The role of spatiotemporality in identity work: The case of the Festival Locarno

There is a range of organizations that can qualify as temporary and spaceless organizations, namely organizations such as sport manifestations, festivals, commercial fairs or (academic) conferences that have only a minimal own spatial extension. The project examines how this peculiar spatiotemporality comes about in the context of an urban film festival and how it mediates identity processes. In particular, it develops along three specific lines of inquiry:

1. The role of spatiotemporality in identity work
2. The aesthetic production of temporary space in interaction
3. The role of festivals' spatiotemporality within the film industry circuit

The project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, develops a three-year longitudinal qualitative study of a major European film festival, the Festival Locarno, integrating various methods of the ethnographic tradition in organization and communication studies, such as qualitative interviews, observation, and visual methods. The Locarno Festival, having itself a very limited spatial extension, needs to temporarily construct its space by lending and transforming urban spaces and by coordinating with co-located actors. This recurrent, interactive space construction brings about a specific relationship with the urban context and informs the identity work both of the festival and the hosting territory.

The project aims to offer a processual appreciation of the relationship developing between cyclical cultural events, the host territory, and the industry these events represent, thus providing an alternative and complementary perspective to traditional economic impact studies.

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