

Covid-19 and Empty Meeting Grounds

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Abstract

In the towns and villages of the small Mediterranean island group of Malta, the most poignant Roman Catholic ritual – the village *festa* - is simultaneously an annual space-making event and the centrepiece of high church and folk culture (Boissevain, 1993), with lavish street decorations, colourful processions, fireworks, band marches, High Mass in decorated churches and lots of food, drink and merriment.

Malta's partial lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic achieved positive results by the end of June 2020. The authorities provided solutions for continuing the celebration of such important communal events, until the 'new normal' crashed by mid- July 2020, when a cluster of new Covid-19 infections was traced, amongst others, to a particular village *festa*. All public gatherings were prohibited, giving a total new meaning to MacCannell's book title *Empty Meeting Grounds* (1992).

This qualitative study endeavours to identify the experience of organizing the *festa*, an event that has been infested with rivalry since the 1850s (Boissevain, 1993: 75) which brings about contrasting and conflicting issues of ownership among the stakeholders, worries about continuity, preservation of memory and matters of identity/self-image.

Short-term effect of Covid-19 measures have seriously disfigured the public celebration of the *festa*, while the long-term effects of the pandemic may have serious impact on the future of the *festa*, one of Malta's iconic identity markers. Restoring the village *festa* to some semblance of its past will require significant innovation, goodwill and entrepreneurial flare in the pre-vaccine era. An analysis of the impact of the pandemic on the *festa* season of Malta provides highly contradictory opinions within the community, while bringing about how the individuals engaged in the preparation of the *festa* celebrations, reaped their rewards and processed their frustrations.

Introduction

This research paper explores how Covid-19 impacted the popular *festa* season in Malta. This communal celebration of Roman Catholic patron-saints forms an integral part of the cultural calendar of every locality within the Maltese archipelago (Bezzina, 1988, 2004; Cassar, 2015). It is here argued that communal participation in such events transcends beyond the concept of identity, especially in times of uncertainty. Popular public activities had already experienced significant adjustments because of preventive measures intended to curb the challenges presented by the pandemic. Social distancing dampened the overall sense of communal participation but also changed the concept of self-actualisation. The latter manifests itself best in the ritualised behaviour that dominates both the religious and

secular aspects of the festa. However, the pandemic eliminated, or at least severely restricted, the possibility of such ritualised mass manifestations. These form an integral part of place-making, allowing for the celebration of identity, as public places become creative spaces.

The festa celebrations for each locality are spread over a whole week. The core of the locality is transformed into a public creative space, both by stakeholders from within the community and by private residents, as each overtly or covertly claims a sense of ownership of the festa (Visanich, 2017; Sultana and Gellel, 2012). This apparent contestation leads to the question who really owns this artistic event in the “new normal” compared to the “old normal”?

From our observations, it appears that the impact of Covid-19 allows for an analyses of stakeholder behaviour with respect to the attempt to generate a “new” festa creative space. In the absence of the ritualised manifestations exhibited during normal times, it is still possible to explore the various subtle contestations that some stakeholders are forced to negotiate every year in an attempt to re-discover and re-invent the festa’s creative placemaking, due to popular demand, while other stakeholders stoically refuse to give in to any such demands. This is a classic example of lived religion of the community festa stakeholders, among them the festa *dilettanti* (die-hard enthusiasts) who are looking for something new every year, pitched against the prescribed religion of the Church, its unchanging liturgy appealing to those Maltese finding comfort in their beloved and ensuring rituals (Boissevain, 1980, 1988, 1993). Davie (2010) discusses the possible existence of a common, experiential “feel-good” factor. The important matter is that the festa enthusiasts simply “feel” something, either the sacred or the sacred arousing a sentiment reaching beyond the ordinary filling of an emotional, ritual need. They want the multisensory experience of the patron saint’s feast to be focal point everywhere in the community, rather than only a pure liturgical occasion within the church. This in itself displays a shift from obligation to consumption (2010: 146) and presents an opportunity to explore how different stakeholders understand and enact creative placemaking through their discourse. We argue that amid the longstanding ritualised history that brings together various stakeholders and the community, the spiritual component associated with this celebration emerged as the most important placemaking actor during the Covid-19 period, namely the patron saint as a main stakeholder in the festa.

The Festa

One of the highlights of Valletta 2018 celebrations as European City of Culture was specifically a festa celebration. Probably, this was the easiest and least contested decision adopted by the organizing committee. With a long-standing history of over six centuries, the village festa, principally a religious celebration, is an important marker of Maltese identity (Sant Cassia, 1993; Cassar, 2005; Cassar, 2015; Frendo, 1994; Bonnici, 1993). From a religious celebration it extended to a folk lore celebration while at present there is a large secular aspect to it too. ‘Feasts are a part and parcel of the Maltese folklore and must be

cherished as much all those organisations which are behind them,' argues Malta's Culture Minister (Micallef, 2020). This official recognition is also reflected in the current bid for festa to be recognised as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status. In the words of one of the participants in this study, 'During the festa, we celebrate our friendships, the dead, the past, traditions, religion, our Malteseness.'

Inevitably, when writing about religion and religious feast, one has to take into account the matter of secularisation. Davie (2010: 46) suggests that in Europe it might be that the idea of secularisation as a necessary part of modernisation is mistaken. Davie (2010: 2) also observes that the advocates of secularisation find it hard to acknowledge that religion remains a very normal part of life for a large majority of ordinary citizens. They question how could it be that something which is factually and so manifestly false, seems to be so essential for humankind, especially in difficult times? From Davie's research, it appears that secularisation in the West was for a long time misunderstood. Secularisation is no longer thought of as a process of losing faith but more as a process of un-churching, losing trust in the historic church itself for any number of reasons (Davie 2010: 47). This process has taken place in Malta too (Visanich, 2017; Sultana and Gellel, 2012; Buttigieg, Cassar and Avellino 2016). During 2017, the Maltese Curia engaged in a quantitative research on church attendance, in line with the general results of declining church attendance in Europe, only 36% of Catholics attended Sunday Mass, against 51% in 2005 (Sansone, 2019). A gigantic drop, as in 1967 still 81.9% attended Holy Mass in Malta (Census, 2005). However, it does not seem that the Maltese have lost their faith entirely (Debono-Roberts, 2003). It does, however, may explain why people attend Holy Mass less but still have love for their patron saint, since many people can identify with and relate to the concepts of martyrdom and victimhood.

Since each festa celebrates a patron saint, the Church holds an important but diminished role in the religious activities associated with the festa, although its sphere of influence still crosses the threshold of the church. Apart from the religious/spiritual aspect, each location is decorated for the occasion by the local population as a private tradition and through the creative works of the following main stakeholders (Visanich, 2017; Cassar 2015; Cremona, 2016). The largest are the band clubs, each dedicated to a patron-saint. They are umbrella organisations driving other stakeholders. During the British rule in Malta (1800-1964), the festa grew from a one-day celebration to a one-week celebration and consequently band clubs were organised according to the British model, a place where people could learn to play an instrument and participate in band marches (Bonnici, 1993; Zammit, 1988; Cassar-Pullicino 1951, 1992). With the introduction of band clubs came competition and contestation (Boissevain, 1993; Cassar, 2015). These clubs often acquired their own building and grew into social meeting places with a bar and canteen. Since they were able to generate money through activities such as fund raisers, donations, collections etc., several other stakeholders could be sponsored, all of equal importance for the success of the feast. These include firework makers of both air and ground firework displays and associations of artists responsible for the transformation of the village spaces from the mundane into fantastic artistic exhibitions which both elevates and reminds the rest of the community about some of the salient features of their identity (Cremona, 2016; Sultana and Gellel,

2012). These public spaces are decorated by painted banners and garlands traverse the width of the streets, statues of saints and biblical figures are placed on pedestals and a multitude of other festive street decorations are placed. These artists spend a whole year preparing for this event, a culmination of research, practice, long hours of planning and preparation. The local church dedicated to the patron saint is decorated on the outside with banners and strings of lamps, called *festoon*, while the inside of the church is decked with red damask and the church silver is proudly exhibited. Flower arrangements give such churches an extra dimension and a sense of temporality of the feast. Fraternities, groups of lay religious people, are the ones who do the heavy lifting, carrying the statue of the patron saint through the streets. Besides these orchestrated efforts, there are the locals who live near the church and in the surrounding winding streets used by the processions and band marches. They decorate their balconies with flags, garlands, and *festoon*. On their roofs are massive flag poles, flying the flag of the band club or patron saint. Competition is noticeable in every aspect of the festivities and as the often heard saying goes: 'My neighbour's flag can never be larger than mine.' All these decorations come at a considerable cost and effort, just to honour the patron saint. The combined effort between private persons and artists totally transforms the locality in a vibrant tableau.

Creative placemaking

Creative placemaking is defined by the National Endowment of the Arts (2020) as that process 'when artists, arts organisations, and community development practitioners deliberately integrate arts and culture into community revitalisation work—placing arts at the table with land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies'. Since 2010, planning practitioners and cultural policy makers have rapidly adopted the term placemaking (Zitcer, 2020; Stevenson, 2019). Amid attempts to define the concept, several studies have highlighted the various competing forces that dominate the process of creative placemaking (Stevenson, 2016; Sweany *et al.*, 2018) The concept of placemaking is multi-layered and therefore needs to be critically unpacked to uncover the various dynamics that dominate the creative festa space.

An integral part of creative festa space involves artistic projects that are set within visible and easily accessible public spaces (streets, squares, facades of homes) rather than isolated or hidden private ones (Hall, 2012; Carmo, 2012; Burrage, 2011). The creative space is here considered as that geographical space within which culture manifests itself as the yearly festa event provides a returning platform for cultural meanings and a sense of identity to be shared between festa stakeholders and their audiences. The coalition of stakeholders is expected to work in partnership, intending to rediscover and reinvent aspects of a ritualised behaviour which have an impact on the community within a specific public space (Duffy and Mair, 2018; The Street Party Site, 2019; Zitcer, 2018). According to Lynch (1960), identity of a place is created in response to the identification and recognition of objects in the space, where a space can be distinguished from another. In the case of the festa, the locality is transformed into a confluence of artistic expression, a unique and unparalleled experience that manifests itself annually over a period of seven days.

This collective experience is governed by an atmosphere of religiosity, but also a celebration of temporal meanings. Such events allow for successful outcomes that rival other important cultural markers, especially since the festa allows for much flexibility as well as generating an immediate impact on those who experience the festa (Askins, 2016; Heil, 2014; Courage, 2017). Therefore, the festa permits the stakeholders and the community to combine spirituality, pleasure and play as a means to define identity and place.

The Maltese Festa and the Covid-19 Restricted Experience

The festa has a longstanding history, steeped in ritualised behaviour. However, the pandemic presented new challenges to the norm, forcing the main stakeholders to reconsider possible ways of how to celebrate the festa. The festa creative space became dominated by the relationship between use of space and health-related measures. Creative spaces are today influenced by precautionary, and in some cases, regulatory measures intended to safeguard the wellbeing of both the artist and the participative audience. Some creative spaces, especially those that attract large crowds, are now meeting significant challenges, including a strong sense of uncertainty on how to operate in the future. Within the festa environment, this challenge was further accentuated because the stakeholders have been deprived of sharing their artistic products with their audience, due to cancellation of most festa celebrations. Although some villages have missed a festa celebration in the past due unforeseen circumstances, the Maltese archipelago never experienced a total cancellation of all festa celebrations, with exception of instances of the plague and World War II.

The festa season stretches between May and early September. As a result of the pandemic, the authorities decided to cancel any events involving significant public gatherings (Times of Malta, 25 March 2020). Clubs were closed and the prospects of celebrating festas shelved. By May 2020, the local health authorities recognised the positive results of the adopted preventive measures as numbers dwindled to single digits (Micallef, 2020). In line with advice from the public health authorities (Cuschieri et.al., 2020), the relaxation of lockdown measures presented the possibility of reconsidering the organisation of a significantly reduced version of the festa celebration. For three weeks, some villages engaged in a piecemeal approach to the festa. By the third week of July, contact tracing identified several Covid-19 infected persons who had participated in a common event in one of Malta's village festa. The alarm was quickly sounded as the authorities advised for caution. While the authorities struggled to take a position, various organisations, especially band clubs, cancelled any of the events they had planned for the coming celebration of their feast. Consequently, Covid-19 and the associated safeguarding measures disrupted the festa season with only a handful of villages experiencing some form of a limited possibility for creative placemaking.

Not everyone has bowed to the advice and regulatory measures of the authorities to avoid large gatherings and to stay at home as the best precautionary measure during the festa week. This was definitely the case with the various festa *dilettanti* who felt that Covid-19

would deprive them of the most important event to exhibit and celebrate their creative talent. While uncertainty compounds on the human psyche, rituals have emerged as an important emotional regulator. Without prejudice, a “benign” form of resistance was conditioned by the emotional charge that particular rituals carry for those involved in the organisational aspects of the festa public celebrations. The sense of social cohesion, especially among the enthusiasts, was so strong that they simply had to meet with others of a similar understanding, as they tried to navigate through the challenges that came to dominate the festa season. The year-long preparations towards the festa plays a significant role in the life of these *dilettanti*. Significant physical and emotional investment in preparing for the crescendo of the event of every town and village, the final Sunday, propelled these enthusiasts to maintain most of those events that often happened within the confines of their private meeting places. This sense of privacy and remaining unnoticed by the authorities, was seen as a safety-valve, albeit a very naive one, to still celebrate friendship and to generate some sense of fraternal camaraderie, normally celebrated in unison with the rest of the festa-goers. The Covid-19 virus had a field day.

The pandemic is laying bare what really matters to many Maltese, and particularly those who invest a lot of energy in organizing the annual festa. During such moments of uncertainty, the alternative solutions could also be interpreted as an attempt to mitigate the sense of loss of control over those temporal experiences that manifested themselves within the festa environment, the creative space.

The relationship of health and place is now a pervasive thought on the minds on the festa organizers and the rest of the community. As indicated by all the interviewees and the information collated during the participant observation sessions, there is a clear understanding on the need to explore and learn how to cope with Covid-19. Public creative spaces, such as the village core and its arterial network of winding streets will require a significant change in communal behaviour, potentially changing past ritualised practices into ones that go along with public health concerns.

The washing of hands, wearing masks and maintaining social distance became the new forms of “magic” that would protect those enthusiasts who still felt the need to celebrate the festa through the various activities held within their own clubs.

The most vulnerable of the artistic group of the festa, the elderly *dilettanti*, were among the most immediate participants who considered any form of gathering as unnecessary and relatively dangerous for their own health and that of their immediate family. One interviewee remarked how the only festa activity he participated in was the High Mass on Sunday. Although this festa was one of the few allowed to be celebrated with significant changes, the lack of trust and poor knowledge about the general situation disheartened this interviewee such that he declined participation. This enthusiast refrained from attending any band club gatherings and also opted out from taking part in the pilgrimage, instead of the usual procession, that the church organised on that Sunday evening. ‘I watched the pilgrimage when they carried the statue of the patron-saint through my street, just standing outside the front door of my home’, he claimed. The same attitude was communicated by another interviewee coming from a northern town in Malta. The festa of this town is known

to be one of the best on several levels. This feast attracts people from different parts of the island as it falls on a public holiday. However, a former vice-president of the club declined a personal invitation for a celebration, even if this gathering involved a selected few who are known as the insiders of the band club. While attending the Sunday High Mass was considered as the only legitimate festa celebration that he could attend, he bluntly stated that he could have never honoured that invitation, since he had serious doubts that the regulatory measures adopted by the authorities would be observed. However, as an enthusiast, he still decorated his balcony with lights and an image of the patron saint, his contribution to the communal effort towards the festa creative space. In both cases, these enthusiasts commented about their responsibility towards their families especially since in one case, the interviewee looked after his nieces and nephews.

The younger generation held a different stand regarding the festa celebrations. Two of the interviewees admitted that the enthusiasts at their club are also their friends outside the club. The club meetings, and their commitment to support the festa organisation, is an extension of their social life. One of the interviewees admitted that the knowledge of the festa to be cancelled, four months prior to the event, had an emotional and psychological effect on the stakeholders. As a result of such situations, there were moments when they did not only contemplate, but actually organised social gatherings, respecting social distancing regulations, to mitigate the associated emotional and psychological stress.

This cohort remained the most fervent to seek alternatives for celebrating the festa. Although deprived of the possibility to transform the areas within the town into a creative space, they still sought new ways of how to maintain and reinforce those cultural meanings that were often celebrated through the communal public activities. In the absence of such events, the younger enthusiasts still decided to meet in their respective clubs. The invitation to specific members to social gatherings, as indicated above, was confirmed by the two younger participants in this study. In both cases, their discourse revolved around the need to transfer public placemaking into a makeshift private experience. Seeing that both celebrations were postponed, the need to sustain some form placemaking for a smaller community was still considered as important. Admittedly, nobody gave a second thought that these private meetings could spread the Covid-19 virus.

Although food and drink generated a sense of conviviality, stakeholders claimed that they could not share their artistic achievements with the rest of the community. While artists continued with their planned projects, the participants also agreed that none of their creative projects planned for this year were shared with any of the invited members of the community to the social gatherings. All their common efforts, *i.e.* the artwork, the fireworks display choreographed through computer aided systems and the orchestra programme rehearsed several times by the band club musicians, would have to wait for next year. These events, and many others, usually attract large crowds who celebrate the patron saint and all those other cultural meanings that manifest themselves as part of the creative space.

However, the absence of the festa had a tremendous impact. 'We still decorated the vicinity of the band club only because that is what we are always expected to do', remarked one of the *dilettanti*. The group involved in setting up street decorations for a centrally located

town, also renowned for its creative festa celebrations, decided to put some banners and lights within the vicinity of the band club. Although this might be interpreted as part of the resilient character of these stakeholders, this interviewee commented that members of the community complained that such displays generated more stress, especially since they also knew that the festa would not be celebrated. 'Covid is damaging the sense of community', it was argued. There is no better way of how to epitomise such thought than the confession of one of the participants: 'Covid has an impact on the leaders and helpers due to the lack of close human contact. This makes it difficult to discover new talent or to recruit new participant and leaders. In pre-Covid times it was already difficult to recruit new volunteers. Without social contact it will be more difficult. When it continues, it will be increasingly difficult for the organisation. Also, a great impact on the elderly of the committee, who will discover new hobbies and commitments. Not returning to old ways.' Another interviewee stated that 'a band club is for many people a second home, where they can have a meal, a drink and a social life. Often, the die-hards spend much more time there than at home.'

One of the participants, who is a sociologist, argued that the longstanding tradition is the lifeblood that would allow these organisations to continue to exist, even if with a modified approach. However, the recovery process was viewed by four of the six participants as slow and possibly requiring a lot of strategic planning to minimise the impact on membership but also interest in the *raison d'être* of the festa stakeholders. Amid such concerns, hopes are still high among some of the participants, "The general idea is that with Covid this year there will be no feast, but next year, next year there will be a super feast."

Technology and dissenting voices

In the absence of the physical creative space, stakeholders also used technology as a means not only to engage some of their members but also the rest of the festa community. Band clubs took the lead in this practise, using social media to reach out to a broader audience. Comments on social media indicated how nostalgia encapsulated the several members of the congregation. The "creative space" was transformed into digital placemaking. Apart from the locals, many Maltese emigrants followed both recorded and live sessions, commenting positively about the opportunity to experience home away from home. All interviewees agreed about the use of technology and recognised that it had become the main medium to communicate with their audiences during the pandemic. The inability to plan well ahead of time had an effect on the quality of material presented on social media. This should be an opportunity to further reflect on the importance of digital placemaking and the need to exploit this better. Of course, there are always dissenting voices. One of the interviewees, remarked that technology also had its drawbacks, including the false sense of being part of a community. On the contrary, he argued, technology increased the sense of isolation.

One major dissenting voice is a recurring debate about Malta's festa season. This revolves around noise and air pollution resulting from fireworks displays. Many elderly, the sick and pet owners complain about the daily barrage of fireworks and the smell of burnt gunpowder

coming into their homes (Camilleri and Vella, 2010; Pace and Vella, 2016). 'As a side effect, we appreciate the silence caused by Covid.'

Who Owns the Festa?

The Covid-19 experience presented this research with an opportunity to explore an unspoken reality among the Maltese community each time that the religious authorities and the other stakeholders in the organisation of the festa diverge on some popular culture aspects of the event. Although conflicts are most of the time resolved, the question 'who owns the festa?' often generates an interesting debate.

Aware of the sensitiveness of the question, the researchers often witnessed long pauses before and between the answers. This question was asked to all participants and some of the answers were rather surprising. Most respondents argued that the festa belongs 'to us all,' while others added that the "owner" [participant using his fingers to emphasis the word owner within quotes] of the parish feast is technically speaking the parish priest but it is something not that straightforward. This cautious reply was explained by two other participants, highlighting the importance of the church in some sort of hierarchical structure. The emphasis on the festa's religious aspect was provided by the three participants who are directly involved with the festa organisation which fall directly under the responsibility of the church. On the other hand, three other participants who are more involved in band clubs, stated that all stakeholders are equally important and interdependent. Rather than presenting an organisational hierarchy, the discourse revolved around how the sum of all defines the traditional Maltese festa. However, such arguments need to be contextualised for each locality.

The two main contenders in this "invisible" power struggle are the church and the band club. The Maltese case-study includes few instances in history when disagreement resulted in a band club not to participate in the village festa, including 'closing of the doors of the club when the procession passes.' The same informant explained how such impasse was resolved 'when a new parish priest comes to the village, peace would be made, and life continues as normal.' Band clubs normally include a spiritual director as part of the organisation however, this would preferably not be the parish priest. Some respondents said that it would not be unthinkable that in case of a severe conflict, the band club would organise the festa without the church and carry their own statue of the patron saint in the procession. In the past, a number of such incidents have already occurred.

All interviewees commented about the participation of the many stakeholders during the religious celebrations. Especially now, during these times of heightened uncertainty, religion continues to provide a spiritual sense of healing and hope. In moments of fear of the unknown, humans have often resorted to spiritual practices in an attempt of levelling out emotional anxiety (Davie, 2010). Congregating within a community to pray generates a sense of community. Since the festa celebrations held within churches are still dominated by long standing ritualised practices, religious gatherings continue to act as an important vector that provides a sense of meaning to life.

Perspectives and concluding remarks

The leading research question of this paper was whether Covid-19 shifted or disrupted the festa's creative space. Besides the general knee-jerk reactions, several issues came to light, such as who owns the festa and who are the stakeholders.

New directions in the new normal have led, at least temporarily, to creative, proactive and privatised solutions with the artistic stakeholders. For the moment, the less religious and the secular seem to have been content, with taking place-making and creative spaces indoor, hoping for a big bang once the Covid situation is solved. The church answered in its own way, conservative and reactionary but with public continuation in mind. As a result, the most creative and innovative stakeholders and place-makers were affected the most, while the most traditional ones were the least impacted. One answer could be that the ritualised and unchanging nature of the liturgy does not provide people with expectations of the creative. Liturgy is many things but not entertainment, it does however fulfil other expectations of coming to terms with emotional and psychological challenges in difficult times. It appears that a patron saint is a very important stakeholder in this context, a link between the temporal and the eternal, a medium for contemplating salvation. Patron saints themselves went through enormous difficulties in their lives, allowing people to reflect on Covid in a religious context. Comforting people through unchangeability and identification with a patron saint seems to have taken a lead position once again. On the other hand, when the church offered something different, a pilgrimage instead of a procession, few people attended as they did not know what to expect.

The pandemic also generated a drain from talented members who always supported the creative placemaking experience. In the midst of such discourse, the participants simply echoed information that various researchers have already explored (Cassar, 2015; Visanich, 2017; Sammut and Gellel, 2012). Nevertheless, the pandemic exposed underlying contrasts. While the band club, the fireworks factory and the street decoration artists were deprived of both their traditional creative space and their innovative artistic expressions, the church continued to celebrate its liturgical celebration unaffected, with relative success notwithstanding restrictions, drawing strengths on unchangeable traditions.

Ownership of the festa remains a diverse and slippery matter as none of the stakeholders has managed to either lose or strengthen their grip on the festa. The situation will remain fluid until post-vaccination times.

Communities are still trying to renegotiate their ways and to come to grips with how Covid-19 shifted the goalposts. Some followed the new regulations issued by the government, some had a piecemeal approach, while others went their own way. A rift appeared between the older and younger *dilletanti*. Young people wanted to participate more and social distance was something for others, while the older kept their distance and lost touch with the festa.

From this context, Covid-19 swiped away the entire social festa environment. It separated space-making dynamics, stopping the festa structure in public spaces and kept away the onlooking community who usually filled those spaces. As a reaction, the festa went 'underground', *i.e.* many band clubs created their own private creative space within the confines of the club, privatising the event rather than socialising it, diverging the festa into a new direction and norm. Normative thinking shifted, although with no clear understanding of what to do, notwithstanding the efforts to maintain the ritual. What will fill up the empty meeting grounds?

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