big wider world you have a world of wearable arts and trash to fashion but none of that matters because here on Waiheke, in our own little microculture, we had *Junk to Funk*, which was bigger and better in our eyes. Our big goal was creating a platform of, 'Oh yeah, on Waiheke Island they did that. It is achievable and look at the benefits.'"

The question of who is producing what for whom is key, according to Friedman (1990, 323, in Magliocco 2001), to understanding different reactions to tourism, especially on a small island. When the islanders are in charge of their own (re)presentations, the development of a tourist-driven festival economy does not have to undermine the continuation of a distinct island identity. Instead, Friedman argues, "when tourism exploits, displaces and instrumentalizes its object, resistance to tourism and the

creation of a contrasting selfhood is the likely result" (Friedman 1990, 324, in Maglioccio 2001).

While identity politics plays an important role, there is another more pragmatic aspect of festival reclamation. The local artists perceived the internationalization of their festival and gradual exclusion of their work from it as "an act of war", one that had direct implications for the financial survival of the island's artist community but also the community itself. The *Sculpture on the Gulf* festival directs visitors arriving at the ferry terminal over to the coastal Maitiatia headland sculpture trail. Though an additional shuttle bus route runs to other locations, most visitors stay on the sculpture trail, purchasing food and drinks from authorized stalls, and return to the ferry terminal without visiting the rest of the island or Oneroa village. As the festival takes place in the summer and Headland is exposed, visitors are rather tired by the trail and often return to the ferry for departure. *Sculpt Oneroa* was thus a response to the need to bring income to the island and keep it there:

> "What were we going to do? It was going to kill the economy of the island. We have been up here and working 360 odd days a year for the last 14 or 15 years and they were going to rob us of that economy."

In our question about who has benefitted economically from reclaiming the sculpture festival, Paora's response was clear: "I would suggest it is the community because most of us who have sold through that spend our money back here on the island."

Festival reclamation in this case is seen as an exclusively local celebration after a larger festival has become a tourist attraction. Following the line of Friedman and Appadurai, Magliocco (2001) argued that in the context of the twin processes of globalization and localization, festivals serve as sites for the construction of identity and authenticity. The two Waiheke sculpture festivals fit within Appadurai's argument, that "for polities of smaller scale, there is always a fear of cultural absorption by polities of a larger scale, especially those that are nearby" (Appadurai 1990 295, in Magliocco 2001). And to paraphrase Maglioccio (2001), when an island festival no longer performs an identity narrative to which islanders can subscribe, like *Sculptures in Gulf*, the island community may choose to transform

the festival through new activities or to designate a new, separate festival, like in the case of *Sculpt Oneroa*, to perform the identity with which the community identifies.

A "STRANGE ISLAND"

Despite the festivalization of Waiheke's festivalscape, many of these events, past and present, reflect its distinct "strange island" identity. The concept has been used by Baragwanath and Lewis (2010) to describe Waiheke and it is borrowed from Sarah Neal, a British academic whose expression of *"strange towns"* – meaning different from the norm – was used to explore why some small, rural towns in Britain have become associated with progressive politics and radical or countercultures. Baragwanath and Lewis (2010, in Baragwanth 2010, 8) viewed Waiheke as a "strange island" in terms of its high levels of activism and ways in which different groups mobilize in order to preserve its distinctiveness, including its strong values of sustainability embedded in the island way of life. As the organizer of one of the festivals expressed:

> "Waiheke in general has always had this very staunch, well for my lifetime at least, sustainability-focused culture and *Junk to Funk* was just an amazing opportunity to show that off and to really celebrate our uniqueness and our artsiness and our creativeness, our eco-warriorness which we all have here on the island too." (Junk to Funk organizer)

This resourcefulness around sustaining the eco-friendly values that living on a small island demands is manifesting in different aspects of the island's festivalscape, including the strong festival volunteering tradition. When one local was asked why they volunteer for the Zero Waste stall in one of the festivals, the reply was indicative of the island's strong sustainability ethos:

> "I struggle when I go to events that are not organized using a zero waste *kaupapa*, so attending events where waste [is] minimized and sorted makes me happy. It is better for the venue and event organizers as they are thinking beyond the walls of their events and thinking about the footprint they are having on their environment. The wider community benefits by having access to compost that is created from food scraps and compostable and jobs are created through this

> process. It also spreads the message about minimizing waste to vendors and an audience of participants that may not be familiar to this way of being." (Waiheke Island festival volunteer)

Part of Waiheke's strong island identity has to do with its earlier low income, single parent households and its artist and activist population, but also with the fact that until 1989 it was governed by the Waiheke County Council. To the islanders' disappointment and strong protest, it was then amalgamated to Auckland City Council, and one of the first effects of this change was the loss of their fledgling recycling scheme. The highly successful *Junk to Funk Festival*, run by the Waiheke Resources Trust (then Waiheke Waste Resources Trust), had as its principal sponsor the community-owned company, Clean Stream, which ran the local rubbish enterprise until it was stripped of its contract by the Auckland City.

> "Exporting waste out of Waiheke is quite an expensive thing so being able to minimise the waste that is leaving the island has economic value in itself. On top of that, importing stuff to Waiheke is expensive due to the ferry costs so being able to go out into the waste stream and recover what you need and being able to be resourceful and find that stuff for yourself is of huge value in terms of the economy. Furthermore, the actual event itself was catered and had food trucks there from local stores and was a great way for sustainable businesses to show off." (Junk to Funk organizer)

Waihekeans, like many island communities, are sensitive to loss of sovereignty (Prescott 2003) and have developed a culture of demanding more control over where they live. This desire for self-determination is a persistent theme in the island's history, and its challenging relationships with government bodies can be linked to this value, making a fertile ground for community development.

> "I think a festival like this [Junk to Funk] brings different community groups together and creates further relationships between people helping one another, understanding organizations and what they stand for." (festival volunteer)

Developed by the WRT Education team, the much loved festival showcased the island's creative talent by producing wearable art from the waste stream. It involved 1,200 people (out of a population of just 4,000) and used strategies where existing events, such as the local market and music

festivals, provided opportunities for community engagement. These events were the forerunners of the *Sustainability Festival* – spanning ten days and hosting over fifty events, involving many other clubs and environmental organizations.

> "I think it really did contribute to the identity and culture of the island and that was a deliberate ploy on our part. We were out to create social norms around reducing and reusing, particularly before you recycle… So, the culture we were fostering was one of togetherness, we are all in this together looking after the planet, we are here to look after each other as well, we are here to not squander the precious resources of the earth and I think that is an integral part of the identity of Waiheke Islanders" (Junk to Funk Festival organizer)<END>

When Clean Stream lost its licence, the transfer station, a favourite scavenging point, was declared off limits to the public and ever-increasing volumes of reusable material were consigned to landfill. Without the financial backing of the company, the *Junk to Funk* festival stopped running in 2010, although islanders still have great hopes that they will regain the contract and the festival can be brought back to life. But it did leave a lasting legacy, especially in the younger generation that was actively involved and trained in community activism:

> "I think it had lasting social value to the community at large about bringing us all together and giving us a chance to show off the wonderful works of our young people. And I think, extending a bit further from that, it taught a whole generation and a half really of young people on the island how to be resourceful for themselves and how to think of art in a very unique way and how to get involved and be engaged in waste in a very Waiheke way. (Festival organizer)

Another festival that reflects similar values is the *Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta*, which focused on creating a seasonal Christmas festival with a strong sustainability focus:

> "The festival brought up a lot of conversation around how many electric cars there are on Waiheke, it is pretty tremendous and how we, again, want to become this example to New Zealand and how we can define that through the festival and maybe remind people of what we want to be in the community. Where we are heading towards, what we are aiming for." (Festival volunteer)

This festival, despite its strong sustainability focus and the engagement of different groups, particularly young people and children, was not viewed positively by some islanders. The festival replaced the long-running and very popular *Santa Parade*, which was run by the islanders as a big seasonal party that expressed Waiheke Island's strong community and creative spirit. But this was not the only reason *Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta* was not embraced. Some islanders saw it as an imposition from above, commissioned by the local board and thus not a grassroots event. Some argued that the island did not need yet another trendy festival and that, by necessity, islanders were already well versed in sustainable ways of living . The island's changing demographics, though, might mean that newcomers need to find ways to take part in the island's storytelling practices, and festivals such as this one help to create inclusiveness and build identity.

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSIONS: FESTIVALS AND ISLAND IMAGINARIES

It is evident from the above that Waiheke has a unique *festivalscape* that reflects its island identity. *Festivalization* is firmly established and, despite the increasing number of commercial festivals that aim at branding the island as a tourist and cultural events destination, there is still a persisting culture of and desire for local festivals for the islanders and by the islanders (*community engagement*). As one of the festival volunteers expressed:

> "I hope that these festivals and community occasions continue to happen because I think that there is something truly magic around the arts, around festivals that the media and that television and movies just don't have. It is a different type of magic and it is very unique and it takes a little bit more energy but it is a whole lot more satisfying." (Waiheke Island festival volunteer)

Local festivals are often associated with the concept of sustainable islands, and Waiheke has proven that to be the case. One of the emerging themes from this research was a "just do it" Waiheke culture that many locals believe is part of their island identity. This island seems to be rich in human capital, which is in line with the literature on island character (see above for Conkling 2007 and Putz 1984). High levels of volunteerism, necessary for sustaining such a rich festivalscape, are part of this. Waiheke's openness to experiment, part of its "strange island" nature, manifests as a "voyage

of discovery" for the community when they embark on something new, like so many of its festivals have demonstrated.

However, as the island's population is changing due to increasing unaffordability, its entrenched association with alternative lifestyles, counter-cultural developments and activism is also affected (Baragwanath 2010, 18). Although one can still identify elements of this distinctive character in many island activities, including the festivals, they might be interpreted differently by different groups.

> "I think with Waiheke becoming a growing destination with all sorts of different types of people coming here, there has been a fear that we are losing our sense of identity and a lot of people are moving off the island. So, I think a festival like this really brings people together and makes them think about what is important to them. They have to create something together. It is around what our values are as a community, what we want to protect. What we want our children, the future generation, to be investing energy into and really coming up with ideas which sort of celebrate Waiheke and what it means to be" (Fossil Fuel Free Fiesta volunteer)

The concept of geographical imaginaries (Baragwanath 2010) is useful in referring to the different visions of what Waiheke is and should or could be, with the consequence that the ways in which people imagine Waiheke, in turn, affect how they behave. An imaginary, Baragwanath and Lewis (2010, in Baragwanath 2010, 7) argued, is more specific than abstract imagination, as the latter implies an opening up of new possibilities and even utopian notions, while a geographical imaginary is a particular representation of place that has effects on how participants create communities. It implies a cultural and political project in which the imagination is connected to identity and to political economy, becoming in effect a discourse of place.

The festivals, integral to the island's storytelling communicative ecology, help to construct island imaginaries but also act as a barometer in this changing island- and festivalscape. And on Waiheke we have a paradox on display, one that sees the island's imaginaries mobilized by different actors in different ways and for different reasons, creating tensions between the island community's perceived notion of their identity and that of outsiders.

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