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# LITERATURE

## The Festival as a Constructed Space outside Everyday Life

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### Abstract

*This article discursively examines one question: how does festival construct a separate space outside the everyday? To be able to address this question, it takes a chart across what constitutes everyday life, then explores the notion festival as a theatrical form, and finally explores how festival operates to draw distinction – particularly spatial (and temporal) distinction - between itself and everyday life. Methodologically, the paper is cast as a critical examination of how festivals as theatrical forms are sites of distinctions from everyday occurrences, towards revealing the operational variations created in space and time to achieve the transformation from everyday life to festival. The paper draws theoretical insights from French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre specifically his articulations in Critique of Everyday Life on the one hand, and Wole Soyinka's Myth Literature and the African World Ododo's Facecuerade Theatre on the other in establishing the core requirements of the African approach to festival space creation. The paper concludes that the festival requires a particular form of intentionality or planning, elaborate or facile, to effectively create a separate space outside the everyday. However, while this intentionality in the occidental imagination comes with physical and time-bound arrangements, in the traditional African creation of festival, the festival is essential because in good measure, it is functional. While festival is sometimes separable from the everyday functioning of society, it is oftentimes realised within it or even transcends it into the existential sphere.*

**Key Words:** Festival, Everyday life, Space, Intentionality, Functional

### Introduction

Festivals are socio-cultural events which are, in a broad sense, designed for public participation. They may be either traditional (in an ancestral sense) or contemporary in form, and generally celebrate a range of themes. According to Akyeampong, "A festival is a special event which after years of continuous celebration has become identified with a given locality or

people” (344). There are diverse characteristics that make it problematic to define festivals in one brief sentence, however. For instance, while some festivals come with a show of revelry, others are marked by withdrawal, solemnity and esotericism. Whatever their nature, nevertheless, festivals seem to be consistently defined by the values of assemblage, recognition, cultural attestation and memory. For a subject to be worthy of festivity, it must transcend the common. The paper makes an attempt to interrogate the spatial constituency of the festival as a form, specifically in its elemental distinction from the familiar, regular and recurrent.

In the ninth and final chapter of his book, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Michael Sheringham examines the configurations of what he calls the *space of the day* as a statutory marker of the *everyday* (364). Sheringham’s contributions are crucial for appreciating how the regular is constructed. We draw from the polemical contribution of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, arguing along with Sheringham that the everyday is characterised by freedom in its generalness, habitualness, or regularity, and by implication, that festival arrests and intrudes into this determinant to create a space for itself. In other words, festival is a disruption of the spacio-temporal constituents of the everyday, a limitation imposed on the quotidian nature of everydayness with its otherwise limitless “sphere of invention” (Sheringham 361). The discursive approach of the article basically drives towards enunciating the paradigmatic nature of the festival in general in an effort to appreciate its relevance for ontology and culture. This retains validity even after considerations of Soyinka’s (1976) and Ododo’s (2015) vision of the African psychic apprehension of the everyday as not profoundly removed from the occasional, especially in performance, given the operational nature of Art in the continent’s customs. Lefebvre after all articulates that a ‘fusion of art and everyday life in a transformation of the latter’ (Lefebvre 339). In other words, while myth, festival, ritual, and rites are habituated almost innately within *regular* experience, given their functional nature across African societies, it is still possible to isolate markers of representation that separate spacio-temporally the festival from the everyday. As Ododo traps it: “*Ekú* is a way of life” (217) and encapsulates the intrinsic duality of the Ebera worldview.

### **What is Everyday Life?**

Perhaps everyday life is just what the name suggests: it is the way humans live daily. It has varied dimensions: people live personal lives, family lives, economic lives, cultural lives, emotional lives, social lives; and they engage in spiritual, intellectual, rest, recreation, and cultural and other aesthetic events. They participate in politics, conflict, peacebuilding, livelihood and religion, and they respond to fortunate occurrences as well as calamities in varied ways. These are some of the dimensions of humanity's profound existential realities which invariably mutate as people grow both individually and communally. In his famous three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre writes extensively about the philosophical dimensions to everyday life.

Arguably, *Critique of Everyday Life* is the richest, most prescient work by one of twentieth century's greatest philosophers, and the most rigorous by any writer on the subject. Written at the birth of post-war consumerism, the Critique has had remarkable influence on thought, culture, and life especially in Western societies (Sunker 2). It was a philosophical inspiration for the 1968 student revolution in France and is considered to be the founding text of all that we know as cultural studies, as well as a major influence on the fields of contemporary philosophy, geography, sociology, architecture, political theory and urbanism. Lefebvre takes as his starting-point and guide the "trivial" details of quotidian experience: an experience colonized by the commodity, shadowed by inauthenticity, yet one which remains the only source of resistance and change. While Lefebvre posits that "insofar as the science of man exists, it finds its material in the 'trivial,' the everyday" (p. 133), and his main audience would appear to be fellow Marxists, our most intimate concern is with his position as regard the relationship between art and culture on the one hand, and everyday life on the other, especially how the two utilize space. This is in part significant because as Lefebvre posits, social conditions are produced beyond economic spaces, including in art and culture. According to Lefebvre:

At the same time as art, literature and philosophy were attacking everyday life so relentlessly, without discriminating between its two sides (the bourgeois and the human), the world of knowledge was also moving closer to it, but in order to study it as seriously as possible. Important discoveries were made in

several scientific fields through the study of humble, everyday and (at first glance) insignificant objects. (121)

This is important because it points to us that everyday life is not as mundane as it sounds. There is nothing *common* or *petty* about everyday life. Life in all its aspects, even the most recurrent, is serious. But because *everyday life* is everyday, we may be able to postulate that it requires specific shifts of coordinated nature to be able to realise festivals out of it. This becomes the starting point for our argumentation. For Lefebvre, who clearly appreciates art, film, literature and even bourgeois-oriented leisure, the capacity of art to distance itself from "everyday life" provides a critique, or expose of the mundane and trivial. He rebukes art that seeks to escape or deride the restrictions of everyday life, as in surrealism or realism; that approach to art is trapped in an outdated epoch; transposing an era rather than transforming it, exchanging in the process a moment paroxysmal for one that "annuls life" (129).

Life is varied and complex, and *everyday life* suggests existence as characterised by innumerable choices and activities as shaped by economic, personal, psychological, epistemological, emotional, spiritual, philosophical and myriad other factors and considerations. Humans have varied needs, and these needs mutate in considerable ways, sometimes shaped by factors controllable to them, other times determined by uncontrollable elements. *The everyday*, the notion popularized by Lefebvre, is largely shaped by 'the quotidian,' that is, the dimension of lived experience that characterises day to day living (eating, phoning, shopping, objects, gadgets et cetera). This term is less ambiguous and more neutral than *everyday life*, which "tends to have distinct political and sociological connotations" (Sheringham 3). Nevertheless this paper treats the two as coterminous. The everyday is defined by four key attributes. Sheringham writes:

First, while many things are commonly identified with the *quotidian*-eating, phoning, shopping, objects, and gadgets-everydayness is not a property or aggregate of these things; it inheres rather in the way they are part of manifold lived experience. Secondly, the ensemble in which we are immersed comprises other people: *quotidiennete* implies community. Thirdly, while the everyday is not the place of the event (always

exceptional), and is therefore in tension with history, it has a historicity that is embodied, shared and ever changing (repetition does not have to be stale). Fourthly, *quotidienne* dissolves (into statistics, properties, data) when the everyday is made an object of scrutiny. Everydayness lies in practices that weave contexts together; only practices make it visible. (360)

Citing insights from Jean-Francois Lyotard (1971) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1988), Sheringham identifies another key attribute of the everyday, that is, *figurality*, where everyday events make meaning “the way they are seen not in terms of a descriptive system but as the sites of practice, of things being done—in time as well as space, in community as well as solitude” (364). Overall, as noted above, the everyday is essentially what occurs in the commonplace life of humankind, with cultural shaping, but while this may be recurrent, nothing prevents it from being profound especially when carefully considered especially in the context of the multifaceted vortices that spring from it.

### **Festival as Art Examined**

In part, as a pathway towards satiating their aesthetic needs, human societies often come together to perform special events that have come to be known as festivals. The nature of these events varies from one society to another, from one period of history to another. Other determinant factors could include social class, economic viability, gender, religious belief, and so on. To attain this, two elements are effused into the everyday: segmentation and rationalization (Sheringham 360). After all, “The everyday as lived reality only exists modally, through the slant or impetus we impart to particular iterations” (Sheringham 361). Leslie Shepard writes in the Foreword to the third edition of the encyclopaedia *Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations of the World* that:

From primitive times onwards, special rites and festivals have marked the religious mysteries of existence—the enigma of birth, life, death, and rebirth in the environment and in individual human experience. Such celebrations fulfilled a deep-seated urge in the human psyche, evoking profound emotions associated with the changing pattern of the year, the promise of

spring, the joys of summer, the harvest, the decline of the year through fall to the rigors of winter, and the promise of a new spring. The divine source of this mystery was to be acknowledged and propitiated so that human prosperity and fertility flourished in the struggle for existence throughout the passing of time. (ix)

The processes in the emergence of festivals are sometimes slow and deliberate, other times spontaneous and arising out of chance, as Meek (1930) demonstrates among the Bachama of Numan, and their three-day religious festival held in honour of the deity Nzeanzo, primarily achieved through the solemnization of the everyday towards pacifying the deity and soliciting his blessings. However, festivals generally “originate within the community in response to a need or desire to celebrate the community’s unique identity” (Dwyer and Jago 43). One way of appreciating festivals is to recall the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy’s position that the everyday is determined by what he calls “the free dissemination of existence” (Sheringham 362). This is opposed to the festival, which carves into this freedom its rules, however flexible, where group behaviour becomes confined to steps or more frequently, conventions.

It is important to state that festivals differ in their functionality, form, and content. While some are purely social, others are of more esoteric purposes, including the spiritual, occult, down into the profane. While some festivals are for whole communities, others are choosier in their participants, the determining factors including age, knowledge, gender, spiritual affiliations, ethnicity, initiation and a host of others. While some require elaborate preparation and are occasional, ending when they are complete (typically of occidental society or modelled thereafter), others – as the African – are imbued in living and only require the agency of reliability where the self is not fragmented from the essence (Soyinka 38-9). Three of the great religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have in common the recognition of a holy day of rest and/or psychic reset, from the week-long toil of livelihood. The Sabbath of Judaism was adopted by the Christians but shifted from Saturday to Sunday, while for Muslims, *the day of congregation* in a mosque is, essentially marking the same essences but on a Friday. A key constituent of the festival that can be observed here is the element of timing.



Festivals represent a vital part of human society, and they have been around for several centuries. The history of festivals goes far back into the past, long before the written history of civilizations began. The desire to mark particular occasions, such as equinoxes, solstices and harvests, with communal expressions of feelings has been around since the Neolithic times (Mair 3). Fishing festivals, for instance the Arugungu Fishing Festival of the Arugungu people of Kebbi state, are like most festivals of agrarian nature, celebrations of the earth's many fertilities. It is also important to remember that festivals themselves have to be a unique type of entertainment. They have to offer people an experience they can't get by going somewhere else, or from a TV.

A look at Arnold van Gennep's concept of "rites of passage," Victor Turner's metaphor of "liminality" and Wole Soyinka's apprehension of the "African world" help us appreciate the nature of festivals deeper. Van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* provides an extensive study of traditional celebrations of life's key transformative moments such as birth, puberty, marriage and, death. These cut across customs, and are typically marked by festivities, rites, and ceremonies in recognition of the profundities that inhere in them. The intricacies of the rites of passage were of particular interest to Turner. He called these the *liminal*, a term derived from the Latin word for margin, or threshold. During a liminal phase, Turner argues, participants are stripped of their social status and removed from social structures. There is a connection between this and our appreciation of the relationship between the everyday and the particular, as apprehended in the African cosmic sense. Soyinka's theorization of the African world as conceived in terms of three worlds – the worlds of the unborn, the living and the dead, connected by transitional gaps, is pertinent here. The gap is what he calls the *essential gulf*, one which "must constantly be diminished by the sacrifices, the rituals, the ceremonies of appeasement to those cosmic powers which lie guardian to the gulf." (144) Importantly, about the relationship between the three realms, time, and the cosmos, Soyinka avers:

The past is the ancestors, the present belongs to the living, and the future to the unborn, the deities stand in the same situation to the living, as do the ancestors and the unborn, obeying the same laws, suffering the same agonies and uncertainties, employing the same Masonic intelligence of rituals for the

perilous plunge into the fourth area of experience, the immeasurable gulf of transition. (148)

This is in part to do with the functional nature of Art in Africa, and contrasts with the Western compartmentalizing habit of thought. Thus, perhaps it is more appropriate to consider the full gamut of dimensions that have relevance to festivals in order to fully comprehend their scale and scope. The most important elements to be highlighted include the following: In relation to timing, festivals are almost always short term and are usually recurring. Another key dimension is that *festive* occasions are always open to the public – while there may or may not be an entrance fee or other charge, non-esoteric festivals are generally publicly accessible as opposed to closed meetings or events where an invitation is required. In nature, festivals tend to be celebratory, although the specific theme of the celebration varies widely from religious and/or traditional to contemporary and arguably inauthentic. Nonetheless, the theme usually relates to an element of culture, be that traditional culture (religious or secular), high culture (such as opera, the arts or gourmet food, for example) or popular culture (such as folk or pop music).

Festivals are usually also place-based and often celebrate the history, tradition or culture of a particular place. Festivals are also social phenomena, and communities are at the centre of festivals, whether that implies place-based notions of communities (which is often the case) or broader communities of interest. Festivals often, although not always, have a performative element, with music, songs, dancing, parades or other ways of showcasing a way of life. Finally, the behavioural and affective elements of festivals help to differentiate them. The behavioural dimension of festivals highlights that they are often used to provide recreation and entertainment involving interaction and socializing. In relation to the affective dimension, festivals are often considered to relate to feelings of belonging and sharing, connection and cohesion (Mair 5-6).

As noted, festivals hold multifaceted roles in society, spanning economic development, tourism benefits, social outcomes and others. Although many festivals have been held for decades or more and celebrate important religious or historic traditions, there are significant economic advantages to be gained from either ‘re-imagining’ them or from generating new festivals. For example, festivals (along with other types of events) can be

staged or supported by governments for instrumentalist purposes – to bring positive economic impact, secure jobs and growth, underpin regeneration and catalyse infrastructural development (Mair 4).

Across the western world, popular music festivals have been around for well over half a century: festival communities are no longer exclusively youth-oriented. For Bennett, the festival can be both an inter-generational music event, young and old coming together, and one for aging fans to affirm that ‘their cultural investment is [still] shared by other members of their generation; it can also offer an opportunity to reengage with particular practices-late-night drinking, dancing, recreational drug use, and so on—which ... assume more cultural resonance when enacted as a collective practice’ (89). The idea of the festival as ‘a unique type of event’ that is a ‘playground for adults’ (Anderson 215) is confirmed by several scholars. Hence, while festivals may serve various needs, there is one incontestable verity about them: they mark a divorce from everyday life.

### **Construction of a Separate Space outside the Everyday**

Festivals may first be started on ordinary days but once they catch on, the days those festivals occur transmute into extraordinary days. Since the everyday is “resistant to codification” (Sheringham 363), this does not always come entirely easily. Festivals traditionally allowed respite from hard work and mundane daily life, injecting a certain amount of socialising, relaxation and rejuvenation into what Thomas Hobbes argued might otherwise be the solitary, nasty, brutish and short existence of many peoples throughout history. In recent times, the importance and number of festivals has increased, primarily in tandem with the increasing importance placed on festivals (and other events) as opportunities for increased tourism, branding and economic development (Mair 3-4). Across African societies, festivals are intricate, inalienable aspects of all traditions. Specifically, the festival in the African imagination needs no deep severance from the everyday. In Soyinka’s *Myth, Literature, and the African World*, for instance, we come across a fundamental representation of the interlocked relationship between the everyday and the unique: a religious or spiritual or mystical experience is not realized as something bifurcated from everyday, matter of fact existence. Soyinka advances that in the theatrical experience, in revolution and in ritual, the individual acquires a sense of union with the community, while the present

grips the past and the future at once. There are no gaps, and identity is both confirmed and complicated. We witness clearly "the cosmic envelope within which man...fearfully exists" (41). Soyinka illustrates this in *A Dance of the Forests*:

DIRGE-MAN: Daughter, your feet were shod  
In eeled shuttles of Yemoja's loom  
But twice your smock went up  
And I swear your feet were pounding  
Dust at the time. Girl, I know  
The games of my ancestors. Leave the dead  
Some room to dance.

A touch, at that rounded moment of the night  
And the dead return to life  
Dum-belly woman, plaintain-breasted  
Mother! What human husband folds  
His arms, and blesses randy ghosts?  
Keep away now, leave, leave the dead  
Some room to dance. (40-41)

The celebration of the gods, the ancestors, is an endless component of everyday. Ododo's *Facekuerade* theatre is a theatre of creation and recreation (Ododo 215) much similar to Soyinka's conception of Yoruba tragedy in *Myth, Literature and the African World*, and as well transformative theatre in much the same way envisioned by Schechner (219). The transformation is at once real (because the performance is not *like life* but *a part of life*) and metaphorical (since it abides in symbolism and triangulation of paramount essences). Hence, we note that for the Ebira, the festival is both play and living. Divine and human agencies are both subjects and mechanisms in the process. As in probably all African theatre, in major distinction with the West, the theatre is not merely game but possesses a functionality that cross beyond passing time: it is part of the social and existential order, as important as metaphysics, art, medical science, astrology and philosophy all combined in the Western imagination. As a marker of distinction again between the occidental and African theatre, the latter's festival space is constructed not emphatically physically, but also in the psyche.

Lefebvre notes in *The Production of Space* that the key element to consider is that of **intentionality**. Indeed, through succumbing to this simple

notion, man's capacity to *do* practically anything becomes manifest. Lefebvre notes:

Obviously, a city does not present itself in the same way as a flower, ignorant of its own beauty. It has, after all, been 'composed' by people, by well-defined groups. All the same, it has none of the intentional character of an 'art object'. For many people, to describe something as a work of art is simply the highest praise imaginable. And yet, what a distance there is between a work of nature and art's intentionality! What exactly were the great cathedrals? The answer is that they were political acts. The ancient function of statues was to immortalize the dead so that they would not harm the living. Fabrics or vases served a purpose. One is tempted to say, in fact, that the appearance of art, a short time prior to the appearance of its concept, implies the degeneration of works: that no work has ever been created as a work of art, and hence that art - especially the art of writing, or literature - merely heralds that decline. (74)

The argument made here by Lefebvre is quite captivating and true. And festival being art, is hardly divorced from the judgment enunciated here about the role of intentionality in the creation and realisation via performance of festivals, whatever their nature – sacred, profane, or secular. Lefebvre states that social space is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production (and with the relations of production). These forces, as they develop, are not taking over a pre-existing, empty or neutral space, or a space determined solely by geography, climate, anthropology, or some other comparable consideration.

According to Lefebvre, “Venice is indeed a unique space, a true marvel. But is it a work of art? No, because it was not planned in advance (76). Hence, the key word for us that best captures what the philosopher refers to as *intentionality* is planning. For an artistic work to be realized, including a festival event, there is a need for the core element of *planning*. It cannot therefore be some random outdoor activity of street theatre. On the contrary, festivals as performance events require in-depth and prior analysis of needs, and must answer the cardinal theatrical questions of *who does what for whom, where and with the use of what*. These questions have been addressed by

theorists since Aristotle's grand *Poetics*. Peter Brook writes in *The Empty Space* that "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (7).

While these words may appear simple – and indeed Brook admits they are *theatre* only in its simplest form, they nevertheless capture the essence of the theatre in its totality and in particular as relates to its spatial demand. *A Man* is the performer; *walks* relates to action; *empty space* is of course the theatrical space or stage; *someone else* refers to the audience; *watching* is the consumption element, which also supposes the existence of spectacle. Other elements find where they belong in attendance to these cardinal ones. Festival manipulates and realizes these theatrical and performance elements through the element of planning, which again reminds us of the need for theatrical specialist in the creation of festivals such as the contemporary carnival, a point stressed by Chidiebere Ekweariri in "Carnival Arts and Street Theatre Consciousness in Nigeria: An Emerging National Trend" (Ekweariri 101).

Lefebvre posits in *The Production of Space* that in the areas set aside for leisure, the body regains a certain right to use, a right which is half imaginary and half real, and which does not go beyond an illusory 'culture of the body', an imitation of natural life. Nevertheless, even a reinstatement of the body's rights that remain unfulfilled effectively calls for a corresponding restoration of desire and pleasure. The fact is that consumption satisfies needs, and that leisure and desire, even if they are united only in a representation of space (in which everyday life is put in brackets and temporarily replaced by a different, richer, simpler and more normal life), are indeed brought into conjunction; consequently, needs and desires come into opposition with each other. Specific needs have specific objects. Desire, on the other hand, has no particular object, except for a space where it has full play: a beach, a place of festivity, the space of the dream (356).

In recent years there has been a clear increase in the number of festivals and events taking place across the world, although it is problematic to put an exact figure to this. They certainly have their significance for local communities but are also conceived and staged with the aim of attracting external audiences and particularly, valued tourist markets. Alongside with the growth in the number of festivals, there has also been a general increase in the degree of professionalism in the occupations that are linked with festival

planning, management, organization and operations reflecting their social, political and their economic roles. Heightened professionalism in the realm of cultural festivals and events indicates a more or less common recognition that festivals do make important contributions to tourism and economic development strategies, as well as providing a vehicle for community participation in regeneration programmes, and a heightened sense of civic pride (Anderson 15).

In the area of film alone, some of the festivals held annually around the world reflect a broad diversity that speaks volumes about the carvings that happen within time and space, all attuned to the universal quest for respite from tedium that characterises the human spirit. This quest can create conflict over ownership and entitlement to space, both special and temporal; both between festivals and among festivities.

In “Performance Space in Traditional African Theatre,” Tochukwu Okeke treats the subject of physical space for festival within the space of the contemporary epoch as these are contested by other forces. Mkpikpa festival among the Igbo of Umudioka town in Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State. The festival honours a female deity, *Mkpikpa*, the goddess of fertility and protection. The three-day festival often features a lot of spectacle and dances involving men and women as well as masquerades. For Mkpikpa festival, the space is typically the regular village square (*ilo*) as is common among the Igbo. The centrally located space, about the size of a football pitch, is communally owned, open, without added backdrop nor fence, and is used for varied activities at different times by the community. The audience stands around the arena, with seats provided for elders and initiated men. This does not mean that there is a clear delineation between stage and auditorium. Where masquerades are involved, the audience especially women often retreat at the sign of their approach, which invariably expands the performance space while pushing the audience further afield. Likewise, some circumstances may make audience members to surge into the space, shrinking again the distance both spatial and in relationship between audience and performers (26-9). Okeke specifically discusses the Mkpikpa festival among the Igbo of Umudioka town in Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State. The festival honours a female deity, *Mkpikpa*, the goddess of fertility and protection. The three-day festival often features a lot of spectacle and dances involving men and women as well as masquerades. Challenges abound for the *ilo mkpikpa* (the grand

performance space where the Mkpikpa festival is held). Today, a lot of non-traditional performances are threatening not only the availability of the space for the staging of mkpikpa festival events, but also thereby challenge the sustainability of the Mkpikpa festival in its entirety. Without space, after all, the performance can be complete. Pentecostal churches have renamed the space *ilo Jesus* (Jesus Square) (Okeke 30). Likewise, the Anglican and Catholic churches have taken to vehemently using the space for their own religious functionalities. One notes here that the contemporary generation of Igbos are only playing out a continuation of the cultural battle fought by the generation of Ezeulu in Achebe's *Arrow of God*. When the Chief Priest Ezeulu refuses to make the necessary rites to usher in the season of harvest in that novel, the people turned to the Christian God. This transfer of allegiance was obviously not total at the time, hence its continuation today. Although the festival "still holds albeit in some reformed manner" (31), one can foresee that unless proper measures are taken, a future would come when the space is completely usurped by *modernity*.

Festival space is sometimes geographically determined, sometimes by intentionality, other times beyond it. For instance, traditional festivals such as the Ete Fishing Festival among the Bassa-Nge people of the confluence area, or the Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi state, are only possible due to the geographical feature of the presence of fish in a naturally placed water body. This space element is therefore, naturally constructed. Like similar festivals among riverine people, the Etè Festival is a demonstration of the rich attachment of the Bassa-Nge to the great river, which manifests in various aspects of the people's cultural heritage including games, commerce, aesthetics and industry such as angling. The time requirements of festival space for the Ete are also explicable: Long after the rains of the previous season have stopped, the River Niger loses some of its tributaries which dry up as the drought settles in. A few however merely disconnect from the main river, and continue to recede from it until they become small stand-alone ponds. These ponds have huge advantages for fishing since the fish in them collect in the small areas and would be of various species because they originate from the great river Niger which stretches for 4,180 km across five countries.

There is an architectural dimension to the creation of festival space, too. For instance, "the Romans designed cities to engage kinetic viewers,



choreographing festival routes to exploit the genius loci of various sites and buildings along specific linear routes” (Favro 10). Unlike the more permanent architectural work of the Romans, the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Willem III’s reign in 1874 saw temporary architectural work by the Dutch “to transform the city’s squares, streets, and canals into celebratory *feestzalen* (reception halls); they were meant to draw attention to the festive landscape itself, not to the city, transporting the viewers to an alternative urban reality in which the illusory décor convincingly imitated masonry” (Stieber 183). Interestingly, in these festival events, viewing, listening, and other forms of sensing were not only physiologically determined, but also culturally mediated. Thus, cultures develop conventions and decorum about who should see what and how, spatial body-filling, and so on.

This is much akin to the use of space by the Ebira Tao during the Ekuechi festival, where, because the ancestors are descending (Ododo xxii), women are barred from viewing. The space is therefore, gender-marked. The Ekuechi festival from which Ododo’s facekuerade theory emanates is described by Ododo as “a reenactment of myth, legend and traditional social events meant to mark the end of the year and usher in a new one” (xxi) among the Ebira-Tao. Celebrated in the last months of the year, the festival combines metaphysics with social aesthetics, inviting divinity to the human realm – ***Eku e Chi*** (xxii). Space is therefore, not merely physical. It is also psychical. For Ododo, “masquerade can be conceived without a mask” (2). And so he does, as did his forebears, in his theorization of a theatrical model where the unison of dualized-existence is performed to arrest the sameness of the living and dead on the communal and existential-metaphoric stage. In Facekuerade theatre, nature itself is adopted as costume, because the night for instance becomes worn as a mask, hence “a performance masquerade character without mask” (4) is what *facekuerade* entails.

## Conclusion

The article has examined the nature of everyday life, and of the festival, as well as made an exploration into what constitutes *everyday life* from both the notional and philosophical perspectives. Likewise, the key constituent of how festival breaks away from everyday life has been identified based on the postulations of the French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre to be the element of *intentionality*, which can simply be appreciated as *planning* –

elaborate or simple. In other words, while the article does not take the surface simplicity of everyday reality to imply outright mundaneness, it nevertheless recognises with Lefebvre that festival being art, it is realised through a choreographed break away from everyday living – and this requires the inalienable element of planning. Through proper planning, various elements of performance are brought into a production that possesses in a chosen thematic direction which in turn influences the various aesthetic choices made by everyone involved. At this, the paper also makes effort to juxtapose the process and mechanisms of space creation in the Western and African approaches, finding difference especially in the psychic and functional approach that African festivals use, as opposed to the primarily physical and ceremonial space that characterise Western festivals and festivities.

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