FESTIVAL CITY AS A TOOL FOR URBAN CITIES DEVELOPMENT – EL MULID CASE STUDY IN EGYPT

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Abstract

Mulid as an event means exaltation and praise of one of the household of the prophet (peace be upon him), or one of the crown or sheikh. The real old event was about praising his or her life and how they spend their lives for the sake of delivering the message of Islam, by time, this event turned to be more folkloric and cultural than showing its religious value.

There are different means of celebration whether by music, food manufacturing and even by performing specific shows, some of which are Sufi praising GOD and Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). The ultimate uniqueness of this event could be its touristic economic historical value, in which the urban space changes to be a dynamic urban space all day long during the period of the Mulid. This paper will focus mainly on the household of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) mosques and mausoleums in old Islamic cairo, which could be presented as a green path way telling a story of one of those ionic Islamic pioneers. The richness of actions and values of these places is not about the story of the behavior only, its also about its historic value that confirms and represents the present time and future urban planning aspects for such types of places.

Mulid event gather people from different sectors and countries, the beauty of this event lies in making all people united in one single street or zone for a complete week or even more, during this period, they live together, eat together and share all street functions together. Also, it creates seasonal functions. The urban fabric during this time becomes more complicated, this part of the city becomes the focus of festivals during the date of celebration.

Mulid could be the top folkloric event taking place, if some of its functions become more organized, we could consequently add some other functions to adapt with the new challenges, meanings and values.

Keywords: celebratory urban events, cultural festival, green path way, future urban planning, city festival.

INTRODUCTION

Festivals are an important sub field of study, and of particular interest to scholars in many disciplines because of the universality of festivity and social festival experiences. Within event studies, festival studies is also emerging as a distinct sub field, in large part because festivals occupy a special place in almost all cultures and have therefore been well researched and theorized by scholars in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

There is also a special appeal in festival studies associated with scope for inspiring creativity, attracting large crowds, and generating emotional responses. In this way festivals are part of the entertainment business and often featured in place marketing and tourism and have become permanent elements in both popular and high culture.

Festivals have been defined by Falassi (1987), in the classical cultural anthropological perspective as “a sacred time of celebration.” Festivals celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity. The reflection of the modern approach to naming events as festivals, Getz (2005), defined them as “themed, public celebrations”. Pieper (1965) believed only religious rituals and celebrations could be called festivals. Numerous forms and themes of festival are possible.

Festivals have occupied an important place in the event literature, but have not previously been assessed separately. Prior to 1993, when the research journal Festival Management and Event Tourism was established, there were only sporadic research based papers dealing with event tourism and festival. As confirmed by Formica (1998) there were few articles related to event management published in the 1970s. Formica quantified the topics explored by festival and special event research articles from 1970 through 1996, descending order of frequency economic and financial impacts, marketing, profiles of festival events, sponsorship, management, trends and forecasts.

The first set of journal papers to deal with festival and event management and tourism was published in a special issue of the Canadian Journal of Applied Recreation Researchin 1991. Cousineau (1991) wrote the

More recent reviews of event management and event tourism have been compiled by Getz (2000; 2008), Harris, Jago, Allen, Huyskens (2001), Hede, Jago, and Deery (2002, 2003), and Sherwood (2007). Getz (2000) reviewed articles published in the journal Event Management from 1993 up to 2000, concluding that the most frequent topics were economic development and impacts of events, followed by sponsorship and event marketing from the corporate perspective. In 2000, the Events Beyond 2000 conference in Sydney, Harris reviewed Australian events related research. They determined that the most frequently examined topics were economic development impacts of events, other management topics, and community impacts. However, most of the research literature on impacts was related to sport events, not festivals.

Hede, Jago and Deery (2002) reviewed thirteen tourism, hospitality and leisure journals and conference proceedings in identifying more than 150 publications focused on special events during the period 1990-2001. Both community/cultural and sporting events more commonly provided the context, while very little academic research was published on commercial, political or religious events. Impact evaluation was dominant, and event operations and management was revealed to be a small component in the studies they found. Particular research gaps included: planning, human resource management, risk management, quality perceptions and management, social, cultural and environmental evaluation, value profiling, choice modeling, recommending behavior, repeat visitation, and attitudes.

METHODOLOGY

The paper will provide a detailed description on how the Mulid can act as a celebrity urban space. Besides, how the place hosting these events is converted from a static ordinary place into a dynamic one reflecting the identity and culture of Egypt which consequently develop the urban spaces.

FESTIVAL PHENOMENON

- Festival actions and types.
  Etymologically the term festival derives ultimately from the Latin festum. A religious festival is a time of special importance marked by adherents to that religion. Religious festivals are commonly celebrated on recurring cycles in a calendar year or lunar calendar. Hundreds of very different religious festivals are held around the world each year, types of festivals could be categorized according to activities practiced within to: artistic festivals, touristic festivals, marketing and shopping festivals, religious and cultural festivals.

- Festival urban spaces:
  An open urban space where the action is taking place, a new terminology has raised to mark a festival space by a third place.

URBAN SOCIAL INTERACTIVE DEVELOPMENT

FESTIVAL SPACES AS THIRD PLACES

Third places is any place other than work or home where we spend time, a place that has become a non negotiable part of the workplace experience. They play a critical role in attracting and keeping the creative an innovative workforce that community needs to compete in the very near future.

Developing the third places in community is not a matter of accident or serendipity, but a matter of intended social researchers designed to place communities in a position to attract exactly the workforce that is required.

This is a multi faceted process, designed to enhance the lifestyle experience throughout the community, from dining, nightlife, music and performance to exercise opportunities, environmental commune and far more. Responsibility for the development of these third places is also a diverse process. Municipal and regional authorities will be tasked to create the environment and infrastructure, private enterprise will, in many cases, provide the actual grass roots efforts.
THE THIRD PLACE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

In a way, we've always had third places. Third places are simply places where we spend time when we are not at home and not working. Today, however, third places take on a much larger role in our lives and, subsequently, in defining our places. They have become an incorporated part of our overall lifestyle. Third places are also somewhat unique in the concept of place development because they cross the generations a great deal more than other place characteristics. Communities can be significantly impacted as population centers as much by senior centers and activities as they can be trails to entertainment facilities.

But what has really made third places significant in today’s world is the extent to which they have incorporated themselves into the everyday lifestyle. A generation ago, an skier, for example, would relish a job opportunity which put them an hour away from the slopes. Today, an skier doesn't relish such an opportunity, they demand it. An opportunity without access to a ski resort nearby is no longer considered to be an opportunity. To that skier, their access to that third place directly impacts their ability to have a totally fulfilling life.

Once we begin to understand these aspects of third places, that they have become significant aspects of living a fulfilled life, we begin to understand how important they have become in the establishment of the concept of place. A community that does not recognize this does so at their own peril, because they are limiting the influx of talent that will drive their own future.

FESTIVAL SPACES AS HOSTS FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The first thought that comes to mind when considering third places is entertainment opportunities, and for good reasons. Entertainment options define so many characteristics of place, from the authenticity of the community to diversity to the ideal of acceptance.

Characteristics of festival spaces:
Place development involves designing a place that draws the kind of creative and innovative workforce that fills the community’s needs in becoming an economically prosperous community. To be able to set festival spaces characteristics many specifications need to be identified:

Third Places represent a personal experience
People have a variety of third place needs that must be fulfilled. More is better, and variety acts as a multiplier that enhances the community’s image as a desirable place.

Third places are personal, but not necessarily on an individual basis. It’s the third place experience that is personalized, and that requires a variety of options.

Figure 1: Third places as personal experience

Third Places fulfill an individual need
Sometimes that need is social interaction. Sometimes that need is creative. At other times, it may revolve around personal well being. It may be a need to perform or just a need to unwind. More often than not, it fulfills a variety of the above, plus others.
Third Places take us away from home and work:
They are as important as either of those for defining who we are and what we do. More than any other characteristic, this describes the difference of the importance of third places today as compared to a generation ago. We allow our third places to define us today.

Third Places are personally functional to us.
What does that mean? We need what our third place experiences give to us. If we enjoy the freedom of bicycling and hiking, it is likely that the fitness benefits we enjoy as a result are very important to us. If we enjoy playing in a blues band, the creative performance outlet is something we personally need. The role of third places in defining the desirability of place has become nonnegotiable and This is why.

Third Places are there when we need them
A simple statement with huge implications. As schedules become less important “on demand” third place experiences become proportionally more important.
When we look at these five characteristics of festival spaces as third places in the light of the current community needs, it becomes apparent that the active design of third places is an important aspect of society when it comes to planning the community we want to develop. In many as we plan third places development, we are choosing the “bait” we will cast to “catch” the talented and creative workforce.

RELIGIOUS ACTIONS AND CULTURAL BELIEVES
A religious festival is a time of special importance marked by adherents to that religion. Religious festivals are commonly celebrated on recurring cycles in a calendar year or lunar calendar. Hundreds of very different religious festivals are held around the world each year.

Is ‘El Mulid’ celebration a cultural or religious believe?

Shia as well as some Sunni scholars mostly approved celebration of Mawlid, while the Wahhabi movement oppose the celebration. ("Mawlid", Encyclopedia Britannica)

In the Muslim world, the most of Islamic scholars are in favor of Mawlid. They consider observing Mawlid permissible in Islam, and see it as a praiseworthy event (Kaptein, Schussman (1998)), whilst the Wahabis say it is an improper innovation and forbid its celebration. One leader of Ahl al-Hadith, Ibn Taymiyya forbade Mawlid celebration as it is not in any of the Hadith nor the qur'an itself. (Mawlid According to the Salafi “Ulama”, 2013). Mufti Ali Gomaa, Chief Mufti of the world’s oldest and largest Islamic university, Al Azhar in Egypt subscribe to Sunni Islam, has given his approval for the observance of Mawlid. For the first in English Shaykhul Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri has published a book Mawlid al Nabi Celebration and Permissibility defending the legality of Mawlid on more than 700 pages. ("Mawlid al Nabi: Celebration and Permissibility", Minhajul Quran Publications).

From all of the above, it is correct to say that El mulid is a cultural festival under a religious umbrella or cause and to be able to understand the cultural/religious side of el mulid celebration a layer analysis for the practiced activities & actions must be mentioned:

Some of the Religious/cultural actions:

- **Al “Zekr”**: its held in evening till sun rise accompanied with religious music and songs.

![Figure 5:Al Zekr & Al Maddeh ation.](image)

- **Al “Madeeh”**: singing and repeating the good features and description for prophet Mohammed.

- **Al “massera” el “mohamadiya”**: A March after el “zekr” in old cairo from its main mosques to the gathering grand piazza in el Hussein & el Azhar locations.

![Figure 6:Al massera (march) el mohamadiya](image)

- **Children’s playing ground and celebration**: multiple spots are equipped and established for welcoming children to celebrate the occasion by many games and sweets.

- **El “mulid” sweets**: special type of sweets that is baked only in el mulid day, its distinguished by colours and shapes, especialy the horse shape for boys & “el Arossa” for girls.
“El mulid” as a religious celebration event

Mawlid (Arabic: مولد النبي, “Birth of the Prophet”, sometimes simply called mawlid, el mulid, el mulud among other vernacular pronunciations; sometimes milad) is the observance of the birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad which occurs in Rabi’ al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar.

Mawlid is derived from the Arabic root word (Arabic: ولد, meaning to give birth) according to Arabic English Dictionary. In contemporary usage, Mawlid refers to the observance of the birthday of Muhammad. (Arabic: مولد النبي معجزة مولد النبي, Moungued Dictionary).

Other terms, synonyms, used for this event include:

- **BarahWafat**: The Prophet was born on the twelfth day of Rabi’ul-Awwal, the third month of the Muslim year. His death anniversary also falls on the same day.
- **elMüled (en Nabawi)/Müled en Nabi**: The birth of the prophet. (Egyptian Arabic).
- **Mawlid e Sharif**: The Blessed Birth (Urdu)
- **Yawm an Nabi**: The Day of the Prophet (Arabic)
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The oldest Mawlid text is from the 12th century and likely is of Persian origin. However, the first mention ever made of the Mawlid celebrations in any historical work comes in the writings of Jamal al-Din Ibn al-Ma’mun, who died 587 AH/1192 CE. His father was the Grand Vizier for the Fatimid Caliph al Amir (ruled from 494 to 524 AH/ from 1101 to 1130 CE).

The earliest observation of the Prophet’s birth as a holy day was arranged somewhere in the late twelfth century. The difference from before was that there was an increased number of participants to the Mawlid house that was opened specifically for this celebration. This particular event took place on Monday, 12 Rabi’i, which is the third month of the Islamic calendar that is associated with the beginning of Spring. This celebration was introduced into the city Sabta by Abu Abbas al Azafi as a way of counteracting Christian festivals and to strengthen Muslim identity.

Al Maqrizi writes in his Khīṭaṭ, manual script:

The early celebrations included elements of Sufic influence, with animal sacrifices and torchlight processions along with feast and public sermons. The celebrations occurred in contrast to modern day observances, with the ruler playing a key role in the ceremonies. Emphasis was given to the Ahl al Bayt with presentation of sermons and recitations of the Qur’an. The event also featured the award of gifts to officials in order to bolster support for the ruling caliph. In early Cairo, this holy day was celebrated by the court and the ruling class, not the common people.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CELEBRATION AND OBSERVATIONS

Mawlid is celebrated in most Islamic countries, and in other countries that have a significant Muslim population. Most Arabian countries the Mawlid is not an official public holiday. Participation in the ritual celebration of popular Islamic holidays is seen as an expression of the Islamic revivalism. There is no one clear motive for people celebrating Mawlid, for the celebration itself appears to have sacred elements.

Mawlid is celebrated in a festival manner, large street processions are held and homes or mosques are decorated. Charity and food is distributed and stories about the life of Muhammad are narrated with recitation of poetry by children. Scholars and poets celebrate by reciting Qaṣida al Burda Sharif, the famous poem by 13th century Arabic Sufi Busiri. A general Mawlid appears as “a chaotic where numerous events happen simultaneously, all held together only by the common festive time and space”. (Schielke, Samuli, 2012). These celebrations are often considered an expression of love for the Prophet.

Along with being referred to as the celebration of the birth of Muhammad, the term Mawlid also refers to the ‘text especially composed for and recited at Muhammad’s nativity celebration’. These texts contain stories of the life of Muhammad briefly summarized below, (Knappert, J, “The Mawlid”):

- Abu Talib’s nephew’s first caravan trip
- Arrangement of Marriage between Muhammad and Khadija
- Al Isra’
- Al Mi’raj, or the Ascension to heaven
- Al Hira, first revelation
- The first converts to Islam
- The Hidjra
- The Muhammad’s death
- The Ancestors of Muhammad
The Conception of Muhammad
The Birth of Muhammad
Introduction of Halima
Life of Young Muhammad in Bedouins
Muhammad's orphan hood

These text are only part of the ceremonies. There are many different ways that people celebrate Mawlid, depending on where they are from. There appears to be a cultural influence upon what kind of festivities are a part of the Mawlid celebration

**Celebrations:**
- Mawlid cavalcade as celebrated by the Malaysian Muslims in **Putrajaya, Malaysia,** The jubilee is known locally as MaulidurRasul.
- During **Pakistan's Mawlid,** known in Urdu as EidMilad un Nabi celebrations and processions, the national flag is hoisted on all public buildings, and a 31 gun salute in Islamabad, capital of Pakistan, and a 21 gun salute at the provincial capitals are fired at dawn. The public and private building are illuminated with Fairy lights. The cinemas shows religious rather than secular films on 11th and 12th Rabi ulAwwal. This is the worlds biggest gathering for Mawlid celebrations.
- Among non Muslim countries, **India** is noted for its Mawlid festivities. The relics of Muhammad are displayed after the morning prayers in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir at the Hazratbal Shrine. Night long prayers held at the Hazratbal Shrine are attended by thousands.
- Other non Muslim countries noted for their Mawlid festivities are **Kenya and Tanzania,** where it is known as "Maulidi". In Kenya, the most famous place is the coastal island of Lamu and Malindi. In Tanzania the largest celebrations are on the island of Zanzibar. In **Qayrawan,** **Tunisia,** Muslims sing and chant hymns of praise to Muhammad, welcoming him in honor of his birth.

*Figure 10:* shows the site of the Mulid prophet Mohamed path through old Cairo urban fabric which include most of the Islamic monuments all around the world
Figure 11: shows the path direction from Sultan Hassan mosque all along to Sayeda Zeinab Mosque down to Mosque of Sayeda Nfisa
Map of the Prophet Mohamed family Moulid trail in old Cairo. All these streets have different pattern, sometimes it act like parking and overlapping pedestrian and vehicles path. Another time it act like public market and most of time it acts like daily activities hub which include commercial, religion, social network for residents and daily visitors. This trail has 17 main historical mosques and schools Islamic monuments other than old historical houses and remaining fringes in the middle of this complicated urban fabric. During Mulid time all these streets closed from vehicles and turn to be like a motel which has the activities like accommodation, cooking, dancing, singing, zekr circles, and trading. This tinny path turns to be like tool for expressing in different means of people from different places and sometimes countries, all the streets turn to have shading device from cloth fabric to allow the accommodation of people and protect them from sun and sometimes heat.
Figure 12: shows Sultan Hassan square, the start of the trail which include Mosque of sultan Hassan and Elrefaay Mosque too, with urban fabric around.

Figure 13: shows some of the activities that happen in the trail, like marketing for some materials that express about the Moulid and games like small simulation for gun shooting, and eating.

Figure 14: shows second part of the path arrived to Sayeda Zeinab Mosque

Figure 15: shows third part of the trail passing through Tolon Mosque down to Nfisa Mosque
Figure 16: shows 4th part of the trail passing through Sayeda Sakina Mosque

Figure 17: shows 5th part of the trail reaching down the Mosque of Sayeda Nafisa

The Photos below show the streets and their width and the density of users everyday and after them, photos of the same streets while hosting the Mulid describing the events and activities held on that special occasion.
CONCLUSION

After offering a comparison between the urban space with and without hosting a Mulid, and describing how it is converted into a dynamic festive place with its activities and events, we can conclude that these Mulids are considered from our cultural heritage that has been moved from generation to generation throughout hundreds of years.

These events must be preserved and repeated on regular basis in order to preserve the cultural events – our heritage – as they reflect our identity and character that make us special amongst other cultures.

The streets during the Mulid are full of life and colors and thus become active rather than passive and dead, therefore streets during these events could be considered as a tool for urban development and reforming of urban cultural image towards new era that consider this city at that moment as festival city.

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