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Approaching the (alternative) Economies of Festive Events: Insights from official and independent carnivals in Nice and Viareggio

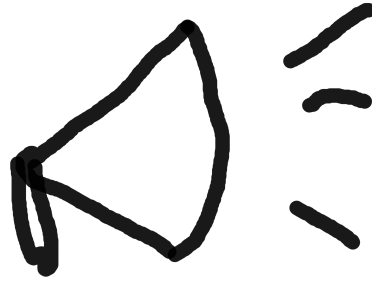
Aproximação às economias (alternativas) dos Eventos Festivos: Insights de carnavais oficiais e independentes em Nice e Viareggio



Monika Salzbrunn,

University of Lausanne and ERC Activism Project, monika.salzbrunn@unil.ch

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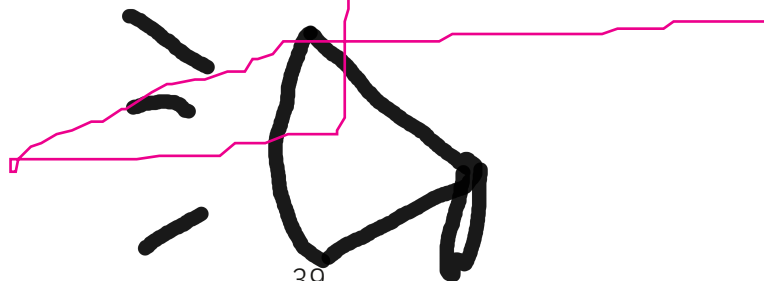
Os eventos festivos foram sempre incorporados em economias locais, regionais e/ou translocais, baseadas em modelos capitalistas, mas também em modelos e modos de troca alternativos. Assim, as economias dos eventos festivos requerem análises a diferentes níveis: 1. o contexto económico e político global, local e micro-local da sua preparação, realização e impacto; 2. as relações de intercâmbio individuais e coletivas entre os principais atores, participantes e espectadores e as suas atitudes pessoais e institucionais face aos modelos económicos. Após uma apresentação das reflexões conceptuais e teóricas sobre as economias dos eventos festivos, delinearei os conhecimentos empíricos obtidos no âmbito do projeto ARTIVISM financiado pelo European Research Council (ERC). Este projeto explora várias formas de expressão artística, incluindo performances, eventos festivos, carnavais e formas carnavalescas de demonstração, aplicando etnografia multi-sensorial e audiovisual a vários sítios de campo em França, Itália, Camarões e Califórnia. Partindo de uma perspectiva histórica, este trabalho centra-se na economia (alternativa) dos carnavais oficiais e independentes em Viareggio e Nice, bem como nas suas ligações translocais.

Palavras-chave: Economia de Festival, Eventos festivos, Carnaval, Etnografia multissensorial, Economia alternativa, Antropologia política, Estudos folclóricos

Abstract:

Festive events have always been embedded in local, regional and/or translocal economies, based on capitalist, but also alternative models and modes of exchange. Hence, the economies of festive events require analysis at different levels: 1. The global, local and micro-local economic and political context of their preparation, realization and impact; 2. The individual and collective exchange relations between the main actors, participants and spectators and their personal and institutional attitudes towards the economic models. Following a presentation of conceptual and theoretical reflections on the economies of festive events, I will outline the empirical insights gained in the framework of the European Research Council (ERC) funded ARTIVISM project. This project explores various artistic forms of political expression, including performances, festive events, carnivals and carnivalesque forms of demonstration, applying multi-sensory and audiovisual ethnography to various field sites in France, Italy, Cameroon and California. Starting from a historical perspective, this paper focuses on the (alternative) economy of official and independent carnivals in Viareggio and Nice, as well as their translocal connections.

Keywords: Festival Economy, Festive Events, Carnival, Multi-Sensory Ethnography, Alternative Economy, Political Anthropology, Folklore Studies



Introduction: Defining festival, festive events and festival economy

Based on Marcel Mauss' theory that gifts are never free, it can be assumed that festive events – as total social facts - are hardly ever celebrated without considerations of the economy. In most cases, they are intended to create, maintain or challenge social ties, which are inevitably linked to economic and political power hierarchies. Nevertheless, concepts of the festival economy, or the (alternative) economy of festive events, differ considerably across space and time. First, we explore the meaning of festival economy, feasts and festive events and develop our understanding of their semantics. In the second part of this paper, we provide empirical examples from the European Research Council (ERC) funded ARTIVISM project, namely ethnographies from the carnivals of Nice and Viareggio. Finally, we call for a rethinking of the conceptual and methodological framework of festival economy studies.

1.1. Festivals, Feasts and Festive Events

Social and human sciences, in particular history, have long focused on specific events, –to the point that an epistemological counter-perspective emerged through the Annales school and its journal of the same name, which moved away from battle (event) history. This French, but also German school of social history, closely linked to social sciences, inquired into everyday life and broader economic questions. Several decades later, social sciences tended once again to focus on events as research objects, renewing the epistemological framework of their disciplines, in particular anthropology (Bensa & Fassin, 2002; Bessin, Bidard & Grossetti, 2010; Amiotte-Suchet & Salzbrunn, 2019). The study of events not only comprises formalized, organized spectacles, but also unpredictable, disruptive elements – including contingency within the choreography of carefully planned and framed events. Given the extraordinarily rich literature on festive events, in particular in relation to carnival (Agier, 2000; Bakhtin, 1984; Bausinger, 1983; Bercé, 1994; Boissevain, 1992; Crichlow, 2012; Fabre, 1992; Faure, 1978; Ferreira, 2013; Fornaciari, 2010; Heers, 1983; Kinser, 1990; Martin, 2001; Matheus, 1999; Moser, 1993; Moser, 1982; Mallé, 2014; Ndagano, 2010; Rabanel, 2016; Testa, 2021; van Gennep, 1947, etc.) and the broad literature overview on festive studies and carnivals provided in the inaugural and the second issues of the Journal of Festive Studies (Fournier, 2019; Testa, 2019; Salzbrunn, 2020b), we will not refer in detail to those academic debates, rather we will focus here on the (relatively understudied) economy of official and independent carnivals, based on the examples of Nice and Viareggio.

After the terrorist attacks in France, in particular the one carried out in Nice on Bastille Day, July 14, 2016, festive events like carnivals, targeting a wide audience, have undergone a profound transformation due to exponentially increasing security constraints. The economy of festive events, whether alternative, independent and autonomous or official and organized by city authorities, has thus considerably changed in France, but also in Italy, as will be shown in the empirical section of this paper. To foster a deeper understanding of the economy of a specific form of festive event, namely carnival, I will first provide a brief overview of academic literature on festival economy, festival tourism and their critiques.

Festive events can be studied *sui generis* – focusing on mechanisms, rituals, functioning – or they can be considered as cultural performances revealing information about the social and/or religious life of a society and its actors (Salzbrunn, 2017; Testa, 2019). They can also be researched using an interdisciplinary approach, combining anthropology, folklore studies, cultural studies, geography, economics (Fournier, 2019). An increasing number of scholars integrate an intersectional perspective, including gender, race, class, but also age, sexual orientation and places (Bronner, 2011).

Tourism studies and economics have researched festivals applying mainly quantitative methods, attempting to measure the economic impact of the event on the development of the city. Hughes

considers the widespread promotion of festivals in the 1990s as an extended form of city marketing aimed at revitalizing peripheral territories (for the economy, mainly through tourism) and combating a subjective feeling of insecurity within public space (Hughes, 1999). Janeczko *et al.* (2002) published a research guide to estimate the economic impact of festivals and events. They also focus on strategies employed by cities to develop event-tourism, in particular outside traditional peak seasons for tourism, e.g. during the summer in Australian winter resorts. In the empirical section of this paper, I will show that the increasing festival tourism has its roots in the 19th century, when the carnivals of Nice and Viareggio were founded to attract winter tourists from all over Europe to summer holiday spots by the sea. Adopting a similar perspective to that of Janeczko *et al.* (2002), Visser researches the general contours of the South African festival tourism segment (Janeczko *et al.*, 2002; Visser, 2005), while Jauhari and Munjal focus on fairs and festivals in India and their cultural and economic potential (Jauhari & Munjal, 2015). The latter consider social benefits too, arguing that festivals could reinforce the cultural roots and values and enable the preservation of traditions. These studies considered festivals as top-down organized events, with predominantly economic objectives: increased tourism, food consumption, etc., gains for industry directly and indirectly related to the event, including hotels, restaurants, transport businesses, retail sector, etc. Their methodological approach is mainly quantitative, i.e. the measurable economic impact on certain sectors (Hughes, 1999), or, where qualitative it focuses on the point of view of certain stakeholders (Babu & Munjal, 2015). Picard and Robinson (2006) stress tourism as an important factor in the re-invention of festival processes and in forming new patterns of social existence.

The general idea of urban revitalization and urban regional development through festive events is one of the objectives of the European Capitals of Culture initiative, situated partly on the periphery of tourist routes, e.g. the industrial urban region of Essen/Ruhr and the smaller cities of Pécs and Matera/Puglia. European Capitals of Culture change every year, but each selected city receives funding several years in advance to prepare cultural events intended to have a long-term economic impact through tourism.

Although some studies mention critical voices (Hodur & Leistritz, 2006; Egresi & Kara, 2014), their perspectives and criteria for the measurement of the impact of the events remain predominantly economic and quantifiable from a capitalist, developmentalist market point of view.

In sum, leisure studies and tourism studies focus on the economic impact of an event on the city (Janeczko *et al.*, 2002) through consumption, employment, business development, etc. According to Kyungmi Kim and Muzaffer Uysal (2003), the organizers' perceived economic impacts related to four dynamics: 1. Community cohesiveness; 2. Economic benefits; 3. Social costs; 4. Social Incentives. Spindler, in his recent work on the economic impact of *l'événementiel touristique* (event tourism) in Nice challenges the evaluation methods applied in tourism studies, in particular due to the difficulties involved in measuring tourism's long-term consequences (Spindler, 2018). As partners of the tourism office, his research team is nevertheless in a special situation. Below, I will explore the recent evaluation of the official and alternative carnivals in Nice, which I studied partly together with Federica Moretti^{12.)}, applying my method of field-crossing^{13.)}, drawing on my previous

^{12.)} The collective ERC funded ARTIVISM project focuses on art and activism through performances, on three continents. Among other subjects, I studied the economic aspects of the official and independent carnivals of Nice and Viareggio, as presented here on the basis of interviews I conducted, events in which I participated, observations I made and primary and secondary sources I consulted. Federica Moretti is currently finishing her PhD thesis on "Mobilizing Creativity: An Ethnography of *Carnivals et Fêtes indépendantes* in the Greater Region of Nice" under my supervision.

^{13.)} I developed this method for collaborative research to open additional perspectives and to gain coherence in the framework of a broad collective project: See Salzbrunn, 2021b.

contacts with Annie Sidro and Anaïs Vaillant. The official carnival was organized by the *Office du Tourisme et des Congrès de Nice* (Nice Tourism and Convention Office, OTCN) until 2018-2019 and is now in the hands of the *Office événementiel de la ville de Nice*, while the alternative carnivals have had certain events prohibited by the authorities, or cancelled by the organizers, due to security concerns.

The perspective on festivals as a market, (Gordin & Dedova, 2015) focusing on their economic impact on host regions (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015) has been widely criticized in new approaches to festival ecologies, in particular by Nicola Frost (2016). She criticizes the isolated focus on festivals: some policy-makers consider them as agents for “social cohesion and neighborhood economic regeneration,” others mention the benefit of “multicultural color in the inner city, or authentic cultural heritage in the countryside,” while still underlining the “quantifiable economic impact” (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015, p. 569). Taking into account Frost’s critique of the “underlying assumption” of festival studies, as hosted in economics or tourism and leisure studies, I advocate here for an anthropological perspective on festive events, which is not incompatible with consideration of the general economic context framing the event. Indeed, as Frost writes, “[f]estivals and carnivals, however defined, are inevitably subjective, embodied and lived, which of course means that their myriad elements are complexly interconnected and inter-dependent” (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015, p. 570). She does not see a contradiction between “culture and commerce” or “politics and entertainment” (Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2015, p. 571) quoting Duffy and Waitt (2011, p.55):

“The festival is, in fact, a paradoxical thing: festival events function as a form of social integration and cohesion, while simultaneously they are sites of subversion, protest or exclusion and alienation. It is precisely this paradoxical nature that creates the festival’s socio-spatial and political significance for notions of community and belonging.”

The tension between protest and subversion, on the one hand, and a top-down organized spectacle or showcase for the ruling power, on the other, is particularly significant in carnival as a specific festive event. John MacAloon (1984, p. 264) posits that “the spectacle’s satisfaction with entertaining and pleasing the eye at the expense of stimulating the mind, piquing the conscience, or exciting the body turns persons further away from festival, ritual, and game.” Interestingly, the organizers of the Nice and Viareggio official carnivals use spectacle or *spettacolo* as a category to self-describe their events. We will show that the analytical use of this term also makes sense from an etic point of view, since MacAloon’s definition typifies the contemporary evolution of both official carnivals.

Due to space constraints, I can only refer to my earlier critical discussion of historical carnival studies (Salzbrunn, 2011d, 2020a, 2020b), concluding that a global, nuanced perspective on festive event studies and more specifically on carnival studies is necessary, taking into consideration the historical, political, and economic, local and global context of their celebration. In other publications, I have described in more detail my method of combining various ethnographic methods, namely apprenticeship, multi-sensory ethnography and audio-visual methods (Salzbrunn, 2020c; Salzbrunn, Moretti, 2020; Salzbrunn, von Weichs & Moretti, forthcoming), so I will only refer to them as relevant in the second part of this paper.

Carnival studies are partly linked to literature studies, not only because Bakhtin’s work building on Rabelais is a common reference, marvelously criticized by Samuel Kinser (1990). Recently, Naomi Milthorpe and Eliza Murphy (2019) studied festive sociability through the lens of literature, because the texts provide evidence of “the felt and imagined experience of social and moral transgression, bodily, mental and affective transformation, and class, race, gender and sexual boundary-crossing.” This multisensory approach to literature finds its counterpoint in our ERC funded ARTIVISM project on Art and Activism: Creativity and performance as subversive forms of political

expression in super-diverse cities. Building on Sarah Pink's (2009) pioneering work, we open our ethnographic perspective to the widest and deepest possible perception, practicing immersive fieldwork as a multisensory bodily experience: we touch and create cardboard sculptures with our hands, smell the colors, hear the music play and taste the food and drink that accompany the preparation of carnival. This perspective is enriched by our position as apprentices, experiencing in a multisensory way the process of undertaking carnival and carnivalesque event¹⁴). Furthermore, we use audio-visual methods in a collaborative way to co-produce images and representations about the festive events¹⁵). As I will show in the second part of this paper, I agree with Laurent Sébastien Fournier's recommendation (2019, p.22) that scholars should "open their own minds and accept the seeming nonsense of the situations they document" in order to truly grasp the *otherness* of festive behavior. Nevertheless, in several cases, "*otherness*" can be accompanied or replaced by a sameness of festive and non-festive behavior.

Several authors have focused on community building, emancipation and recognition of minorities through festive events. According to Roberta Comunian (2017), instead of focusing on the socio-economic impact on local communities, research should focus on their role in building knowledge communities and communities of practice. She examines the key role played by the festival in supporting and commissioning artistic work (street art "Fuse Festival" in Medway/UK). I will show below that communities are practiced situationally, and that the same event can bring together different, apparently ideologically opposed communities, like the official carnival and alternative carnivals or protest movements against the municipality.

Finally, the tension between "in" and "off" festivals, official and alternative events, or top-down and independent carnivals has been researched by several authors. In his article on "Décarnaval," Dessislav Sabev studies the "zone décarnavalesque" during "l'hiver québécois" in order to analyze (festive) reactions against an official festive event (Sabev, 2003). Salzbrunn and the ERC ARTIVISM team focus on various carnivals, as well as carnivalesque political events. While the official and the independent carnivals can be distinguished, there are a number of historical, economic and personal interferences between them. As we will see below, several individuals play a role in the official carnival (namely in order to obtain access to economic resources), while being deeply engaged in the independent festive events, for ideological reasons, as well as for fun. This leads us to argue that binary distinctions between official and independent carnivals, top-down, commercial and bottom-up, volunteer-based, festive events should be surpassed in favor of a more complex analysis of individual, collective and institutional engagements.

In her article on festival ecologies, Nicola Frost recalls the debate about festivals as a reflection of non-festive social life (Frost, 2016) and, referring to Don Handelman (1990), to the idea that festival performance or participation could be "productive of social meaning as well as (or instead of) representative of it". She concludes that research on festivals must involve sensory experiences, including sonic, kinesthetic elements, as well as culinary and bodily experiences. These multi-sensory methods also allow a broadening of our understanding of the staging of multiple belonging, the expression of stereotypes and symbolic or material exclusion processes which take place during festive events (Salzbrunn, 2011c, 2014, 2020a). Furthermore, the preparation and sharing of food and drink is not only part of many festive events, but also creates opportunities for informal

¹⁴) Referring to Dilley (2015), we can consider "(1) apprenticeship as an indigenous form of social organization for learning specific skills and crafts, (2) apprenticeship as the way in which anthropologists have themselves undergone specific training as part of a fieldwork research method, and (3) how apprenticeship provides an opportunity to learn about learning in a variety of cultural settings, which has led to anthropological debate about theories of learning and practice."

¹⁵) For a general reflection on the co-construction of images in audio-visual anthropology, see Salzbrunn, 2020c.

conversations, so that different information (from that collected in formal interviews) can be accessed. In the following section, I will combine the analysis of material aspects of the festival economy with my ethnography of carnival and carnivalesque events.

In the framework of the ERC funded project ARTIVISM, I have conducted fieldwork on festive events in Italy (mainly in Genoa and Viareggio, but also in Florence), in France (Nice and Marseille), Germany (Cologne), California (Los Angeles and San Francisco) and in Cameroon (Douala and Yaoundé). Below, I will focus on Viareggio and Nice, as the interesting, more than centennial history of both carnivals presents different layers of festival economy. Both Mediterranean cities created a carnival to attract tourists during the winter season, while local craftspeople have developed sophisticated artistic skills and techniques, leading to a contemporary form of *art total*.

2. Carnival of Viareggio: Between dockers' recreation and touristic spectacle

In Viareggio, in the 19th century, when splendid private baths and cafes were built along the sea front, private and public masked balls were held during carnival week, which took place before Ash Wednesday. According to Pellegrini (1994), the carnival in Viareggio was celebrated in a particular way: at the time of the *Ducato di Lucca* (Duchy of Lucca, to which Viareggio belonged), the government offered to the people a transgressive day, *Martedì grasso*, when chiefs and servants were supposed to feast together. The first carnival parade took place, somewhat as a joke, in 1873 in Via Regia in the historical center of Viareggio. Created by young men who gathered in the *Caffè del Casinò*, the parade took place on Mardi Gras, February 24, 1873 (Fornaciari, 2010). These young men were described by Pellegrini (1994, p.9) as *giovanotti-bene* (handsome young men) who "have their coach in the courtyard of their palace" (Pellegrini, 1994, p.9). So it can be questioned whether the carnival of Viareggio was a popular event at its origin. However, Claudio Lonigro (2016, p. 3) underlines that it "certainly [had] a popular matrix," since rules of the "Società del Carnevale" from 1876 overlapped with those of the "Società di mutuo soccorso fra operai e marinai di Viareggio" (Mutual assistance association of workers and dockers of Viareggio) founded in 1863.

At the beginning of the 20th century, many chalets, cafes, restaurants and luxurious hotels were built in Viareggio, in order to develop seaside tourism, leading to the inauguration of the *Passeggiata Viale Giosué Carducci*, a wide promenade running parallel to the beaches, where the carnival parade still takes place today. The architectural style developed during this period was named *Viareggio Liberty*, an eclectic style inspired by various currents, in particular Art Nouveau. During the 1920s and 1930s, many two-story, Art Deco style buildings were constructed along the sea front, providing a unique backdrop for summer tourism as well as for the carnival parades, which took place along the *Viali a mare* (streets by the sea) from 1921. Today, most of the ground floors of those buildings on the *Passeggiata* host all kinds of shops, the majority of which sell luxury goods and clothing, targeting wealthy tourists.

Until 1956, the carnival was organized by the *Comitato del Carnevale*. Since then, a foundation has organized the parades, handled the construction of the floats, managed two museums and promoted the carnival through marketing events throughout the world, together with the Tuscan tourism office. Over the years, the floats, built by artists named *Maghi* (magicians), have reached record sizes and heights, with many moving elements. The rapid professionalization of the construction and the annual selection of winners have led to a very competitive atmosphere amongst the carnival artists. Today, artists divided into four categories compete for different prizes: *Maschere isolate* (Isolated masks, portable masks or little floats created by single artists); *Mascherate in Gruppo* (Group masks, portable masks or little floats created by artists with a team); *Carri di seconda categoria* (Second category floats, large floats carried by tractors and created by a big team of artists, construction engineers, etc.); and *Carri di prima categoria* (First category floats, the most prestigious category with the largest floats carried by tractors and created by a big team of artists,

construction engineers, etc.). Each *carrista* (float constructor) signs an agreement with the carnival foundation concerning payments, participation in events, security issues, etc. The price paid by the foundation for each float or mask is determined by the category: in 2017, first category float constructors received 121,000 euros (125,000 euros in 2019); second category constructors 57,000 euros (59,000 euros in 2019); group masks creators 21,000 euros (22,500 euros in 2019) and isolated mask creators 1,000 euros (1,500 euros in 2019)¹⁶). With this sum, they have to cover salaries for themselves and their employees, security engineers and advisors, rent for the construction hall and materials. In 2018, a new clause was introduced, a sort of “productivity bonus,” so that float constructors and the foundation share overall profits. The first 100,000 euros of net profit are shared 50% each; the second 100,00 euros are shared 35% for the float constructors and 65% for the foundation; and the remaining surplus is divided 15% for the float constructors and 85% for the foundation. The share for the float constructors is distributed in proportion to their construction costs, so that the first category artists receive the highest amount and the isolated mask constructors the lowest.

Our discussions with several members of the foundation revealed their main concerns to be related to financial issues. The choice of partners, guests, collaborations was guided by strategic reflections on the direct marketing benefits for the event (based on numbers of followers or readers, or the capacity to attract potential tourists). Some float constructors appreciated the professionalism of the recently formed foundation team, whose strategy led to an increase in profits for both the foundation and the float constructors. Others evoked a lack of passion for the carnival and a certain distance from some of the artists. It is clear that the competitive system has an impact on social relations between the foundation and the float constructors. In his autobiography, carnival artist Umberto Cinquini (2018) described the feelings of passion, narcissism, exclusion, jealousy, pride, frustration, anger and joy that characterize the life of a *carrista* from the very beginning. Thanks to relationships of trust developed over the years, we shared this whole range of feelings with the *carristi* during our fieldwork: in the off-season when floats are created, during the parades and finally, when tension was at its climax, on the night when winners and losers had to face the jury’s verdict.

Each year, a jury decides on the winners of each category, through a voting system. The carnival artist’s future depends on the results. In addition to the financial advantages or disadvantages, they determine whether they remain within their category or are promoted or demoted after a period of three years. Although - or because - the jury members are from outside Viareggio, the voting process regularly provokes animated debates, as was the case in 2020. The winner that year was the float “Home Sweet Home. *Nessun posto è come casa*” (see Figure 1) created by the *Compagnia del Carnevale*, Corinne Roger and her children Elodie, Sébastien Léo and Benjamin Balthazar Lebigre. The float showed Swedish activist Greta Thunberg as Dorothy from Frank Baum’s children’s book *The Wizard of Oz*.

¹⁶) Interviews and informal exchanges with float constructors Umberto Bonetti and Corinne Roger, February 2017 - February 2020; Lonigro, I. (2017, March 5). Carnevale di Viareggio, dall’orlo del baratro alla resurrezione: salvo grazie ai carristi che hanno anticipato i soldi (Carnival of Viareggio, from the edge of the abyss to resurrection: saved thanks to float constructors who have advanced the money), *Il fatto quotidiano*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/03/05/carnevale-di-viareggio-dallorlo-del-baratro-alla-resurrezione-salvo-grazie-ai-carristi-che-hanno-anticipato-i-soldi/3430117/>; Vecoli, C. (2019, February 26). E una fetta dei prossimi due incassi sarà distribuita anche fra i carristi. *Il Tirreno*. Retrieved from: https://iltirreno.gelocal.it/versilia/cronaca/2019/02/25/news/e-una-fetta-dei-prossimi-due-incassi-sara-distribuita-anche-fra-i-carristi-1.30043149?refresh_ce.



Figure 1: "Home Sweet Home. Nessun posto è come casa" created by the Compagnia del Carnevale.

Source: the author.

Although Corinne Roger arrived in Viareggio in 1979, with her husband Gilbert Lebigre, and despite the fact that their three children are (also) Italian, in 2020 a newspaper in Florence published the headline *I carri del Carnevale e i verdetti sui carri Promossi e bocciati. Il carro francese vince il Carnevale. Secondo quello dedicato all'intelligenza artificiale.* (The carnival floats and the verdict on the promoted and downgraded floats. The French float wins the carnival. Second is the one on artificial intelligence). The first sentence also highlighted the French origin of the family: *Sul Carnevale di Viareggio sventola la bandiera francese e quella ambientalista dei Fridays for Future: a vincere al termine di sei corsi mascherati è stata la Greta Thunberg in chiave Mago di Oz dei parigini Lebigre e Roger con il carro Home Sweet Home* (The French flag and the environmentalist flag of Fridays for Future fly over the carnival of Viareggio: the winner after six mask parades was Greta Thunberg as part of Wizard of Oz by the Parisians Lebigre and Roger with the float Home Sweet Home). In fact, Gilbert Lebigre (deceased in June 2016) and Corinne Roger not only have other origins (Spanish and Italian) but have also spent more than half of their lifetimes in Italy. Only one of their sons now lives between Paris and Tuscany. In the many interviews and informal discussions I have conducted over the past four years, as well as in local and regional newspapers, the question of *Viaregginità* (Viaregginity) has often been raised, as an element which provides legitimacy or – if absent – illegitimacy and exclusion. When Gilbert Lebigre and Corinne Roger won the competition for the first time in 1988, they faced such a violent backlash that they left Viareggio and its carnival competition for fifteen years (Cinquini, 2018, pp. 194-197). As soon as they returned, they won again in 2004, together with famous local artist Arnaldo Galli. Despite their exceptional talent and the renewal they offered to the carnival of Viareggio by introducing sophisticated choreographies on and around their floats, the French origin of the Lebigre Roger family is still being highlighted, more than forty years after their first participation (out of competition) in the carnival parade. I will show below that local origin and the transmission of knowledge within families of carnival artists

also plays an important role in Nice, but the latter has opened participation in parades to national and international groups. As mentioned above, the local or foreign origin of participants is raised when commentators are dissatisfied with decisions. The 2020 ranking was interpreted as a vote in favor of societal topics (environmental issues, artificial intelligence, etc.) and against traditional knowledge and themes, since Fabrizio Galli's float *Abbracciami è carnevale* (see Figure 2) (Hug me, it is carnival) found itself in last place. This result was criticized as the result of only foreign (outside Viareggio) jury members who are unaware of the history and the semantics of the carnival of Viareggio, as journalist Claudio Vecoli reported. In this context, a foreigner includes somebody from a neighboring city, as the president of the foundation experienced when she was criticized for being from Lucca, the provincial capital, but not from Viareggio itself. Her argument that a jury composed of people from outside Viareggio was the only possible choice met with particularly strong criticism in 2020 when the traditional float by Fabrizio Galli came last.



Figure 2: "Abbracciami è carnevale" by Fabrizio Galli.

Source: the author

Vecoli asked *Che si deviareggini anche il carnevale? Il carnevale è non solo un prodotto turistico è anche frutto della storia di una città* (Is the carnival being deviareggined? Carnival is not only a touristic product; it is also a product of a town's history). Such concerns are also raised in relation to the growing efforts of the foundation to attract international tourists, and to adapt the floats' messages to them: environmental issues are easier to understand than three dimensional caricatures of Italian politicians. Hence, we have observed a slight decline in traditional representations of national politicians, understandable mainly to locals or people who follow Italian politics, in favor of broader issues like the protection of nature and wild animals (re-

presented by Luca Bertozzi's tigers, the protagonists of his winning 2nd category float in 2020). Nevertheless, Italian populist right-wing politician Matteo Salvini was represented by two different artists in 2020. He took these portraits as a pretext to visit the Cittadella, the construction site of the floats, with the carnival museum and workshops, on February 22, 2020, accompanied by his daughter, to be seen beside the floats. Several carnival artists refused to be used for political ends, and Umberto Cinquini started a campaign *Portoni chiusi* (Closed gates), as a reflection of Salvini's anti-migration campaign *Porti chiusi* (Closed harbours). When Salvini was Minister of the Interior in 2018, he had attempted to block the arrival of refugees by ordering harbor administrations to refuse access to ships of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that had rescued refugees in the Mediterranean Sea. His presence and the inauguration of the new headquarters of his party, *Lega Nord* (Northern League), in Torre del Lago Puccini, south of Viareggio, strongly polarized public opinion and divided the city. During his presence, costumed activists protested at the Cittadella, and

in parallel, the civic movement *le Sardine* (the sardines) from Lucca and Viareggio organized a concert with the highly committed musicians Marco Rovelli and B.K. at the beginning of the *Passeggiata*, in front of two four-star hotels (see Figure 3).

During our fieldwork in Viareggio, it was sensed that political affiliations have always been a hot topic, subject to ambiguous situations. One of the former presidents of the carnival foundation was elected as city councilor in Camaiore, north of Viareggio, as a representative of *Forza Italia*, Berlusconi's populist party. Recently, he joined Salvini's party, while he presents himself openly as

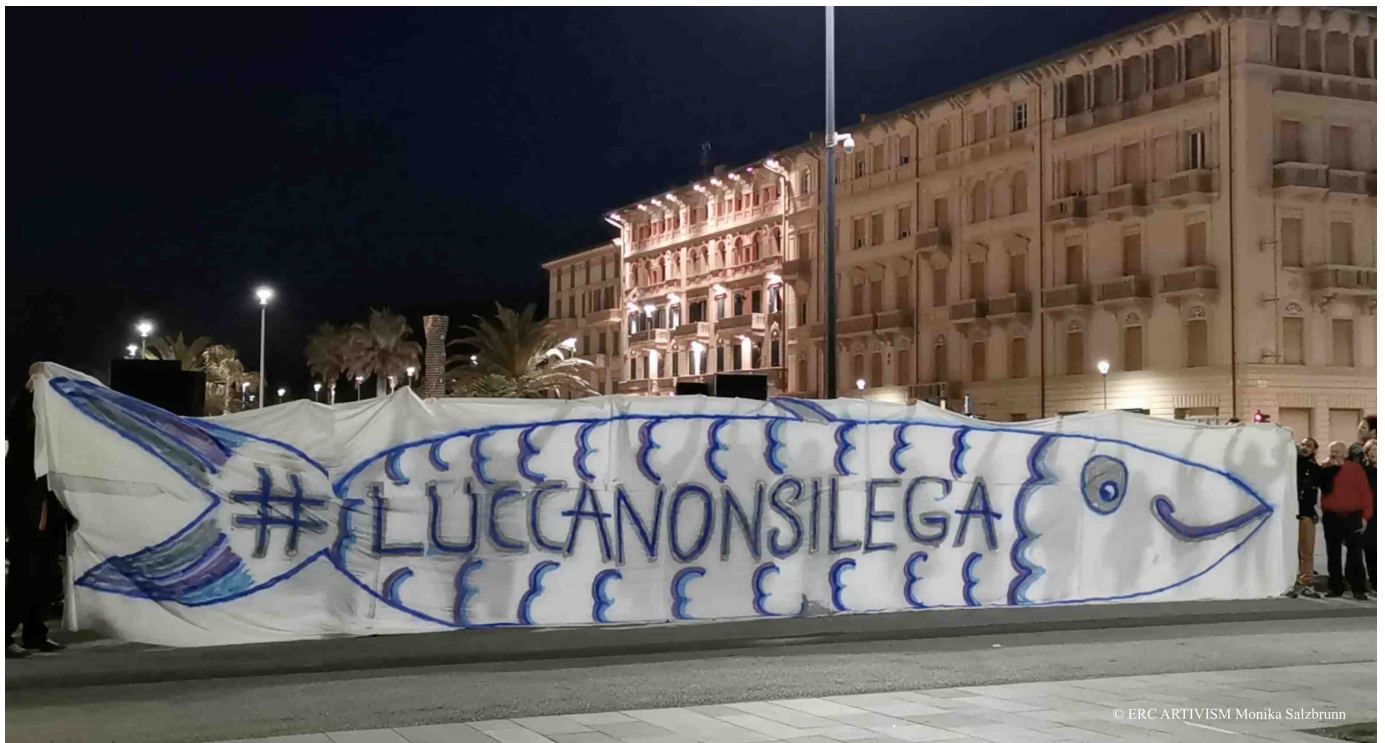


Figure 3: "Lucca non si Lega", Viareggio.

Source: the author.

gay and a royalist. In contrast, the current president's brother is a senator for the *Partito Democratico*, the former socialist party, and was guest of honor during one of the parades. When we filmed the entire parade in 2018 from the president's tribune, we observed in detail how the president and members of the foundation interacted with local, regional, national and international guests, with smiles and waves, but also by dancing when floats passed and through informal conversations. With its deep local and regional roots, but also its national and international alliances, the carnival as an institution and event is a platform for networking and staging, used by representatives to maintain relations and alliances.

Interestingly, the strongest critique of the internationalization of subjects and transnational cooperation was expressed by a leader of the far-right party *Fratelli d'Italia*, who argued that the foundation wanted to denaturalize" the carnival¹⁷⁾, in particular through the new partnership with Mexico that

¹⁷⁾ Simoni (Fdi). (2020, March 1). Si vuole snaturalizzare in Carnevale. *Il Tirreno*.

led to the spread of painted skulls all over the city in 2020. This partnership is part of the internationalization strategy of the foundation which sent Benjamin Balthazar Lebigre and other delegates to Mexico in 2019 to the "*Dia de los Muertos*" (day of the dead) to exchange technical skills and artistic knowledge. During the carnival period in winter 2020, the carnival foundation cooperated with the Lucca Center of Contemporary Art (Lu.C.C.A.), inviting ten carnival artists and ten international artists to paint skulls as symbols of the precariousness of human existence.

The foundation also cooperates with the Tuscan tourism agency *Toscana Promozione Turistica* to increase the appeal to tourists and to spread the "Viareggio brand" through territorial marketing^{18.)}. The capital city of the Tuscany region, Florence, hosts a carnival event under the auspices of the carnival of Viareggio, in collaboration with Carnevalia, organized by AIWA Onlus (Arab Italian Women Association *Organizzazione Non Lucrativa di Utilità Sociale*, non-profit organization of social utility), together with the group *Editoriale e Once* – Extraordinary Events.

Besides these marketing events, the foundation also promotes values of solidarity and mutual assistance by dedicating each parade to a specific cause and/or association: in 2020, each of the six parades was dedicated to one of these Onlus (non-profit organization of social utility): 1. COSPE for the development of emerging countries; 2. *Informatiци senza frontiere* for sustainable and social use of IT; 3. Refugees Welcome which promotes the hosting of refugees in families; 4. The *Tommasino Bacciotti* foundation that helps families of recovered children at the Meyer hospital; 5. *Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti* which supports the integration of blind people in society; 6. The *Un Raggio di Luce* foundation which supports children and women living in poor conditions^{19.)}.

In 2020, the overall theme of the carnival year was "Generations"; it was "Women" in 2019. Although artists are not obliged to reflect the themes in their creations, many floats – in particular the winners - were inspired by them. An important question remains concerning the local rooting of the whole event, in relation to the main actors, participants and spectators.

3. The Carnival of Viareggio in the local media: Financial issues on the front page, but where are the locals?

When we^{20.)} started our fieldwork in Viareggio in Spring 2017, I was struck by the lack of traces or signs of the carnival in the public sphere. There were hardly any decorations on private houses or balconies. The most visible sign was a *cartapesta* (cardboard) sculpture in front of the train station, and a large protest banner calling for the sanction of those responsible for the cargo train accident that occurred in the night of June 29, 2009, causing 32 deaths. The trial took place at the time of our arrival and a float constructed by family members of victims demanding justice was part of the parade in 2017. Given that we were about to attend one of the biggest European carnivals, we expected popular participation of the residents with masks, decorations, music. The weather did not help that year, with almost daily downpours. We undertook several walking ethnographies to explore the environment of the celebration. Our first encounter took place in a bookshop,

^{18.)} See "Carnevale di Viareggio 2020," *Cartella Stampa*, 2020, 39.

^{19.)} "Carnevale di Viareggio 2020," *Cartella Stampa*, 2020, 32.

^{20.)} I lived in my main ERC ARTIVISM ethnographic field in Italy, followed most of the events in Viareggio and started the ethnographic work on Viareggio in Winter 2017 with PhD student Federica Moretti. Later in 2017, senior researcher Raphaela von Weichs joined us and in 2019, PhD student Sara Wiederkehr participated in the ethnography of a parade, using my concept of field crossing: See: Salzbrunn (2011a; 2021b). Pascal Bernhardt filmed most of the events. Unless mentioned otherwise, in the present article, I only refer to sensory ethnographies, informal encounters and interviews conducted by myself or in my presence.

Libreria Lungomare, where its occupants gave us a warm welcome. We were explaining our interest in carnival when a regular client, a doctor, passed by. Hearing the word *carnevale*, he spontaneously said with some disdain “This is a spectacle.” This encounter remained with us for several years during our analysis, since the literature about the subversive character of carnival and the inversion of roles, etc. seemed to be contested from the beginning by our ethnography²¹). Indeed, we found more indications of a top-down organized spectacle in the sense of MacAlloon’s definition, where the lines between protagonists and spectators were quite clear. In addition, the carnival of Viareggio started during the development of seaside tourism, when opulent hotels, restaurants and private baths were built. Besides the official paid parades, several *Rione* (districts) organize one or several days of street carnivals, sometimes, as in the largest district around the harbor, with their own free parade where self-made floats created by local organizations circulate. Some of these volunteer groups also participate in the official parade. These feasts, where costumed groups of friends or family eat seafood and other specialties outside, sitting at long tables and dancing to live music, have preserved a certain popular character. Nevertheless, in 2020, during the last carnival week, the food was all consumed but participation in the street party decreased, doubtlessly due to the developing fear of SARS-CoV-2, the new coronavirus which arrived from China through the Italian region of Lombardy. Participants and followers of various carnival constructors with whom we met all agreed that local feasts in the districts, especially around the harbor, are important, popular carnival events not to be missed²²). Their existence is mentioned in the official program and in the media, but with limited space and visibility compared to the official parades. While the majority of the spectators who watch the official carnival parade in Viareggio do not wear masks, costumes or make-up, or just one or two accessories purchased on the *Passeggiata*, the participants in private or semi-public carnival feasts (like a dinner and dance party in a tennis club that we joined at the invitation of a local friend) wear costumes. Other events, in particular performances in a spirit of *détournement* (parody) organized by the Dada Bom collective of Viareggio, remain totally independent and relatively small-scale.

Reading the local newspapers, the dominance of financial issues on the front page and/or occupying a great deal of space in the regional pages of the Tuscan newspapers *Il Tirreno* and *La Nazione* was striking. When we started our fieldwork, the carnival of Viareggio had just emerged from a deep financial crisis and its future was uncertain. Although the artists had to wait several months for payment, they continued to work on their floats so that the parades could take place in 2017. The newspapers reported on the financial situation on an almost daily basis, as shown by the front pages and main article titles²³) in 2017: “Carnival: the balance sheet. Almost record Sunday. 630,000 euros earned”²⁴); “Burlamacco effect not only in the city. More than 80% of hotel rooms occupied”²⁵).

After each parade, the local newspapers publish a comparative table with the income of each parade over the last ten years, detailed comments on the financial situation and provisional calculations. From 2018 to 2020, significant titles relating to the festival economy were: “A good

²¹) For an extended discussion of different academic approaches to carnival studies, see Fournier (2019); Salzbrunn (2020b); Testa (2019).

²²) The research team regularly participated in different feasts in the districts, namely Darsena (the harbour) and Marco Polo. We observed that these festivities have decreased over the past few years, for budgetary reasons, as confirmed by the organiser of the carnival in Rione Marco Polo (interview by Monika Salzbrunn, Federica Moretti and Pascal Bernhardt, February 3, 2018).

²³) Unless otherwise mentioned, author’s translations from Italian.

²⁴) See Vecoli, C. (2017, February 28). Carnevale: i conti. Domenica quasi record. Incassati 630mila euro. *Il Tirreno*, p. II.

²⁵) See Navari, F. (2017, March 2). Effetto Burlamacco non solo in città. Oltre 80% delle camere occupate. *La Nazione Viareggio*, p. 3.

start, but income does not exceed 140 thousand euros”^{26.}); “The rain does not stop carnival. Reduced income, great spectacle”^{27.}); “Record total number of tickets sold. With 950,000 euros, the best revenue ever”^{28.}); “Perfect carnival and record profits”^{29.}); “Carnival breathes a sign of relief. Burlamacco’s accounts are already in order. The goal of 2,611,000 total revenue already exceeded. But tomorrow’s finale is haunted by the nightmare Coronavirus”^{30.}); “Burlamacco combats the new fears and hits the jackpot. Revenue of over 500,000 euros, objective already exceeded”^{31.}).

In addition to seaside tourism, carnival has become a major direct and indirect income source for the residents of Viareggio: artists, engineers, administrators, cultural mediators, museum guides, etc. work full-time or part-time throughout the year at the Cittadella del *carnevale*, paid by the carnival foundation. The employees and owners of hotels, restaurants and retail shops benefit indirectly from carnival tourism since these events attract tourists who, in other circumstances, would not necessarily consider a journey to the seaside during winter. From 2020, a sixth parade on carnival Thursday evening was introduced, in order to increase the number of visitors. Thus, the festival economy comprises clear financial gains, but also encompasses discourses on the transmission of immaterial heritage (through cultural mediation, cardboard workshops for pupils, guided tours and museum visits) and a wider branding of the Tuscan region, with a broad construction of cultural representations. Adopting our apprenticeship approach, we participated in several cardboard workshops in order to learn this technique in a multisensory way, experiencing touch, sound, smell and sight of the material, and the way and spirit in which these skills are promoted and transmitted. We also participated in several training sessions organized for journalists by the Tuscan order of journalists, in particular on the history of the carnival of Viareggio. On February 12, 2020, a seminar on *Il Carnevale di Viareggio: tradizione e innovazione* (The Carnival of Viareggio: tradition and innovation) was organized at the Cittadella in order to analyse the economic and touristic relevance of the event on a territorial level. The president of the foundation, Maria Lina Marcucci, spoke on the issue “Quanto vale il *carnevale*” (How much is the carnival worth)^{32.} The carnival artists Jacopo Allegrucci, Alessandro Avanzini and Fabrizio Galli were also invited to express their point of view. Nevertheless, during interviews, we not only came across financial topics, but also the issue of passion. Many interviewees told us that they contribute to float construction out of love for the carnival, or that they rehearsed routines for the dances accompanying the floats even when they had to work abroad, through video tutorials, in order not to miss a single parade.

Every carnival artist/family/group is surrounded by a large group of followers and fans, who participate to a certain extent in the whole event, mostly on a voluntary basis. The dancers, who intensively rehearse routines over several months, even pay for the costume they wear during the performance. As the number of free entrance tickets per float is limited, several dancers even have to pay for their entrance. The growing securization and bureaucratization of the work procedures have rendered participation in float construction increasingly challenging, since the constructors’ work is strictly controlled. One artist told me that he was sad to refuse an old friend’s offer of volunteer work, since he risked accusations of illegal, unpaid labor. Another artist told us that a retailer threatened to report her, as she refused to buy construction material from him because one of her

^{26.} See Vecoli, C. (2018, January 28). Buona la partenza, ma l’incasso non va oltre i 140mila euro. *Il Tirreno*, p. 11.

^{27.} See Vecoli, C. (2019, February 10). La pioggia non ferma il Carnevale. Incasso ridotto, grande spettacolo. *Il Tirreno*, p. 1.

^{28.} See Vecoli, C. (2019, February 16). Cumulativi-record. Con 950 mila euro è il miglior incasso di tutti i tempi. *Il Tirreno*.

^{29.} See Del Chicca, M. (2019, February 18). Carnevale perfetto e incasso record. *La Nazione Viareggio & Versilia*, p. 1.

^{30.} See Vecoli, C. (2020, February 24). Il Carnevale tira un sospiro di sollievo. Già in ordine i conti di Burlamacco. Superati l’obiettivo dei 2 milioni e 611mila euro di incasso totale. Ma sul finale di domani aleggia l’incubo Coronavirus. *Il Tirreno*.

^{31.} See Del Chicca, M. (2019, February 2). Carnevale perfetto e incasso record. Il corso baciato dalla primavera porta 500mila euro al botteghino *La Nazione Viareggio & Versilia*, p. 1.

^{32.} See “Carnevale di Viareggio 2020,” *Cartella Stampa*, 2020, 38.

employees did not wear the required protection helmet. She resisted the threatening attitude and cut commercial ties with the company, but she reported several similar incidents that have increased pressure on her work. Finally, the festival economy is impacted by economic and political power relations, based on formal hierarchies but also influenced by informal mechanisms.

In official documents (website, press service, etc.), interviews and presentations, the international collaborations of the Viareggio carnival were frequently raised, in particular efforts made to attract Asian tourists. After providing an overview of the economy of carnival in Nice, I will briefly examine the engagement of the carnivals of Viareggio and Nice with China, facilitated by, among others, Annie Sidro, president of the association *Carnaval sans frontières* (Carnival without borders), based in Nice.

4. Nice Carnival: From the king's honor parade to an export product for China

The Nice Carnival was first organized during the 1820s in honor of the king of Sardinia in the historical old town. The first float of the simple parade was a small fishing boat carried by local fishermen. From 1873, the first bleachers were constructed at Place de la Préfecture in order to host paying guests.

In 1882, the bleachers were moved to *Place Masséna*, which remains the central location of the official festivities to this day. Until 2004, the parade went down *Avenue Jean Médecin*, offering a free spectacle for spectators standing behind barriers on the way, before the floats reached the reserved zone on *Place Masséna*. Today, those who criticize the high entrance prices to the parades systematically refer to this period, arguing that the character of the carnival was lost when it became inaccessible and closed. After the terrorist attack on Bastille Day, July 14, 2016, when a truck drove into the crowd on the seafront *Promenade des Anglais* and killed 86 people, security became an additional argument to close access, not only to the bleachers but to the whole parade. Since 2017, 54 security checkpoints have controlled access to the parade, which is now invisible from outside because of temporary black walls. Certain parades (except the *Batailles de Fleurs*) are accessible free of charge for people who wear costumes that cover the whole body, but access is limited to a specific walking zone, the *Promenoir*.

The *comité des fêtes* organized the carnival of Nice, until its dissolution in 1994 due to internal struggles. Over more than 20 years, from 1995 to 2018, the carnival of Nice was organized by the Nice Tourism and Convention office (OTCN), in close collaboration with local travel agencies, hotels and restaurants. The parades were scheduled to coincide with official school holidays in order to allow pupils from all over France to attend the parades. French and foreign tourists, particularly from China and South Korea, are the largest group of paying spectators. The latter spend an average of more than 1,000 euros on shopping during their visit to Nice for carnival³³). When I asked Denis Zanon³⁴), the former head of the organizing committee, about the percentage of local spectators in 2018, his answer was vague and evasive, reflecting the fact that the event is considered by locals as disconnected from city life. This feeling is reinforced by the observation that the main protagonists are street theatre groups hired and accommodated for the occasion. The participation of 50 local, regional and international groups in the carnival and flower parades is also highlighted in the official press release.

³³) See Bernouin, M. (2018, April 28). "Les touristes asiatiques ont boosté les recettes du carnaval de Nice. Retrieved from: <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur/alpes-maritimes/nice/touristes-asiatiques-ont-booste-recettes-du-carnaval-nice-1466835.html>.

³⁴) Interview with Denis Zanon by Monika Salzbrunn, February 27, 2018, filmed by Federica Moretti.

The economic, social and political aspects of the official carnival of Nice have been widely criticized by individuals and associations: several well-known carnival artists have left the official carnival scene to dedicate their creativity to independent carnival activities³⁵). The independent carnival and the music group Nux Vomica have been strongly linked to the Nice alternative artists, who occupied the “*Hangar St Roch*,” an ancient work space, in October 1990 and started their activities with exhibitions, concerts and free aperitifs (Pastorelli, 2019, pp. 16-25; Rinaudo, 2000; 2005). However, as the carnival of Nice is an important source of revenue, on a regular or ad hoc basis, many artists involved in the independent political scene and its performances work in parallel for the official carnival. During our fieldwork in Nice in spring 2018, we met several activists and artists who were about to organize a *CarnaVélo* – a carnivalesque pro-bike demonstration³⁶). As the bad weather and the lack of communication about the event reduced participation, we ended up struggling around Nice, making fun of the situation and playing with real satire. We came across a photo exhibition organized in a renewed building and acted out short humorous scenes within the inspiring décor. It was only in the last room that we discovered that the organizer was an investment fund, advertising in a subtle way its ongoing projects in this place and the wider area. This small shock led us to profound discussions about gentrification, the impact of tourism and the shrinking political opposition to a dominant right-wing political power that had been in place for several decades. After a while, we ended up in the apartment of a cultural actor living above the independent cultural center he managed (and which was one of the few remaining independent spaces in the area). Sharing drinks, we learned more about the biography of the present activists – photographers, dancers, street theatre actors, active in self-organized spaces in Southern France. It turned out that the main protagonist of this independent carnivalesque demonstration works for the official carnival in parallel. When he spoke about this economically necessary activity, his voice was loaded with criticism. During his work, he senses the extent to which the majority of the street theatre groups hired for the event from outside only do their professional work, without any emotional or historical relation to the town. Indeed, only seven out of 24 French groups are local groups from Nice (among them 4 folklore groups); the majority comes from other cities, regions or countries: 17 groups come from abroad³⁷). (Belgium, United Kingdom, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Spain and Korea). Likely, the famous *grosses têtes* [big heads], large figures made mainly of *papier mâché*, are carried by people who are paid for this service. Only during the *Parada Nissarda*, one of six carnival parades (and eleven in total, including the five flower parades), are floats and costumes made by volunteers from district associations visible. When I first came to Nice, I was also struck by the fact that the official carnival hires various kinds of artists and assistants, except for the *Parada Nissarda*. This can explain a certain lack of *anima* (soul), the impression of a spectacle in which the locals are in a minority: within the parade and on the stands (mainly filled with tourists).

Unlike popular carnivals such as Cologne, where spectators and participants sing together local carnival songs played by brass bands (Ellinghaus & Salzbrunn, 2019; Salzbrunn & Ellinghaus, forthcoming), only a minority of the protagonists and the spectators know the historical local songs in Nice, and the live DJ who accompanied the spectacle in *Place Massena* played mainstream rock music, finishing each carnival parade with the same song *Allumer le feu* by a very popular French singer, the late Johnny Hallyday (1989). As spectators are occupied with taking photos and videos and/or grasping flowers during the Flower Parade, the carnival organizers hired a street theatre group of 60 dancers and circus acrobats, the BAT (see Figure 4) (*Brigade d'Agitateurs de Tribune* -

³⁵) Source: Our interviews with Louis Pastorelli, April 11-12, 2022, Lausanne, and Louis Pastorelli, *Li aventuras de Nux Vomica* (Nice: Baie des Anges, 2019). Federica Moretti's PhD thesis will explore this point in greater depth: see Moretti, in progress.

³⁶) I followed this event together with Federica Moretti and our cameraman Pascal Bernhardt. The following section is based on my observations.

³⁷) Carnaval de Nice, “Dossier de Presse 2020,” 2020, 26-31.

Brigade of Stand Agitators) in order to encourage people in the stands to dance. When I did fieldwork in Nice in 2018, I observed that some spectators were shouting at these artists because they hampered their view. Mostly children responded to their show, laughed and danced. This impression of an artificial spectacle that lacked local rooting was confirmed by many people we met and by the personal impressions of all the team members who participated in the research as field crossers (Salzbrunn, 2011a, 2021b)³⁸). Nevertheless, several actors involved in the organization of the carnival are aware of this disconnect and intend to develop activities and partnerships with schools and local associations in order to bring them back to carnival. More than 20 years ago, several passionate carnival artists transformed their disappointment in the official carnival into creative optimism, developing alternative carnivals like Saint Roch or inventing other feasts and festivals like the Santa Capelina³⁹).



Figure 4: Brigade d'Agitateurs de Tribune (BAT).

Source: the author



5. The Riviera turns to Asia: The carnivals of Viareggio and Nice deepen international cooperation to attract more tourists from China and South Korea in a context of criticism of mass tourism

Annie Sidro, founder and president of the association *Carnaval sans frontières* (Carnival without borders), initiated the participation of carnival artists from Nice and Viareggio in carnival parades in Macao (2011) and Ningbo (2018). In addition, in 2017, the carnival of Nice travelled to Xiamen, which has been one of Nice's sister cities since 2014. This cooperation is meant to promote the carnivals of Nice and Viareggio in China, in order to attract Chinese upper and middle class tourists to the Mediterranean Sea. In Paris, half of the turnover of the main department stores is already generated by the shopping tours

³⁸) In addition to Federica Moretti, who participated in most of the events in Nice, the following team members applied the field crossing method: Monika Salzbrunn, Raphaela von Weichs and Ana Rodriguez Quinones.

³⁹) I will not develop this point here since Federica Moretti is currently writing her PhD thesis on these (alternative) carnivals. See also Christian Rinaudo's works on the situation of Nice's carnivals in the 1990s. Rinaudo, C. (2000). *Fêtes de rue, enfants d'immigrés et identité locale*. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 16(2), 43–57 ; Rinaudo, C. (2005). *Carnaval de Nice et carnivals indépendants*. *Sociologie et sociétés*, 37(1), 55–68.

of Asian tourists. As mentioned above, Chinese and Korean tourists travelling to Nice for carnival spend more than 1,000 euros during their stay. As Xiamen has become the second most important Chinese city for seaside tourism, the tourist office in Nice hopes to attract potential visitors through the carnival parade which takes place during the “Golden Week” (the main travel period). During their stay in China, carnival artists from Nice taught carnival construction techniques to Chinese artists, so that 20% of the floats were constructed on site while 80% of the floats, *grosses têtes* (big heads) and groups were transported from Nice⁴⁰). The link between China and France is also embodied in the marriage of the famous Chinese actor Liu Ye to a woman from Nice, and since summer 2019, a Chinese airline has been operating a direct route between Nice and Beijing. Nevertheless, the recent crisis due to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus in winter 2020 leaves the future of these relations uncertain. Furthermore, the crisis has reinforced critical voices that have been warning against the ecological consequences of (mass) tourism, like the SET network of Mediterranean cities against touristification, that organized its first anti-touristic carnival in Florence/Italy in 2019, in which I participated (Salzbrunn, forthcoming). The actors themselves used audio-visual methods and multi-sensory performances to stage their political and economic demands through an anti-capitalist city tour and performative distribution of empty maps in Florence; through multimedia installations in Genoa and anti-touristification carnivals in Florence and Genoa (Salzbrunn, 2021a). However, such voices appear to be inaudible in Nice, since security measures and obligations for organizers following the attack of July 14, 2016 have rendered alternative public performances and festive events almost impossible. In contrast to those political, critical, independent carnivals and carnivalesque performances, the carnival of Viareggio is losing its political, satirical impact, tend-

ing to become a pleasant spectacle for the global tourist market, seeking to attract ever more visitors from a wide range of countries, from France to China, following in the footsteps of the Nice Carnival (see Figure 5), to which it is historically, institutionally and personally linked.



Figure 5: “Carnevale di Viareggio” visits Nice Carnival.

Source: the author

⁴⁰) See: La Tribune, February 2, 2017; Les Echos March 1, 2017; La Tribune, February 3, 2020.

Conclusion

The economies of festive events are highly complex and can only be understood in their historical, political and social context. Does the festive event allow its protagonists and participants to practice a specific festive behavior or can we observe similarities between festive and non-festive behavior, both embedded in a certain festive economy? In the first part of this paper, I presented various approaches to researching festival economies. In many cases, festive events are exclusively considered as economic enterprises that have a clear impact on the locality in terms of tourism, employment, marketization, etc. Nevertheless, the economic issues raised are very complex, since the profits generated by these festive events may also affect individuals who are ideologically opposed to this festivalisation, but who need to earn money through their artistic skills and knowledge. As I have shown, some individuals use official carnivals as a source of revenue but in parallel are involved in alternative carnivalesque and/or anti-carnival actions. It is therefore necessary to avoid hasty binary perceptions of “official” as opposed to “independent” carnivals, in favor of long-term fieldwork that makes it possible to grasp the complexities and apparent contradictions of the festival economy and its protagonists.

In the cases of Nice and Viareggio, economic issues seem to be paramount in the local media. Many front page stories are devoted to the financial results in Viareggio, with detailed figures on the number of tickets sold and the number of spectators presented in a comparative table summarizing the figures for the last ten years. In Nice, financial figures are also prominent, but they mainly relate to spending by foreign tourists (from South Korea and China). In both cities, the financial situation of local hotels, restaurants and retail shops is regularly highlighted, as these economic sectors directly benefit from the increase in winter tourism during the carnival period. However, the internationalization of the Nice Carnival, whose primary objective seems to be to attract relatively wealthy tourists, has been widely criticized since it has been accompanied by an uprooting of the carnival and its main protagonists. As a result, the participation of local associations and groups has decreased and is now mostly limited to the *Parada Nissarda*. Some artists and volunteers have left the official carnival scene or participate only for financial reasons, dedicating their energy to alternative carnivals and carnivalesque festive events like Saint Roch, Santa Capelina or the Carnavélo. In 2018/2019, most of the alternative carnivals were cancelled for security reasons, and/or because the organizers could not afford to pay for a private security service (Salzbrunn, 2018).

Besides these quantifiable aspects of festival economy, other issues were included in the analysis of festive events: the complexity of political relations, the ambiguous role of the organizers and their partners (foundations; local and regional tourism offices; city council and government, regional council and government), as well as the role of non-governmental organizations and independent groups who are sometimes in a grey zone between different festive events (which cannot always be divided into “official” and “independent”). Discourses of protagonists playing on different stages have also been analyzed from a situational point of view. Many artists or intermediate professionals whose resources are partly dependent on official festivities can be engaged in alternative events and activities which are more in line with their philosophical and political convictions. Given the professionalization and control of those top-down organized official carnivals, the assumption that carnival has a transformative potential is not valid here. Rather, carnival is a mirror of the existing (economic, political and social) hierarchies in society, as described by Turner (1982, p. 13). The carnival of Viareggio is still deeply rooted in the local society, but the official committee united by the financial authority – the foundation - and the jury – control the budget and have a strong impact on the theme as well as on artistic expressions. Therefore, it can be posited that carnival strengthens the social order, as Bertolotti wrote in 1991 (Bertolotti, 1991), even without needing to provide the temporary experience of inversion or suspension of norms which could strengthen the need for their reestablishment.

Furthermore, festive events like carnivals also have a strong symbolic significance: they can be an expression of local belonging, of political opinions, of sexual preferences or of music cultures. Both in Viareggio and Nice, the relation to the city and its inhabitants and local and regional rooting are important for the protagonists, certain participants, certain visitors, as well as for the local media. In Viareggio, the transmission of artistic and artisanal knowledge and skills from one family member to another (son, daughter, nephew, spouse, etc.) is very common, so that several deeply rooted families claim a certain artistic and ideological heritage, for example the Avanzini, Galli and Bonetti families. The *Viaregginità* is also asserted by certain local and regional media, so that the merit of the cosmopolitan family Lebigre-Roger is still called into question after more than 40 years of involvement in the carnival and enrichment of its evolution through sophisticated choreographies. The motivation to participate is not only financial, but also passion and love for the carnival. Many people contribute to float construction on a voluntary basis. The dancers and participants on and around the floats make a major voluntary contribution and express their love for carnival and for a specific float constructor and/or her/his team through their commitment (rehearsals of routines, songs, numerous Facebook messages, joint parties and gatherings, etc.), and in the case of Lebigre-Roger, for example, as a family that stands together. Hence, non-quantifiable aspects like passion, love and commitment motivate their participation in the carnival of Viareggio.

In the case of Nice, carnival float construction skills have been transmitted within families, but only to male descendants. For this reason, Annie Sidro could not inherit her father's construction area and privilege, but managed to perpetuate the memory through her work as a historian, mediator for the city and founder of the association *Carnaval sans frontières* (Carnival without borders). Today, only five construction enterprises monopolize float construction, and two main families share most of the projects: Povigna and Pignataro. The *grosses têtes* (big heads) in cardboard are worn by young people specifically hired and paid for this task, which has become a job (instead of an honor, as it is the case in other carnival parades, namely in Cologne). In addition, local but mainly regional, national and international street artists and theatre groups are hired to perform during the parade. Only during the *Parada Nissarda* do groups of NGOs with dozens of volunteers participate in the parade for fun. The tourism office openly declares that carnival is an economic locomotive for the whole Riviera region and develops its partnerships with China and South Korea to increase benefits for local retailers, hotel and restaurant owners. In conclusion, today, the social local rooting of the parade and its protagonists is very limited, although the economic and political aspects are dominated by local and regional power dynamics. In that sense, carnival can indeed be considered as a total social fact, as Mauss would have considered it, as I mentioned in the introduction.

In both cities, the marketing or branding of the event and/or the city have long been crucial; in Nice from its beginnings and in Viareggio from the first parades, since their invention went along with the creation of winter tourism and the trend for European and Russian noble families to spend their holidays in the Riviera. Today, both cities make major efforts to attract foreign tourists, from the neighboring regions and countries, but also from China and South Korea, inviting them to a spectacle to watch rather than to a transformative bodily experience. They join in as spectators of a nowadays translocal commercial event, while carnival artists and dancers participate in exported carnival shows in Macao and Ningbo. This touristification of the official carnival has led to the development of parallel or alternative carnival events and an increasing critique of the marketization of the city. In Viareggio, several districts organize carnival feasts and parades for free, although these activities are declining due to financial reasons and lack of participation. In Nice, alternative carnivals like Saint Roch, the CarnaVélo or the carnivalesque Santa Capelina feast have been invented over the last decades but they have been threatened on security grounds since the 2016 attack. As I have shown throughout the paper, it does not make sense to oppose official and independent carnival activities in a binary way, since a closer look shows the extent to which they are intertwined through personal relations between both milieus. The transformative potential of both is

limited, not only as a result of the reinforcement of security measures after the 2016 attack in Nice and the health situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an even stricter framing of all public events. Through our immersive ethnography, including apprenticeship, a multi-sensory perspective, audio-visual methods, as well as field-crossing (Salzbrunn, 2021b; Salzbrunn, von Weichs & Moretti, forthcoming), from the preparatory phase to the post-event-reflections of the actors, we were able to grasp the complexity and ambiguity of local and translocal references and belonging, expressed in multiple ways during informal encounters as well as during public performances.

In other cases, which I can only summarize here, carnival and carnivalesque performance techniques have been used to express anti-gentrification opinions and to promote anti-touristification messages: in Florence, several social centers organized their first anti-touristification carnival in spring 2019 with the critical SET network. In Genoa several activists organized a carnival of *La città di sotto* (The city from below) to protest against racism, exclusion and environmentally damaging cruise-ship tourism. Furthermore, for several years, they had reinterpreted the San Giovanni feast into a critical political parade, denouncing the free circulation of capital and the prohibitions on the circulation of refugees (Salzbrunn, 2021a; Salzbrunn, forthcoming). In these cases, on which I have published elsewhere (Salzbrunn, 2021a, Salzbrunn, von Weichs & Moretti, forthcoming), not only is the festival economy of carnival criticized, but also the capitalist economy and the branding and marketing of cities and related gentrification process in general. Will these critical voices accelerate changes in the (alternative) festival economy after the COVID-19 crisis? As the current evolution shows, implementation in the globalized economy of festive events has its limits since event tourism is already decreasing as a result of post-COVID-19 travel habits. The future will show if gentrification due to international investments and mass tourism can also be reduced, and if local situational communities of practice can be reinvented and/or reinforced.

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