

# DISSERTATION

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„Commodification of Living Cultural Heritage in  
New Orleans. An Anthropological Case Study.“

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## List of abbreviations

IHH	International House Hotel
LCH	Living Cultural Heritage
LSU	Louisiana State University
MACCNO	Music And Culture Coalition of New Orleans
NOCCA	New Orleans Center for Creative Arts
NOCVB	New Orleans Convention and Visitor’s Bureau
NOLA	New Orleans Louisiana
NOMGIC	New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian Council
NOMTN	New Orleans Multi-cultural Tourism Network
NOTMC	New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNO	University of New Orleans
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VCPOA	Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents, and Associates





## 1. Introduction

Commodification is as old as the market itself - certain worries appear to have grown with the character of the contemporary consumption and entertainment society, slowly turning into a commodification society where the ethos of consumerism has become a dominant cultural force. The purpose of the present study is to investigate such worries that have been developing among several groups of cultural actors in New Orleans. In the cultural capital of the state of Louisiana, USA, the tourism sector is keen on producing a complex mix of experiences ready to be consumed by visitors. Cultural activities of the local population are conveniently reformed, packaged, and priced. This process leads to conflicts of interest between the many stakeholders that are active in the fields of culture and tourism.

*"The soul of New Orleans is a marketable commodity" (interview 9)*

In fact, I am interested in how the soul of New Orleans is transformed into a commodity and what are its consequences. The beneficial and unfavourable situations for the cultural actors resulting from commodification are of interest to this research. The cultural activities are grouped with an innovative definition of living cultural heritage which is building upon an integral understanding of the intangible, tangible, cultural, and natural heritage concept by UNESCO. While entertainment activities certainly play a significant role for the local tourism sector I rather speak of investigating cultural tourism activities. UNWTO (2004) defines cultural tourism as being *"about immersion in and enjoyment of the lifestyle of the local people, the local area and what constitutes its identity and character."* Visitors and tourism marketing agencies hardly perceive any difference in the consumption of cultural or entertainment activities (GOTHAM, 2008). Yet I identified that for the local cultural actors in New Orleans this distinction is significant. Tourism is acknowledged increasingly as an agent of cultural change and has been identified as a force for cultural enrichment, renaissance, awareness raising, but also as the loss of cultural integrity (SALAZAR, 2004). Thus I distinguish between advantageous and adverse influences of commodification on living cultural heritage. The rather positive influences emerge if this process leads to social, cultural, and financial benefits which remain within the group of cultural actors. The opposite occurs if commodification is equalised with exploitation by the same actors.

*"The city is selling narrow and exaggerating elements of its culture" (interview 11)*

Today, cultural tourism is an industry of worldwide dimension. The local consequences that are linked to cultural tourism have generated lively debates over its definition, benefit, and sustainability. Potential conflicts, its management and resolution, remain one of the *"most vexing issues to scholars"* (SALAZAR, 2005: 362). Moreover, *"the rise of ethno-commerce in the age of mass consumerism is having counterintuitive effects on human subjects, cultural objects, and the connection between them"* (COMAROFF, 2009: 28). This case study contributes to the recurring themes of these conversations, representing an analysis of such counterintuitive effects. The research is focused on conflicts of interest between local stakeholders, namely, performers, residents, participants, organisations of cultural events, public bodies, and the tourism businesses.

Regarding New Orleans, I have experienced a high investment of capital in diversity during my fieldwork periods. This investment is the basis for the production of cultural commodities that appear interesting and attractive to visitors. The 'exotic other' is an illustrative asset promoted by the tourism industry as the ultimate experience, as the manager of a small tour operator mentioned during an interview: *"There is a great quote by Tennessee Williams saying: 'America has only three cities: New York, San Francisco and New Orleans. Everywhere else is Cleveland.' America has got a lot of the same stuff going on [...]. A lot of people want to get out of their world and get a different experience somewhere, they want to be transformed, and New Orleans can be transformative!"* (interview 52).

A common critique concerning the impact tourism has on cultural activities is, tourism increases the demand for cheap copies of art, cultural performances, and events, leading to a *"desacralization of what once had been pure or whole"* (SHEPHERD, 2012: 194). For each cultural activity the influence linked to its production, conversion, or preservation is different. This also affects the perception if something is 'real' or 'fake', 'sacred' or 'profane', 'non-commodified' or 'commodified'. But this strict separation only rests on the belief that culture and tourism can be clearly distinguished (PICARD, 1996: 129). In New Orleans for example, this becomes highly problematic because tourism has been present for a long period of time. The tourism system is broadly characterised as operating within and not on the local cultural actors. The tourism sector and the cultural industries are closely collaborating, at least institutionally, under the umbrella

of the *Cultural Economy Initiative*. Established in 2006, this initiative is creating strategies to convert cultural activities into commodities for the purpose of profit maximisation. In reality this collaboration is merely in part successful and not necessarily mutually beneficial - on the cost of the cultural sector.

The present thesis covers topics such as tourism, heritage, and culture in the eyes of a cultural anthropologist and a consultant for sustainable tourism development. I carried out ethnographic fieldwork during two missions in 2012 and in 2013 respectively. The anthropological research I have conducted is based on qualitative interviews and participant observation methods. My activity as a musician on stage in various venues of New Orleans played a significant role for getting in contact with interlocutors. Through these acquaintances I gained valuable access to certain cultural activities where I could conduct participant observation and collect significant data.

The main conflicts that I have identified in my study are about (i) intellectual and cultural property rights, (ii) the right to perform, and (iii) the question of whether living cultural heritage elements should be valorised and marketed as mass entertainment practices. This research regards also topics about 'whose heritage' is commodified or reconstructed and analyses conflicts of status among the cultural actors. Moreover, I deepen into the existing dichotomies such as: culture vs. entertainment, music vs. noise, ordinance vs. regulation, costume vs. suit, parade vs. performance, real vs. fake, tourist vs. local, etc..

### **Research purpose and objectives**

This thesis examines how tourism and culture transform each other as different actors and organised interests compete for access to and control over political and economic resources. Tourism and culture are both multidimensional, heterogenous, as well as 'organic' (as people in New Orleans like to say) concepts that attain their significance in relationship with each other. Additionally, the boundaries between tourism and culture are flexible, moving, and ever changing, partly because these categories become both sites and objects of political struggle among different groups.

Gotham (2007) defines commodification as the "*conversion of local products, cultures and social relations and identities into saleable products that are sold on markets for profitable exchange*" (p. 10). Throughout this thesis commodification is understood as such. The cultural activities to

which I refer to in this study are grouped with an innovative definition of living cultural heritage. I want to introduce to a concept that builds upon an integral understanding of intangible, tangible, cultural, and natural heritage by UNESCO (please refer to annex A for an explanation about these concepts as elaborated by UNESCO). The anthropological concepts of cultural landscape, space, and place play a significant role for the application of living cultural heritage at my case study. The elaboration of the term is aimed at contributing to the debate about an integral cultural heritage approach which focuses on the combination of tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets. The following cultural activities, practices, and events are considered as living cultural heritage elements which are analysed in the present study:

- Music performance (e.g. live music in bars/venues, street music, church, etc.)
- Music, food and art festivals (e.g. French Quarter Festival, Jazz and Heritage Festival, neighborhood festivals, etc.)
- Parades (e.g. Mardi Gras, St. Patricks, Easter, etc.)
- Second lines, jazz funerals, Mardi Gras Indian events
- Religion and belief in the supernatural (e.g. Vodou)

The central research question to which I propose answers in each chapter is: How is culture commodified and what are its practices? This question leads to the discussion of a complex set of processes and dynamics that are at the centre of my study. In detail, I am interested in what kind of conflicts are created through the marketing, promotion, and selling of culture on the tourism market. The local negotiations, reactions, power struggles, and ambivalences between the stakeholders are described for the five living cultural heritage elements.

This research was initially planned to cover a second component regarding the evaluation of tourism sustainability in New Orleans. I have collected data about the question if and to what extent the cultural elements and its consumption potentially contribute to the following aspects: raising cultural awareness and pride, local economic development, community empowerment, ensuring conservation and safeguarding practices, representing a resource for tourism, and community involvement in tourism activities. Furthermore, the data collection contained information if certain sustainability criteria of cultural tourism are presently respected.<sup>1</sup> With a

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<sup>1</sup> Tourism sustainability criteria: positive impact of tourism; integration of local community into tourism activities; local ownership/participation in decision making; consumption of local products; cultural education for tourists; tourist contact to local community; preservation and valorisation of the element.

quantitative analysis of these specific questions (please refer to the questionnaire in annex B) I wanted to highlight why certain issues would be prevailing over others and how the tourism system could be managed in a more sustainable manner. Due to constraints of time for the general data analysis I decided to elaborate on this data information in a separate study. Hence, the present research does not give answers to the questions of the second component.

In order to achieve my research objectives I had to cover a wide range of different voices about my questions. Therefore I decided to ask people from, broadly speaking, six areas in the cultural and tourism sector, as listed in the section about qualitative interviews in the methods chapter (under point 1.3). After two fieldwork periods I had conducted 58 qualitative interviews which lay the basis for this analysis, next to the collection of ethnographic data with participant observation.

Within the discipline of cultural anthropology this research project covers the global phenomenon of tourism. Hence, the results will be interesting not only to scholars but also to tourism destination managers, as well as urban public and private institutions. Since tourists are increasingly interested in meeting local people and experiencing certain cultural activities, this research aims at understanding how the balance of powers between the local players is currently managed. Such local players are cultural actors and consumers, producers and promoters, those who pay and those who get paid, active and passive individuals, as well as those who invite and those who participate. A further interesting question for a future analysis would be how the above stated balance can be managed or improved for those who perceive a disadvantage - but this is part of a forthcoming research where the quantitative data about the tourism sustainability could also be integrated.

### **The structure of this thesis**

The introduction chapter contains the applied theoretical considerations as well as an extensive description about the methods used for this research. In continuation I give a comprehensive overview about the case study in New Orleans. This includes relevant information about the local background concerning its history and cultural evolution which is based on three colonial empires: France, Spain, and Anglo-Saxon England before the state of Louisiana was purchased by the United States in 1803. It is followed by a description of the historical development of the tourism industry in New Orleans and shifts over to an analysis of its strong collaboration with the cultural sector.

The focus of chapter two is the description, explanation, and definition of the five living cultural heritage elements that were selected for this study. I want to give a comprehensive overlook about what kind of cultural activities I am going to analyse. Its historical background and actual cultural representativeness are considered. At the end I give information about the classification of cultural elements from the perspective of the tourism industry and look at cultural assets that are commodified by the cultural economy sector in order to have an opinion about how differently cultural activities are classified.

The following five chapters represent an individual analysis of the living cultural heritage elements of New Orleans. The first of these, regarding the commodification of music, regards different forms of influences that make music a politicised arena where conflicts, dissonances, and issues in 'minor' are discussed in public. Tourism related influences are a hot topic when it comes to performances which can be enjoyed for free, often leading to the general low payment for the artists. The results from my interviews and participant observation present the conflicting situation about the noise ordinance which I followed from 2012 until its peak in 2014, giving an insight on how actively the right to perform in the city is fought for by musicians, music lovers, and other supporters. Music, its performance, and general enjoyment are almost treated as a human right in New Orleans - sometimes though it is handled with inhuman conditions as my observations from Bourbon street make clear. What I want to show with the synthesis of this chapter is that music is not commodified enough. Many potential benefits are not cashed due to the lack of a well-working music industry, the auto-management inefficiency of musicians, the constant under-estimation of musicians themselves, among other reasons. Lots of non-profit organisations are helping musicians in terms of self-management, education, and training. They furthermore substitute health care and other social welfare services.

The chapter about the commodification of festivals is loaded with several excerpts of my observation at the French Quarter Festival and the Jazz and Heritage Festival. There I could participate and volunteer in both years of my fieldwork. After an analysis about the multitude of different festivals and about its cultural significance in the city I pass on to tourism related influences. Conflicts about the over-commercialisation of the Jazz and Heritage Festival for many locals as well as musicians end up in counter festivals and movements which are organised by groups that started to boycott the annual event. With an analysis of issues regarding the French Quarter Festival (e.g. carrying capacity mismanagement and the 'no payment' concept for

musicians), I slip into the discussion of why festivals are actually organised. The crisis of whether festivals are organised for making financial revenues or whether they are carried out for the sake of celebrating music and other forms of expressive culture is discussed.

The commodification of parades is focused on Mardi Gras Carnival due to its over importance for tourism and the locals. The results of my interviews show that although Mardi Gras is the unquestioned mega-event (that everyone loves) locals do have an ambivalent relationship to it - mostly due to tourism influences that have altered the parades throughout the last decades. Furthermore, critics about the annual parading system and ordinances come up because of the advantage that Mardi Gras Carnival krewes (historical white influential business people) enjoy in comparison to Social Aid and Pleasure clubs (the black population in the backstreet neighbourhoods) organising street and dance-driven second lines.

Concerning the commodification of second lines, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indians I have extensively collected data from interviews and participant observation at many events. After an excerpt from my fieldwork diary about the experience at the Mother's Day second line the chapter begins with a detailed description about the structure and organisation of events carried out by Social Aid and Pleasure clubs as well as by Mardi Gras Indians. The signs of commodification of these dance-driven street parades regard in particular the distinction into tourism-centred and neighbourhood-centred events often defined as 'fake' or 'real' by the locals. Issues with the promotion of such events for tourism purposes and creeping commercialism are further analysed. Conflicts among Mardi Gras Indians additionally arise with the copyrighting of their suits in order to be protected against the 'exploitation' by photographers or the tourism industry. Other issues concern the sale of their suits and the (auto)commercialisation of Indian identity in the French Quarter. In this context I further explain the importance of the self-proclaimed tribal formation of the Indians. Towards the end of this chapter the analysis shows certain protection measures from commodification by tourism from Social Aid and Pleasure clubs and Mardi Gras Indians.

The last living cultural heritage element that is analysed with this dissertation regards religion and belief in the supernatural. The results from my qualitative interviews and participant observation show that also within this element a tourism-centred version of Vodou and belief in the supernatural exists, specifically in the French Quarter. Religious assets such as cemeteries are commodified by the tourism industry into experiences that can be enjoyed with particular

walking tours. The morbid character of New Orleans is further part of the attraction. Issues arise because religion is increasingly offered, sold, and experienced as entertainment by visitors. In a comparison to the tourism side of Vodou, religion, and its distortions in the various souvenir shops as well as consumer oriented museums, I give an insight into my participation at publicly as well as privately held Vodou ceremonies. These took place both at a hotel in the centre of the city and in a private peristil, a Vodou temple in the backstreets of the Bywater neighbourhood. The pejorative perception of Vodou in the city (by its population and tourists likewise due to the Hollywood influenced vision) and the will to destigmatise it (by the actual Vodou practising community) are further described.

The final part is a concise conclusion of results presented throughout the prior chapters, the general theories regarding the commodification of culture and its conflicts among the stakeholders in New Orleans are at the centre of the concluding remarks.

## **1.1. Theoretical considerations**

In the following I explain the theoretical contexts onto which I align my analyses and descriptions. These concern broad topics such as culture, anthropology, and commodification in the context of and the combination with tourism. I shortly depict how I apply the concept that culture can be converted into products for sale of tourism consumption. In continuation, my understanding and definition of living cultural heritage is elaborated.

### **Culture and tourism**

Current tourism statistics of the UNWTO state that globally around 1.6 billion tourist arrivals are expected in 2020 (UNWTO, 2011). Tourism is considered as an economic upstream and general development strategy for improving infrastructure and life standards not only in developing countries but also in occidental parts of the world. Tourism represents a positive alternative to industrialisation, where local traditions and natural capital can be supported and maintained. Travellers are becoming more interested in cultural tourism and are searching for individual experiences while getting in contact with local people at their destinations. This change of travel behaviour results in an alteration of the local communities' status. The traditional attraction poles of tourism destinations like built and natural heritage are slowly replaced by living and intangible heritage of the local community (BUTLER, 2007). On the long run, the local population is expected to become a very important tourism resource of a destination. The making and



consuming of tourism takes place within a complex social milieu, where competing actors are creating products combining people, history, culture and lifestyles - *"culture and people thus become part of the tourism product"* (BURNS, NOVELLI, 2006: 7). The implications are not fully understood and vary from destination to destination.

Cities, countries, and international organisations see culture and tourism as having a mutually beneficial relationship which can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of places, regions, and countries. Culture is an important element of the tourism product as it is often used for creating distinctiveness in a global marketplace - the cultural and creative industries are also increasingly used to promote destinations. The use of culture and creativity to market certain destinations is putting pressure on differentiating regional identities and images - a growing range of cultural elements is hence being employed to brand and market locations and regions (OECD, 2009).

As I am also working as a tourism development consultant I experienced that public institutions on the city, regional, and national level together with tourism marketing agencies promote their effort in the tourism industry mainly as a success in terms of economic revenues, investment, and increased infrastructure. Locals, cultural producers, and scholars instead often claim an effect on the social and cultural structure - often the scope of my professional work as a consultant is to decrease potential impacts of tourism, integrate locals into decision making processes and the tourism system, trying to find solutions where tourism really can be mutually beneficial in economic, social, and cultural terms. Regarding this influence of tourism, the protection of local communities and their cultural expressions is an important topic. For example, the UNESCO World Heritage Sites claim to cover both kinds of impacts: (i) promote the destination and attract visitors (positive impact on the local economy) plus (ii) protect and safeguard local communities and their cultural expressions from exploitation by the tourism industry. This (ideal) process of sustainable tourism management is certainly due to the sites themselves - the safeguarding of cultural heritage is hence defined and practiced differently from destination to destination.

Heritage is a social, economic, and cultural resource. At the same time cultural and/or heritage tourism is a politicised and contested concept (NIJKAMP, 2004) - posing questions about "whose culture or heritage" is brought to the front of our current multicultural societies (SHEPHERD, 2014; SALAZAR, 2012). Cultural tourism often aims at valorising heritage and adding value to

existing ones (SALAZAR, 2005) - be it through awareness raising, education, representing an economic resource, or the empowerment of a community (MATARASSO, 2001). The dramatic metaphors attached to the rapid growth of tourism and cultural consumption are appropriate at many destinations. The tourism and culture industries appear to be advancing in Western and developing countries likewise, occupying the spaces vacated by oil, port, manufacturing and other formerly strong industrial sectors. Tourism is an increasingly important form of cultural consumption, which is increasingly encouraged, managed, and financed by local, regional, national, and overarching supranational bodies. It allows destinations to expand their customer base, diversify their offer, extend the length of stay, and reduce seasonality (PATUELLI, 2012). Said with the words of Greg Richards this development "*reflects the change from an era when production drove consumption, to the consumer society where consumption drives production*" (RICHARDS, 1996: 10).

### **Anthropology and tourism**

The scientific discipline of tourism research faced a difficult start when articles about tourism impacts (mainly connected to economic issues) appeared for the first time in international journals in the 1950s (ALEXANDER, 1953; AMORY, 1952) and reached the interest of other disciplines in the 1960s (FORSTER, 1964; NUÑEZ, 1963). The global research community was skeptical whether tourism can ever become a scientific discipline on its own. This general uncertainty about the hypothetical combination of tourism and science was the major obstacle for anthropologists who were observing the growing impact of tourism on indigenous societies throughout the world (BARNARD, SPENCER, 2002; GREENWOOD, 1972; 1977). The study of tourism was considered as 'improper' with traditional anthropological contexts and its discovery by socio-cultural anthropologists had occurred largely by "*accident*" (NUÑEZ, in SMITH, 1977: 207). The integration of tourism into social studies showed a delayed beginning because of the "*tabu*" (NASH, 2003: 19) against its scientific consideration. As a consequence, anthropologists were hiding their data in field notes refraining from publishing their observations in systematic form and published articles only occasionally (SMITH, 1977). As described by Burns (2006: 7) throughout literature the combination of culture and tourism has been handled differently - at one hand, rather naively, culture is described as "*vulnerable and fixed, waiting to be 'impacted' by tourism*" (such as in GREENWOOD, 1977; WYLLIE, 2000), on the other hand it has been seen as flexible and adaptable, capable of dealing with global changes and influences of modernity (such as in WOOD, 1993; FRANKLIN, 2004).

The probable reasons for the *"trivialized and neglected"* (DANN et al., 1988: 2) state of affairs of the study of tourism in anthropology are the following: (i) the study of tourism was viewed as a topic which was not fit for academic pursuit (BURNS, 2004: 6), (ii) tourists were perceived as exploiters, emissaries of capitalists or missionaries and anthropologists. Fieldworkers and ethnographers never wanted to be associated in the slightest with tourists (hence exploiters), perhaps to maintain their obsessive monopoly over the 'exotic other' (see NASH and SMITH, 1991; BURNS, 2004). Furthermore, *"anthropologists may have been unaware of the extent of tourism and its consequences"* (NASH, 1981: 461) particularly in those societies where they tended to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. Tourism was mainly thought to be something that occurred in the industrialised Western nations and not small-scale societies in the developing countries which had long been the focus of anthropological studies (BURNS, 2004).

The reason why anthropologists have taken *"more than a passing interest"* in the subject after Chambers (2000: 2), is the factor of the phenomenal growth of the tourist industry, as a subject *"which is becoming almost impossible to ignore."* Chambers mentions in his work "Native Tours: The Anthropology of Travel and Tourism" that transformations within the discipline of anthropology were instrumental of making the study of tourism more attractive. The consequently changing concept of culture among anthropologists also altered the practice of ethnography as the most important tool for researching cultural processes. This transformation *"represents a change from an anthropology that is primarily concerned with explaining how discrete cultures determine meaningfulness to a discipline that is at least equally interested in understanding how divergent meanings collide and are reconciled in new cultural frameworks"* (CHAMBERS, 2000: 3). Chambers advances the view that it was the ideological shift, that culture is of a flexible and accommodative nature which is no longer bound to place, time or ethnicity, that encouraged anthropologists to dedicate more attention to a subject such as tourism. Clifford (1997) also describes the important relevance of travel and tourism as subjects of serious anthropological investigation and its link to a greater appreciation of culture as a process.

Jafari, founder of the journal *Annals of Tourism Research* in 1973, defined the tourist space in anthropological terms as the intersection of the tourist's extraordinary life with the native's ordinary one (JAFARI, 1987) - especially regarding what is called ethnic, cultural, or heritage tourism during such a situation the tourist is looking for original experiences. The tourist quest for authenticity generates what MacCannell (1989) called 'staged authenticity', that is, cultural

expressions, performances, behaviours and artefacts that will be accepted by tourists as authentic or at least a reasonable facsimile of the pre-tourist situation. It describes the constructed possibilities allowing tourists to *"experience local life as natives experience it"* (MacCANNELL, 2008: 336). Sometimes staged authenticity (such as musical or theatrical performances, dances, religious ceremonies, sculptures, art work, etc.) can lead to a cultural renaissance of native traditions, to a renewal of ethnic consciousness, and even to the invention of new traditions and new identities (BARNARD, SPENCER, 2002).

Tourism has become a dynamic source of (com)modification, alteration, and creation of culture - it can produce very complex situations of cultural change and shifting ethnic boundaries - phenomena of great interest to anthropologists. *"Tourism can even be seen as a mirror of anthropology itself: both constitute a quest for the other. In a sense, ethnic tourism is amateur anthropology, or anthropology professional tourism"* (BARNARD, SPENCER, 2002: 522).

### **Commodification and tourism**

Regarding the term commodification, there exist various definitions in the social sciences - as mentioned above, I opted for the version used by Gotham (2007), understood as a transformation of local cultural elements (products, expressions, relations, identities) into consumable and saleable products (commodities), talking in tourism genre "experiences", which are traded and sold for profitable exchange. In this sense, I apply the capitalist system that anything that can be priced (tangible or intangible) can be sold, purchased, and consumed - thus also culture can be treated as a commodity. According to Lanfant, once a cultural element is transformed into a tourist product, its 'cultural value' is also transformed into a 'commercial value', a process which stimulates also the reinvention of the past (LANFANT, 1995). Rather than being a reclamation of the past, many elements of heritage and tourism work as a new form of cultural production - a kind of value-added industry (KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, 1998).

The 'cultural value' is usually framed in everyday life as profound, transcendent, creative, intrinsic, while the 'economic or commercial value' is framed as superficial, repetitive, instrumental, calculative, - one is good, the other is bad (SMITH, 1988). The commodification of culture for tourism purposes often coincides with a social and cultural influence which certainly has to be differentiated in types of tourism and range of impact (Greenwood, 1977). Scholars of tourism related topics have frequently begun their studies with a notion of tourism as something

inherently negative, due to the cultural degradation it is inclined to cause (NASH, 1981; WOOD, 1997).

The constant *"shift in the production of value from the material to the immaterial"* through the trading and sale of intellectual property, identity, experiences, and so-called modes of self-production also indicates the fact that commerce *"exceeds the sale of goods and services"* (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 2009: 28). Moreover, in their work "Ethnicity Inc." Comaroff and Comaroff stress that it is not just culture (with its traditions and expressions) that is increasingly commodified but that its commodity *"is being rendered explicitly cultural"* - so the production and the consumption are focused on the intangible product of the experience. This means that the *"difference between marketing and consuming, and between living and buying is becoming smaller and smaller"* (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 2009: 28).

Regarding the commodification of identity, this dissertation also touches issues about protecting intellectual property with the copyrighting of certain traditional dresses, costumes, suits, expressions, dancing styles, and music. A copyright is *"the legally protected entitlement of individuals or groups to control and to profit from the circulation, duplication, and sale of their creative work"* (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 2009: 33). With the examples that I am going to analyse concerning the Mardi Gras Indians I will show that they treat traditional work as intellectual property, which is hence subject to innovative action. The same applies to the analysis concerning the case of the commodification of music. The question of "who owns native culture" is argued by Brown (2003, 1998) in two different positions. There are, at one side, those who are protecting intellectual property with laws, rights, and decrees such as the World Intellectual Property Organization or UNESCO with the 2003 adopted Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, among many others. The other position maintains that culture is *"inherently public, organic, unbounded, and therefore, irreducible to private property, individual or collective"* (COMAROFF, 2009: 30). The copyrighting of culture is according to the Comaroffs a rather modern mechanism of ethno-commodification.

I often speak with terms such as tourism product, cultural product, and commodity when I write about cultural elements which have been or are in process of being transformed, hence commodified, into consumable and saleable products. In this context I apply Bourdieu's concept of symbolic goods - these *"are a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object. Their specifically cultural value and their commercial value remain relatively independent, although*

*the economic sanction may come to reinforce their cultural consecration"* (1993: 113). At one side, art (in Bourdieu's concept) is produced accordingly to a logic which is heteronomous with respect to the logic of economic profit - produced for commercial success - and is discredited by the dominant logic of arts. At the other side, its production is autonomous with respect to the economic field - regarding the approach 'art for the sake of art, cultural production for the sake of culture' - and hence created for enhancing symbolic capital or prestige. This is valued and its success determined by the approval of other autonomous cultural producers.

Thus, when the term commodity appears in combination with the cultural elements under analysis (especially regarding music, parades, second lines, events and suits by Mardi Gras Indians) it should be understood as an artistic cultural good and an economic commodity. As I will show with several examples, the economic commodity of the cultural elements is correlated with the entertainment character of the cultural goods, which is demanded by visitors and offered as such by the tourism industry and related businesses. In fact, the local cultural producers achieve to transform their cultural good into economic benefit only when it is performed, sold, or consumed by visitors in form of a commodity for entertainment.

Regarding the commodified performance of cultural elements for the entertainment of visitors, I was often confronted with the distinction into 'real' and 'fake' performances, particularly when speaking about second lines, Mardi Gras Indians, or Vodou related events or commodities. Although Connie Atkinson taught me that *"there is no such thing as authentic"* (personal communication) I observed that the term authenticity is used in many different contexts and understandings by the people I interviewed. This includes its usage by promotional ads for anything that goes on in New Orleans, by journalists, by those who 'produce' cultural events, and those who consume it at the end. When speaking about authenticity I refer to how the term is argued in the book "Debating Authenticity" (FILLITZ, SARIS, 2013). Authenticity is not approached as an anthropological category but in the way the term is used by my interlocutors, city residents, on tourism ads, and in the moment of the cultural production on the spot.

With the above concepts in mind this thesis should contribute to the discussion about the different ways of transforming cultural heritage into a consumable experience. I want to emphasise that I do stand away from analysing only adverse and exploitative aspects of the tourism industry when it comes to the commodification of culture. Although such influences are currently prevailing at the destination of my research tourism certainly can have positive

impacts such as the generation of social, cultural, and financial benefits. In order to make such benefits palpable for the cultural actors also other city and state wide systems need to work properly. If public social welfare programmes or a tax-credit system for cultural actors are poorly organised at a destination the tourism industry cannot be solely blamed for eventual negative effects on the cultural activities. The results of my research contribute therefore to understanding where city authorities and the tourism sector should collaborate more effectively. The examples taken from the case study of New Orleans can also be extended to other destinations where similar difficulties might exist. Anthropological methods are a useful tool in order to reveal certain conflicts of interest among stakeholders. Some of these conflicts need further analysis from other viewpoints, for example legal aspects about intellectual and cultural property rights.

In continuation, I introduce to the concept of living cultural heritage which is of particular interest regarding an integral interpretation of culture - especially at destinations that market themselves as places where the experience of 'culture' is the ultimate attraction.

### **Living cultural heritage**

When referring to the cultural activities of music, festivals, parades, second lines and Mardi Gras Indians, religion and belief in the supernatural that are under study, I speak of living cultural heritage. Aligned to the cultural heritage concept of UNESCO (please refer to annex A for further explanation) the understanding of living cultural heritage is based on my own definition and interpretation. It is considered as a contribution to the discussion about an integral cultural heritage approach where tangible and intangible cultural heritage are not separated anymore.

Introducing to the discussion of living cultural heritage I want to emphasise that although the topic has been touched by various authors in the last decade (APPADURAI, 2002; BOUCHENAKI, 2003; KHUON, 2005; KOLB, 2008; KURIN, 2004, 2007; MIURA, 2000; MUNJERI, 2003, 2004; UNESCO, 2003) it has not been thoroughly analysed so far. Though the term has been used for different contexts (folklore, intangible, popular culture, etc.) and various locations (Angkor Wat, Hampi, Loire, etc.) a detailed description or closer explanation is not existent in literature. Hence, I start my own attempt of depicting the rapprochement of an integral cultural heritage approach with a definition and attached five propositions.

I do this through combining philosophical conceptions of space, place (LEFEBRVE, 1974; HIRSCH, 1995), landscape (BENDER, 2001, 1993), as well as the role of culture for the perception of environment (INGOLD, 2000, 1992), with the understanding of UNESCO concepts of cultural as well as natural heritage. My expected contribution to the discussion of 'what is living cultural heritage?', is a more practice-oriented use of anthropological concepts regarding landscapes and the interaction between the 'cultural and the natural'. It should be understood as an integral concept of where tangible and intangible is needed for being practiced in a culturally and socially produced space, place, and landscape - and vice-versa. The case study in New Orleans reveals issues for the five living cultural heritage elements of 'authentic' and 'fake' cultural performances facing difficulties for the cultural actors when occurring in displaced locations. The shifting of locations where these performances take place are due to the demand of tourism, to the ordinances of the city or the police department, as well as to infrastructure, gentrification, modernisation, and the feared disneyfication of certain neighbourhoods in New Orleans.

In order to make my concept of living cultural heritage more palpable I would like to connect it more to the case of New Orleans, where it is applied at this stage. Interlocutors often talked to me about the 'culture of New Orleans' in metaphors like *"our culture is rooted"*. They emphasised that *"culture grows out of the ground, of the swamps"*, meaning that the place, which is situated at the rather isolated Southern tip of Northern America, has been 'growing' and was developed in such a form because New Orleans is where it is. Its place is constructed geographically (spatial), ecologically (natural), linguistically, historically, socially (cultural), and spiritually (integrated).

*"I realized that our culture is like wall flowers - if you look at a parking lot, everything covered with asphalt, and there is a flower coming out, which hasn't been watered, full with pesticides, ... well this is how our music is like. So if it's here, it comes out of the cracks of the side walk but yet if you take them and transplant them somewhere else, they won't survive"* (interview 2).

Broadly seen, the concept of living cultural heritage is directed at enriching the understanding and significance of local cultural elements, potentially also the appreciation of a confluent interpretation of culture and nature. Hence, it includes Ingold's (2000) argument that the relations between humans and their environments are mediated by culture, leading me to the following definition. In addition, I have elaborated five propositions in order to explain the concept of living cultural heritage in more detail.



## Definition of living cultural heritage

Living cultural heritage is the symbiotic combination of tangible with intangible and cultural with natural heritage assets which are equally essential for representing a web of inter-linkages existing between a community, its geographical surrounding, and cultural expressions performed within that location. The cultural actors constantly recreate and elaborate living cultural heritage through the active management and maintenance of culturally significant practices.

Table 1: Five propositions for living cultural heritage (LCH)

1	LCH comprises tangible and intangible, cultural and natural heritage assets.
2	LCH implies strong links between the community <sup>2</sup> , its location, and the activities performed at the location. LCH puts relations between physical cultural assets and communities at its focus.
3	LCH cannot be identically reproduced or copied in any other place of the world. The community and the location are equally essential for the interpretation of LCH on behalf of visitors: LCH could not persist if the community and/or the tangible assets were absent from the location.
4	The community itself is responsible for safeguarding and maintaining the knowledge, skills, values, and the locations of its performance.
5	The community actively preserves its cultural heritage because it potentially has meaning for most members of the community in everyday life.

### Proposition 1:

#### **LCH comprises tangible and intangible, cultural and natural heritage assets.**

*"Without tangible heritage, intangible heritage becomes too abstract. Without intangible heritage, tangible heritage becomes an illegible series of objects or sites."* (APPADURAI, 2002: 12)

While intangible cultural heritage represents traditions, customs, practices and knowledge recognised by communities and groups of cultural actors, living cultural heritage embodies the linkage of these intangible assets with buildings, monuments, public open spaces, and sacred places being actively used for social interaction, artistic performances, religious rituals, and other forms of daily social and cultural expressions. The synergy of intangible and tangible cultural heritage merges into living cultural heritage. In this sense LCH is mutually inclusive, meaning that any tangible asset

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<sup>2</sup> Community is defined as a group of people sharing the same interest and common values within a location, cultural area, and/or organization.

which has been created by man (such as buildings) or nature (such as landscapes), playing an important role at rituals, ceremonies or daily life interactions, is significant for its practice.

**Proposition 2:**

**LCH implies strong links between the community, its location, and the activities performed at the location.**

**LCH puts relations between physical cultural assets and communities at its focus.**

LCH comprises communities and groups of cultural actors in specific places of their neighbourhood, location or area. LCH highlights the relations between the community, its location and the cultural activities performed. The conduction of cultural activities is traditionally linked to certain locations due to specific buildings, monuments or streets with particular spiritual and/or historical value for the activities. The tangible assets of certain locations are significant components for celebrations, gatherings, and performances. Saying it with the words of Appadurai, living cultural heritage is *"a tool through which the tangible heritage could be defined and expressed [thus] transforming inert landscapes of objects and monuments turning them into living archives of cultural values"* (APPADURAI, 2002: 12).

These cultural values are further expressed through spiritual bonds particularly articulated at edifices or places with religious or supernatural connotations such as temples, churches, graveyards and other kinds of memorial places, as well as paths of pilgrimages. The social space, containing a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, as well as the networks and pathways facilitating the exchange of material assets and information (MIURA, 2000; SOJA, 1998) are strong links between the people and the location. Historically identified places are providing a sense of local identity and representative character for a given community or group.

**Proposition 3:**

**The community and the location are equally essential for the interpretation of LCH on behalf of visitors: LCH could not persist if the community and/or the tangible assets were absent from the location.**

**LCH cannot be identically reproduced or copied in any other place of the world.**

LCH is socially articulated and a consciously manipulated heritage, it is strictly bound to local communities and specific local spaces as well as locations with culturally and historically

significant monuments or landscapes. If any of these elements were missing or substituted (by persons or location) the LCH elements could suffer from potential alterations that are not socially and historically constructed. A continuation of cultural performances with important elements missing or being substituted can lead to and be negatively interpreted as some kind of 'disneyfication'<sup>3</sup> or 'museumification'.<sup>4</sup>

Cultural industries can sometimes be harmful, exploiting local populations for global consumption, turning local values into tourist spectacles, or commodifying cultural products without regard for the dignity of their producers. LCH takes on a dynamic and creative relationship between intangible and tangible heritage, where each shapes the other over time in defining the common cultural wealth of a society. This is the basis for developing cultural industries that benefit sustainable diversity.

LCH depends on local groups of people and communities performing cultural activities at specific locations. An identical reproduction of LCH at places that are not traditionally constructed is not possible due to several reasons: shifts of people who are not part of the cultural community and changes of locations do contribute to potential alterations of the performance and the spiritual affection to the location. A copy of a LCH manifestation, festivity, celebration, tradition, or artistic performance cannot be conducted identically by different actors or in different locations.

**Proposition 4:**

**The community itself is responsible for safeguarding and maintaining the knowledge, skills, values, and the locations of its performance.**

The safeguarding of locations includes the physical conservation of buildings and monuments, hence tangible assets, which are equally essential for the interpretation and conduction for specific cultural activities and the creation of a social space (MIURA, 2000). Collective safeguarding means the viable continued practice by the relevant cultural community, in order to be considered safeguarded LCH has to be "*vital, dynamic and sustainable*" (KURIN, 2007: 12) and passed on to future generations by styles and techniques that are visible and audible (ICOM, 2004). Safeguarding measures are aimed at ensuring the viability of LCH, including the

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<sup>3</sup> *Disneyfication* describes the derogative transformation and alteration of cultural performances or heritage sites into something more appealing, superficial and generalised. It implies homogenisation of consumption, merchandising and emotional labour.

<sup>4</sup> *Museumification* signifies an act of freezing cultural performances of a community and hence an 'artificial' conservation of rituals/traditions.

identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education and practice (representing the relations), as well as the revitalisation of the various aspects of such heritage (UNESCO, 2003b: Article 2.3).

The safeguarding process of LCH is understood as adopted by the UNESCO 2003 Convention, which tends to shift both the measure and onus of safeguarding work to the cultural community itself. It is preserved in communities whose members practice and manifest its forms: "*... if the tradition is still alive, vital and sustainable in the community, it is safeguarded*" (KURIN, 2007: 12).

Additionally to UNESCO's vision about conservation I shortly explain why the community itself is responsible for safeguarding LCH. If the safeguarding efforts are controlled by governmental institutions it could become problematic in the sense of freedom and human rights. Many cultural minorities do not see the Government as representing their interests, especially regarding cultural traditions and values that might be celebrated during manifestations. Cultural practices (such as minority languages, religions, particular rites, etc.) have often been under pressure. Therefore, decisions taken by governmental institutions could cause conflicts and unbalanced power relationships between culture practicing communities and regulators with a potential advantage for the latter (KURIN, 2007). Furthermore, potential alterations of LCH due to external factors are reduced if the community itself is in charge of its preservation by active participation.

**Proposition 5:**

**The community actively preserves its cultural heritage because it potentially has meaning for most members of the community in everyday life.**

LCH is constantly recreated in response to changes in the social and cultural environment. It provides individuals, groups and communities with a sense of identity and continuity, and constitutes a guarantee of sustainable development. LCH is considered as a collective recognition, it is represented by a group of people who collectively possesses and/or practices collectively relevant knowledge and skills of their community. This is appropriate in the case of performing or applied arts when the performance of a group is manifested as more important than the role of an individual. The active preservation of the cultural heritage is considered when

ceremonies and festivities are carried out on a regular basis, the community hence ensures the transmission of knowledge and skills (which might be led and mastered by specific cultural tradition bearers) and thus ensures the perpetuity of the expression of the living cultural heritage concerned.

When introducing interlocutors to my general research topic I explained to them my definition and understanding of living cultural heritage. During the interview I asked the interlocutors to rate these five propositions regarding its application to the five living cultural heritage elements of New Orleans (rating from 0 - do not agree, to 5 - totally agree). The range of agreement to the application of the living cultural heritage concept for the case of New Orleans was between 4,30 and 4,96 - meaning that an integral approach to cultural heritage as elaborated in the following does make sense in the location of my study.

### **Living cultural heritage - an integral approach to cultural heritage**

Integral approaches, due to its holistic character, often have a philosophical connotation. While in alternative medicine a holistic approach means the treatment of body and mind, two aspects that many would identify as rather different, in the world of cultural heritage it illustrates the combination of tangible and intangible.

The following statements and conceptual elaborations of cultural heritage touch my proposed vision of living cultural heritage at various points. The theoretical reflections combine tangible with intangible as well as cultural with natural heritage at the same time. This leads to a comprehensive understanding of an integrally interpreted cultural heritage concept which I try to apply to my case study.

The anthropological concept of cultural landscape highlights the interpretation of culture and nature, its approach to heritage *"leads us to consider it as a social ensemble of many complex and interdependent manifestations"* (BOUCHENAKI, 2003: 1). Bouchenaki suggests to identify and promote forms of mixed heritage in order to understand the meaning and significance of the interdependency between tangible and intangible heritage. Although they seem rather different in its nature (just like body and mind), *"they represent the two sides of the same coin: both carry meaning and the embedded memory of humanity"* (2003: 4).

Natural heritage is often regarded with notions such as ecology, environment, and a systemic approach to a habitat of humans. It is further considered as providing a *"model for thinking about intangible heritage as a totality, rather than as an inventory"* because of the potentially cultural significant surrounding and traditional meaningful landscape. With such an approach we could give the proper importance to the *"intangible value of a living system, be it natural or cultural"* (KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, 2004: 53).

In his paper of 2004, Munjeri analyses the historical evolution of the convergence of tangible and intangible heritage due to the linkage of society and values: *"Objects, collections, buildings, etc. become recognized as heritage when they express the value of society and so the tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible"* (2004: 13). The *"breakthrough"* (2004: 16) of this cognition was reached at *The Nara Convention on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention* (1994) accepting the fact that all cultures and societies are rooted in particular forms and means of both the tangible and the intangible (LARSEN, 1994). This concept of cultural heritage significantly influenced the meetings of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Since the early 1990s it became evident that the World Heritage List<sup>5</sup> was rather non-representative, in the sense that European cultural heritage such as historic towns and religious buildings (basilicas, cathedrals, monasteries, etc.) were over-represented in relation to culturally significant monuments in the rest of the world. An analysis of the issue revealed that *"from its inception the World Heritage List had been based on an exclusively monumental concept of the cultural heritage. [...] A static view of human cultures"* (UNESCO, 1994: 4). The revolutionary output of that meeting was the acceptance that the standard concept of cultural heritage would no longer be concentrated on *"single monuments in isolation but rather on considering cultural groupings that were complex and multidimensional. [...] Each individual piece of evidence should therefore be considered not in isolation but within its whole context with an understanding of the multiple reciprocal relationship that it had with its physical (i.e. tangible) and non-physical (i.e. intangible) environment"* (UNESCO, 1994: 3). The intangible cultural heritage was finally taken on board and considered as crucial in all the following activities of the World Heritage Committee.

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<sup>5</sup> The UNESCO World Heritage Committee is responsible for implementing the World Heritage Convention. One of the ways in which the Committee implements the Convention is by inscribing sites and properties of "outstanding universal significance" on the World Heritage List.

According to Munjeri (2004) it was rather unavoidable that the grouping (of tangible and intangible heritage) would take place at some point, although it might have taken a long time until its convergence. His approach towards the discussion of cultural heritage goes even one step beyond the convergence of the tangible and intangible - this suggestion is based on the fact that the three pillars of cultural heritage - societies, norms and values - would form a "*smart partnership sustaining cultural heritage.*" These pillars would then work "*within a larger equilateral triangle of natural heritage, cultural heritage and spiritual heritage*" - he proposes that someday this combination might be recognised as the "*intangible natural heritage*" (MUNJERI, 2004: 18).

An additional integral approach towards cultural heritage is discussed by Appadurai in his contribution to the Universal Declaration of Diversity in 2002. While Munjeri speaks of the convergence of tangible and intangible heritage Appadurai argues that cultural heritage is internally indivisible - in the sense that we are not supposed to sub-divide cultural heritage into tangible and intangible but perceive it as a whole element. This approach is strengthened by his statement that "*tangible heritage comes to life only by the interpretation through intangible forms of knowledge, art, craft and symbolism*" (APPADURAI, 2002: 11) and because of the intimate links between the two kinds of heritage.

The above presented interpretations by Appadurai, Bouchenaki, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and Munjeri concerning the combination of various kinds of cultural heritage do all contribute to what I want to express with the definition of living cultural heritage. The concept I am going to apply with this thesis is that tangible and intangible, as well as cultural and natural heritage are not to be separated when it comes to its practice by local cultural actors. In addition I am going to include the following concepts of constructing space, place, and landscape in order to complete the version of living cultural heritage which I want to apply to my case study.

At this point the anthropological view of cultural landscapes encounters the proposed concept of living cultural heritage. The case of landscapes is a widespread and much discussed topic in social and cultural anthropology, geography and philosophy (BENDER, 2001; FELD and BASSO, 1996; HIRSCH and O'HANLON, 1995; LEFEBRVE, 1974; LOW, 2009; RODMAN, 1992). Regarding landscapes, in anthropology the discussion is about spatialising culture. This means that culture is produced and expressed spatially, and that space reflects and changes culture. It is about the boundaries between persons, places, and spaces that are understood to be intimately

'imbricated' (BENDER, 1993, 1998; HIRSCH and O'HANLON, 1995). Landscapes are not separated from human experience or seen as purely visual, instead they are part of a world of movement, relationships, memories and histories (FELD, BASSO, 1996). Said with the words of Bender "*all this adds up to a dense and complex web of people/things/places*" (2001: 76).

According to Hirsch (HIRSCH et al., 1995), landscape has a submerged presence and significance in anthropological accounts in two related ways. It has been deployed as a framing device informing the way the anthropologist brings the study into "view" (the outsider's objective view). The second way is that landscape has been used to refer to the meaning imputed by local people to their cultural and physical surroundings (the insider view - how a particular landscape "looks" to its inhabitants). Trivially said, there is the landscape we initially see and a second landscape which is produced through local practice. Drawing on its etymological roots in Western art history, Hirsch defines landscape as entailing a relationship between the foreground (the way we are now, every day, real ordinary life - place) and the background (the way we might be, idealised or imagined settings - space) of social life (HIRSCH, 1995). The idea of landscape is closely linked to a number of related concepts, including place and space, inside and outside, image and representation. The concepts of foreground, place, inside, and image roughly correspond to what we would understand as the context and form of everyday, un-reflexive forms of experience (BOURDIEU, 1977). The counterpart concepts roughly equate to the context and form of experience beyond the everyday. Although these concepts seem to stand apart they are never completely disconnected, where I again would like to connect with the proposed concept of living cultural heritage. The foreground would be represented by tangible and natural cultural heritage (rather visible), the background would be represented by intangible and cultural heritage when building upon the interpretation and differentiation of UNESCO.

The topic of cultural landscapes, which is mentioned in proposition one and two, is closely linked to the social production of space which includes social, economic, ideological, and technological factors that result in the physical creation of the material setting. The materialist emphasis of the term 'social production' is helpful in defining the historical emergence as well as the political and economic formation of urban space. Lefebvre's (1974) work is uncovering cultural, historical, and socio-political processes that produce spatial configurations and meanings. His theories of the social production of space focus on the social, political, and economic forces that produce space, and conversely the impact of socially produced space on social action. This concept is also aligned to what I want to express with proposition three - the production of



social space and its influence on the social actions is particularly significant when it comes to the reproduction of cultural activities at certain locations where the surroundings are constructed by tourism related means.

Rodman (1992) gives attention on the definition and use of place as an analytical construct. She criticises anthropological conceptions of place that provide taken-for-granted setting to situate ethnographic descriptions or are used analytically as metaphors. Rodman describes places as socially constructed by the people who live in them and know them, they are "*politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions*" (1992: 641). Place can have a unique reality for each inhabitant, and while the meanings may be shared with others the views of place are often likely to be competing, and contested in practice. With the propositions three and five I try to enter into this discussion which is about the diverse contextualisation of place by, for example, the cultural actors, visitors, and the tourism industry as well as the city government as regulatory bodies giving and taking access to specific sites. Rodman proposes the concept of *multilocality* to describe considerations of place/s affected by influences of modernity, imperial history, and contemporary contexts.

What I want to emphasise on with the concept and definition of living cultural heritage is the "*anthropological truth*" that space is made meaningful and that the "*experience of space is always socially constructed*" (GUPTA, FERGUSON, 1997: 40). But how is this meaning-making practiced and how does this meaningful association of places and people work practically? Just as objects appear to have a natural use value, so too does a particular culture and its practices seem to have a natural relationship with a particular people and a particular place - natives are supposed to be native to a particular place (CLIFFORD, 1992). Yet it is important to keep in mind that this seemingly natural association of a particular people with a particular place and culture is a social and historical construct of how anthropology has "*mapped the world, not a set of natural facts*" (GUPTA, FERGUSON, 1997: 40). This thematic is relevant also (though in an abstract dimension) within the context of tourism. Visitors arrive with certain images, opinions, and pre-defined ideas of the 'other' culture, people, and the geographic place. The tourism industry seeks to satisfy these ideas with the corporate production and commodification of cultural activities in order to create the promised experiences that the tourist is supposed to take home with.

Throughout this dissertation I examine several cases of how the corporate reproduction of socially constructed space creates conflicts of interest. The concept of living cultural heritage is applied to focus not only on the intangible practice of the cultural activities but to 'follow' the issues to the tangible places of where 'culture' is produced and reproduced. Herewith this case study contributes to the above stated concepts of spatialising culture through the social construction of space. The anthropological methods used are a useful tool to analyse and interpret the cases from different points of view.

## 1.2. Methods

This is an ethnographic multi-method research based on classical and modern principles and applicative methodologies of the grounded theory approach. Following Glaser and Holton (2004: 7) I apply classic grounded theory to my research as a *"set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area."* Based on Glaser's principle "all is data" (2007) several research methods and techniques have been used to collect relevant information in the field which are explained in detail in the present chapter. According to the concepts of grounded theorists I give priority to deriving *"analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts and hypotheses"* (CHARMAZ, 2001: 336-37). By minimising commitment to received and preconceived theory, it is more likely to develop new analytic categories and original theories from the data. More on this approach is described in the section about data analysis.

Victor Turner's concept of field and arena (1974) finds considerable appeal throughout my research representing a form of enhancement of the case study as applied by the Manchester School (GLUCKMAN, 1962; 1958). The field is a heterogeneous domain of practice and action, values and norms, consisting of a set of rules *"from which many kinds of sequences or social action may be generated but which further specify what sequences must be excluded"* (TURNER, 1974: 17). Within this field social actors compete and cooperate over the same public rewards and social forces whose power relations and tensions are subject to alternation. This change of values and norms results in frictions - the exclusion rules are responsible for the arising paradigm conflict. It is the arena where these conflicts are settled in form of rituals culminating in the social drama. *"Arenas are the concrete settings in which paradigms become transformed into metaphors and symbols"* (TURNER, 1974: 17), those who are bearing the values and norms articulate in the power struggles regarding social, cultural, and political strength. With the analysis I describe what kind of frictions exist among the actors and why conflicts arise.

Moreover, I analyse who embodies such confrontations and how the various actors interpret those frictions which are not as obviously encountered within the arena.

The case study method that is applied with this research is based on classic and modern forms of the extended case method. Primarily oriented on the Manchester School and its early developers, such as Gluckman (1958) and Mitchell (1956) who elaborated the situational analysis, I also take into account the method as described by Burawoy (1998).

In its most basic form a case study may refer to the basic descriptive material an observer has assembled by whatever means available about some particular phenomenon or set of events. The case material is the content of the observer's field notes prior to any deliberate analysis or selection for presentation in some analysis (MITCHELL, 2006). *"Gluckman hit on the idea of scrutinizing particular situations of conflict as complexes of connected incidents that are occurring in the field, in order to isolate and identify the actual mechanisms underlying the development of the conflict"* (EVENS, HANDELMAN, 2006: 2). In this sense I also try to link the varied incidents to one another and identify the actual mechanisms. By analysing conflicts Gluckman latched onto the idea of empirically isolating and identifying the social mechanisms that constituted process as such. The method enjoys a very practical ethnographic advantage as it requires attention to ethnographic detail which is laid out with my descriptions of the various situations of participant observation.

As stated by Evens and Handelman, the implications and advantages of situational analysis and the extended case method are multifaceted, *"extending to matters of ethnographic observation and analysis, to situational flow between the local and the global, to the ontological nature of social life, to reflexive and activist anthropology"* (2008: 8). Moreover, case studies are a reliable and respectable procedure of social analysis discovering multiple processes, interests, and identities. Kapferer points out that *"data and analysis or theory were not to be separated [...] but rather to be dialectically interrelated so that they emerged or developed more directly [...] out of each other"* (KAPFERER, 2006: 313). Furthermore, he writes that analytical, theoretical, and ideological assumptions are always embedded in the action of description. Throughout the description of my cases I follow the indications of Burawoy (1998) stressing that the extended case method *"applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro', and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future"* (BURAWOY, 1998: 5).

The anthropology of Gluckman concentrated on the themes of crisis and change, dilemmas of modernisation, local government as the activator of transformations in the societies, immigrant and settler communities and their inventions and reconstructions of traditions. These themes are also covered in my analysis. The rationale for choosing an anthropological method that is based on research and analysis of such topics has therefore guided me to the Manchester School. Moreover, for Gluckman *"the term 'situation' refers to a total context of crisis, not just contradictory and conflicting processes but a particular tension or turning, a point of potentiality and of multiple possibility"* (KAPFERER, 2006: 122). In my research this context of crisis where everything is subject to change (micro dynamics within macro forces) is the field of tourism.

Based on the ethnographic fieldwork method as elaborated by Malinowski (1922) I collected concrete data over a wide range of facts, which is one of the main points of the applied field method. With two fieldwork periods covering a total length of almost ten months, carrying out daily observations of a considerable amount of events (such as musical and artistic performances, parades, ceremonies, manifestations, meetings, conferences, presentations, and performing musical concerts by myself) I can state to have witnessed, understood, and analysed the *"inponderabilia of actual life"* (MALINOWSKI, 1922: 18) in New Orleans regarding the scope of my research. Seeking to record carefully and precisely the actions of the cultural actors, residents, and the audience or participants I have additionally prepared a chronological list of relevant events observed (please refer to the end of the methods chapter). This helps to understand the degree of my personal acquaintance with the facts analysed.

With this chapter I describe at one hand the methods used in the collecting of the ethnographic material and at the other hand the methods used for analysing this data. In order to give an insight into my field and way of doing research in New Orleans I start with the description of how the observations were conducted, the number and frequency of events observed, and under which conditions observations were made and information collected.

### **1.3. Data collection methods**

The ethnographic field study in the city of New Orleans, situated in Orleans Parish in the state of Louisiana, was carried out from March to July in 2012. A second field research period was conducted from April to July 2013 - a period which is locally proudly called the festival season. The stay in the field can be depicted as very intense, in terms of my occupation as a researcher

as well as a musician. Every step and action was lived and gloried to the extreme. Since this is, trivially expressed, also the way New Orleanians use to live their daily routine, I cannot deny that the effect of acculturation has stained upon me. Data was collected with qualitative interviews, informal conversations, and participant observation at various events as described in the following. Secondary data material<sup>6</sup> and relevant information were gathered in the field in various libraries and archives, thanks to many recommendations by interlocutors. Some reports of public institutions and private non-profit organisations were handed over to me during the interviews.

### **Qualitative interviews**

A total of 58 qualitative interviews was conducted in personal meetings, except of one interview, which was carried out via telephone. I was able to tape 44 interviews and to transcribe them in detail. The information given with the remaining interviews was documented by hand since a recording of the meeting was either not permitted by the informant or simply impossible due to the noise of the place and surrounding where the interview was conducted. The interviews were carried out in many different locations drawing on the difference of the interviewed persons. Since I mainly moved by bicycle this gave me the opportunity to get to know the city very well. Just to give a small insight into the places of where interviews took place I would like to describe some of the locations. The personal meetings brought me as high as up to the 18th floor of a downtown business building, overlooking the city from a glass covered CEO management office cube while just another rainstorm was raging and flooding the streets of the Central Business District. I conducted an interview in the private cottage-style house of a local journalist in the middle of the oldest quarter of New Orleans, namely Treme. Doing interviews brought me to the hidden *Archive of Costumes, Textiles and Carnival Collections of the Louisiana State Museum* as well as to the dark wooden offices of the Mayor in City Hall. On the historically important Congo-Square right next to the entrance of Louis Armstrong Park I met a grand marshal and another interview was taken at a local Sicilian Po-Boy store I never recognised to be around the corner of my house.

Since this study covers five living cultural heritage elements, which are staged, performed, and practiced in different parts of the city for different audiences, the pool of possible interview partners was relatively large. The initial problem was getting access to the people that could

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<sup>6</sup> such as books, articles, papers, data from reports, communications, e-mails, symposia, websites, statements, writings, video and audiovisual material, etc.

provide me with relevant information and forward me to other interesting interlocutors. Mainly, I was able to make contacts with the commonly used snowball system. This works through being slowly handed over from one person to another who was expected to be open to talk to me and to give insight into opinions about my research topic. According to the cases I interviewed those who are responsible for providing the "cultural supply" like musicians, artists and performers, those who organise and execute events where the artists do perform, those who safeguard and/or expose cultural heritage and contribute to cultural education, the ones who write about the city and its local features, those who prepare packages, sell and commodify cultural heritage for tourists, and finally the institutional bodies who are supposed to guard over the balance between financial benefit, cultural exploitation, and local identity. Broadly, the interview partners are divided in six areas of expertise as follows:

- Performing artist (e.g. musician, dancer, artist, etc.)
- Organisation of cultural events (e.g. festivals, parades, etc.)
- Cultural institution (e.g. museum, foundation, association, etc.)
- Scholar, author, journalist
- Tourism industry (e.g. tour operator, travel agency, marketing/promotion, etc.)
- Other (public institution and others)

As you can see in the attached questionnaire (please refer to annex B) my interlocutors were asked to choose a maximum of three options into which group they could locate themselves. The majority of them actually did consider themselves as representing various fields of expertise. In New Orleans, you can easily work as a manager for a company preparing cultural events, write articles in magazines, voluntarily support foundations (or manage your own foundation), guide tourists through the city as a tour guide and perform live on stage in the evening on Frenchmen Street. Some of them are doing it in order to pay their bills, others just do it for pleasure and for joyfully going through everyday life. Nevertheless, I asked my interlocutors with what voice they are going to speak and tried to define them as belonging to just one field of expertise for my own statistical considerations.

Generally, I informed myself well about the selected interlocutors which I asked for a qualitative interview. I either got some valuable input from those who made the recommendation and established the contact, or tried to dig after information by myself. Prior to meeting the contacted persons I (vaguely) evaluated their position, accomplishments, and role in the field of

activity. Since my days in New Orleans were limited I could not run the risk making time-consuming interviews with anyone who is active in the six different fields of expertise but wanted to be (more or less) certain that the data obtained with the interview was relevant. I managed my contacts of interlocutors with a detailed excel file in order to have an overview about who was contacted (with a description about the person's position and relevance for the research), when (date of first contact by phone, e-mail or in person, when the person responded to my meeting request), how the first contact was done (by myself or by others), by whom was that person recommended or informed, if and when the person was actually interviewed and if other meetings are planned. The excel file contains about 150 contacts of which almost 60 were de facto interviewed. With a colour scheme I labeled the contacts to have a better overview of who had already been interviewed, who was pending, who will definitely not be interviewed (because of denial or other reasons), who has/not been contacted, who seemed to be interested but further information was needed. The contacts were broadly grouped into the mentioned fields of expertise, additionally the file also contained recommendations for literature which were given by informants.

### **The questionnaire**

The attached questionnaire (please refer to annex B) was finalised at the beginning of April 2012 and discussed with Kevin Fox Gotham (Dean of the Faculty of Sociology, Tulane University). It was conceptualised for conducting qualitative interviews including quantitative questions with a desired duration of around one hour. The questionnaire was designed with a structural sequence of open and closed questions. At the beginning and at the end socio-demographic data was collected. The questionnaire was organised in two parts. While the first treats the selection of living cultural heritage elements, the definition, relevance and potential in the case of New Orleans, the second part concentrates on the commodification and the influence of tourism on the various elements.

### **Informal interviews and meetings**

I was characterised by several personalities when having conducted research in the field, according to specific situations. I used to introduce myself as a cultural anthropology researcher when contacting potential interlocutors and certainly when interviewing. It was different when I occasionally talked to people on the street or at performance venues. Although I mainly guided the conversations to satisfy my needs of information and used to look out for constructive

answers to all my questions I did not reveal my identity as a researcher. This happened at small talks with random people but also with friends and acquaintances that I used to meet more often. Due to my self-proclaimed inter-personal skills of cognition of characters I decided to cover my anthropological identity.

In my case, informal interviews are considered as meetings with people that were prepared for a talk about my research. They were informed about my field of interest and directly contacted in advance. I used to take notes instantly, did not tape the conversation, asked questions without help of the questionnaire, and was acting as a researcher. Informal meetings instead are considered as meetings with people I did not know before I actually talked to them. Mostly I got introduced by friends, the talks were neither recorded nor did I take notes in the same moment (but at a later stage), contacts were not always exchanged, and I did not reveal my identity as a researcher about cultural tourism but as a musician, tourist, or a short-term resident of the city (and either of them were absolutely true). This solely facilitated the basis of conversation and enhanced the input for my research since I wanted to get answers to my questions and not lose time with talking about myself. A common goal of informal interviews and meetings was the search for names and contacts to other relevant people that could constructively contribute to the answer of my questions. At informal meetings with people at second lines, with festival goers and at music gigs I was often confronted with untrained minds, unaccustomed to formulate their thoughts with any degree of consistency and precision, full of biased and prejudged opinions about "blacks" or "whites" or "tourism" or "the city". Such conversations often made me smile and think of the various events from different points of view but did not have a significant impact on my research.

Concerning the Louisiana "swamp" dialect I have to say that I faced some difficulties in following several "sayings" and expressions only at the beginning. Generally, the black population speaks with a stronger dialect than white New Orleanians, hence communication with Afro-Americans was slightly more incomprehensible. When I recognised some difficulties due to language barriers Chuck Perkins was always available to help me with certain interlocutors. Particularly during the first weeks of my stay in 2012 I suffered from local ignorance concerning names and nick names of streets, places, areas, neighbourhoods, bars, musicians, bands, clubs, and local abbreviations for such. As time went by I also got more used to local understandings, interpretations, and appreciations of mentality, behaviour, and humor.



During the months between the two fieldwork periods I constantly maintained in contact with interlocutors, friends, and acquaintances via e-mail communication, and kept myself up-to-date with e-newsletters, social media updates of various organisations and websites (such as Radio WWOZ, NOCVB, Offbeat Magazine, The Healing Center, Crosstown-Conversations of the Creative Alliance of New Orleans, Jazz and Heritage Foundation, Music and Culture Coalition, Louisiana Office of Tourism, House of Dance and Feathers, etc.).

### **Participant observation**

*"... the Ethnographer has not only to spread his nets in the right place, and wait for what will fall into them. He must be an active huntsman ... "* (MALINOWSKY, 1922: 8)

I have transformed the citation above into the leitmotif of my fieldwork in New Orleans from the very beginning of my stay. With the commonly used snowball system I did not only enlarge my nets and networks of contacts for doing qualitative interviews but was literally "hunting" my preferred interlocutors at the various events, concerts, parades, ceremonies, presentations, and meetings where I conducted participant observation. Often I only knew their nick names, had collected a physical description, some basic characteristics, and was given the name of the bar or place where the person was supposed to be found. My hunting attitude really came out when I started to frequent second lines and Mardi Gras Indian parades, these are moving dance-driven and street-based events meandering through the backstreets of New Orleans, without a route-sheet it is hard to know where the parade starts and where it leads to - I needed to use all my human senses in order to detect them for conducting participant observation and do some informal conversations. Please refer to the respective chapter about the commodification of second lines where I deepen in the description of hunting such events.

The anthropological literature offers various methodical aspects and approaches toward the research tool of participant observation (HUME, 2004; EMERSON, 2001; AMIT, 2000; BURAWOY, 1991; etc.). In the following, I will not thoroughly analyse what participant observation is according to literature but rather explain in detail how this method was used for the present study in New Orleans.

Participant observation is the core method for social and cultural anthropologists. It is characterised by practicing an intensive involvement with the people in the field over an extended period of time. Apart from the fact that participant observation is a labour- and time-

intensive activity that calls for patience I consider it as a systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting of the field. The observations enable to describe existing situations using the five senses. It is a process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities, and *"of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting"* (SCHENSUL, 1999:91). It is furthermore a process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally, then removing oneself from the setting in order to immerse oneself in the data to understand what is going on and be able to write about it (KAWULICH, 2005).

Participant observation is not just about observing processes. It includes natural conversations, informal interviews, checklists, mapping fields, unstructured questionnaires, constantly taking field notes, and unobtrusive methods of research. In my case these discreet methods were for instance the keeping and building up of friendships with potential interview partners or people that were somehow immersed in activities related to my research topic. Regular telephone calls to get updates about second lines, quick meetings for lunch, drinks at my favourite "Café Istanbul" or the joint enjoyment of a jazz gig at "The Spotted Cat Music Club" on Frenchmen street were very common actions for conducting informal conversations.

Participant observation requires a certain amount of deception and impression management and you need to maintain a sense of objectivity through distance. It is characterised by such actions as having an open, nonjudgmental attitude, being interested in learning more about others, being aware of the propensity for feeling culture shock and for making mistakes, being a careful observer and a good listener, and being open to the unexpected in what is learned (DeWALT, 1998).

Throughout the description and analysis I frequently present a detailed insight into my form of participant observation at specific events. It was only rarely that I visited events where I did not know anyone. I would not say that I was privately accompanied by local friends to the various events of interest but I frequently met someone that I already knew from other events, interviews, or who were friends of acquaintances. Hence, I mainly had the possibility to make informal conversations with already familiar faces.

## Participation at cultural activities

Although I have the feeling that I participated at many cultural events and did my very best to immerse myself as often as possible during the months of fieldwork in New Orleans, I have to say that I also missed a lot of concerts, festivals and second lines. This is due to the unimaginable amount of live performances and cultural activities in the city. There was an estimated number of 24.700 music live gigs in the city in 2010. Around 3.2 million visitors attended over 100 cultural festivals, from Mardi Gras and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival to neighbourhood festivals and green markets. The city counted 141 entertainment enterprises that are proclaimed as musical or performing arts venues, most of them (bars and clubs) host local musicians multiple weekdays and weekends. The day-average number of live gigs was 70 up to the average number of 105 live gigs during a festival weekend day. Over 1.057 theatrical performances took place. New Orleans has more festival days than weekend days in a year<sup>7</sup>. All these numbers neither include the second lines which are permitted on 39 Sundays of the year of the locally existing Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs and Second Line Clubs, nor the public practices, processions and parades of the Mardi Gras Indian tribes such as Super Sunday events. One can see that the numbers of concerts and events which I visited might seem negligible in comparison to the above stated quantity but I emphasise to have carefully selected the most significant performances and cultural events for the present study.

Throughout the field study I tended to listen to up to ten live gigs per week on average. The locations I visited the most can be found on Frenchmen Street (Spotted Cat, The Maison, Three Muses, Snug Harbor, etc.), in the Marigny/Bywater (Cafe Istanbul), and spread around the French Quarter (Preservation Hall, Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Club) and other areas like the Garden District (Tipitina's). Very often I ended up talking with musicians during set-breaks or after their performance.

Concerning festivals I had the chance to participate at around 15 such events during both research periods (please refer to the chronological list of events and to the description of festivals in the respective chapter for detailed information). Access to music gigs, festivals, as well as parades was relatively uncomplicated in comparison to participating at second lines, Mardi Gras Indian events, or Vodou ceremonies. Most of the bars in New Orleans do not have cover charge. Since you can listen to the bands for free (at most bars you are asked to tip the

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<sup>7</sup> Source: The Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy (2010) Cultural Economy Snapshot, City of New Orleans.

band and consume at least one drink) you can easily enjoy several concerts an evening through hopping from one bar into the other. The same applies to any kind of festival (music, food, art, etc.) because visitors need to get tickets for only a few festivals in New Orleans. Entrance is free of charge, the events are very well promoted, and the location is mainly centred to the tourism areas. Therefore, access was not a problem. Regarding Carnival parades as well as Carnival imitating parades, access is also given without any difficulties due to the fact that they are organised along the streets that lead to the French Quarter. Although second lines and Mardi Gras Indian events do also happen in public spaces, along the backstreets of New Orleans, access to these events was more complex. Those moving, dance-driven parades are mainly promoted among the various Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, second line clubs, and Mardi Gras Indian tribes. Therefore, it was initially tough to get the information about where and when these events would start and lead to since so-called route sheets are not distributed outside the circle of interested clubs. The issues about finding access to second lines as well as getting in contact with Vodou affiliated persons who then took me to ceremonies are described in detail in the respective chapters.

### **The role of the researcher - a self-reflection**

As shortly mentioned above, I was characterised by several identities, roles and personalities which shifted softly according to the various situations I witnessed. While I was a PhD student of social and cultural anthropology to my interlocutors with which I conducted qualitative interviews, I often appeared to be a musician, tourist, or long term resident in New Orleans to people I did not know well. Concerning the contacts to the tourism industry I soon recognised that researchers or students are principally not warmly welcomed which is why I often introduced myself as a consultant for sustainable tourism development. The fact that I am a musician turned out to be a very positive asset as it was easier to come along with the many other artists and active musicians that I was surrounded with. This happened either when playing my own gigs and talking to people afterwards, or when listening to bands and conversing with them in the role of a ukulele and oboe player. This seemed to be a good starting point to discuss about my research questions. Often, in continuation of interesting dialogues, I revealed my primary activity in New Orleans. Generally, I had the experience that entering the field as a musician in order to conduct research about my topic seemed to be very helpful.

My multiple identities had an impact on the process of my research from the very beginning, as I could observe the situation with Chuck Perkins. I got to know Chuck as a musician, together with

my (at that time) girlfriend Nadia<sup>8</sup> we asked him if we could play at his Cafe Istanbul and perform our music. At the evening of our first gig we got to know the sound technician Walter who brought us to the Loa bar in the International House Hotel. There we settled our weekly concerts until the end of my first field visit. The regular gigs were then continued during the second research period for many weeks. At Loa bar I got to know Vodou priestess Sallie Ann Glassman who invited me to join her Vodou ceremonies. With Chuck I often discussed about my research topic. He was befriended with many persons who are immersed in the so-called "cultural community" of second lines and Mardi Gras Indians. Chuck helped me to get access to these events and influential persons such as Ronald Lewis. When I told Walter about my research intentions he introduced me to Catherine who manages the social club Moisant Kiwanis. Catherine offered me to volunteer at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, where my observations from inside a beer booth significantly contributed to analysing the case of music festivals. Moreover, walking through the French Quarter pretending to be a tourist I often asked standard tourist questions to hotels and tour operators, getting informed about research relevant events of which I would never have known of by only talking to my acquaintances.

When curiously asking participants or by-standers at the various events about what was going on my personal background did not play a big role. Although I was often immersed in events of the African American community and was obviously not part of their tribe or club people did not seem surprised of my presence. It was rather the contrary, I recognised that they were, in some way, used to the participation of curious and interested "white guys". They could understand that whites cannot follow exactly what is going on at a second line or a Super Sunday parade because of the "lack of blackness".

During these situations I always tried to talk less about my research topic and myself but to encourage the interlocutor to think about my inquiries. Depending on the situation, I revealed the reason for asking such questions and participating at street parades. For example, when I had a good feeling about the person who was positively and likewise conversing about the topic or when I felt the need for introducing into what I wanted to know. In other cases, when the conversation would rather not keep on going (people being more concentrated on dancing than on talking, following their crowd of friends, or speaking in a manner/accent that I could not

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<sup>8</sup> Nadia was carrying out a research period for her PhD at the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research at Tulane University in 2012 and 2013. Her presence during my field visits also significantly influenced my research due to our mutual music performances, the resulting contacts, and through accompanying me to some events where I used to do participant observation.

understand well, being intoxicated, etc.) I simply responded to stay in the city for a while visiting friends, living in the neighbourhood as a temporary resident, or being just interested in what happens in New Orleans. Such answers were never doubted and mostly followed by a standard question if I liked the place.

With the weeks running I got more experienced with the process of the various events and could act like a regular participant. This was expressed by feeling more secure with dancing, having drinks and food from moving street vendors, conducting informal conversations with as many people as possible, cheering to the brass band, clapping for the parade king and queen, as well as taking pictures or videos, just like anyone else did with their mobile phones or compact hand-cameras. Especially at events organised by Mardi Gras Indians or Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs I often got alerted to keep attention on the situation. I was advised to avoid being surrounded by too many people, particularly at the tail of the crowd. Danger through shootings or fights among gangs was a constant topic during such events. Participants sometimes advised me on leaving the moving parades before the official end when people got drunk, stoned, and uncontrolled about their behaviour. Throughout this dissertation I give some examples of how my multiple identities such as being an anthropologist, my activity as a musician, consultant, or tourist positively influenced the research process.

#### **1.4. Data analysis**

Coming back to the topic of grounded theory, its concept and methodological approach, as understood by Glaser and Strauss (1967), refers to a systematic process for generating theory from data through procedures that jointly collect, code and analyse data. The purpose of grounded theory is to discover concepts and hypotheses and not to test or replicate them (GLASER, 1992). The method of discovering grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss consists of the categorisation of concepts and their properties, where a category is a conceptual element of the theory and a property is a "conceptual aspect or element of a category" (GLASER, STRAUSS, 1967:36). All categories and properties emerge from coding data, and constant comparison of data. The objective is to keep introducing data to the system until it reaches the point of "theoretical saturation" (pp. 61) where the addition of data no longer develops new properties or categories.

All data obtained in the field were archived with a data register file, following my own logic of labelling and archiving the different sources and material. In my hand written fieldwork diary,

accompanying me every step I took out of my house, any kind of information was documented - this regards the notes during qualitative interviews (I used to take lots of notes during interviews although they were recorded), notes of observations in the field, interesting quotations, personal reflections, information achievement, sporadic memos, thoughts, interpretations, analyses, contacts and information given by interlocutors; literally anything that seemed to be relevant for my research ended up in written form in the diary. Once I found a quiet moment I used to digitalise the hand written information on my computer and archive it in different folders. I carried out the analysis of primary data with the help of Atlas.ti which became my research database as I incorporated all the primary data material (transcribed qualitative interviews and information from the fieldwork diary). All the registries of primary data, including my personal thoughts and opinions were written in English so no time for any translation needed to be invested.

The selection and analysis of the whole data unfolded two general phases - while after the first research period I only concentrated on transcribing the interviews, digitalising my fieldwork diary, arranging primary and secondary data, and doing some pre-analysis of the gathered data in order to decide how to go forward, the actual data analysis was started after the second research period. In November 2013, after all interviews had been transcribed and all remaining primary data had been digitalised, the first Hermeneutic Unit for the empirical analysis was set up including the unfolding coding assignment process and the creation of the first grounded categories for the analysis. For doing this I benefitted from using Atlas.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software programme as a tool to help manage, code, and analyse my data. With that programme I was able to organise and manage field data in a very efficient way.

Regarding the quantitative data that I collected with the questionnaire, particularly in respect of the questions about the tourism potential of the cultural elements and its tourism sustainability characteristics, I have to state that it has not been thoroughly analysed so far and it is not considered in this dissertation. A detailed analysis of the data is planned to be presented in a scientific paper where the quantitative data shall be used to support qualitative results as they are laid out in this research.

## Data coding

*"The process is like someone who is simultaneously creating and solving a puzzle"* (EMERSON, 2011: 173)

I organised the qualitative analytic coding process of my primary data in two different phases. In open coding, I used to read interviews and field notes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or suggested issues, no matter how varied and disparate. In focused coding, the interviews and field notes were fine-grained, and analysed on the basis of topics that have been identified as being of particular interest. Ideas and categories were cancelled, changed, and substituted to have a smaller set, and to provide the major topics and themes for the final ethnography. While reading through the interviews and field notes and doing the first wave of coding I also used to create systematic theoretical code memos. When going ahead with focused coding I revised ideas with the writing of integrative memos. Following the work and practical suggestions of Emerson I felt like moving *"from a general reading to a close coding to writing intensive analyses and then back again"* (2011: 173). In my case, coding was indeed uncertain, since it is a matter, not simply of discovering what is in the data, but, more creatively, of linking up specific events and observations to more general analytic categories and issues. With time, practice, and wider exposure within my research topic, I gained confidence to make analytic connections, and coding became less uncertain, especially during the phase of focused coding and creating integrative memos. With such memos I identified and wrote about core processes that characterised talk and interaction in a particular setting.

After the steps of open, focused, and selective coding the list of final codes amounted to 115. In order to work more efficiently with Atlas.ti I attributed continuous numbers to the various codes which helped me in finding, revising, and relating to certain topics and codes.



Table 2: List of codes

Nr.	Code	Nr.	Code
1	Music	57	tourism as a double edged sword
2	Festivals	58	French Quarter
3	Parades	59	Zoning, districts, urban dev plans
4	Jazz Funerals	60	Raising Cultural Awareness, pride, education
5	Second Lines	61	Local eco dev/benefit
501	Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, Task Force	62	Empowerment
6	Religion, belief in the supernatural	63	Safeguarding and conservation
7	Vodou related	64	culture representing a resource/attraction for tourism
8	Architecture/tangible/places	65	Community involvement/integration of locals into tourism activities
9	Culinary	66	positive tourism impact
10	Tourism Industry	67	negative tourism impact
11	Tourists	68	ownership/decision making
12	Keep the culture alive/ongoing	69	consumption of local products
13	Street Performance	70	cultural education for tourists
14	Cultural Rebirth, reconstruction	71	tourist contact to locals
15	Mardi Gras Parade	72	sustainable tourism
16	Disrespect/Respect to NOLA culture	73	issues: residents with tourism
17	catered to tourism, adaptation to satisfy tourists	74	issues: cultural actors with tourism
18	in/direct tourism impact/change on culture	75	issues: cultural actors with NOLA city gov/NOPD
19	Local Musicians vs. Outside Musicians	76	issues: deteriorating culture
20	Commodification of Culture	77	issues: regulation of culture/the war on culture
201	not commodified enough, positive commodification	78	issues: complain about tourism behaviour
21	NOLA culture	79	investment into culture/nbh
22	NOLA City Government/policies	80	Living Cultural Heritage
23	Katrina impact, desasters	81	locals vs tourists
24	Culture for Free	82	Paradoxon: using CH but preventing/not sustaining
25	Commercialisation/Tourism promotion	83	Support and promotion of LCH
26	Culture as entertainment	84	Funds for social projects
27	complain about treatment of musicians	85	Missing funds, wrong allocation
28	Authentic vs fake/staged	86	Mardi Gras vs second line/Krewe vs SA&PC
29	reciprocity	87	issue: carrying capacity
30	Development of culture, stopping and continuing	88	issue: incapacity of groups collaborating
31	Spirit of NOLA	89	Racial relations
32	Bourbon Street	90	Paradoxon: eco benefit without selling culture as tourism

33	Advocacy	91	Music: no real designation to a music city
34	Disney/Homogenization	92	Tourism potential
35	Treme	93	Sports
36	Cultural economy and tourism	94	Museums
37	Mortality, morbid	95	Mardi Gras: Krewes
38	Mardi Gras Indians	96	Lack cultural tourism offer
39	Performing/Artist	97	Neighbourhood associations, community engagement
40	Tribes	98	NOLA gov: cultural economy initiative
41	Police, NOPD	99	Important citation
42	Exploitation	100	Afro-American NOLA culture
43	MGI, entertainers, musicians	101	Civil Rights
44	MGI suits	102	Music is business
45	Cultural issues	103	NOLA history
46	Noise ordinance	104	issues: tourism marketing/promotion
47	Gentrification	105	issue: identity among groups
48	Frenchmen Street	106	festivals: Jazz fest
49	Necessary actions for cultural tourism development	107	festivals: French Quarter Fest
50	Inventing events for tourism/copying events	108	tourists exposed to the REAL culture = real experience
51	public/private, hidden/open events	109	copyrights
52	Comparison to Las Vegas, show your boobs, party tourism	110	You gotta fight back
53	Danger	111	Secret societies
54	Violence, crime prevention	112	Mardi Gras Indians: no impact
55	the exotic other culture	113	Defiance
56	tourist crowds at cultural events		

Through initial coding and memoing, I identified many more ideas and themes than I was actually able to pursue in this monograph. I had to decide which topics to explore further and which to park aside, at least for the moment until a potential following paper. Concerning the process of selecting themes I gave priority to topics for which a substantial amount of data has been collected and which reflect recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under this study.

### Citations and photos

Regarding the citations of transcribed interviews, I note that some original phrases have slightly been altered concerning word-order, grammatical constellations, or specific wordings in order to make the phrases readable more easily and fluently. New Orleanians, especially those with a strong accent (such as Afro-Americans), like to use dirty words very frequently (particularly

when they are enraged). Verbs are not always used accordingly to singular or plural subjects, and standard filler words or expressions of loud thinking have been cancelled. Sometimes my interlocutors talked to me about very personal opinions which they did not want to see published (advising me that the statement would be "off the record"). In this case the phrase was anonymised so that no inference can be made.

The photos published in this dissertation (please refer to the photo annex) of Mardi Gras Indians, second line club dancers, musicians, or any other cultural actor in the streets of New Orleans do have my copyright unless labelled otherwise. I herewith would like to state that I have not and will not receive any remuneration for these pictures - the only reason for publishing those in this dissertation is for illustrating the events described so that the reader can better understand and appreciate my depictions. I know very well the concerns of Mardi Gras Indians and second line clubs regarding photo and video material and do totally respect their opinions and reasons.

Table 3: Chronological list of relevant events observed

Date	Event	Short description
First research period March - July 2012		
March 12	Arrival in the field	
March 17	St. Patrick's Day parade	Participation at the opening mass service, observation at the St. Patrick's parade in the uptown area
March 18	Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday Uptown	Several Mardi Gras Indian tribes and Social Aid and Pleasure clubs parading through the Uptown area around L. A. Davis park, brass bands leading the second lines, start and end in the park with BBQ by participants
March 24	Congo Square Rhythm and Dance Festival	Participation and observation at the festival on Congo Square
March 24	New Orleans Sacred Music Festival	Participation and observation at the festival in the Healing Center
March 25	New Orleans Roadfood Festival	Participation and observation at the festival along the area of the Final Four stages
March 31	Old Algiers Riverfest	Participation and observation at the music and food festival organised on Westbank
April 2	Final Four Basketball Festival	Observation at the festival with music stages at the Riverwalk in the French Quarter
April 7	Freret Street Festival	Participation and observation at the neighbourhood festival along Freret Street
April 8	St. Augustine Church	Participation at the Easter Sunday Catholic mass in St. Augustine church in the Treme neighbourhood
April 13,	French Quarter Festival	Participation and observation on three days of the

14, 15		French Quarter Fest, observation of artists and visitors, music, food, and art products, observation of commercial Mardi Gras Indian music bands
April 16	Wedding second line	Witnessed a second line for a the celebration of a wedding along St. Charles Avenue, the bridal pair and its family was white
April 18	Bourbon Street	Observations along Bourbon Street
April 22	Single Ladies Second Line, uptown	Participation and observation of the 15th anniversary second line parade of the Single Ladies Social Aid and Pleasure Club, uptown
April 22	Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday, Westbank	Observation of many Mardi Gras Indian tribes parading through the streets of Westbank, seemingly the biggest Super Sunday event with a stage, rapping musicians, and BBQ in the park at the end of the event
April 26	La Belle Gallerie Second Line	Witnessed a second line organised for the opening event of an art gallery in the French Quarter with high participation of tourists and gallery visitors
April 28	Jazz and Heritage Festival	Volunteering at the Moisant Kiwanis beer booth, participating at the various festival events, observation of second lines and parading Mardi Gras Indians, festgoers and listeners of concerts, visit of the several "cultural exchange tents"; listening to interviews of musicians in the fairgrounds internal area
April 30	Instruments A Comin' Benefit Concert and Outdoor Festival	Witnessed and observed the event Instruments A Comin', the battle of marching bands on Napoleon Avenue, organised by the Tipitina's Foundation
May 3	World Cultural Economy Forum	Participation at the Forum held in the Ritz-Carlton hotel, organised by the Mayor's Office of the city of New Orleans, conversations with cultural tourism consultants to the city, listening to the presentation of cultural tourism products offered in the city based on the cultural economy industry
May 5	Jazz and Heritage Festival	Volunteering at the Moisant Kiwanis beer booth, observation at the "cultural exchange pavillon" of an Indian practice of the Creole Osceola Mardi Gras Indian tribe, participation at second lines, observation of festgoers, focusing on food stands, artisanry and music products
May 14	Visit of the Costumes, Textiles and Carnival Collection Archive of the Louisiana State Museum	Interview with its curator Wayne Phillips and continuous guided tour through the archive
May 20	Second Line of the Divine Ladies Social Aid and Pleasure Club	Participation and observation of the second line parading through the uptown area
May 26 and 27	Bayou Boogaloo Festival	Visit and observation at the festival in the Mid-city area, observation of the performance of Chuck Perkins and traditional Mardi Gras Indians music (non commercial)
June 4	Visit of the Historic New Orleans Collection	Interview with historian John Magill and continuous guided tour

June 4	Visit of the Louisiana State museum in the Presbytere	Interview with the marketing director Arthur Smith and continuous guided tour in the museum
June 22	Head-washing Vodou Ceremony	Participation and observation of the head-washing Vodou ceremony carried out by Manbo Sallie, active participation at the baptising ceremony in the lobby of the International House Hotel
June 23	St. John's Eve Vodou ceremony	Participation and observation at the public Vodou ceremony for St. John's Eve in Mid-city park
Second research period April - July 2013		
April 2	Arrival in the field	
April 12 and 14	French Quarter Festival	Observation of the performance of Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr. and the Wild Magnolias and other gigs, observation of food, art, and music product stands, as well as the festgoers, Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra
April 14	Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday Downtown, 7th Ward	Mardi Gras Indian tribes, among them Creole Osceola with Queen Kelly, parading through the 7th Ward, ends at Hardin Park
April 21	Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday at Westbank	The parade already ended when I arrived, witnessing many NOPD officers and racing police cars, participants advising me to "go home" and leave the area
April 25	Protest second line	Participation at the protest second line in support of music venues and musicians in the Bywater-Marigny area, walk from Mimi's club up to St. Roch tavern, mostly white locals participated at the event which was accompanied by amateur musicians
April 26	Sync-up Conference	Visit of the conference which is held on the mornings of the Jazz and Heritage Festival, listening to presentations and discussions of musicians, producers, event organisers, talent bookers, and music labels, presentation of innovative ideas to boost the music industry in New Orleans
April 27	Jazz and Heritage Festival	In the morning, participation at the Sync-up Conference, in the afternoon and evening volunteering at the Moisant Kiwanis beer booth, observation of second lines and Mardi Gras Indians, meeting with Queen Kelly and walking along with her on the fairgrounds
April 28	Jazz and Heritage Festival	Volunteering at the Moisant Kiwanis beer booth, meeting with Helen Regis and drawing of a festival map for her research project, observation of second lines and Mardi Gras Indians music performances, local jazz and brass bands
April 30	Observation of museums	Visit of the Backstreet Cultural Museum, the historic museum at the Old US Mint, Museum of the Free People of Colour
May 8	MACCNO meeting	Participation at the meetings of MACCNO with several bar owners and musicians discussing about the noise

		ordinance
May 9	Jazz in the park	Witnessed the Memorial Jazz funeral for Pat Evens
May 11	Vodou Wedding	Vodou wedding ceremony in the peristil of Manbo Sallie
May 12	Mother's Day second line by the Big Seven Social Aid and Pleasure Club	Participation and observation at the second line which was stopped after a shooting, happening in the 7th Ward
May 14	NOTMC marketing presentation	Participation at the presentation of the new followyournola tourism marketing event organised by NOTMC, conversations with city officials and tourism industry managers
May 15	MACCNO meeting	Participation at the meetings of MACCNO with several bar owners and musicians discussing about the noise ordinance
May 19	Bike second line	Observation of the bike second line organised by a non-profit organisation around the Mid-city area
May 19	Bayou Boogaloo festival	Observation and visit of the festival in the Mid-city area, witnessed traditional non-commercial Mardi Gras Indian music, focus on music, food, and art products
May 25	Vodou Ceremony	Participation at a Vodou ceremony in Manbo Sallie's peristil with following procession to the Mississippi river for worshipping
May 31	Visit of the New Orleans Afro-American Museum	Interview with the museum director and guided tour of the museum (which was closed for renovations) in accompany with its director and manager Essence Edwards-Burd
June 5	Visit of the House of Dance and Feathers	Interview with its founder Ronald Lewis and guided tour in the museum
June 6	Cultural Progress Panel	Participation at the discussion about cultural progress in New Orleans at Tulane University with famous musicians, scholars, journalists and a representative of the hospitality industry
June 15 and 16	Zydeco-Cajun festival at the Old Mint	Observation at the festival in the Old US Mint building, visit of presentations and interviews with traditional zydeco musicians
June 16	Creole Tomato Festival	Visit and observation of the food festival happening right next to the zydeco-cajun music festival

## 2. Description of the case study in New Orleans

*"New Orleans has always been on sale"* (interview 57) was one of the first replies during a meeting with Connie Atkinson, professor at the University of New Orleans - the Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies, giving me the feeling that I have arrived in the right city for doing research about the commodification of culture. Tourism and the consumption of cultural performances have always been playing a major role in the city and have impacted the place somehow. The works of historians, sociologists, anthropologists and cultural geographers such as Campanella (2008; 2013), Gotham (2008), Ostendorf (2013), Powell (2012), Sakakeeny (2011; 2013), Souther (1971; 2007), Stanonis (2006), among others, do contribute to the discussion of this topic from a historical and cultural point of view as well as from a socio-economic and urban development perspective.

While there are many reasons why a city and its population are subject to change over time all of the above mentioned researchers do investigate these factors and its consequences within their academic discipline giving valuable input to my own analysis. The tourism-anthropological perspective presents a detailed insight into processes and mechanisms of the upper- und sub-cultural layers of the city and its present transformation due to the rising influence of the tourism industry.

The decision for selecting New Orleans as the destination for the present case study research is based on two principal factors: the thriving tourism industry and the vast offer of intangible cultural heritage assets for tourism consumption. Both of these factors are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The thriving tourism industry can be shortly described with the total of tourist arrivals and the economic impact. In the case of New Orleans this would result in 9.01 million tourist arrivals in 2012 and around US\$ 6 billion of tourist spending in the same year, pushing the city into the top 10 ranking of the world's most popular tourism destinations.

The description of the vast offer of intangible cultural heritage assets instead needs more detailed explanation. As a matter of fact New Orleans is not on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites which does not say anything about the cultural "significance" of the destination. Hence, the city does not benefit from the international marketing campaign of the UNESCO label

and cannot apply for any funds concerning potential preservation activities. Nevertheless, the city welcomes a big amount of visitors per year who are demandingly seeking for "unique" cultural experiences.

The international wave of interest in cultural tourism in New Orleans did not arrive since hurricane Katrina in 2005 but already in the early 1800s. A time when three colonial Empires, France, Spain, and Anglo-America, were influencing the territory culturally and administratively. Sailors, the former business tourists, were impressed by the infinite entertainment possibilities such as music, girls, food and alcohol. European immigrants and investors certainly contributed to the emergence of a masked ball culture starting in 1803, the early parades on Mardi Gras Day starting officially in 1833 and resulting in the first organised Carnival parade of the Mystick Krewe of Comus in 1857 awaking interest of more visitors. If not to say that these big parades and associated balls were supposed to attract visitors and were hence originally geared towards tourism.

Today there are around 52 officially parading krewes during the Carnival weeks until Mardi Gras Day. Second lines (organised by Afro-American second line clubs or Social Aid and Pleasure clubs), jazz funerals, and parades of Mardi Gras Indians have also developed over centuries. The music industry with its live performances in bars, venues, at proper festivals, and on the streets is responsible for more than 82 gigs per day on average (City of New Orleans, 2012). Dance and theatrical performances, Carnival balls, spiritual ceremonies of Vodou and other religions, as well as food and neighbourhood festivals, sport events, supported by more than 500 culinary enterprises and around 1.000 visual artists and craftspeople do count as intangible heritage assets for the cultural tourism products in New Orleans.

In order to have a more detailed insight into the development of the different cultural and artistic expressions I will describe the historical and cultural evolution of New Orleans. This is followed by an introduction into the emergence of the local tourism industry and a short analysis of its current situation. Subsequently, I will outline the strong collaboration of the tourism sector with the cultural sector as defined by the city of New Orleans which also serves as an introduction into the analysis of commodification of the living cultural heritage assets.



## Entering the field in New Orleans

*"New Orleans is not the Southernmost North American city but the Northernmost city of the Caribbean"* (OSTENDORF, 2013)

The city of New Orleans, lovely called by its various nicknames "The Big Easy", "The Crescent City", "NOLA" (an abbreviation for New Orleans, LouisiAna), and in contemporary times most popularly the "Who Dat" city (WALTON, 2012), is locally referred to as the capital of the Caribbean. This is due to various reasons beginning with the constellation of the population (according to the US 2010 Census there are 60.2% Afro-Americans, 33% White and at least 5.2% with Hispanic or Latino origin), the proud rumor of being a pirate destination because of its historic past as a major port city in the Gulf region, and the Creole influence in life, language and local cuisine. Other motives why New Orleans deserves the depiction of being a Caribbean city are its abundant urban jungle like vegetation and heavy rain falls, the colourful French and Spanish architecture of wooden houses and mansions, but most importantly the life-style of its inhabitants - characterised through an open-minded and smooth approach of achieving daily missions, which are attributed more significance than past actions or future accomplishments.

But New Orleans is also the place of periodically appearing devastating natural catastrophes, one of those hit the city back in 2005. Many residents who had fled the day before Katrina touched the ground has not returned yet. The urban infrastructural recovery process is somehow at the same pace as the process of repopulation. There are resettlement programmes for non-natives with tax refund incentives for investment in housing or start-up businesses. Native New Orleanians are usually attracted by something else when finding the way back to their location of origin - by their cultural identity with the place.

One might argue that US Americans generally carry a big portion of national identity with them which can be easily observed at annual festivities for independence or new year's day. But all this publicly displayed identification with stars and stripes of the US American Nation is expressed by New Orleanians on a local level. For example, instead of decorating houses, gardens, and cars with the colours of red-white-blue at public or private celebrations the "NOLA" pride is expressed through dipping all these assets into the traditional gold-purple-green colours of their local Mardi Gras festivities.

The topic of local identity is combined with the fact that New Orleans has always been proud of its cultural distinction from the rest of the country which is due to historical, geographical and socio-cultural factors. The geographer Pierce Lewis explained the evolution of the individual New Orleans identity with the following phrase:

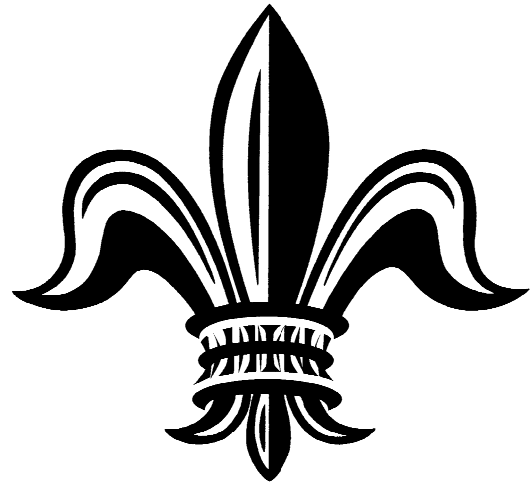
*"For most of its history, New Orleans was an island, protected against national fads by the insulating swamps, by Creole aloofness, by poverty, by a host of natural and artificial devices which kept the world at arm's length. Over that long time, New Orleans has had the leisure to plant and nurture the special qualities that made it a fine city"* (In: ROGERS, 2011: 49).

A major sign of demarcation from the rest of the USA is visibly expressed with the ever present emblem of the "fleur de lys" - existing in various forms (i.e. body tattoos), at any place (on house doors, street cars and license plates, flags, accessories, clothes, etc.). The symbol of the flower of the lily has traditionally been used to represent French Royalty, it is said to signify perfection, light, and life, and has as such arrived in the city when it was founded by the French Mississippi Company. Since 1967 it has been the uniform emblem of the local Football Team, the New Orleans Saints, and its importance has been growing especially after hurricane Katrina. As I could observe citywide, the residents and those who cared for them and the city declared it as a common sign for representing strength, power and the collective wish to rebuild the city, a symbol showing the tangible and intangible support for the structural and cultural recovery, a signal of a common social bond and likeness for achieving the rebirth of New Orleans.

Figure 1: Fleur de lys



Fleur de Lys as used by the New Orleans Saints  
(Source: New Orleans Saints)



Fleur de Lys as used by the City  
Government (Source: City of New  
Orleans)

### **Abstract of the historical and cultural evolution**

Berndt Ostendorf describes New Orleans as a "*Caribbean Metropolis of the Senses. ... where culture can literally be felt and touched*" (p. 15). Since one cannot appreciate its *urban space of the senses* without comprehending the historical layers, I will introduce to the "making of" New Orleans by giving a short historical background of what is now the "rich cultural gumbo", as locals use to call the Creole fusion of languages, cuisines, folks, music, dances, *savoir vivre*, cultural practices, and artistic expressions.

Founded by the French in 1718 *Nouvelle Orléans* was ceded to Spain in 1766 under which rule it enjoyed a crucial phase of growth. The old town burnt down twice in 1788 and 1794 and was rebuilt with Spanish architectural design, despite of that the old city centre is known as the French Quarter today. Spain had little interest in developing Louisiana, conceiving it primarily as a buffer-zone to protect Central American colonies against encroachment by the British and, after 1783, by the US. Since Spain exerted little cultural influence over Louisiana its population was able to maintain French habits, language, religion, and customs (STANONIS, 2006: 3).

The territory was finally bought by the United States with the famous real estate transaction, the Louisiana Purchase, in 1803 for around US\$ 15 million and included the Western part of the continent up to the Rockies. Within less than 100 years the city was already based on three layers of colonial practice forming a public space of different laws, customs, and habits. The three centres of colonial power, France, Spain, and England, brought to their colonial periphery three different systems of governance, bureaucracy, architectural public and urban space systems, slavery and racial behaviours, as well as distinctive culinary and religious traditions. A mix of contradictory state governance and cultural practices is the outcome of this period resulting in today's basis for racial issues, development of Caribbean cultural and social practices, as well as an *ethno-nostalgic heritage*.

New Orleans was furthermore highly affected by three historical revolutions. The French revolution (1789) brought in a respectful number of foreign French and the Haitian revolution (1791-1804) was responsible for doubling the population just within a decade. Despite the modernisation and structuring of New Orleans in an American way after the purchase the French and Creole cultural identity was defensively reaffirmed. The topic of civil rights was introduced differently with each revolution. For the *gens de couleur libres* the American Revolution and Constitutional Rights were only a theoretical promise to freedom. Practically, New Orleans became the most important port of slave trade in America. Discrimination and a strict bi-colour segregation was rudely introduced and had its peak after the Supreme Court decision against Homer Plessy. A New Orleans Creole who committed to the universalism of the French and Haitian revolution, the time when black slaves could buy their own freedom to become Free People of Colour, and when Creoles and whites lived in harmony and respected each other. He gave his name to the case of Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896, a case that Creoles pushed back disastrously in terms of racial practice. Plessy, a highly educated and influential man was fighting the ongoing discrimination and segregation - because New Orleans was not used to having these issues. The overall consensus of the Supreme Court was the national law confirming that whites wanted to be segregated from blacks and that the same law has to be enforced also in New Orleans.

New Orleans counted an average population of 10.000 inhabitants and the highest number of free blacks in North-America by the time of the Louisiana Purchase. Blacks could buy their freedom with the money they made from growing agricultural products and doing work for constructing houses, as a carpenter, painter, or with other craft services. During Spanish rule,

the term *coartación*, an expression used when slaves could buy their freedom, was a common word. This had its origins at the beginning of the plantation economy in Louisiana when its business was not as productive and successful as in other colonies. Slave owners had to cut expenses on their workers and allowed them to plant their own provisions, develop small markets to sell their goods (on Congo Square), or to hire themselves out as craftsmen. In fact, slaves had to work from Monday to Friday and were off on weekends when they could look after their goal to achieve material independence from the masters (OSTENDORF, 2013).

Europeans were a minority in the city at the beginning of the 19th century. The majority constituted a diverse group of individuals, all of whom were descended, at least in part, from the Africans. On the one side there were the *gens de colour libres*, most of them were of mixed European and African ancestry. Many of these individuals were highly educated, owned property such as houses, land, and enjoyed a life of style and leisure. Consequently, they formed a coloured Creole community that was similar in the culture to the white Creoles (JACOBS, 1991). On the other hand, there were the slaves, some African, some West Indian, and others American-born. Among both the free and enslaved groups were large numbers of exiles and refugees from the Haitian revolution. Most of them were planters and merchants and were quickly integrated into the social and cultural life of the region.

Slavery in New Orleans was necessarily different from that on the plantations. Rather than having large concentrations in any one owner's hands, the predominant form of ownership in the city was for individuals or families. While some were domestic servants, others were skilled laborers such as blacksmiths, masons, and carpenters, who leased themselves out for hire and returned a portion of their earning to their owners. City authorities who were responsible for maintaining levees and construction roads, wharfs, and public buildings also purchased the labour of slaves, who might work alongside people who were free. What developed was a relatively flexible situation in which slaves generally had contact with a variety of people and a degree of physical mobility of "freedom". In this varied and flexible setting opportunities arose for blacks to become involved in different forms of cultural life, *magico-religious* activities, languages, cuisines, and artistic expressions such as music and dances together with francophone Creoles from the Caribbean.

By 1860, the population had risen to more than 100.000 (OSTENDORF, 2013) and the city inherited the highest percentage of foreign-born white persons of any urban area in America

(POWELL, 2012). German, Irish, and Italian (mainly from Sicily) workers made up most of the new population leading New Orleans to be the second largest immigration port after New York City. The Afro-Hispanic-French Creole traditions were super-imposed by the Anglo-American system of economy, and a new racial order with the so-called *one-drop rule*. Social conflicts and cultural problems between the old inhabitants of Creoles and Blacks who were not used to an industrial and manufacturing economy came up with the new immigrants. Black and white craftsmen and traders competed for the same jobs resulting in inter-racial contacts and issues. A two decade lasting political division of the city into three municipalities started in 1836. The American municipality, today's Central Business District, one for the Creole population in the French Quarter and the Faubourg Tremé, and a third district for an *ethnic mix* in Faubourg Marigny and the Bywater. After the American Civil War (1861-1865) between the northern Union and the southern Confederence which resulted in the abolition of slavery New Orleans received a massive amount of immigrants of former slaves from neighbouring states such as Mississippi, Alabama and the Carolina states. Until today, this division in the black population between well-educated Creole-Catholic-francophone blacks (downtown: French Quarter, Treme) and simple, not-educated, Afro-American Protestant blacks (uptown: Garden District) is impacting cultural practices and politics (OSTENDORF, 2013).

New Orleans' economy was always closely bound to the sea and the river port. This dual role had not only economic but also cultural ramifications. The seaport was the Atlantic gate for hemispheric networking with Europe, Africa and the Caribbean islands. The harbor was the place where New Orleans got connected with America and sailors were the figures of cultural exchange.

Since the early 20th century the city was economically based on the chemical and petroleum industry after the discovery of oil and its extraction. By World War II, New Orleans had established itself as a hub for military shipbuilding and manufacturing so that the city's economy was based on three major pillars by the middle of the century: oil industry, port industry and the tourism industry.

In the 1970s container ships substituted the work force of thousands of port workers and the Mississippi port was pushed into a steep decline. Access for supertankers was increasingly more difficult on the river. Recreating the port's strength with Caribbean tourist cruise liners is one of the strategies for bringing back its economic significance.

Throughout the centuries the local economy was always dominated by a few commodities. While it was mainly sugar in the 18th century, cotton in the 19th, it was oil in the 20th century. In the 21st century, the main commodities of New Orleans' economy are international tourists and national visitors - being shipped in and out at the port by cruise liners, transported at the airport, or arriving individually by train and automobile - and its local culture. Just as New Orleans was exposed to the earliest version of globalisation, with ships bringing manufactured goods or immigrants from Europe and returning with cotton and sugar, it is also exposed to the a rather recent form of it - the mass tourism industry.

Today New Orleans is the biggest city in the state of Louisiana, and home to almost 360.000 residents (US 2010 Census, estimation for 2011<sup>9</sup>) with the highest number of native citizens in the USA - a total of 73.1% was born in the state of Louisiana<sup>10</sup>. According to the US 2000 Census that percentage was even as high as 77.4%<sup>11</sup>. We have to keep in mind though that after the devastating natural catastrophe of hurricane Katrina (August 2005) the population decreased by more than 50%<sup>12</sup>.

## **2.1. Tourism in New Orleans - now and then**

Tourism has been playing an important role for New Orleans since the early 19th century. As river-based commerce and cotton trade dominated the New Orleans economy, a growing market for leisure and amusement developed through the transfers of people experiencing the city's entertainment supply. This contained public parks, theatres, art galleries, betting at sports grounds, shopping but also the music performance sector. The city's "red light" district, prostitution, live music such as jazz, and the cultural mix of whites (mainly from Spain, France and Italy), free people of colour and slaves, left an indelible image in the minds of business and leisure visitors and served for decades as a magnet to draw people to experience the "sin" industry. Jazz bands entertaining passengers on steamboats up and down the Mississippi river through the US were part of the early marketing campaigns dragging people's interest in visiting

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<sup>9</sup> source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/22/2255000.html>, retrieved in November 2012

<sup>10</sup> source: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>, retrieved in November 2012; the number refers to the five year estimation for the period between 2006 and 2010 with a total population of 295.285.

<sup>11</sup> source: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>, retrieved in November 2012, the percentage of 77.4% refers to a total population of 484.674 residents.

<sup>12</sup> US Census estimation for the population in July 2006 is 223.000 residents.

New Orleans and listening to live music - these floating stages happened to be stepping stones for the international fame of many musicians, one of them was Louis Armstrong.

When captains, sailors and workers of ships arrived in New Orleans to unload their goods the men were compensated for their hard labour. Most of the money was instantly spent on entertainment activities. This sector developed quickly and the resident businesses such as hotels, taverns, restaurants, bars, theatres, music venues, and strip clubs collaborated closely with individual entertainers and musicians. The city's entertainment industry was primarily based on the consumption of alcoholic beverages such as rum, accompanied with live music on the streets, up to the many courtesan houses in Storyville. Hence, tourism was a by-product for New Orleans being a commercial town for centuries.

One of my interlocutors, Kevin Fontenot, explained this development with the following statement: *"... the history of New Orleans is and was always combined with the open and more tolerant exotic Latin place of the US - while the rest of the US was conservative - it was a place where something else could be experienced, today this is perceived as tourism!"* (interview 11).

New Orleans and other north American cities attempted to attract visitors by creating annual festivities. In the 1850s, Mardi Gras appeared in New Orleans with krewes organising the Carnival show and constructing extravagant floats. Similar carnival events were held in southern cities up to the North in Washington but did last only for a couple of years. The Mardi Gras parades enjoyed nation wide coverage in newspapers which emphasised its regional importance but also published a romanticised image of the city. The arrival of tourists forced the city's regional influence. Between the decades of 1890 and 1910 New Orleans tourism mainly depended on the Carnival floats and on male travellers drawn to Storyville, the city's district of courtesans.

Beginning in the 1870s urban businessmen in Louisiana started to offset the negative image of built environment within cities by hosting national expositions highlighting the emergence of urban centres as tourist destinations. New Orleans hosted the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in 1884 which helped the city to market itself as a perfect destination. This was a way of tourism marketing without placing the city itself at the centre of attention, free of the slum conditions and social tensions that marred the surrounding urban environment (STANONIS, 2006: 15). The initial reason for staging the Exposition was to commemorate the



100th anniversary of the first shipment of cotton from the United States to Europe in 1784. Cotton production and distribution had been a mainstay of the New Orleans and Louisiana economy from the 18th century onward. The 1884 Exposition reflected and reinforced the city's growing reputation as a place of paradox and irony - on the one hand it was promoted as a place of irresistible charm, on the other hand the Exposition was plagued with financial difficulties, just a few international exhibitors, and as a consequence it suffered from low attendance. Nevertheless, it was a significant undertaking and represents a major turning point in the history of New Orleans as a tourist destination. 24 steamship and steamboat lines, 9 railroads, 13 hotels and other industries stimulated travel, making arrivals easier, stays more comfortable, and trips more affordable (GOTHAM, 2007).

The Exposition played a major role in raising public interest in local culture and focusing international attention on New Orleans as a place of leisure and exoticism. A series of a loose network of groups with interest in promoting urban tourism got connected, among them especially the railroad, steamboat, and hospitality industry as well as guidebook publishers. Writers such as Lafcadio Hearn (1878), William H. Coleman (1885), and George Washington Cable (1886) constructed New Orleans as a place of mystery, romance, beauty, and rich history to captivate and attract visitors to the city. In particular, the fictional publications of Cable and Hearn communicated a stereotypical image of New Orleans as a place of promiscuity, naughtiness, and exaggerated partying, images that would become part of the visitor's and reader's impressions about the city. For example, Hearn's descriptions about masquerade balls of the political and economic elites during Mardi Gras, trivial essays and newspaper articles about Louisiana Voodoo, as well as books about Creole proverbs and the Cuisine Créole in 1885 helped create the popular reputation of New Orleans as a distinct culture, seemingly closer to that of Europe and the Caribbean than to the rest of North America. Railroad companies and guidebook publishers complemented the place-making work of the mentioned writers framing social conditions and assigning meaning to New Orleans. Advertising and promotional efforts also played a major role in broadcasting the elite Carnival krewes of Comus, Momus, Proteus, and Rex as the cultural leaders and the dominant signifiers of the "real" Mardi Gras celebrations (GOTHAM, 2007). The mentioned krewes were the only krewes that existed around that time in New Orleans, each krewe invented new traditions and assets that would make Mardi Gras more interesting, as explained in the description of the carnival. This variety of literary images and slogans applied to New Orleans became commodified and were incorporated in books, movies, advertising, and other video and print media. The many Hollywood-produced movies that have

portrayed New Orleans as the location of unusual wickedness or sin - movies like *Angel Heart* (PARKER, 1987), *Interview with the Vampire* (RICE, 1976), *Walk on the Wild Side* (ALGREN, 1956), *King Creole* (ROBBINS, 1952), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (WILLIAMS, 1947) - have prepared the visitor for preconceived notions of the city as a place veiled in mystery (ATKINSON, 2006).

The first modern strategies to increase tourism influx and spending volume in New Orleans came up during the 1950s, when city officials and elites tried to enhance the economic prosperity of the central city (SMITH, 1986). Due to a dwindling urban population, the eroding manufacturing base, and burgeoning suburban development in the 1960s city leaders were afraid of economic stagnation and started investments into a structured development of the local tourism sector (GOTHAM; 2007: 14).

Beginning in this period, political and economic elites established close institutional links and developed several public-private partnerships in pursuit of tourism as a strategy to encourage inward investment and urban revitalisation. In terms of tangible assets this included the building of a domed stadium (1971-1975), the fifth largest convention centre in the US (1978), many office towers in the Central Business District, museums (i.e. the National World War II museum), and other tourism entertainment infrastructure such as a theme park and a festival mall. The city has started to stage several mega-events such as the World Fair in 1984, periodically it hosted Super Bowl and Sugar Bowl sport events, nation-wide basketball tournaments, the Jazz and Heritage Festival (starting in 1969), the French Quarter Festival (starting in 1984), the Essence Music Festival (starting in 1995), and others dragging niche tourism markets to visit New Orleans.

The hotel and hospitality industry has also grown considerably over the past few decades, as indicated by the impressive number of hotel rooms in the central city area. While in 1960 New Orleans had a receptive capacity of 4,750 hotel rooms, this number increased to around 25,500 rooms in 1990 and rose up to more than 37,000 as of 2012<sup>13</sup>.

New Orleans has been focusing its tourism business on the convention and conference market from its beginnings and counted 172 conventions in 1960. The market has grown immensely up to an amount of 1.453 convention events in 1990 and achieved a total of 3.556 conventions in

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<sup>13</sup> Source: <http://www.neworleanscvb.com/visit/faq/>, retrieved in June 2012.

the year 2000<sup>14</sup>. The general convention attendance increased more than twenty times from 1960 to 2001, which reflects the growth of a tourism infrastructure of hotel and other types of hospitality accommodations, restaurants (around 1.340 restaurants as of 2012)<sup>15</sup> and bars, casinos, festival and event promotions, university programmes in tourism management, service, and hospitality, professional sports, and similar. Another important step for tourism increase not only in the New Orleans area but in the whole state of Louisiana was the legalisation of gaming in the 1990's, as well as the establishment of public and private tourism management institutions such as the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation (NOTMC), the creation of the New Orleans Multicultural Tourism Network (NOMTN), the Mayor's Office of Tourism and Arts, as well as the expansion of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau's (NOCVB) effort to market the city and region predominantly to international business tourist groups. These institutions will be presented and their actions analysed with more detail in the upcoming chapters.

In 2012 New Orleans officially hosted 9.01 million visitors (keep in mind the number of the population which is around 360.000)<sup>16</sup> with a total spending volume of US\$ 6 billion.<sup>17</sup> The total spending volume of domestic and international visitors to the state of Louisiana was around US\$ 9.3 billion in 2010.<sup>18</sup> Hence, more than 60% of tourism dollars in Louisiana were generated in the city of New Orleans.

According to the city Government and the NOCVB the hospitality industry is the city's largest employer with a work force of around 74.000 jobs - these numbers give evidence that the city is heavily dependent on its tourism sector concerning tax income and job creation since big industry enterprises (especially in the chemical and petroleum business) left the destination, mainly to the neighbouring state Texas.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Figures on the growth in number of hotel rooms and conventions come from the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitor Bureau (NOMCVB), the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, the New Orleans Aviation Board, the Louisiana Office of Tourism, the U.S. Travel Data Center, and the Louisiana Hotel-Motel Association

<sup>15</sup> Source: <http://www.nomenu.com>, retrieved in April 2013.

<sup>16</sup> US 2010 Census, estimation for 2011, source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/22/2255000.html>, retrieved in November 2012

<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://www.neworleanscvb.com/visit/faq/>, retrieved in April 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Louisiana Tourism Fact Sheet, 2010

<sup>19</sup> Source: [http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2012/03/new\\_orleans\\_tourism\\_breaks\\_rec.html](http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2012/03/new_orleans_tourism_breaks_rec.html), retrieved in April 2013. And <http://www.neworleanscvb.com/visit/faq/>, retrieved in April 2013.

The major income of the tourism industry derives from the hospitality and accommodation sector, the entertainment sector including music clubs and casinos, as well as the culinary sector with restaurants and bars. Alcohol consumption in the public and seemingly legal prostitution are highly appreciated by tourists and rated as important attraction factors for spending one's holidays in New Orleans.

## **2.2. The tourism sector and the cultural sector in New Orleans**

The tourism industry needs products to attract tourists - and in order to be profitable enough these products must be promoted attractively to make the tourists spend their money. When it comes to tangible assets, New Orleans does not offer many single attractive sights. Physical heritage is present with the homogeneous Louisiana architectural style of single and multi-family residence houses and villas which are of particular interest to visitors. Since New Orleans lacks in appealing single physical assets like famous buildings, monuments (no Empire State building or Golden Gate Bridge) or nature settings (no Grand Canyon) it is the local intangible cultural assets that are promoted on the global tourism market. The promotion is primarily done by three marketing offices which are dedicated to increasing the number of visitors to the city. The private but publicly funded (by an additional hotel occupancy tax of hospitality businesses which are situated in the Entertainment Zone, the larger extent of the French Quarter) New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation (NOTMC, 2013) is tasked with attracting leisure travellers to the city; the private New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau (NOCVB, 2013) with bringing in large groups for business meetings; and the New Orleans Multicultural Tourism Network (aka Soul of New Orleans) with marketing New Orleans as a "multi-everything" destination for "*multicultural visitation*" (NOMTN, 2013), hence focused on US African-American tourists. Music festivals, carnival parades, local food, as well as the "*uniqueness and the authenticity*" of the place are the most promoted cultural products by the various tourism agencies.

Additional to the destination marketing with cultural products New Orleans has a public institution with the mission of leveraging the "*innovative and entrepreneurial nature of cultural economy development to achieve deeper outcomes across city projects and priorities.*"<sup>20</sup> In other words, this entity supports businesses of culturally related activities to get linked with the tourism industry and other profit-making sectors. The *Cultural Economy Initiative* starting in 2004, managed by the city Government's Office of the Mayor and launched by its present

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<sup>20</sup> Source: Mission statement on <http://www.nola.gov/cultural-economy/>, retrieved in April 2013.

Mayor, is focused on creating *"opportunities and systems that enable true economic activity and growth for cultural economy stakeholders and the public."*<sup>21</sup> It furthermore calculates the economic impact of the cultural industries in order to discover more potentially contributing businesses. The generated dollars of the cultural economy in New Orleans are primarily from businesses within the US, of focus industries such as the filming and recording industry.

In 2005, a comprehensive report about the cultural economy in the state of Louisiana with the promising and appealing title "Louisiana: Where Culture Means Business" was released. The study was produced by a contracted consultancy firm (Mt. Auburn Associates) to generate data about how many people are employed in the cultural economy sector and how much its income contributes to the city and state tax offices (about 144.000 jobs or 7.6% of the employment base were created within the cultural economy in the state of Louisiana in 2005, almost the half of it was measured in the culinary sector). Furthermore, the present status of potential and expanding possibilities within the six cultural economy segments - Culinary Arts, Design, Entertainment, Literary Arts and Humanities, Preservation, and Visual Arts and Crafts<sup>22</sup> - was calculated. More recent data concerning New Orleans are given in the following paragraphs.

Since 2010 the responsible office in the cultural capital city is publishing a report called "The Cultural Economy Snapshot" approaching a quantitative analysis of all aspects of the cultural economy; hence, expressing the economic impact of culture with numbers. As stated in the edition of 2012 the cultural sector was one of the few industries to experience positive employment growth between 2011 and 2012 and drives the city's tourism industry. In order to produce and sell these products there are more than 32.400 jobs associated directly with enterprises in the cultural sector. This number represents 13.8% of the total workforce in New Orleans and means an increase of 7% of cultural jobs compared to 2011. The city counted 1.722 cultural businesses in 2012, a number that is steadily rising. These are ranging from cooking schools, restaurants, art galleries, and architects; to independent press, music venues, specialty plasterers, and graphic design firms. As stated in the report, all the mentioned businesses contributed US\$ 68.5 million in sales taxes to the City of New Orleans in 2012, funding public services, programmes, infrastructure enhancement and maintenance, which in turn benefit businesses as an indirect impact. The report of the Cultural Economy Initiative also mentions

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Source: <http://www.nola.gov/PRESS/City-Of-New-Orleans/All-Articles/20110506-MAYOR-LANDRIEU-RELEASES-REPORT-ON-CULTURAL-ECONOMY/>, retrieved in April 2013.

that over US\$ 1.1 billion in salaries were paid to New Orleans cultural workers via cultural businesses.

Furthermore, major city events such as the annual Mardi Gras festivities, the Jazz and Heritage Festival, and the French Quarter Festival had an economic impact of US\$ 760.4 million in 2012 and topped the year of 2011 by 3%.<sup>23</sup>

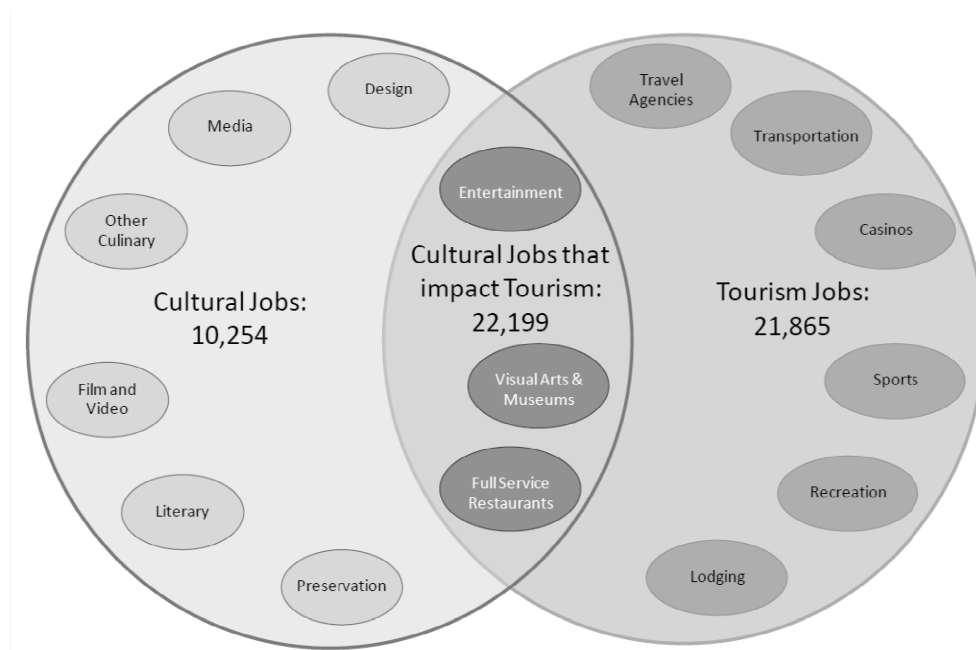
The tourism and cultural sectors are closely linked in New Orleans. Referring to the graph below, these two sectors do overlap in certain categories. Although substantially different by definition and employment, the sectors are increasingly intertwined and contribute to the other's economic success. The cultural businesses do include companies in the sectors of film, media, design, literary, preservation, and culinary. According to the report, cultural jobs added up to 10.254 positions. Although they are not part of the larger tourism industry, these companies are responsible for the basic thriving tourism sector. Direct tourism industry sectors such as hospitality, transportation, tour operators, casinos, sports, and recreation are strictly divided from the cultural economy and amounted to 21.865 jobs in the tourism sector.

The overlapping sectors (somewhere between cultural and tourism related) which are defined as cultural jobs that impact tourism are the entertainment, visual arts and museum, and the full service restaurants sectors - the combined sectors made up the sum of 22.199 jobs in 2012. These are seen as the cultural sectors representing the foundation of what "makes a place creatively and culturally vibrant" (City of New Orleans, 2013: 4) and hence directly attract visitors who are sustaining the tourism industry. While these overlapping sectors are mainly significant for satisfying the tourists' expectations the cultural sectors do contribute the nurturing factor for additional jobs in the tourism sectors such as sightseeing and accommodation facilities.

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<sup>23</sup> Source: Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy (2012) Cultural Economy Snapshot, City of New Orleans.

Figure 2: The tourism and the cultural sector in New Orleans



Source: Cultural Economy Snapshot 2012

The cultural economy initiative does certainly valuable work for the analysis of the collaboration and integration of cultural enterprises into the tourism industry, the film business and the sport events sector. It tries to combine working relationships where both parts can profit from each other primarily in a financial way. The work is focused on the producing and organising cultural enterprises, the culinary sector, entrepreneurs, and single artists such as musicians, dancers, designers, and craftspeople, actors and writers who make a living or at least earn the majority of their income with artistic-cultural professions.

In New Orleans there are many clubs, associations and tribes organising cultural events like parades, dances, concerts, processions, spiritual ceremonies, and mass services. Members of Second Line Clubs, Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, Mardi Gras Indian tribes, groups of spiritual congregations, and others are responsible for the preparation and implementation of the above mentioned activities. The clubs and its members do not financially benefit from the events they are organising. Most of them are either non-profit organisations or not officially registered as any kind of company or association (such as the Mardi Gras Indians or spiritual communities). The financial resources that are collected by fundraising activities and membership fees are spent entirely for the annual parades, ceremonies or other forms of cultural events. These factors make the mentioned cultural groupings less subject for inclusion into the cultural

economy or for collaboration with the tourism industry; the financial value and profit of their events is simply too marginal.

### 2.3. Living cultural heritage in New Orleans

Regarding my definition of living cultural heritage, a concept which is extensively discussed in the theoretical considerations, I selected distinctive cultural elements in the city of New Orleans. These are explained in detail in the present chapter. The final analysis of the commodification process is based on these elements. Due to the big diversity of cultural events and practices the selection was a challenging task.

Concerning the diversity of cultural assets in the city I was eager to group the different events and practices to have a limited number of cultural elements (see table below). This grouping also had the goal to facilitate the communication during interviews so that both interviewer and interlocutor were able to understand each other when talking about the different cultural practices. Since culture is something *organic* (as people in New Orleans like to say), where *everything* is interwoven and constantly changing, it is in fact difficult to draw strict lines between elements and classify them rigidly. In the case of New Orleans this is mostly true for music as it is an integral part for any cultural element - concerts, festivals, parades, second lines, Mardi Gras Indian parades, and religious ceremonies cannot happen without being accompanied by beats, rhythms, lyrics, and melodies played and sung by musicians and percussionists.

Table 4: Living cultural heritage elements in New Orleans

Music genre in general (e.g. live music in bars/venues, street music, church, ...)
Music, food and art festivals (e.g. FQF, Jazz Fest, neighborhood festivals, ...)
Parades (e.g. Mardi Gras, St. Patrick's, Easter, ...)
Second Lines, Jazz Funerals, Mardi Gras Indians
Religion and the belief in the supernatural (Vodou, ...)
Other:

After extensive talks and consultations with my first interlocutors and during initial explorations in the field I decided to group the above mentioned five living cultural heritage elements in order to distinguish the different cultural events and practices. As I wanted to encourage my interlocutors to propose additional elements that they would consider representative for the cultural fabric of the city, I left the option for suggesting an extra element on the questionnaire. The proposed list of elements in the questionnaire was not exhaustive and hence open for individual input.



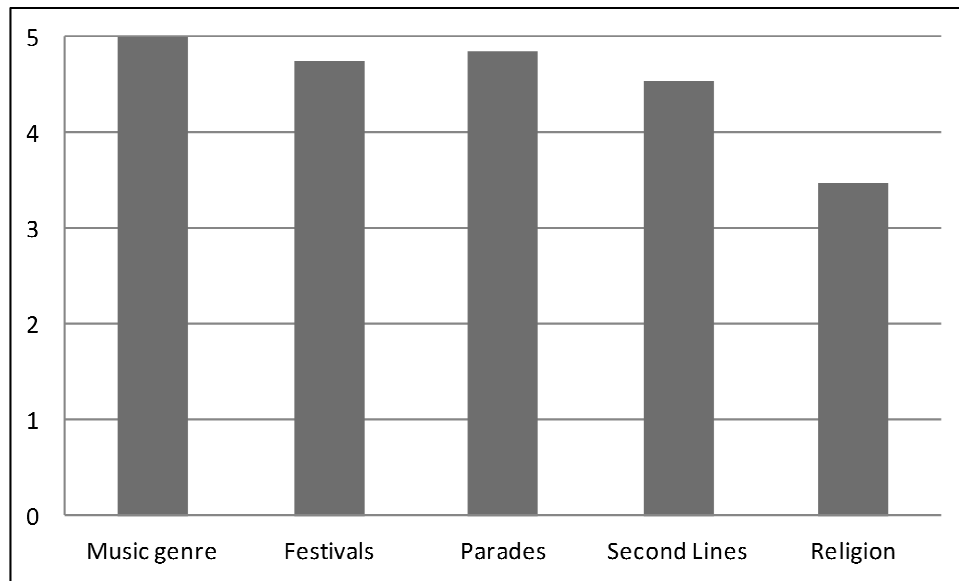
Since participant observation is an important data collection method for this research, it was not enough to identify the different cultural events but also to locate them. In New Orleans, many events are happening in public space defined as "moving events" - and sometimes not even the organisers or participants know exactly where the crowd is supposed to move because the route is a spontaneous thing. Therefore, tracing the various locations of these moving events in order to be able to participate was challenging but exciting.

After the detailed description of the selected living cultural heritage elements I will outline two other attempts of grouping cultural elements in New Orleans at the end of the present chapter. The local tourism industry and the Cultural Economy Initiative do certainly look on the "cultural supply" from another point of view due to their different objectives. While the tourism sector groups the most entertaining and profitable assets, the cultural economy sector concentrates on grouping the elements which can be best analysed in terms of economic impact, job creation and investment possibilities. With these examples I want to make clear that there is no standard classification of cultural elements in New Orleans and that the grouping certainly depends on the interest of analysis. Towards an anthropological analysis of the commodification process I will give an insight into the different perspectives also in the respect of justifying the choice for the cultural elements I selected.

I selected the five elements on the basis of meetings and interviews with local cultural actors, and personal participation at various events. In order to be able to demonstrate that I have chosen the most significant cultural elements for the analysis of my research the opening question to the interlocutors concerned the representativeness of the single elements. In regard to the present thesis a cultural element is representative if (i) it has historically originated at the destination; (ii) it is carried out with the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned, and with their free, prior and informed consent on a regular basis.

Figure 3 gives evidence about the present degree of representativeness of each cultural element expressed by the interlocutors. On a scale between 0 (not representative) and 5 (highly representative) the result of this analysis demonstrates that the selected cultural elements are very significant for the present research. All elements except religion and belief in the supernatural achieved a value of higher than 4.

Figure 3: Representativeness of living cultural heritage elements



Source: Data analysis and elaboration by the author.

### 2.3.1. Music genre

Music in New Orleans cannot be given the same meaning as music in any other place. The performance of music in New Orleans impacts on the decisions of Governments, provokes the proclamation of city ordinances, unites and separates blacks and whites, is responsible for the city's word fame, brings ultimate happiness to everyone even during funerals - and all this has been happening since the French colonial times.

As I have experienced and observed during my two fieldwork periods, music in New Orleans is influencing the people's life style and opinions on a daily basis and is attracting millions of tourists - music is performed at concert venues, in the streets and underneath the I-10, on steamboats, in private houses and is entertaining locals and visitors likewise. Hence, music in New Orleans is more than a combination of notes and a sequence of bars, which are played in a specific rhythm, with certain instruments.

In 1970 Ralph Ellison rhetorically posed the question: is American culture jazz-shaped? His main purpose was to raise awareness about the black impact on white culture but in fact he points out that a certain style of music, claimed to be originated in New Orleans, is influencing the whole population in the US (In: OSTENDORF, 2013).

Music in New Orleans with all its different genres (jazz, Dixie-land, blues, bluegrass, bounce, cajun, gospel, swing, brass, Mardi Gras Indian, rag-time, R'n'B (standing for rhythm and blues), soul, zydeco, etc.) has developed over centuries, it has gone through times of colonialisation, war and slavery, has been influenced by many religions, cultures, languages and races, and has still not ceased its advancement. This development was primarily made possible due to the fact that slaves had their Sundays off. A place called Congo Square was the centre for gatherings where enslaved and free blacks, creoles and whites were drumming, dancing, singing, and playing string and brass instruments. The combination of African-Caribbean percussion and drumming, European melodies, practices of spiritualist churches and congregations, and the common passion for performing music was essential for the different styles of music that evolved in New Orleans. The skills of playing music were passed on by practice from the family and the neighbourhood which acted as teaching assistants. These intangible skills were passed on just like tangible instruments were handed over to the next generations. Musical practice is also held in place by a strong networking of neighbourhood associations. Until today music is not only practiced but also studied on the streets while playing parades and processions and of course on stage of various venues. Musicians in New Orleans are used to play flexibly with many different bands and formations.

When analysing the living cultural heritage element of music I am taking into consideration all kinds of live music performances of any music style in bars, venues, clubs, hotels, and any other place where music is performed live. This includes also performances of street musicians, music in theatres and operas, concerts of special occasions, as well as choirs, orchestras or soloists in the different church congregations. During my time spent in New Orleans I have been listening to around ten gigs per week on average in the various bars, streets, squares, at festivals - additionally I was playing on stage myself weekly.

Due to the big variety of music styles that have been either developed, significantly formed, or that are currently performed in New Orleans I do not go into deeper explanations of these. The local music and culture magazine "Offbeat" lists 52 different categories of music from A like African to Z like Zydeco in its monthly edition.

### **Description and relevance of music in New Orleans**

Music and making music is considered as a professional job, social entertainment, basis for cultural practices, a community activity, expression of political statements, a tool for

constructing identity and negotiating relationships of power, art, and a product for touristic consumption and promotion. Due to its various roles music in New Orleans is monetised, instrumentalised, politicised, and idealised. I recognised these different characteristics of doing, living, and practicing music even more when I was playing on stage myself because this way I got involved in many discussions with other musicians and bar owners. We used to talk about the importance of music in daily life, not only for musicians but also for the societal and political system, as well as the tourism industry, and the locals.

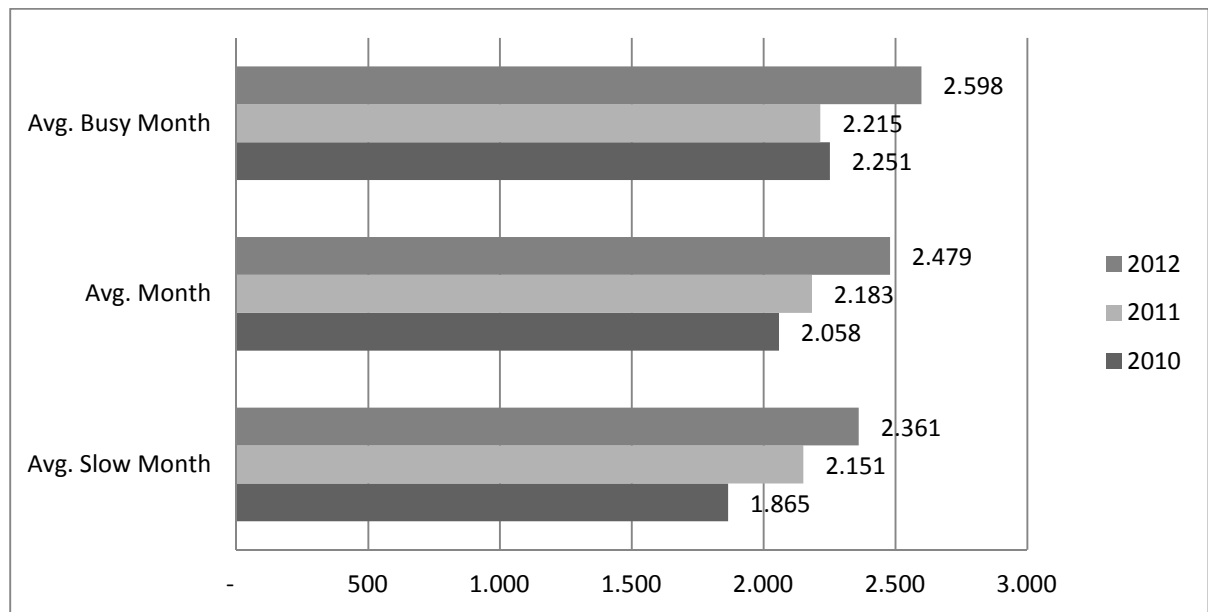
As shown with Figure 3, music is rated with the highest value by all interlocutors. The reasons for the significance of 100% are explained in the following. According to the Cultural Economy Snapshot of 2012 and the Report of Sweet Home New Orleans in 2012, New Orleans is called home for around 4.000 active individual musicians. This number includes native born artists, musicians from different parts of Louisiana and other US states. Additional to this official count of resident musicians there is a non statistically surveyed number of live performers. Those are playing only on a temporary basis and are mainly North-American but also international musicians coming into town for some weeks and/or months during the main festival season between March and July. Furthermore, the number of resident musicians does not include the touring musicians and bands who are shortly performing at big festivals and clubs. The Cultural Economy Snapshot estimated around 24.000 gigs in 2010, and 26.000 gigs in 2011. A large increase of 15%, leading to an estimation of 30.000 gigs, occurred in 2012. This was due to new venues that have opened, but more often, because current venues increased the number of gigs per day and night, especially on the weekend.<sup>24</sup>

**Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** shows the development of average music gigs per month between 2010 and 2012. The data analysed for 2012 shows a small difference of around ten per-cent between the high volume tourism months (considered as busy month in the figure) and lower volume months (considered as slow month).

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<sup>24</sup> In the French Market area live gigs start in the late mornings in various outdoor cafés, while in some bars live music starts sporadically at 13.00 on weekdays especially on Frenchmen Street. Morning gigs are rather usual on weekends for brunch in hotels or designated breakfast locations. Live gigs starting in the afternoon are common on weekend days in the French Quarter, especially on Bourbon Street and also on Frenchmen street. These afternoon live performances which go on until the evening bands start to play are boosting the numbers of live gigs and result in the 15% increase. It is not unusual that bars on the mentioned streets host four to six different bands per day.

Figure 4: Average Music Gigs per Month, 2010-2012



Source: Cultural Economy Snapshot, 2012, Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy

While the snapshot report of 2011 counted 141 entertainment enterprises that were proclaimed as music or performing arts venues, for the following year only 110 entertainment businesses (44% of the total of entertainment businesses in New Orleans as defined by the Cultural Economy Report) were considered as live music venues. The reason for this decrease is not necessarily because the venues closed (or were shut down due to missing live music performance permits) but some venues no longer offered live entertainment or booked it only sporadically so that the report did not consider these venues anymore. Another reason is that restaurants with live music are not considered primarily as entertainment venues but as culinary venues. I have to stress that this number also cuts out hotels and accommodation facilities (hosting gigs mainly during the local festival season or tourism high seasons) which are responsible for a big amount of live performances.

Most of the bars and clubs host local musicians multiple weekdays and weekends. In 2012, the day-average number of live gigs was 70 up to the average number of 119 live gigs during a festival weekend day. Additionally, over 1.057 theatrical performances accompanied with music took place in 2012.

### **2.3.2. Music, food and art festivals**

Falassi (1987) maintains that the social function of a festival is closely related to values that a community regards as essential to its ideology such as social identity, historical continuity, and physical survival. According to Arcodia (2006), a festival revolves around the marking of special occasions and the celebration of significant events. Festivals in New Orleans usually cover a constellation of various events - festivals can be sacred and profane, private and public, following traditions and introducing innovative elements, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of old folk customs, and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts. In New Orleans festivals can be considered as collective celebrations that the local communities wish to share and which involve the public as participants in the experience.

The cultural events classified in this study as festivals include mainly musical performances, local food vendors as well as crafts and art producers. While there is no music festival without booths selling local culinary or any kind of arts produced by New Orleanians, there is neither a food or arts festival without music. These three components are intrinsically linked when it comes to the organisation and the consumption of festivals as I have observed during the fieldwork - a detailed description about my visits and observations at festivals, particularly the Jazz and Heritage Festival as well as the French Quarter Festival is presented in the respective chapter about the commodification of festivals.

Generally, most of the festivals do primarily cater visitors with an extensive offer of musical performances of any style. Such festivals have a duration of one up to seven days and can take place over a time frame of two weeks. Visitor numbers range between several hundred and 600.000 depending on the organiser, the location, the musical offer and the period of time. Some of these festivals were primarily started in order to attract visitors from outside of New Orleans, hence rather strictly for touristic reasons, others have either slowly developed in that direction or are still mainly oriented at entertaining local participants.

### **Description and relevance of festivals in New Orleans**

In 2012, an estimated number of 3.9 million visitors attended around 126 festivals, from Mardi Gras and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival to neighbourhood festivals and green markets.<sup>25</sup> Considering my classification of festivals, the parades before and during Mardi Gras are not included but fall into the cultural element of parades, therefore the estimated amount of visitors at festivals is significantly lower at roughly 2.7 million. Concerning the numbers I noticed that many people, especially locals, attend more than one festival and they further attend the same festival on more than one day over the period of a weekend. Therefore, the stated numbers represent the cumulative number of visits but not the number of individual visitors.

Following again the data surveyed in the Cultural Economy Snapshot of 2012, around 27% of all festivals were primarily characterised as music festivals, 18% as culinary, 12% as cultural and ethnic (including many events celebrating New Orleans' African, Native American, Caribbean, French, Spanish, Latin American, Italian, Cajun, and Irish heritage), 10% as visual arts, and 7% were defined as neighbourhood festivals and events. The remaining 26% are characterised as film, theatre and dance, holiday, and literary events.

All festivals and events are usually featuring several components of music, food, art, dance, or literary, and do hardly ever offer just one element. Many festivals carry the name of both a music style and a culinary dish/way of cooking in its title, i.e. Crescent City Blues and Barbecue Festival; other festivals are organisationally divided but do profit from each other by taking place at the same time such as the Creole Tomato Fest which is a food festival (located at the French Market) but staged next to the Cajun-Zydeco Festival which is focused on music (located right next to the Market at the Old Mint).

According to my survey, festivals are highly representative for the cultural heritage of New Orleans with an average value of 4.75. Festivals are a way of life in New Orleans and its residents are proud of having more festivals than weekend days. Many people even say that New Orleans has five seasons - Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Festival season. The latter is staged between March (starting after Mardi Gras) and July (until Essence Festival), although there are festivals in every month, all year round. In an interview with The Times-Picayune, NOTMC's CEO Mark Romig says: *"we are a city that celebrates everything. ... There's a festival for almost everything and if there isn't one, there will be"* (WHITE, 2012) - and most New Orleanians would

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<sup>25</sup> Source: Cultural Economy Snapshot 2012

agree with him. Going through the list of the 126 festivals which were performed during 2012 one can find a diversity of New Orleans based festivals dedicated to Strawberries, Po-Boys, Crawfish, Giant Puppets, Lindy Hop, Latin American Carnival and Brass Bands to rather imported cultural events such as San Fermín in Nueva Orleans.

Festivals in New Orleans can be as massive and long as the Jazz and Heritage Festival (organised by the Jazz and Heritage Foundation), attracting around 460.000 visitors in 2012 and lasting for 7 days, offering more than 10 stages with music from jazz to gospel, blues, rock and brass bands, parading Mardi Gras Indians together with second line clubs, featuring an exclusive crafts and arts market offering consumers the opportunity to view and buy products such as handicraft artworks, paintings from local artists, photographs, baskets, design jewellery, sculptures, and fashion articles from more than 300 local and regional artists. The collaboration with music stores gives the possibility to buy local music records, specific Jazz and Heritage Foundation stands sell festival live recordings and of course a range of merchandise products.

At the first Jazz Fest, as locals use to call it, in 1969, Mahalia Jackson and Duke Ellington played in front of around 350 visitors, within less than two decades the festival expanded to two full weekends and reached up to 300.000 sold tickets at the end of the 1980s. The festival which is held at the New Orleans Fairgrounds makes revenues with ticket sales, stand fees, and gets sponsored by companies like Shell, Acura, Miller Beer, Virgin Music, Bell South, Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, Hibernia, and many others.

Another massive music festival is the annual French Quarter Festival, having celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2012. Although it is staged on one weekend only (Thursday through Sunday) it attracts more visitors than Jazz Fest in the last years and counts around 600.000 music enthusiasts. Due to free entrance to the festival this number is just an estimation. Booths with regionally culinary products are ever present with gourmet food from local restaurants. As the title says, the festival is staged throughout the touristic centre of New Orleans, the French Quarter. It offers live music at big open-air stages along the Riverwalk, underneath gazebos at the French Market area, inside patios and bars, on the streets. The festival management even thinks about expanding the territory to the Louis Armstrong Park which is geographically seen in the historical neighbourhood of Tremé, one block off the Vieux Carré, as I have heard from Marci Schramm, the festival's executive director.



Organised by French Quarter Festival Inc. the music event had the initial goal of bringing New Orleanians back to the French Quarter, hence oriented at local residents. At the beginning of the 1980s the city centre lacked in visitor infrastructure and popularity, on the other side the Jazz Fest got bigger every year and there was demand for more festivals. Today, it is mainly international and domestic visitors who are enjoying New Orleans music and culinary, as stated in the hospitality research study of the French Quarter Festival done by the University of New Orleans.

The Essence Festival is the third within the group of the biggest festivals in New Orleans. It started in the 1990s and is predominantly an African-American celebration that showcases performers and musical blends of Rhythm and Blues (R&B), jazz, hip-hop, funk and soul. With more than 413.000 sold tickets it is seen as the black festival of New Orleans and is staged annually around the 4th of July (Cultural Economy Snapshot, 2012).

The Tremé Creole Gumbo Festival, the Louisiana Cajun-Zydeco Festival, the Congo Square Rhythms and Dance Festival, and the Crescent City Blues and BBQ Fest (organised also by the Jazz and Heritage Foundation), as well as the Satchmo Summer Festival (organised by French Quarter Festival Inc.) are smaller music festivals in terms of visitors and revenues but can be named together with the events explained before. These spectacles are rationally produced to enhance consumption-based activities and are under constant pressure to make themselves ever more spectacular, especially on the international tourism market. They are strategically spread on the year-round festival calendar to drag visitors at times between big festivals or the touristically seen low summer season between June and August.

The so-called neighbourhood festivals, which are also considered in my classification of festivals, are usually free of charge. They last for one to three days over a weekend (i.e. Freret Street Festival, Bayou Boogaloo Festival) or can be staged on one day during the week over a period of several months (i.e. Jazz in the Park; Wednesdays at the Square). Based on my observations at this type of festivals I can say that they are primarily focused on giving a platform to culinary producers and businesses, arts and craft people, civil organisations such as neighbourhood associations, religious congregations, social movements, and local musicians. It serves for promoting and selling their products, services, and artistic skills. These festivals also serve for a closer collaboration of businesses and artists within a certain neighbourhood where locals are called upon supporting the part of town where they are residing. Although out-of-towners are

very welcome concerning attendance and consumption levels these festivals are usually not promoted outside of New Orleans. Often I was told that such grassroots events are created "*by locals for locals*", are organised by foundations or associations in the cultural and community sector, and get funded substantially by private and corporate sponsors within the Greater New Orleans Area.

### **Food in New Orleans**

New Orleans marks an exception to the American rule, the city "*has refused to bow to McDonaldization, to moral reform, to temperance or to excessive dieting*", both for locals and visitors, it is seen as "*an Eldorado of eating and public drinking*" (OSTENDORF, 2013: 55). Ostendorf speaks of three main reasons concerning the rise of the cuisines of New Orleans. The city has to be understood as a counterpoint to Anglo-Saxon North-America with respect to food and eating habits, it has developed over centuries and was mainly influenced by the French, Spanish and English empires. The establishment of small markets and food chains between blacks, creoles and whites resisting the times of slavery contributed tremendously to the constant development and preservation of foods and recipes. Furthermore, it was the very early indigenisation or creolisation of food ways within a Caribbean system of exchange.

Today, the culinary heritage of New Orleans is best classified by the Zagat Survey 2000 (LITWIN, 2000) stating that the New Orleans cuisine can be divided into three dominant traditions which are the Creole, Cajun, and New Orleans. The Creole and Cajun cuisines have emerged from French-based traditions and are rather family-based ways of cooking, while Creole tended to be more urban, Cajun was rather rural (HEARN, 1990). Nowadays, these differences have become negligible due to the increasing gentrification of Cajun culture. The New Orleans, a restaurant-based cuisine, is a more complex fusion of the former two styles and European flavours.

*"New Orleans combines Creole and Cajun dishes with Italian, Country of Classic French - and even an occasional Caribbean or German dish. 'Haute New Orleans' and 'Down Home New Orleans' respectively, describe fancy and simple versions of New Orleans-style cooking"* (LITWIN, 2000: 7).

The food and culinary arts industry is stated as one of the biggest contributors to the Louisiana and New Orleans economy and is described as "*deeply rooted in the cultural and ethnic traditions of Louisiana's many communities: French, Italian, English, Creole, Native American, African, German, and Acadian*" (MT. AUBURN, 2005: 14). The cuisines draw heavily from the

food products, seasonings, and recipes of the mentioned communities; agricultural, game and seafood products, as well as specialty foods (such as the Creole tomato, and swamp seafood such as crawfish, oysters, crabs, etc.) manufactured in the surrounding New Orleans areas are its main ingredients.

When it comes to numbers, New Orleans counted 1.013 locally owned and operated businesses which include caterers, cooking schools, food manufacturing, mobile food trucks, restaurants, restaurant management, and specialty food stores in 2012 - with a rising tendency. Around 65% of the total are considered as restaurants and 18% are specialty food stores such as bakeries, confectionaries, and coffee shops. An additional 12 businesses in the culinary sector are listed as non-profit organisations (CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, 2012).

### **Visual arts, contemporary and folk crafts**

Currently there are around 700 visual arts and craftspeople living and working in New Orleans contributing to the many cultural activities, performances and particularly the production of arts and folk crafts. Folk arts, traditional wood carving, basket weaving, handmade musical instruments and clothes, architectural and fashion design, as well as paintings using different materials, have a strong tradition in New Orleans and Louisiana. In the surrounding areas of New Orleans a strong woodworking and weaving tradition still exists due to the isolation and poverty of the state's Acadian population which required them to build almost everything from scratch.

In 2012, the city counted 226 original art-selling businesses in its 21 designated cultural districts.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, there are 114 galleries (89%), art supply retailers, art centres and schools which are considered as commercial entities. 52 visual arts organisations including museums, art schools, and some galleries are operating as non-profit organisations, having a share of 17% of all non-profits in New Orleans (CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, 2012).

Many contemporary crafters and art-producers do sell their work to domestic and international visitors at the many music and cultural festivals, improvised art markets around the city and on the streets of the French Quarter. The Bywater and Mid-City Arts Markets do offer local crafters the chance to sell their works to a mainly local population. Local artists such as jeweller Thomas Mann, glass artists Mitchell Gaudet and Mark Rosenbaum, and folk artist Dr. Bob have

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<sup>26</sup> The system of the Cultural Districts is a programme by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism of the state of Louisiana. Source: <http://crt.louisiana.gov/CULTURALDISTRICTS/>, retrieved in April 2013.

developed a national following from their base in New Orleans, which attracts especially a lot of amateur artists due to its advantages of an abundance of old warehouses at a relatively low rent, large number of galleries, a good network of local art producers, and a rather bohemian artistic lifestyle (MT. AUBURN, 2005).

### **2.3.3. Parades**

The living cultural heritage element classified as parades does primarily include mass events such as the Mardi Gras parades at the end of the Carnival period, the St. Patrick's parade celebrated and organised by the Irish community around St. Patrick's Day in March, as well as the Easter parade on Easter Sunday held in the French Quarter. These are organised by the white population of New Orleans. Its main identifying features are Carnival floats, throws, and marching bands.

Floats are colourfully decorated mobile platforms on tractors, trucks, trailers or hangers that are towed behind. For Mardi Gras, the floats feature the annually changing theme of the krewes and present mythological figures, deities, caricatures, political or religious messages, Carnival masks, animals and similar representations of certain topics. On the floats krewe members are privileged to get driven through the parade route while throwing their "throws" to the masses standing and cheering on the streets. A krewe is usually a non-profit organisation with members paying annual fees. These members are responsible for organising the floats which are paid with the fee contribution, additionally the members pay for any kind of decoration and equipment of the krewe parade, including the throws, their outfit and dresses, and manage fund-raising events and eventual balls.

Parades in New Orleans look back to a history of around 200 years. All of them may be attributed to the beginnings of religious festivities related to Carnival and Mardi Gras, which were brought to the city by French colonists. The mother of all current mass parades in New Orleans is Mardi Gras which is the reason for its focus in the present description of the element.

Today, parading means more than welcoming Ash Wednesday. While the original sense of the Carnival parades is firmly catholic, present parades which are mainly imitating Mardi Gras are held for different festivities throughout the year. Parades in Mardi Gras style (concerning the floats, the habit of throws, masking, marching bands, etc.) have become a symbol for a collective

(primarily white) mass street party with unlimited entertainment possibilities, especially for outside visitors.

Regarding my survey, the element of parades is rated with a value of 4,84 concerning its cultural representation in New Orleans. Although mass parades are not performed throughout the year but only in certain periods and days (around 50 parades during the two weeks prior to Mardi Gras Day, St. Patrick's Parades around March 17, Easter Parades) parades enjoy high cultural significance for the population. Families dedicate entire weekends to the visit (active or passive) of parades followed by privately organised garden parties, the continuation of public street parties, or the enjoyment at Mardi Gras balls. When schools and offices are closed prior to the highlight of the Carnival season a feeling of collective holidays comes up in the city. Ostendorf describes the collective parade celebrating habit when he mentions that in New Orleans "*urban politics may divide but the carnivalesque street culture connects*" (2013: 21). Carnival and Mardi Gras have always "*expressed the collective conscience and social antagonisms of the city*" (GOTHAM, 2007: 22) and have been tightly integrated into the social life of New Orleans.

The first official Mardi Gras parades dating back to 1857 did not only serve as religious parades but were also used for political reasons. The official Mardi Gras and its organisational pattern as it still exists in these days was introduced by the white American business class with the goal of controlling the interracial street Carnival, which was steadily growing and getting out of control. New forms of social exclusion, segregation, and rationalisation over the celebration were imposed by social elites. The distinction of participants between riders (on the floats) and spectators (on the street) provided "*symbolic ordering and continuity to an otherwise fragmented, chaotic, and discontinuous world*" (GOTHAM, 2007: 44).

Carnival festivities operate on several socio-political and cultural levels. At one hand the official Mardi Gras parades of the white krewes serve as a control mechanism to introduce law and order and prevent interracial chaos. On the other hand the black Zulu parade is like an anti-Carnival show in reverse that mocks the social pretensions of the white business class. The former Tramps Social Aid and Pleasure Club, established in 1909 and re-named as Zulu club several years later, was forced to parade through the backstreets of New Orleans, since parading on the major streets was illegal for black krewes. These and other activities such as the formation of the first all female krewe of Les Mystrieus were first visual symbols of locals

combating the rationalisation of Carnival and are distinctive expressions of Mardi Gras that are separate from the elite krewes (GOTHAM, 2007).

The spontaneous street Carnival of the black Mardi Gras Indian tribes on their sacred Mardi Gras day is literally uncontrollable and capitalises on the intermission of the forces of law and order during the parades. At last, there is also the politically incorrect gay carnival in the French Quarter with its brazen gender transgressions.

Gotham (2007: 44) states that there is another factor which has been influencing the relationship between New Orleans Carnival and its residents. During the last decades, the rise of mass tourism contributed significantly to interconnect with the creation of new collective representations of Carnival to *"shape and constrain constructions of culture ... in New Orleans, inciting new social conflicts and struggles."*

Mardi Gras was cancelled several times during wars (Civil War, WWI and WWII) but was staged in the year after Hurricane Katrina. The parades of 2006 only half a year after the devastating storm were the first sign of the city's successful comeback and common will to survive, culturally. With the documentary *When the Levees Broke* Spike Lee captures the spirit of carnival in various neighbourhoods destroyed by Katrina.

### **Description and relevance of parades in New Orleans**

It is certainly difficult to classify something like parades in New Orleans since other shows or performances apart of Mardi Gras could also be understood as parades in the local context. Additionally, I experienced during interviews and informal communications that New Orleanians do stay away from comparing anything with Mardi Gras - the grouping of other parades within the same term is therefore problematic.

Although the Mardi Gras parades are claimed to be originally from New Orleans, other cities throughout Louisiana<sup>27</sup> have had or do still organise their own Carnival events called Mardi Gras. During the 12 days of Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans, schools are closed and offices shut down the computers for several days because the noise and constant party distract people from

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<sup>27</sup> As I was informed during interviews, Metairie and Shreveport for example do also host big carnival parades called Mardi Gras which are as well organised by Krewes. They are in fact similar but follow other rules, codes of conduct and city ordinances concerning general organisation patterns, parade routes, participants on the floats and modes of corporate sponsoring. Advertisement and banners of companies are not allowed on the floats and along the routes during Mardi Gras in Orleans Parish.

concentrated work. It is a time when families and friends get together and give garden BBQ parties, make King Cakes<sup>28</sup>, visit the parades in their neighbourhood, and get *wild* about beads and other throws such as krewe-embled aluminium doubloons, plastic cups, flowers, and many others.

Mardi Gras was not always as big as today - from 1857 to the late 1930s, there were approximately four to six parades per Mardi Gras season. The number of parades doubled from five in 1930 to ten in 1940, reached 21 by 1960, 25 by 1970, and peaked at 55 in 1986. Since this time, the number of parading krewes has remained at between 45 and 52 per year (GOTHAM, 2005: 5). The annual Carnival season includes around 50 parades on average in the three-parish area of Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard following a standard parade format. It features more than 1.000 floats, around 600 marching bands, 3.700 parade units, and more than 140.000 active participants<sup>29</sup>. The combined parade routes cover a distance of 300 miles and the added up time of processions that are on the streets is around 200 hours (HARDY, 2009).

Members of krewes, a rather secretive club of influential white business men/women in politics and the local economy, which are responsible for the organisation of their parades, are working on the preparation of the carnival highlight throughout the year. Whether it is about brainstorming over the next parade theme, constructing the floats, designing the masks, costumes and outfits, getting throws, organising the ball or special choreographies, voting for the krewe King and Queen, all krewe members are busy with contributing to the preparation. This hard work privileges them to stand on the floats and get driven through the crowds of people along the route through the neighbourhoods.

Since corporate sponsoring is prohibited by law and tradition the Carnival clubs which are chartered as non-profit organisations have a number of fund-raising projects. The clubs are furthermore financed by dues and membership fees, by the sale of krewe-embled merchandise to the members, and most importantly by Bingo games. These are the most

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<sup>28</sup> A King Cake is an oval, sugared pastry that contains a plastic doll hidden inside; the person who finds the doll is crowned "king" and buys the next cake or throws the next party.

<sup>29</sup> Hardy considers active participants as marching bands, dancing groups, people riding on the floats, and other krewe or performing members walking along the parade routes. Passive participants are considered as people standing, walking, and cheering along the streets, or following the parades. But in fact, these participants are active, too, while contributing to the parades through their cheering, demanding screams after beads and other throws, dancing in the streets and expressing a good mood. They are not involved in the preparation and staging of the float show, on the contrary, the street paraders are more or less staging their own show.

common and lucrative fund-raising projects where the money that is needed to host such a show is collected. The beads and other gadgets which are thrown off the floats have to be purchased with private funds by each float rider.

The St. Patrick's Day parades (around March 17) are considered as the second biggest parades in New Orleans and surrounding Parishes in the form of Mardi Gras style parades. Lasting for some days before and after St. Patrick's Day these parades are not comparable to Mardi Gras in terms of visitor numbers or economic impact. On March 17 the main parades are kicked-off with the mass service in Old St. Patrick's church. Primarily members of the New Orleans Irish community (but also any other parade loving inhabitant) are participating in groups from various clubs. Traditionally all active paraders dress up in elegant costumes (tuxedos, smoking jackets, dresses), mostly in green, throwing off beads and vegetables from the floats, handing out flowers, and distributing kisses to lucky parade goers along the route. With the typical Mardi Gras saying "Throw me something, Mister!" the float riders throw off standard gifts such as plastic jewellery, fake flowers, packed noodles, and vegetables such as cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes or moonpies. Next to the theme topped floats which are considered as the main attraction of the parades, other clubs are presenting themselves with walking groups of men, being dressed up elegantly wearing hats, scarves, and other gadgets while drinking beer and liquor; music groups and marching bands playing Irish and Scottish music as well as traditional New Orleans music; female dancing show groups and cheerleaders; children theatrical groups; and similar performances of groups.

Other important parades which also enjoy high participation level among New Orleanians are the following: Gay Mardi Gras Carnival, Gay Pride Parade (starting in 1971)<sup>30</sup>, Gay Easter Parade (starting in 2000)<sup>31</sup>, French Quarter Easter Parade (starting in 1984)<sup>32</sup>, and other smaller parades.

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<sup>30</sup> Source: <http://www.gayprideneworleans.com/>, retrieved in September 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Source: <http://www.gayeasterparade.com/>, retrieved in September 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Source: <http://www.frenchquartereasterparade.com/pages/home.html>, retrieved in September 2013.



### 2.3.4. Second lines and Mardi Gras Indians

*"The second line culture is one of the most original cultures that exist, of the city and even of the world, it belongs to African Americans and derives from mother land"* (interview 36)

Asking locals who are regularly joining related events, about what second lines or Mardi Gras Indians are, I often was confronted with replies that it were something distinctively *"unique"*, something that could only have developed at that certain place, and something that only people with African origins could truly understand and appreciate. Intrinsically linked with music, rhythms, dancing, and celebrated in groups these events organised by Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, Second Line Clubs and Mardi Gras Indian tribes are important elements of expressive culture by the African American and Afro-Creole population of New Orleans.

The moving street parades, guided through jazz-melodies and drum-beats, a community-sense within clubs, tribes, and neighbourhoods, are not only driven by a collective will of the black population to continue and safeguard traditions, but also by sending out a political statement. I noticed that these are rather spontaneous and uncontrolled parades - a contrast to the perfectly organised Carnival parades of krewes. Second lines and the Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday events have ever been and are still reason for controversial issues with city ordinances, the police department and recently increasingly with the white population moving into gentrified neighbourhoods which are historically inhabited by Afro-American communities. Restrictive orders in terms of parade length, route, and volume levels have to be met, criticised fees have to be paid to city hall. Since parades are getting bigger and traffic is becoming more chaotic, the police is in charge of blocking streets, detouring cars, watching out for criminal actions, and escorting the followers through the neighbourhoods in the backstreets of New Orleans.

Mostly, second lines and Super Sunday events have been peaceful. Due to several shooting attacks throughout the decades many New Orleanians are afraid of joining the public gatherings. The most recent shooting happened at the very beginning of the Mother's Day second line in May 2013. I arrived late and fortunately nobody was deadly injured - please refer to the chapter about the commodification of second lines which starts with a detailed description of my observations at the Mother's Day second line.

Although the structure of Mardi Gras Indian tribes and social clubs is different, the members of these groups intermingle on several occasions. Many Indians are members of social clubs,

participate at second lines and jazz funerals. On the other side, you might easily find dancers of clubs and brass bands accompanying masked Indians at Super Sunday parades. Many of my interlocutors do participate at both events and could therefore provide valuable information which is presented in the respective chapter.

But what is the basis of these dance-driven street parades? It is claimed to be traced back to the early 18th century when African slaves imported to New Orleans between 1720 and 1732 all came from one cultural region which was then known as the Bamana Empire, today this territory is located in the region of sub-Saharan Western Africa (OSTENDORF, 2013). These Bamana slaves brought with them a small market economy and plenty of crafts - this early synthesis has formed a strong African baseline. Traditions such as the former market on Congo Square, and today's Mardi Gras Indians drumming practices, Second Lines, Jazz, Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs are evidence of this fact. The market on Congo Square was a place where these free blacks, slaves, and whites interacted when dealing with home grown vegetables and fruits, self-made goods, and craftsmanship services. It would be wrong not to mention that the city was somehow dependent on these products and services by the end of the 18th century (JOHNSON, 1991). Especially Congo Square was a place where rituals and ceremonies of religious beliefs, accompanied with drumming and dancing were practiced regularly around that time. The celebration of life, of struggles, and challenges with songs, dances, and rituals was the way how blacks could communicate with each other. George Washington Cable describes these dances and celebrations in detail in his work of 1884 "The Dance in Congo Square." These dancing rings were reunions of African nations that the Diaspora and the Atlantic slave trade had dismembered, furthermore Ward describes Congo Square as "spirit theatre" (2004: XII).

Afro-Creoles were caught in the conflict zone between a three-tiered Caribbean racial order and a binary racial system imposed after the Louisiana purchase by North America, they compensated their gradual loss of social status and political power by carving out spaces of freedom and by withdrawing to their families and neighbourhoods. The regular gathering of different races, cultures, and relationships of people at Congo Square is also seen as the cradle of New Orleans music. With the mix of different beats, melodies and instruments the early stages of Jazz could emerge in this communal space where Afro-Creole and African American traditions came together (BREUNLIN, 2009).

The New Orleans dance-driven culture calls for a symbiotic interaction between musician, performer, and audience - the street culture involves the band performance, club dancers, and followers or the rhythmic drumming and singing of Mardi Gras Indians with their gangs and tribe members.

### **Description and relevance of second lines, jazz funerals and Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans**

According to my survey with interlocutors who are active in different roles contributing to the local cultural events the living cultural heritage of second lines, jazz funerals and Mardi Gras Indians has a value of 4,53 regarding its cultural relevance in New Orleans.

Although the social club and Mardi Gras Indian events in principle invite everyone to be a follower most white residents of the New Orleans metropolitan area have never participated in a second line parade, jazz funeral or any event of Indians. Members of the black middle class generally view such traditions "*with a mixture of amusement, nostalgia, and embarrassment*" (REGIS, 1999: 473), as I have also noticed from some student colleagues and friends around New Orleans. Other common reasons that came up during talks with interlocutors were that people are not familiar with the neighbourhoods where such events take place. In fact, second lines or Super Sundays are celebrated by parading mainly through the poor working class areas of New Orleans. People who are not actively involved in the these clubs, communities and cultural events usually would not pass by at these parts of the city occasionally. Furthermore, the deep-rooted angst of shootings and gun fights between young gangs which sometimes occur is always in the air - also among frequent participants.

Nevertheless, the second line becomes an icon for New Orleans culture as a whole partly through the staged reproduction in the service of the tourism and entertainment industries where it also promotes political and commercial interests, as I was told by Helen Regis during an interview. These performances serve to conceal the popular, street-based tradition behind a show that seems like a street party. The increasing use of the second line and the jazz funeral to represent the city globally coincides with continued invisibility of the street-community based tradition to the mainstream cultural life of the metropolis. The party-like adoption of black cultural traditions by the city's elites and the tourism industry proceeds without any acknowledgement of the black, street-based tradition on which it is based (ROACH, 1996).

## Second lines

At some point in the late nineteenth century, the second line detached from the funeral and took on its own identity as a parade sponsored by the city's many neighbourhood-based mutual aid and benevolent societies, which carry on in modified form as Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs (SAKAKEENY, 2013).

The Benevolent Societies and Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs of New Orleans were most probably inspired by the Cuban system of *cofradías*. Formed by urban slaves in Havana de Cuba it had the purpose of community based mutual aid and the protection of their cultural heritage. One of the remainings in Cuba is the well known Buena Vista Social Club which is tied to that tradition (OSTENDORF, 2013: 17). The Young Men Olympia Junior Benevolent Association is the oldest club (founded in 1884) and the last existing Benevolent Society in New Orleans, its initial goal was to finance proper burials and funerals for their members of the Afro-American community. The clubs functioned like insurance companies for their members, since most white-owned insurance companies at the time would not insure African Americans. Besides of providing health care and other tangible benefits, the clubs also provided space for discussing the social issues of the day, as well as organising entertainment for their communities in the form of picnics, parades, dinners, and balls (BREUNLIN, 2009). The annual parades acted as a form of advertising to gain membership. Today, the many different social clubs have extended their services to a lot of other aid and pleasure events and actions. The Second Line Clubs usually organise only their annual second line parade, while Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs do implement social projects i.e. for the safety of their neighbourhood, child protection, musical education for kids in order to stay away from criminal actions, social security, or financial contributions to very poor families, retired couples or individual persons. Every club focuses on other social services but all remain community organisations that act as a core to their neighbourhoods.

Another relevant aspect for the organisation of second lines is "*to keep the culture going*" (interview 12), as locals would express the safeguarding of cultural heritage. My interlocutors explained that it is about the continuation of the clubs, the parades, dancing, and about the distinctive sound of New Orleans brass band music. With the reciprocal participation at events organised by clubs people show respect for each other's club and neighbourhood, it is furthermore a way to close ranks within communities and neighbourhoods and works like an alternative ethical paradigm of charity and solidarity.

My interlocutors often mentioned that due to rising parade fees, police security restrictions concerning the parade routes, the low capacity of police officers, crime scenes and shootings the number of annual second lines is at risk of decline. But regular participants and organisers want them to be enjoyed by their children in the future, it is about handing on a tradition to the next generations.

Additionally, I recognised that second lines have an educational aspect: many local musicians have started to learn an instrument when playing and parading with second line brass bands in the backstreets of New Orleans. Well-known and successful musicians such as Delfeayo Marsalis, a composer, trombone professional and head of The Uptown Jazz Orchestra, told me that he would like his young musicians to join more second lines to get the groove and to be "*in touch with the grass roots or the earthy type of music as the older jazz artists were*" (interview 42) - something that cannot be taught at universities. People like Kermit Ruffins, co-founder of one of the most famous local brass bands, The Rebirth Brass Band, or the founders of the Hot 8 Brass Band first started to play trumpet, sousaphone, or snare-drum on the streets when close relatives and friends in the neighbourhood took them to join a parade. Today, these bands are owing their musical and professional careers to the second lines, they often manage social and educational projects for children and teenagers encouraging them to play music on the streets instead of risking to fall into drug and crime delicts.

In order to organise the anniversary celebration - the moving second line parade - each club is raising funds for paying brass bands and their own costumes, as well as the parade license, covering costs for insurance and police escort required by city law. Club members participate in a year-long cycle of events. They are attending monthly or weekly meetings of their own clubs, and help to organise fund-raising actions such as dinners, dances, raffles, or short trips. Additionally, they often participate in the major life events of club members and their families such as graduation and birthday parties, weddings, or funerals. Furthermore, they also join fund-raising events of other clubs such as balls, banquets, dances, annual second lines and funeral parades. All these events add up to an intensive calendar for active club members who get invited to several dances every weekend, a second line of different clubs almost every Sunday, and once in a while to funerals of well-known community members which are usually taking place on Saturdays. This constant sequence of "*intersecting social events*" (REGIS, 1999: 474) creates enduring social networks of the second line community which is composed of members of different clubs and their followers participating at numerous events throughout the year.

Both the club, represented by dancers, grand marshals, a King and a Queen, and the music band are referred to as the "first" line. The "second line" is composed of the followers, represented by members of other clubs, friends, family, neighbourhood residents, and other interested people participating by dancing, walking and moving next to or behind the brass band. The importance of these followers is underlined by the fact that the entire event is named after them (REGIS, 1999).

The President of the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force, Tamara Jackson, confirmed during an interview that in 2013, 32 Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs and Second Line Clubs organised 39 annually permitted Second Lines. This is the maximum amount of officially licensed street parades due to the maximum capacity of police officers (official statement of the city of New Orleans). The parading season actually is from September through June, leaving out the two hottest summer months. Currently there are more than 40 active clubs, but not every club is able to afford an annual parade and others are rotating in a two to three year interval due to the maximum of permitted parades.

Furthermore, she stressed that 21 of the 32 parading clubs are presently member of and organised under the Task Force, a non-profit entity that assists clubs in communication with city authorities and is an advocate for their activities within communities, with the city government, as well as the tourism and entertainment industry. The Task Force shares relevant information also with clubs who decided to not join the association and try to establish a good working relationship with each other.

In the annual report Sweet Home New Orleans states that members of clubs spend 10% of their household income (around 14% of personal income) on the club parades which is used for purchasing the materials and skills which are necessary to create the elaborate costumes and the parade fee (SHNO, 2010).

### **Jazz funerals**

Jazz funerals and second line parades are both structured around the music of the brass band, but each progresses differently: jazz funerals are organised in two parts - the way from the funeral home to the cemetery is usually accompanied with downbeat music, locally called the dirge, the parade after the cemetery with upbeat. Second line parades dispense with the dirge

and its attendant emotions in favour of music that conveys the pleasure of a celebratory street festival. In other words, upbeat music of the type that ends the jazz funeral makes up the whole of the second line parade. In both jazz funerals and second line parades, music that is predominantly instrumental organises the participation of the crowd and articulates shared sentiments of suffering and pleasure (SAKAKEENY, 2013).

Formerly known as "funerals with music", jazz funerals are not organised for everyone - with a steady decline (TOUCHET, 1998) these funeral processions are exclusively for club members, musicians, prominent and actively involved people in the community or neighbourhood, as well as tragically young died family and club members. Participation in funerals, in New Orleans as in many other cultures, is a profound way of strengthening and repairing the social fabric, which in this city is severely weakened by poverty, unemployment, violence, class- and race-based segregation, and racism (REGIS, 2001).

The jazz funeral celebrates life at the moment of death. In New Orleans and elsewhere, Europeans and Anglo-Americans attended funerals with music that featured a brass band playing solemn music on the way to the cemetery and cheerful melodies when the body was buried. With the end of slavery, black funerals with brass bands became more common in the streets. In the early 20th century, such funerals had developed into platforms for the performance of a new music style called jazz - eventually the celebrations had become known as jazz funerals. At the same time, the popularity of funerals with brass bands waned among white New Orleanians (SAKAKEENY, 2011).

### **Mardi Gras Indians**

Mardi Gras Indians are artists, musicians, and dancers. Mardi Gras Indians are also carpenters, accountants, entrepreneurs, and many are employed in the hospitality industry. Being a Mardi Gras Indian is not a profession - sometimes it is choice, sometimes it is heritage. They speak of themselves as being formed in tribes<sup>33</sup>, are led and represented by Big Chiefs, Spy Boys, Flag Boys, and Queens. These specific roles follow a hierarchical system that began by early tribes such as the Creole Wild West and the Yellow Pocahontas in the mid 19th century. Scientific literature about Mardi Gras Indians is scarce so most of the information given concerning the description of Indians relies on data collected during the fieldwork periods. Fortunately, I made

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<sup>33</sup> Although Mardi Gras Indians claim to be organised in tribes, the term itself is not meant to be used in the classical anthropological sense throughout the thesis. I rather use the term tribe in the sense of the Indians.

close friendship with the Creole Osceola and could learn a lot throughout many interviews, informal meetings, and participant observation at various parades and events.

The precise origins of the Mardi Gras Indians concerning date and names are not known and remain contested. Indian tribes and historians claim that their history began when Native American tribes hosted escaping blacks during slavery. Run-away slaves sought refuge with tribes such as Houma, Chitimache, and others residing in the bayous and swamplands surrounding New Orleans (SAKAKEENY, 2012). The tradition of the Mardi Gras Indians, including the feathered suits, drumming, singing, tribe formation, and their mythology is what remained of the friendship and marriage bonding between so-called maroons and the native American Indians. The significance of the Indian warrior fighting certainly had a powerful resonance among former slaves and their descendents who were subject to Jim Crow laws. In the atmosphere of post-Reconstruction's injustices and hypocrisies, "masking Indian" was an implicit civil rights protest aimed at white elites and at segregation, in keeping with the New Orleans carnivalesque spirit. Fraternity within the tribe and competitiveness with other tribes characterise Mardi Gras Indians. The Indian embodies a particularly masculine representation of fierceness that has historically relegated women to supporting roles. Some tribes have only one queen, others have more queens within the same tribe, and men virtually always fill the other positions.

Mardi Gras Indians do hold regular practices with rhythmic drumming, dancing, singing, and collective commemoration of ancestors in private gardens, bars, and streets throughout New Orleans. They are "masking" in public on their four most important occasions a year. Masking as an Indian is an African American performance idiom that celebrates beauty, fierceness, autonomy, and freedom (REGIS, 2001: 479). They celebrate three Super Sunday parades taking place in each tribe group's neighbourhood respectively - Uptown, Downtown, and on the Westbank. Mardi Gras Day, also known as Fat Tuesday, is the annual beginning of the parading season and is the culmination of Indian festivities when the suits are unveiled on Mardi Gras morning. During these public ceremonies Indians are singing chants and are symbolically in search of rival tribes. When two tribes meet, the Big Chiefs ritualistically compete by pointing on each other with the tip of the spear and by instigating each other with boasts. Historically, the fierceness of the Mardi Gras Indian was tested through violent disputes between rival tribes from the different districts, often leading to fights, verbally and physically. These "humbugs" slowly dispersed during the second half of the 20th century, partly because of increasing



pressure by local police and partly because certain chiefs, most notably Big Chief Allison "Tootie" Montana of the Yellow Pochontas, redirected the competitive nature of Indian showdowns away from violent confrontation and toward pageantry (KATZMANN, 2004; SAKAKEENY, 2012).

The elaborately hand-beaded and feathered costumes known as "suits" of the Mardi Gras Indians are the most celebrated aspect of the culture. During my fieldwork I observed that every tribe member is supposed to sew a new suit for the annual Mardi Gras Day parade, requiring an immense investment of time and money. When the parading season finishes in May - they do not parade during the summer, this would be simply too inhuman because of the heat and weight of the suit - Indians start to draft the layout of the new suit and begin to design the first patches in June. The sewing process continues for months until the following Mardi Gras Day. Indians sew in the evenings after work at home, on week-ends together with other tribe members, and Indian kids learn to work on their suits in special afternoon courses organised by dedicated chiefs. The material cost of a suit can sum up to a total of US\$ 3.000 to 6.000 (or more) depending on the quality and type of materials used - of course, this number does not include the many thousand labour hours of drafting, designing, and sewing from June to February. A single suit can weigh up to 40kg (or more) and consists of many different parts (boots, apron, front patch, back patch, chest patch, gloves, arm patches, feathered headdress, etc.) which are then put together before the parade. All these parts need to be solid and fixed well - a parade lasts for three to five hours and Indians like to dance, jump, fight, run, drink, and pose for pictures and videos. They want to be "pretty" until the end of the show and might use the same suit several times during the same season.

Creative skills of sewing feathers, beads, and stones in artistic patterns and distinctive mosaic colour schemes (patches) in a way that expresses the individuality of the chief and his tribe are prerequisite. As the designs of the suits have become increasingly sophisticated, they have also become identifiable according to two dominant styles, divided by the bifurcation of New Orleans: Uptown Indians use predominantly beaded patches telling a story with images<sup>34</sup> (i.e. a Native American shooting or hanging white men; freeing slaves using a tomahawk), while Downtown and Westbank Indians use three-dimensional geometric designs<sup>35</sup> (i.e. snakes, dragons, sphinx, and others). These creatures have symbolic meaning in terms of strength, power, fights, history, and the universe. Usually every tribe has a designer, which is often the Big Chief. Together with him the sewing tribe members meet for discussing the annually changing

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<sup>34</sup> please refer to photo 24.

<sup>35</sup> please refer to photo 26.

content and design of the suits but can individually decide on the symbolic creature and composition of colours and material. The central aspect of the tradition is to reinvent itself in the form of a new and innovative suit every year.

Another rather mysterious aspect of the Mardi Gras Indians is their language. With a mix between English, French and words that do only exist in their language songs are filled with a verbal art form, hardly translatable. Widely understood among the Indians the words and contexts in the songs are about big chiefs, brotherhood, ancestors, and others topics. In many Indian songs, "*hoo na nae*" is synonymous with the phrase "*let's go get 'em*".

The songs and music of the Mardi Gras Indians are the most popular and accessible aspect of the culture. At Indian practices, gatherings, and public parades most songs are chanted and make liberal use of the call and response tradition. Usually, the chief improvises a solo vocal and the tribe responds with a repeated chant:

*Let's go get'em*

*Early in the morning*

*Let's go get'em*

*Give no warning ...*

These traditional songs are accompanied by percussionists with tambourines, little drums, cowbells, and other sometimes improvised instruments. There is no doubt that popular chants have also become the basis for rhythm and blues, soul, funk, and hip-hop recordings by Indians which influenced the music of New Orleans. "Jock-A-Mo" a chant called when the Indians went into battle was one of the first recorded songs by "Sugarboy" Crawford in 1953 (MORGAN, 2002). Renamed as "Iko Iko", the song became a hit eleven years later in the US, performed by the Dixie Cups. Finally, it was Big Chief Bo Dollis and the Wild Magnolias with the first commercial recordings of their own music, twisting it up with some funk musicians the arrangement of the song "Handa Wanda" (produced by Quint Davis) became their first single. The success of Indian commercial funk music was prolonged with the first album of the Wild Tchoupitoulas in 1976 bringing them to perform at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival together with the Neville Brothers. As the festival slowly began to grow, it was the first time for many visitors and fans to see Indians live on stage. Generally seen, the music on the commercially arranged albums is not as raw as Indian music might be described but attempts are made to give the spirit of Indian music in a popular arrangement. Other important interpreters of Indian music are Big Chief Monk Boudreaux with the Golden Eagles, and more

recently Donald Harrison Jr. and Bo Dollis Jr., both sons of Big Chiefs continuing their father's musical heritage.

Recordings and live performances of commercial music (Mardi Gras Indians performing with funk bands) as well as practices (Mardi Gras Indians singing with percussionists) brought large recognition to what had been a relatively obscure and secretive community practice. It also attracted more Africans to the tradition of Indian masking and chanting. Especially the continuing and rising popularity of Indian music is responsible for the increased attendance of public Indian parades but also for the interest in Indian suits at museum exhibitions, live performances at local festivals, and the cultural life of Indians in general.

Although the neighbourhoods of Indians were heavily affected by the hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Mardi Gras Indian tribes and gangs have largely recovered. Sweet Home New Orleans (2010) surveyed 32 tribes and came to the result that their size is at about 80% compared to pre-Katrina numbers. In recent years, tribes have seen a 26% increase in the participation of young members, particularly due to the organisation of specific classes for young kids where they can get in touch with Indian culture and the artistic creation of suits.

### **2.3.5. Religion and belief in the supernatural**

The fifth living cultural heritage element concerns religion and belief in the supernatural. Its related activities such as the celebration of ceremonies and rituals are performed in various locations. These are private temples, shrines, or dedicated churches, in public areas such as in parks, on bridges, hotel lobbies, along the shore of the Mississippi river or lake Pontchartrain. In this thesis religion and belief in the supernatural are not analysed in the sense of confessional systems but rather in terms of how such religious practices, related activities, and eventual products are commodified and used by the tourism industry in order to create an economic impact. Proclaimed and pretended tangible assets of Vodou are sold in souvenir shops, even bars and hotels are named after the spiritual confession, and museums with artefacts exist in the French Quarter. The fact that the religion of Vodou is heavily present in the tourism marketing strategy calls for an analysis concerning potential issues between those who practice Vodou as a religion and those who sell and consume it as a product.

The different religious directions are influencing the creation of a particular taste for a non-dogmatic spiritualism and for an energetic as well as liturgical rite. The New Orleans spiritual

churches combine rituals, sanctuaries and temples, intensely emotional services of worship, and an eclectic belief system setting them apart from all other denominations. Part of what attracted people to the churches in the early 20th century, and continues to do so now, is their reputation for healing and prophecy. These are said to be the two "gifts of the spirit" on which the spiritual churches are based on (JACOBS, 1991).

It is difficult to measure the actual strength or level of participation of the local spiritual churches. The main reasons are because the spiritual churches are not affiliated with local councils of churches, only a few are listed in official contact directories. The membership records are not complete, some congregations are stand-alone and not integrated into any other association of churches, others do simply not call themselves "spiritual" within their official name because of the public stigma attached to the group (JACOBS, 1991).

In New Orleans there is a great variety of religious belief and expression but most commonly people are of Roman Catholic faith (in 2009, 36% of the population living in the area of the Archdiocese of New Orleans were Roman Catholic<sup>36</sup>) with a French, Spanish, Irish, Italian, or Afro-Creole touch. There are several Protestant denominations as well as different *off-beat* religious traditions which are active in various communities in and around the city. The latter ones are celebrated in spiritualist churches. These symbolise the crossing of different belief systems found in the Caribbean and Latin America such as Santería from Cuba, Vodou<sup>37</sup> from Haiti, Candomblé, Macumba, and Umbanda in Brazil, Cumina and Convince in Jamaica, Shango and Spiritualist Baptist in Trinidad (OSTENDORF, 2013: 20). There are various reasons contributing to the fact that in Louisiana comparable belief systems could arise: the area's French and Spanish colonial past, practices that derived from the rather "popular" Catholicism, migrations from Saint Domingue (today Haiti) in the late 18th century, the heterogeneous population of New Orleans and its role as a centre of trade.

Vodou is a type of religion which is practiced in such spiritual churches. It originated as an ancestor worship and was brought to the New World via African slaves. The colonizers in Louisiana were convinced that by separating families and individual nations, the slave population would not unite as one people. But in fact, commonalities in the belief systems and religions

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<sup>36</sup> Source: <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dnewo.html#stats>, retrieved in May 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Throughout this thesis I follow Sallie Glassman's suggestion of spelling the word "Vodou" to differentiate the religion from the "lurid, celluliod image" (2007) used by the common American term "Voodoo." All other terminology regarding Vodou also follows the orthography of its Kreyòl terms as used by Glassman, 2007.

were found among the slaves who began invoking their own spirits and practicing each other's religious rites. The Roman Catholic Church, which was ever present in Louisiana from the beginning of the French and Spanish colonial times, significantly influenced the development of New Orleans' related spiritual belief systems in the area. Ceremonies, rituals, and saints of diverse cultural belief systems were adopted to the dominant Catholicism of the city among the slave population in public and private spaces (GLASSMAN, 2007). As Martha Ward (2004) describes in her book "Voodoo Queen" about the famous Priestess Marie Laveau, believers were "Catholic in the morning and Voodoo by night."

Ironically, The Code Noir, a French Royal edict issued in Louisiana in 1724, adapted from an existing code to regulate slavery on Saint Domingue, was ultimately in favour of the survival and expansion of different cultural expressions through music, dance, singing, and religion such as Vodou in New Orleans. The document's preamble called the discipline of the "Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church" essential to the "preservation" of the colony. The Article V of the Code Noir ordered by Louis XV forbid all work by masters or slaves on Sundays and holidays (JACOBS, 1991).

While the Code Noir could not guarantee anyone's belief in Christianity, its effect was that both slaves and free people of colour were likely to be exposed to Catholicism. Religious education and instruction did hardly occur. For many slaves, baptism was the only connection to Catholicism, since participation in the sacramental life of the church did not follow, a part of proper burials according to Catholic rituals (LABBÉ, 1978). Priests and members of religious orders actively tried to instill their faith, the efforts were often disorganised (MILLER, 1980). Even slave owners did hardly cooperate with the churches and opposed certain provisions that pertained to religion in the Code Noir. This concerns specifically the right of the sacrament of marriage and the order to release slaves from labour on Sundays and religious holidays. Furthermore, Catholicism did not get much embraced because slave owners and slaves were equal under the roof of the church, allowing them to sit next to each other and receive communion, which was not always supported by the owners. On the other side, priests found out to their dismay that blacks preferred their own rites which were expressed with the drumming and dancing in the city's Congo Square (FIEHRER, 1979). It was during the colonial period that many blacks began to build a cultural, social, and religious life based on elements of African beliefs and rituals.

All colonist governments had tried to control Congo Square throughout the history of the city. Whites complained about *"loud music, lewd dances, sexy songs, Voodoo rituals, and the explosive potential of free and enslaved black people who met by the hundreds, sometimes by the thousands, on the old parade ground market outside the original city walls"* (WARD, 2004: XXII). The authorities feared slave uprisings and insurrection. They worried that free people of colour, whose numbers and prosperity grew with each year, planted ideas of liberation in the minds of enslaved individuals. Sundays at sunset the civil authorities established curfews and fired a cannon to signal the end of the gatherings. The Vodou community, under the leadership of the Laveau family, offered a range of social and benevolent services beneath their branches. With each new plan to limit the gatherings, white officials changed the name of the square. But people of colour persisted that to them it was and always would be called Congo Square (WARD, 2004).

With only two interruptions between 1817 and the Civil War, slaves and ex-slaves assembled there, regularly performing the calenda, bamboula, chica, and other dances associated with Vodou ceremonies in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean (CABLE, 1974). Despite police attempts to prevent additional meetings from taking place, blacks continued to carry on such activities clandestinely, often outside of the city, along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain and the banks of Bayou Saint John, or in the areas of the humid swamps surrounding New Orleans.

### **Description and relevance of religion and belief in the supernatural in New Orleans**

According to my survey the living cultural heritage element of religion and belief in the supernatural has a value of 3,48 concerning its cultural representation in New Orleans. Although the denomination of the element is rather general on religion the focus of my questioning is primarily on spiritual belief systems and religions such as Vodou. In comparison to the prior elements the value of cultural representation is rather low. The reasons for this result are manifold and are explained in the following.

For many people, spiritual belief systems such as Vodou and similar are culturally representative not only for New Orleans but for a larger region, covering Louisiana and especially the Caribbean islands. Although Vodou, as it is practiced in New Orleans, is distinct from other directions present in the surrounding areas and countries people are hardly aware of this difference. As a consequence, Vodou is not appreciated as something specifically or originally from New Orleans. There is furthermore a popular belief that particularly black and Creole immigrants from the

Caribbean do take part of the local Vodou community. Hence, it is believed that Vodou is hardly relevant for the city, its inhabitants, and the cultural fabric because the majority is Catholic anyway.

Vodou is often not respected as a religion and not seen as related to Catholicism. Many people are unaware of the regular mass services in designated temples with singing, drumming and worshipping, taking place just as in any other religious congregation. Ceremonies in spiritual churches are not primarily held for healing rituals which certainly do happen on special occasions. Standard ceremonies are weekly community gatherings held for calling certain spirits, our ancestors.

In New Orleans (and elsewhere) Vodou is perceived as a stigmatised practice of a religion, mostly misconceived, but also racialised. Regarding Ward (2004), the major concerns about Vodou are that it were "*evil, satanic, demonic.*" A book published by Spenser Buckingham Saint John in 1884 titled "Haiti or the Black Republic" is mainly responsible for such prejudices (GLASSMAN, 2007).

*"New Orleans Voodoo is no more satanic or evil than any of the world's religions. The accusations about human sacrifice, cannibalism, or devil worship are figments of fevered white imaginations and a mean-spirited way to turn women of color into the Other"* (WARD, 2004: XVII).

However, the Vodou community is not hiding its activities and worshipping ceremonies. There are a few annual public ceremonies under the leadership and organisation of Manbo Sallie Ann Glassman.<sup>38</sup> These are primarily held for the sake of the ceremony itself, and secondarily for making Vodou accessible to the public - to New Orleanians and visitors of the city likewise. At spiritual open-air places like the Bayou St. John for the festivities on the Eve of St. John the Baptiste and at cemeteries during the night of All Saints Sallie calls spirits with the help of servants, dancers, drummers, singers, and visitors. Believers, interested people, and rubbernecks join these public events which contribute to awareness raising and perhaps the slow decrease of the Vodou stigma.

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<sup>38</sup> Since 1977, Manbo Sallie Ann Glassman has been practicing Vodou in New Orleans. She was initiated as a Manbo in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1995, by Oungans Edgar Jean-Louis and Silva Joseph. Ms Glassman presides over weekly ceremonies with her Vodou Sosyete, La Source Ancienne. She is the artist for the Enochian Tarot Deck, artist and co-creator of The New Orleans Voodoo Tarot (GLASSMAN, 2007).

At the New Orleans Healing Center, a building that *"fulfills and empowers the individual and the community by providing services and programs promoting physical, nutritional, emotional, intellectual, environmental and spiritual well-being"* (communication with Sallie Glassman), Sallie owns the Island of Salvation Botanica. In her shop she offers material for people interested in reaching the spirit with Vodou religious supply, medicinal herbs and roots, candles, oils, perfumes, literature, as well as Haitian and local artwork. Her goal is not only to sell spiritual products but also to educate and enlighten interested or hesitant people in the rich blend of cultures and spiritual traditions that are present in New Orleans.

Another city-wide familiar place for spiritual products is the F&F Botanica Spiritual Supply, commonly known as the F&F Candle shop. It is the self-proclaimed "largest and most trusted" spiritual store in New Orleans offering an immense amount of candles, spiritual soaps, incense, oils, perfumes, herbs, roots, and spices, as well as wooden and plastic figures representing certain spirits, saints, the dead, and illustrations of other important religious and spiritual characters, as I noticed during my visits in the shop on Broad Street. Its sales assistants give professional advice and answer any question concerning the *right* product with a healing effect for certain diseases, pains, psychological difficulties, or wishes, depending on the client's individual demand.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, situated right behind the French Quarter, is a commonly known spiritual church offering catholic mass services in different languages (English, French, Spanish). Regarding its mission statement, it is *"a welcoming diverse, inner-city community of believers, united by our strong Catholic Faith. Through family-centered and spirit-filled worship, education, outreach, and generous service to the poor and homeless of our community, we are called to proclaim and live out the Gospel in our contemporary world."*<sup>39</sup> As I recognised at my visits and from communications with Felice Guimont, jazz bands, gospel choirs, and brass combos are very often responsible for a rhythmic New Orleans flair during the ceremonies, something that strict catholic churches would not allow. The statue of St. Expedite, a catholic martyr, also representing the spirit of death in New Orleans Vodou is visited by many believers and followers.

Furthermore, there is also Priestess Miriam Chamani, a commonly known spiritual leader. Together with her husband Priest Oswan Chamani (who died in 1995) she established the

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<sup>39</sup> Source: <http://www.judeshrine.com/>, retrieved in September 2013.



*Voodoo Spiritual Temple* which is also used as a small museum catering especially to the attention of tourists and visitors from outside. She offers reading (tarot cards, hand palm, crystal ball) and healing sessions, personal training courses to develop the spiritual and mental powers of humans, as well as individually requested mass services and ceremonies for weddings and other special occasions<sup>40</sup>. Her museum includes a shop with several "Voodoo gadgets" (dolls, books, cups, candles, oils, perfumes, herbs, gris-gris bags, etc.) primarily directed towards tourists rather than convinced Vodou practitioners and believers.

Just like with any other religion, there are several controversial issues regarding the belief and practice of Vodou. New Orleanians are thinking very differently when it comes to the topic of supernatural belief systems - and especially Vodou is a subject that divides the territory in various types of people. Among these are the absolute believers, the non-believers, those who are looking for profits from "Voodoo", and those who rather do not talk about Vodou to "outsiders".

Brenda Osbey would claim all of the above mentioned examples of how and where Vodou is present in New Orleans as incorrect. In her paper "Why we can't talk to you about Voodoo" (2011) she explains the secrecy of the local Vodou community and declares that everything that is commonly known about Vodou is simply not true. In her interpretation someone like priestess Marie Laveau has never existed - because generally there are no priests or queens in Vodou at all. St. John's Eve does not have any significance just like Vodou is not in tune with Catholicism or any other Western religion. Generally, nothing from "western Europe" has ever had any influence on the practice and rites of Vodou - it does not recognise neither the St. John's feast day nor the summer solstice as a reason for a religious or other holiday.

In Osbey's opinion, the Vodou religion cannot be explained to or discussed with anyone who is "*outside the Community of the Faithful*" (2011: 6). Hollywood, the tourism industry, "*fakers and defrauders of tourists*"<sup>41</sup> really take nothing from the Religion ..." (2011: 10) and hence do not influence Vodou and the mentioned community in any kind. She compares such fakers with

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<sup>40</sup> Source: <http://www.voodoospiritualtemple.org/>, retrieved in September 2013.

<sup>41</sup> These "fakers and defrauders of tourists" can be interpreted as the many Tarot cards, hand palm, and crystal ball readers who are offering their services on Jackson Square claiming to have a special connection or position within the local Vodou community; the many shops in the French Quarter selling tourist Vodou articles such as dolls, t-shirts, drinks, crystal balls, skulls, and other kinds of gimmicks; and the tour guide agencies offering walking tours by day and night with specific topics such as Haunted History, Voodoo, or Cemetery tours. While leading groups of tourists through the city of New Orleans the guides tell "spooky" stories with a mix of historical facts, urban legends, myths, and other doubtful information.

thieves who snatch with one hand and lose their prize with the other, so at the end nobody profits from anything - it is said that commerce is strictly separated from religion and would not impact each other.

Osbey tries to make clear, that whatever "outsiders" would do, they could never fully appreciate, understand, or feel embraced by the Vodou community. They would only get to a very superficial level and always have a reduced glimpse of ancestor worship rituals. In fact, she publishes a statement that hardly anyone admits in New Orleans. I have noticed that only a few persons are open to talk about Vodou, at one side because they do not have any experience with it, on the other side because they do not want to speak with everyone about Vodou. Luckily, I have been acquainted with some members of the local Vodou community who belong to Manbo Sallie Ann Glassman. They embraced my thirst for knowledge and personal interest in the practice of Vodou. I even got invited to participate at ceremonies. Some of them are accessible to the public, others are only considered as private ceremonies in Sallie's peristil. Thanks to the experiences made with Sallie I was able to enter into the small local Vodou community. My observations and analyses of interviews are presented in the respective chapter about the commodification of religion and belief in the supernatural with a focus on the local Vodou culture and the issues with tourism marketing.

### **2.3.6. The classification of cultural assets from other perspectives**

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter there are different ways of grouping cultural elements to specific topics. These different forms of grouping certainly follow the various goals of the observer.

The tourism industry is concentrated on a kind of interpretation concerning the attractiveness of a certain destination. In the case of New Orleans, the tourism industry is keen on selling *culture* and its surrounding activities as a product - at best in combination with entertainment. As I am going to describe in the following, the topics of music, food, and architecture are the most important assets of attractiveness used by tourism oriented businesses. This selection combines not only the most obvious characteristics of the city but also merges indispensable elements of a touristic visit - containing the product mix of intangible and tangible assets. While music represents the entertaining and relaxing part of the visit, food is not promoted as a vital necessity but as a culturally distinctive and culinary experience. The third block contains architecture as the obligatory physical attractive element during a touristic visit which is aimed

at satisfying the visitor's eye with something that can be touched and traditionally photographed.

The growing movement to link culture with economic development has been accompanied by a proliferation of terms and definitions to describe the phenomenon. Cultural economy, creative economy, creative industries, or cultural industries are just some of the phrases that are widely used. UNESCO provides a working definition of the cultural industries that explicitly acknowledges the place of traditional arts and culture. It defines the cultural industries as:

*"... those industries which produce tangible or intangible artistic and creative outputs, and which have a potential for wealth creation and income generation through the exploitation of cultural assets and production of knowledge-based goods and services (both traditional and contemporary). What cultural industries have in common is that they all use creativity, cultural knowledge and intellectual property to produce products and services with social and cultural meaning"* (UNESCO, 2005a).

Most definitions of the cultural industries are based around a combination of five main criteria - creativity, intellectual property, symbolic meaning, use value and methods of production (GALLOWAY and DUNLOP, 2007). Generally said, the cultural industries are those which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. This includes advertising, architecture, the art and antiques markets, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio.

The cultural economy sector is hence confronting cultural assets differently due to the primary goal of its commercialisation, commodification, and monetisation in the sense of economic development for a destination. Certainly, the creative activities within the cultural industries promising more economic benefit also seem more appealing to the institutions supporting certain businesses and associations. In Louisiana, and more specifically New Orleans, the Cultural Economy Initiative is boosting the creative film and digital media industry since these sectors do employ a high number of workers, attract national investment, and bring lots of tax-money to the state. The living cultural heritage elements as described above do play a minor role in the local system of cultural economy and can be found in the definition of entertainment, except the culinary sector.

### 2.3.7. The tourism industry perspective

The most commonly used grouping of cultural elements in the tourism industry is the "holy trinity" made up of music, food, and architecture (SAKAKEENY, 2013). Basically, that is what makes New Orleans a desirable destination according to the local tourism businesses. This is what New Orleans is typically famous for, therefore it is promoted extensively on the national and international tourism markets. Other scholars like Gotham would substitute architecture with history and the New Orleans based Offbeat magazine promotes music, food and culture as the most characteristic assets of the city. Generally, these trinity topics are the columns of the urban brand strategy, a process of transforming otherwise mundane and ordinary symbols, images, and experiences into evocative signs of place distinctiveness to expand the number of visitors to generate local support for tourism investment. Music is considered as the main axis of the tourism industry within the above mentioned holy trinity. Music is one of the most, if not considered the most important cultural asset of the city especially in the eyes of the tourism industry.

Passengers arriving in New Orleans via Louis Armstrong airport are greeted with a customised mix of local music and a banner proclaiming *"We're Jazzed You're Here!"* On the streets, in restaurants, and bars in the French Quarter soloists, duos, trios, combos, bands, big bands, orchestras or even marching bands performing many different styles of music are ever present. Traditional or modern jazz and blues, rock, R'n'B, soul, funk, reggae, etc. are preformed in the so-called "Entertainment district".

During the many visits and observations I noticed that in some areas the musical performances are obviously catered to tourists, especially on Bourbon Street, with the side-effect that visitors are often more interested in consuming alcohol than in enjoying the gigs. The "New Orleans Official Visitors Guide 2013" suggests to *"experience the nonstop party of Bourbon Street"* which already gives evidence that tourists are catered with so-called cover-bands. This is a band or musical formation playing and imitating songs that are commonly known, written by more or less famous interpreters, whose job is to entertain the guests with songs that are easy to sing along with. Special beer promotions (like 3 for 1) and other kinds of intoxicating mixed liquors (the Granat-drink) are certainly luring for visitors who also want to enjoy the added bonus. As advised in the Guide the New Orleans' open-container law, allowing visitors to take their drink with them as they explore the city, is an American exception that needs to be experienced. On

Bourbon Street there are less than a hand full of bars that do not employ cover-bands but are showing more traditional New Orleans style music like jazz, blues, and soul.

On Frenchmen Street, located just one block off the French Quarter, the situation of the musical offer is very different. DJs or cover-bands are not existent. The bars drag visitors with performances of musicians who are presenting their interpretation of the music that is said to be born in New Orleans. Some of the venues do not have any amplification for instruments because many places are relatively small. People are dancing cat-step and other dances from the 1940s and 1950s and are consciously listening to the performances. The 2013 Guide defines that part of the street as "*known as the 'locals' version of Bourbon'.*"

Apart of live music in venues and clubs, at festivals or parades music is the most important contributor to the event's success. The biggest festival events in town that are catered to "out of town" visitors are the Jazz and Heritage Festival and the French Quarter Festival, both of them had their premiere more than 30 years ago. At parades, such as for Mardi Gras or for St. Patrick's Day, marching bands and brass bands are out on the streets and lead the parade routes.

The destination is famous for its culinary, as typical recipes and dishes are very different from common north-American kitchen. Fish and seafood, coming from and partly bred in the Louisiana swamps (an ecological landscape defined as a forested wetland with brackish water) form the basis of local *Delikatessen* such as oven-baked, fried or roasted oysters, crawfish in the shape of pies, cakes and strudel, fried soft-shell crab sandwiches, sautéed shrimp, and various kinds of steamed mussels. Furthermore, catfish, red beans and rice, andouille sausages, chicken & grits, etc. make up a good part of the ingredients for the culinary fusion between West European (French and Spanish), African, Caribbean and Native American influences. Although the Cajun kitchen comes from South-Western Louisiana (with local dishes such as Boudin, Jambalaya, Filé Gumbo, Rice and Gravy, etc.) it is often listed aside local Creole and other common dishes such as the Creole Gumbo or New Orleans style sandwiches called "Po-boys". Desserts and sweets which can be found anywhere have jingling names such as 'Sno-Balls', pecan crunch pralines, sweet potato cookies, or artisan ice cream. The historical French culinary heritage survived in form of Beignets, Étouffée, and other titles for French influenced dishes.

Just as the local kitchen, also New Orleans architecture is a mix of different styles formed by the colonial history of the place. Regarding the residential houses in the city centre, the French Quarter, and its surrounding residential districts, the architecture is different from the common north-American style. Ranging from simple Creole Cottage or Shotgun houses, to double gallery, centre-hall cottage houses up to the spacious Mansions all the buildings have something in common - bright colours and a wooden construction. Various forms of columns and banisters made of wood or iron, the Spanish-induced window shutters, or French gardens around the houses make the difference of financial possibilities. Although the downtown area of New Orleans can be considered as a typical north-American place other districts within the city are distinct due to their residential and neighbourhood character.

### **2.3.8. The cultural economy perspective**

As in 2004 the Cultural Economy Initiative was launched by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT) under the guidance of the Office of Lt. Governor Landrieu a private consulting firm had the mission to *"quantify the economic importance of arts and cultural activities"* (MT. AUBURN, 2005: 14) and to analyse the potential of the cultural economy situation in the state of Louisiana in 2005. The result with the promising title "Louisiana: Where Culture Means Business" partly serves for my own study, relocating me off the streets and into the spaces of local governmental regulations where policies and economic initiatives are generated.

In fact, the report presents the cultural economy assets that are already commodified to an extent that the economic impact can be calculated. Although the numbers and the assets do consider the whole state of Louisiana all mentioned information can be taken representative for the city of New Orleans. The city is on the front when it comes to cultural identity with goods and products and is also responsible for the most sales volumes of culture related products in the state.

The study was officially presented just three days before hurricane Katrina hit the cultural capital of the state, and it suddenly appeared that supportive cultural economy programmes would have to be put on hold. But the following document released by CRT declared cultural economy as the main driver for recovery. In "Louisiana Rebirth: Restoring the Soul of America" the major strategy is based on "a multifaceted, deeply rooted, authentic, and unique culture" representing an economic asset that other states could not count to their strengths. At the same time the

accomplishment of all the focused recovery goals is stated to be achieved with rebuilding Louisiana as a top tourism destination as result number one. Result number two is the making of Louisiana's Cultural Economy the engine of economic and social rebirth.

The Mt. Auburn report shows a classification of the cultural industries into six key segments: Culinary Arts, Design, Entertainment, Literary Arts and Humanities, Preservation, and Visual Arts and Crafts. In the following I will give a short outline of these key segments as described in the report.

Table 5: Classification of cultural assets by the cultural economy sector

Culinary Arts	Apart of the different New Orleans, Creole, and Cajun cuisine with its diversity of agricultural and seafood products, recipes and seasonings the report pays special attention to the restaurants "that add value to the products", associated products like catering, cookbooks, TV shows, culinary tourist tours, the food export and distribution system, as well as the individual chefs who sustain the brand and the visibility of the local cuisine.
Design	This segment is described as the most applied segment of the cultural economy. Within the report, Design includes the advertising industry, printing and graphic companies producing creative work in print and digital version for the business community.
Entertainment	The entertainment sector includes broadcasting, film, music, and live entertainment activities, as well as digital media including animation and computer gaming. Tourism and sports are not considered as entertainment by the consultant's report but by the city's classification of commodified culture and the state's definition of entertainment. Cultural tourism is considered a separate industry which is part of the larger cultural economy.
Literary Arts and Humanities	The literary arts and humanities industry is comprised of individual writers and editors; newspaper and periodical publishing; book publishing; and related activities in the humanities. The industry also includes libraries and bookstores. Contemporary poetry as well as the highly popular spoken word are an integral part of book and literary art festivals which do play an important role in the industry.
Preservation	The heritage and historic preservation industries include restoration and redevelopment of its built environment, its historic structures and districts that reflect the diverse architectural styles in its history. New Orleans has been a leader in the nation's preservation movement from the 1930s when plans for "urban renewal" that would have razed the French Quarter were blocked by preservationists. The preservation movement remains one of the strongest interest groups in the state. Educational programmes on a secondary university level are effectively attracting students from around the country to architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and preservation studies.
Visual Arts and Crafts	The visual arts industry includes fine arts, folk art, contemporary crafts, and folk crafts. New Orleans and its surroundings are rich in folk art and craft tradition, and do celebrate a thriving contemporary art scene especially since the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) opened in 1975. Around the CAC numerous art galleries and tourism infrastructure such as hotels, clubs and residences have evolved since the 1970s giving the contemporary arts a larger public platform.



### 3. Commodification of the living cultural heritage music in New Orleans

*In New Orleans, music is the lifeblood of the culture, it accompanies both life and death, it celebrates and it mourns. It is essential to the life and future of the city that music continues to permeate the air from every open door, window and street corner.<sup>42</sup>*

The living cultural heritage music in New Orleans is the cultural element which mostly identifies the city and its inhabitants. It is also considered as the most important aspect for what the cultural capital of Louisiana is known for internationally, attracting nine millions of tourists annually. In New Orleans people are constantly exposed to live music performances in different situations and locations. Playing instruments is used to support protest marches against political decisions such as noise policies, help to express the need for civil rights, but most certainly to entertain people so they can dip into the smooth New Orleans mood of life. This is true whether it is brass, folk, blues or jazz band formations in the tourist zones of the French Quarter where street performers are playing music to pursue their daily profession or to promote their upcoming gigs. Music is also performed during orientation week at the Tulane University campus where new students and their parents are greeted by a (white) jazz band during lunch break. One can also walk along the Mississippi Riverwalk and listen to the steam calliope - a steam pipe organ on top of the Steamboat Natchez. In New Orleans one could get the sensation that music can be produced with almost anything - be it instruments or boats.

New Orleans is cited in an uncountable amount of songs, some of them are entirely dedicated to the city, others put the name New Orleans to make a reference or a statement, and others just use the sound of the wording because it goes well with the rhyme of the lyrics. Some of the most commonly known songs citing the city's name are "The house of the rising sun", a traditional folk song, also called Rising Sun Blues, telling about a life gone wrong in New Orleans, the most successful commercial version was recorded by the English rock group the Animals in 1964. "Brown Sugar" by The Rolling Stones (1971) makes reference to slaves working on cotton fields and in the sugar industry of former times. The songs "Jambalaya" by Van Morrison (original by Hank Williams in 1952), "Royal Orleans" by Led Zeppelin (1976), and even a song by the King himself, Elvis Presley with "King Creole" (a song recorded in 1958 laying foundation to the homonymous musical drama film), honour the city of New Orleans. Tom Waits with "I wish I was

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<sup>42</sup> Statement by the Backbeat Foundation: <http://backbeatfoundation.org/about/>, retrieved in July 2013.

in New Orleans" (1976) and especially the interpretation of the city's most famous son Louis Armstrong with "Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans" (written by Eddie De Lange and Louis Alter the song was recorded in 1947, performed by Louis Armstrong and sung by Billie Holiday) do express their sincere love to a city that is culturally based on music. In synthesis, any kind of cultural expression or performance is characterised and accompanied by music. New Orleans is, especially among musicians and music lovers around the world, symbolically seen as the tangible aspect of the intangible element of music.

The tangible notion of music has been rediscovered and even more appreciated since the storm. With the tangible notion I refer to the theoretical context of living cultural heritage combining material and immaterial components of culture. In this regard I try to explain the importance of human built and natural surroundings for intangible assets, hence the relations between a community, its location, and the cultural practices performed.

Other than calling Katrina a "cultural Chernobyl" as McKernan (2008) did, it also had positive effects in the long term regarding cultural awareness raising about the city in the US (and worldwide). This happened through constant news coverage on TV, radio, internet and through the massive call for donations and fund raising by different organisations. This lasted for several years until the superficial wounds caused by the hurricane had been healed. Documentaries and information campaigns about the thriving music heritage had a sustainable impact on the national awareness that New Orleans is *the* American city of music. As such, music was promoted as an important part of American cultural heritage that should be preserved, sustained, and commodified. Tourism in New Orleans got a strong boost when being advertised as an attractive destination for American tourists and musicians. America finally discovered that New Orleans has more to offer than "Katrina tours" and appreciated its cultural diversity from the rest of the country. Local universities got more applications than ever before and many of the first time visitors remained in the city, purchased real estate, rebuilt destroyed houses, found a new home, realised business ideas or invested in start-up activities. Often people talked to me about the typical "I fell in love with New Orleans syndrome" - individuals who arrived as a tourist and never left again.

Music shapes the city on many levels. Music influences and gets impacted by various forces such as history, the tourism industry, the missing music businesses, local and outside musicians, residents, its associations, and the city government which is impeding policies that are regulating

cultural events. Music in New Orleans forms non-profit organisations to create social welfare nets regarding health care or job guarantee. It helps to support crime prevention and contributes to the education system. Music unifies and divides the society, moving masses when it is endangered of being attacked or tried to be possessed by certain groups of interest. Music is the soul of New Orleans, as locals use to say.

### **Positive and negative commodification**

*"The soul of New Orleans is a marketable commodity"* (interview 9)

In the present chapter I analyse the process of commodification of music and the evocation of negotiations, reactions, and transformations among artists, residents, the tourism industry, and the city government. I focus on tourism related influences and how the cultural actors and community are trying to boost the commodification process for its advantage and general well-being. With the term commodification I understand the process of transforming tangible and intangible cultural assets into consumable and hence saleable products. The cultural assets are local artistic activities, cultures, social relations, identities, expressions, shows, skills, exhibitions, among others. Such commodities are performed, offered, constructed, managed, recorded, and/or produced by the cultural community. The commodities are then traded and sold for profitable exchange to and from individuals, social clubs, associations, non-profit organisations, music venues, tourism related businesses, tourists, as well as local consumers. The financial capitalisation of traditions, cultural expressions, artistic skills, ideas, and designs is regarded as a positive or negative commodification.

The tourism industry is often described as a double edged sword for the cultural actors in the city. At one hand, it sustains musicians with tourists giving them the possibility to perform regularly. On the other hand, businesses which are catering entirely to tourists are accused of offering adverse working conditions, low financial compensation, and of focusing on economic profit only without taking on responsibility for the continuity of the culture of performing local music. In this sense, different groups who are involved in the production and consumption of cultural assets do see the cultural commodification from diverging perspectives.

Cultural actors and non-profit organisations working in related sectors do perceive positive commodification of culture if the monetary, social, and cultural benefits achieved through the performance, production and sale of cultural activities do actually remain with the cultural

actors themselves, or within the extended cultural community. Apart of the financial gain for the musicians, which is used for individual disposal, the social benefits are rather focused on social services for single performers. Positive commodification occurs if the generated income is distributed or used for social health care services, crime prevention programmes, investment into promotion, or education of soft skills such as auto-management. The cultural benefits that are capitalised from positive commodification are understood as supporting, maintaining and/or safeguarding the cultural heritage assets for the cultural community. In other words, if actors from the cultural community can continue doing what they actually are supposed to do - such as creating and performing cultural activities with a certain pace, attitude, and motivation which is perceived as adequate for themselves, being supported by distinctive services - positive commodification through "selling" their performances and shows has been achieved. Such services which are enhancing the cultural benefits and helping the musical heritage to survive do include educational programmes for kids, funds for new instruments and music equipment, the organisation of festivals (focused on jazz, blues, brass bands, etc.), gigs, tours, competitions and band contests, networking with the music industry, support by radio stations (promotion of music and awareness raising about musical heritage), and others.

People like Ben Jaffe who are actively contributing to the positive commodification of music are able to express this in a few words:

*"What my dad believed was, that to make cultural traditions last, to have certain social traditions survive, they had to be profitable to the people who were creating them - maybe not financially profitable but maybe something that was redeeming to them in some way. I definitely believe that, I'm a firm believer that if musicians can't make a living with playing music, slowly that traditions that they create would fade" (interview 10).*

The down side of cultural commodification is perceived if the cultural actors do not receive social or cultural benefits in return of their performances. Negative commodification is experienced if financial compensation is lower than appropriate and if cultural skills are not appreciated or respected properly. Often it is equalised with the term exploitation - especially when the cultural actors have the feeling that the monetary benefits end up in other people's hands such as the tourism industry, the city government, festival producers, bar owners, and the like. When I was sitting down with the grand marshal and musician Aaron Blanks on a park bench in Congo Square he mentioned that he has nothing against the commodification of his cultural activities because it certainly:

*"would represent a resource for tourism but it has to be set up with the people, the natives - not certain individuals that own the Jazz Fest, put on the voodoo festivals ... that's for one person to make money! These people are using these people for their culture, history, to gain for themselves! We have the feeling that other people are making money with our culture!"* (interview 12).

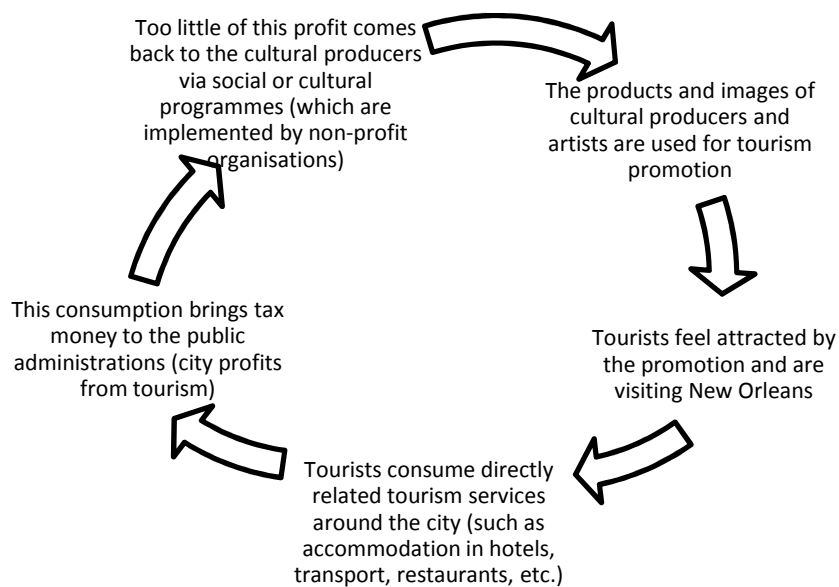
Asante Salaam, working for the mayor's cultural economy initiative is aware of the problem that *"the ratio is not balanced - it's the music that drives the people to wanna come into a bar drinking and hang out, but the musicians don't nearly make as much as the bars make. The benefit proportion is not balanced. The musicians and the culture bearers have a disproportionate benefit to the asset that they are of the city"* (interview 38). With this statement Asante confirms that local cultural actors are seen as a touristic asset for the city and that they are not benefitting enough from their activities. In the ongoing interview she furthermore stated that these issues are continuously being addressed by the institution she is working for.

As described above, compensation does not only refer to financial income but also to other kinds of support through social services and cultural benefits that would be very much embraced by musicians and other cultural actors. During one of the many conversations with my landlord (fieldwork 2013), artist, and civil engineer Robert C. Tannen, on his porch on Esplanade Avenue, he listed the issues to which the city and the cultural economy initiative should find solutions. Tannen, as he is called, would like to see the public institutions to take on more responsibility for the cultural producers in providing opportunities for economic gain from their activities:

*"They do not feel compensated. I should not say they, but many of the cultural producers in New Orleans feel that the city is using their creativity without supporting their activity locally. It is a representation of the culture as viewed by ... [the postman comes by, I jump up and get the parcel from the garden fence - the interview is briefly interrupted] ... there is a feeling, I believe, of the cultural producers that the city is using their products without investing in their activities - for example, the local market for these things may not be as strong as perhaps if the public, city and state, would make funds available for these producers it would make life easier - because they have low incomes. The majority of the cultural producers do not get a direct economic benefit from their production - it is represented and misrepresented and duplicated at the city and county/state level, and by outside interests, without benefitting the cultural producers to a great extent"* (interview 49).

Next to the lost opportunity of benefitting economically Tannen also talks about the missing backing support by the public institutions. The cultural producers do have the feeling that the city government and the tourism industry are making profit off their artistic products and skills - which are seen as commodities. Cultural producers feel caught within a vicious circle as demonstrated below.

Figure 5: Vicious egg of local cultural producers



Source: elaboration by the author

Tannen criticises that a specific public fund for programmes dedicated to cultural producers which is nurtured by tourism taxes hardly exists in New Orleans. This fund should be used for social services reducing costs for health care, tax discounts for specific equipment, renting space for rehearsing or producing art, permit discounts for organising cultural events, and similar services.

The cultural economy initiative has started to work on solutions for enabling the cultural producers to have more direct income and elaborated the cultural products districts (CPD) throughout the city of New Orleans.<sup>43</sup> Within these CPD's sales of original visual artwork, performing arts, and music recordings are exempt from local and state sales tax.

<sup>43</sup> For more information on the cultural products districts: <http://www.nola.gov/cultural-products-districts/>, retrieved in January 2014.

Before deepening into the different forms of commodification of music including its positive and negative effects, I am going to give some insight into the methods that I used in order to achieve valuable data and results for my analysis.

### **The researcher in the field**

During the fieldwork in New Orleans I capitalised on my skills as an amateur musician performing music on a professional level. I had the chance to play around 25 live performances with the band *Nadia & the Rabbits*<sup>44</sup> in various venues throughout the city (Café Istanbul<sup>45</sup> in the Bywater, LOA Bar at the International House Hotel<sup>46</sup> and The Merchant in the Central Business District, Gallery Veriditas in the Uptown area of the Lower Garden District, Radio WWOZ<sup>47</sup> in the centre of the French Quarter).<sup>48</sup> As a European duo with Nadia as the singer-songwriter (vocals and acoustic guitar) and me as a poly-instrumentalist (acoustic guitar, charango, ukulele, ukulele bass, konzertina, and oboe) our repertoire was not based on a traditional New Orleans music genre but a rather international music style. We played lounge, indie-pop, folk oblique, and others with original songs in different languages (English, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese), attracting visitors (especially business tourists) and locals likewise.

Occasionally, we had the chance to share the stage with locally well-known musicians. These were Warren Battiste<sup>49</sup>, Roland Guerin<sup>50</sup>, Norbert Susemihl and band formations such as Chuck Perkins and the Voices of the Big Easy<sup>51</sup> accompanying our songs and vice-versa. Thanks to these artists I got in contact with many other active musicians. Commonly, I was introduced and perceived as a musician by friends, music partners, and people I got to know in the venues. This situation allowed me to have a close relationship to many artists, to get invited to and informed about numerous gigs and events which contributed to the positive development of my field research. It was getting normal to exchange experiences about the life on stage when having po-boys, dinners, drinks, talks and fun with musicians and artists. Topics like the positive and negative side effects of being a musician in New Orleans were approached in a habitual manner.

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<sup>44</sup> For more information on Nadia & the Rabbits: <http://nadiaandtherabbits.com>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.cafeistanbulnola.com>

<sup>46</sup> for more information: <http://www.ihh.com>

<sup>47</sup> for more information: <http://www.woz.org>

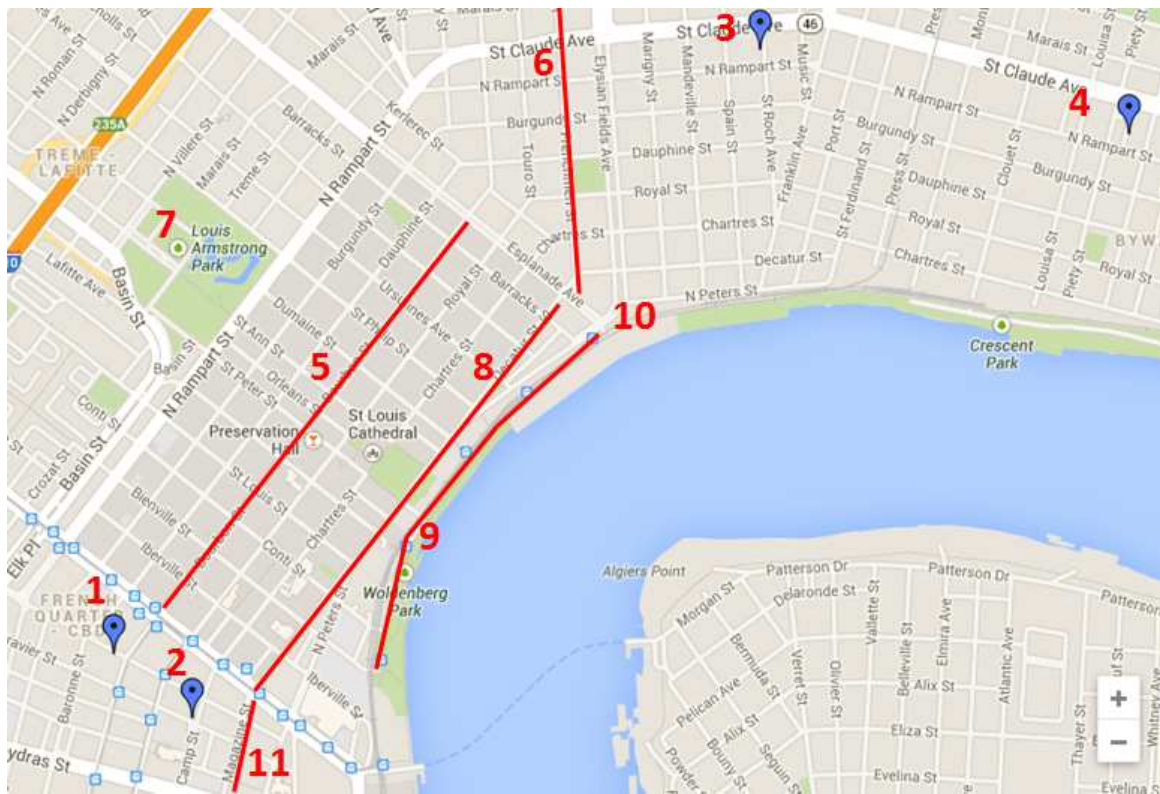
<sup>48</sup> Please refer to figure 6 for the exact location of mentioned venues

<sup>49</sup> For more information on Warren Battiste: <http://www.warrenbattiste.com>

<sup>50</sup> For more information on Roland Guerin: <http://rolandguerin.com>

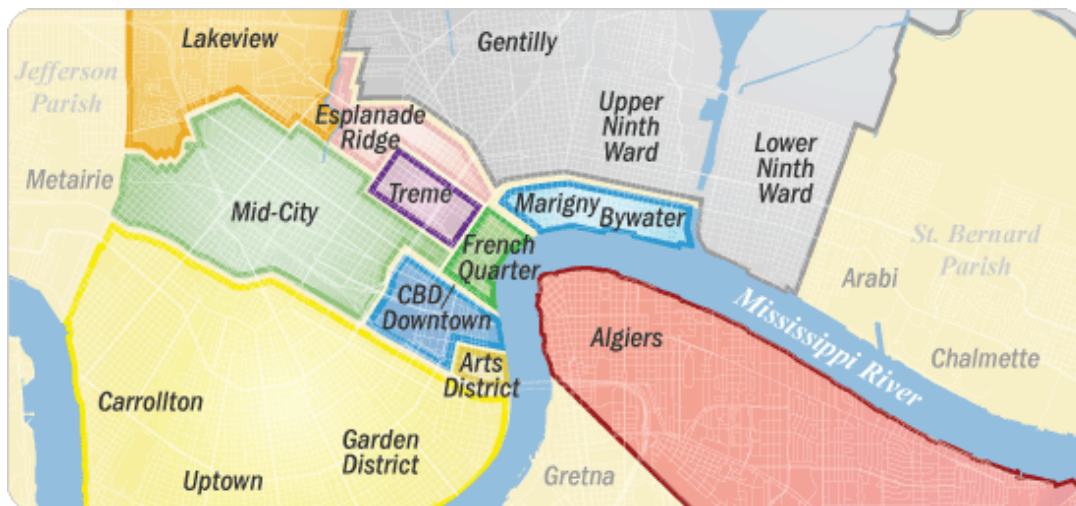
<sup>51</sup> For more information on Chuck Perkins and the Voices of the Big Easy: <http://www.chuckperkinsvoices.com/>

Figure 6: Map of New Orleans with research relevant venues and streets



Source: data from google, elaboration by the author<sup>52</sup>

Figure 7: Map of New Orleans neighbourhoods



Source: NOCVB

<sup>52</sup> Legend: 1 - The Merchant Cafe 2 - LOA bar 3 - Cafe Istanbul 4 - Vodou temple 5 - Bourbon Street 6 - Frenchmen Street 7 - Louis Armstrong Park 8 - Decatur Street 9 - Riverwalk 10 - US Old Mint 11 - Magazine Street



Collecting data was often done with conversations turning out to be informal talks and chats among like-minded people. Such situations helped me to communicate with my interlocutors on another level, to bridge personal doubts of faith more easily, to give and take information that concerns musicians, and to be more immersed in the world of local artists. Roland Guerin was sometimes able to set my name on the guest list when he performed at Snug Harbor, due to the US\$ 25 standard cover charge I could not have afforded to enter to his monthly concerts. Chuck Perkins also welcomed me often to shows, events, and performances at his venue because he wanted to introduce me to musicians and artists he thought I would be interested in talking to - and he was always right.

### **The researcher on stage**

When musicians come together they often ask each other where they usually perform and sometimes help each other out in finding gigs through their contacts. This also happened to Nadia & the Rabbits and how we got to perform in the various bars. I remember well my first visit to Café Istanbul at one of the first nights during fieldwork, it was March 16, 2012. Coincidentally, I was informed via e-mail by the Center Austria at the University of New Orleans which I visited on the same day that an Austrian band named Attwenger would play in New Orleans at Café Istanbul that night. This band consists of an accordion player and a drummer, both singing in Upper-Austrian dialect. After their performance in front of around 30 guests<sup>53</sup> I walked up to the club's co-owner and music manager Chuck Perkins and asked him if Nadia & the Rabbits could also play at his club one time. Chuck answered "*sure, why not?!*" and gave us a slot some weeks afterwards. Our first gig in New Orleans was settled and at the arranged evening of our performance we were ready to give our debut in the US. We arrived at around 18.00h, finished the sound check and waited until the first band would go up and play at around 20.30h. When the second band started their performance at 22.00h the Café slowly got filled up by guests who wanted to get entertained by their smooth soul and R'n B sounds. The six black musicians with a beautiful Afro-American lady as singer in the front, a dynamic saxophone player, and a big guy on the bass hardly could stop their performance after two hours due to the dancing and partying crowd demanding "*we want MORE!*" Eventually, the musicians left the stage with satisfied smiles on their faces and it was finally our turn to plug in our instruments. As soon as we played the last chords of the first song we recognised that Café Istanbul was almost empty, apart from Chuck, his Turkish business partner Suleiman, the three musicians of the next

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<sup>53</sup> The last time I saw Attwenger live was at the Vienna Donauinselfest with around 25.000 frenetically applauding people.

band, other four guests that I did not know, and Walter the sound engineer. Unimpressed by the few amount of remaining guests Nadia and I kept on doing our show, giving our best, trying to convince at least the few people that attentively listened to us. After a show of around 50 minutes we finished. Sasha Masakowski and Cliff Hines, accompanied with the up-right base by Max Moran, the fourth band of the evening, got on stage. After all performances, Walter (a guy who would never keep the secret to be a native Londoner and who always seemed upset about something) approached us and invited us to play at his monthly open microphone event that he is hosting at the LOA bar in the International House. Although hardly anyone got to see us on stage we realised that our first gig was kind of a success, having thus managed to perform at another venue in a few days.

On the arranged Wednesday evening we started to play after the featured artist had finally finished. This artist was a highly motivated fellow in his late 50s, emotionally singing country songs about beer, ladies, and getting drunk in the French Quarter. Walter actually expected more musicians who wanted to promote themselves at the open-mic event. As a consequence we had the possibility to present a whole set of our songs, lasting for more than one hour. The next morning Walter called to tell us that the bar keeper of LOA, Alan, would like to get in contact with us because he mentioned to have very much enjoyed our gig. On Friday afternoon Nadia and I were invited to meet Alan at the cocktail bar. After a drink and a nice conversation we negotiated a fee and fixed a weekly gig every Thursday in May and June at the hotel's luxurious venue. Suddenly, Nadia & the Rabbits was part of the prestigious hotel's artistic series "Here's to the creative ones" which was initiated and cured by its owner Sean Cummings.

LOA then became the vitrine of our music, we could always refer to our show at LOA if somebody wanted to listen to us. LOA was also the place where we increasingly made more contacts to people who wanted us to play at their events or bars. For example, Chris Pepito, manager of 'The Merchant' café, engaged us to perform regularly for brunch time on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Or Thomas, art director of the Gallery Veriditas, asked us to entertain his clients during the Magazine Street Champagne Stroll event. Since LOA is a cocktail bar in the lobby of a boutique hotel which is catering to guests from the arts, movie, and design sector we got to know artists, music, video, and film producers, camera men, screen play writers, and half of the actors crew of the Hollywood movie Django Unchained. We played for particularly invited local friends and acquaintances, for hotel guests, and other international tourists. Often we ended up with enthusiastic regular guests and visitors drinking cocktails and talking about

potential collaboration for music videos, recording new songs, appearances at TV and news shows, and collected lots of new contacts for venues around the States. Typically, not all of the agreed activities and ideas were implemented but I want to emphasise that we usually got in contact with the people that were listening to us. A factor which is very interesting when being on stage, and even more interesting for me as a researcher.

For example, I realised that musicians are generally (on an amateur or professional level) very much appreciated in New Orleans and enjoy a high reputation in society, not to say a kind of privileged status. It is seen as a positive attribute if people are artistically active and are contributing to the cultural scene in the city. It is also very much appreciated by visitors, fans, musicians and non-musicians, if one follows a professional job and does music additionally, like a secondary income source.

Looking back, I would say that also luck was on our side concerning the music performances in New Orleans. We were at the right time at the right place and additionally got to know the right people. These gave us the chance to do what we wanted to do. But this process always reminded me that you need to give your best on stage even when you are playing in front of a few listeners.

Concerning income we either did not get paid at all or received the agreed fee in cash or checks. Hence, our income was fixed before and we were not dependent on bar sales or donations via tip jar, as explained in the following chapters. Generally, we had another approach to making music since it was not the main reason for our stay in New Orleans. Every gig was treated as a new chance to promote our music and make it accessible to people that have never listened to us before, earning money was not the main goal but a charming plus. This certainly influenced my attitude of performing, I did not have to be on stage and entertain guests in order to make a living but could freely decide if I wanted to play or not without any existential pressure. Surely, I invested the additional income not only for purchasing urgently needed equipment for rehearsing at home and playing live (microphone stands, cables, a monitor, bags for secure transportation, guitar strings, stage outfit, etc.) but also for increasing my quality of everyday life. As soon as I realised that making money with music actually positively influenced my life I noticed that with ever more performances some kind of price dumping was slowly creeping in. When people approached us and asked if we would play for free we started to demand at least a little fee for reimbursing our expenditure on music equipment, which at the end made up a

considerable cost. Some of the venues where we regularly performed asked us to play for less - at some occasions we accepted the price dumping at others not.

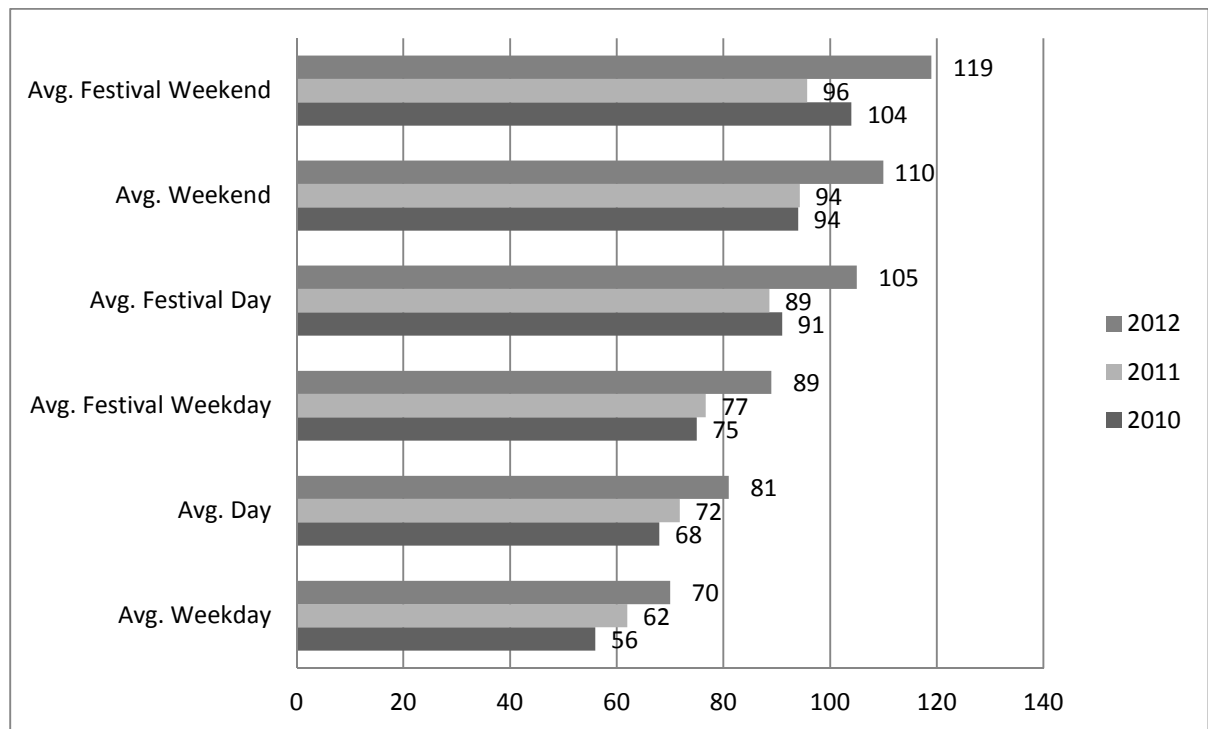
Further experiences of self-reflection as a musician in the field, when performing on stage, and more detailed observations concerning how the activity of being a musician influenced my research are presented throughout the chapters.

The following sub-chapter introduces to secondary data (elaborated by the city and non-profit organisations) about the music scene in New Orleans and gives background information regarding numbers of musicians, performances, and its locations around the city.

### **3.1. Music performance in New Orleans**

As shown in the figure below, the number of average gigs during a festival weekend and a weekday ranged from 119 to 70 in 2012, according to data elaborated by the Cultural Economy Snapshot (2012). Generally, gigs tend to concentrate on the weekends and drop off sharply during the week especially when a major festival or event is not taking place in New Orleans, a rather rare occasion. An average weekend day has 110 performances and an average weekday 36% less than weekends. This concentration is not solely due to an increase in venues offering live music on Fridays and Saturdays, although that is certainly the case, but also to an increase in multiple gigs at individual venues. For example, a bar that only features one band on Wednesdays and Thursdays may feature anywhere from two to five bands on a weekend day, increasing the number of gigs on that day/night.

Figure 8: Average music gigs per day 2010-2012



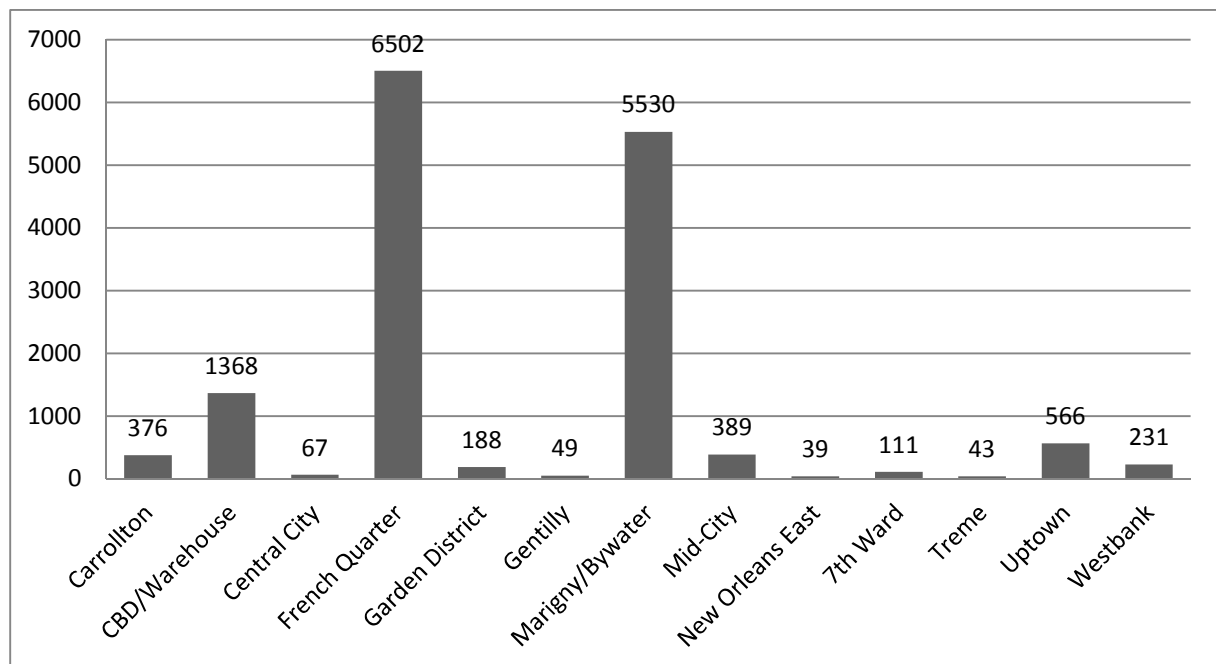
Source: Cultural Economy Snapshot, 2012, Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy

While the number of total gigs in 2012 had an impressive amount of 30,000, this was still not enough to allow all of the city’s local musicians to have consistent work. On average, most bands/musicians only play one gig per month (55%), around 12% play two gigs a month. Bands/musicians with one gig per week are even rarer at 9%. Finally, it is only 7% of bands/musicians playing ten or more gigs per month. In sum, regular work is concentrated among a minority of groups, while the majority support themselves by supplementing gigs with other musical or non-musical work. (2012, Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy)

When looking at the number of gigs performed throughout the different neighbourhoods of the city the following graph gives some interesting detail. The top neighbourhood regarding the amount of live music performances is the French Quarter (6,502 gigs), especially the many bars and venues along Bourbon Street and Decatur Street. The second place in this ranking is taken by the Marigny-Bywater neighbourhood (5,530 gigs), bordering the French Quarter in the east. Mostly responsible for the high number of gigs is Frenchmen Street and rather newly opened bars along St. Claude Avenue. The Central Business District (CBD)/Warehouse District area is ranked third with 1,368 gigs. This is not only because of dedicated music venues but also due to the many hotels entertaining its guests with live music. The figure demonstrates clearly the presently low significance in terms of live music performances within the historic neighbourhood

of Tremé, a place which mainly influenced the development of jazz and its related music genres in the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century. The low number of only 43 live gigs during the first half of 2012 mirrors the fears expressed by interlocutors concerning the continuous cultural insignificance of Tremé. This is due to issues with gentrification, incapacity of the various residents associations and groups to collaborate, and the lack of public as well as private interest in investing in the neighbourhood development.

Figure 9: Gigs by neighbourhood, Jan-Jun 2012

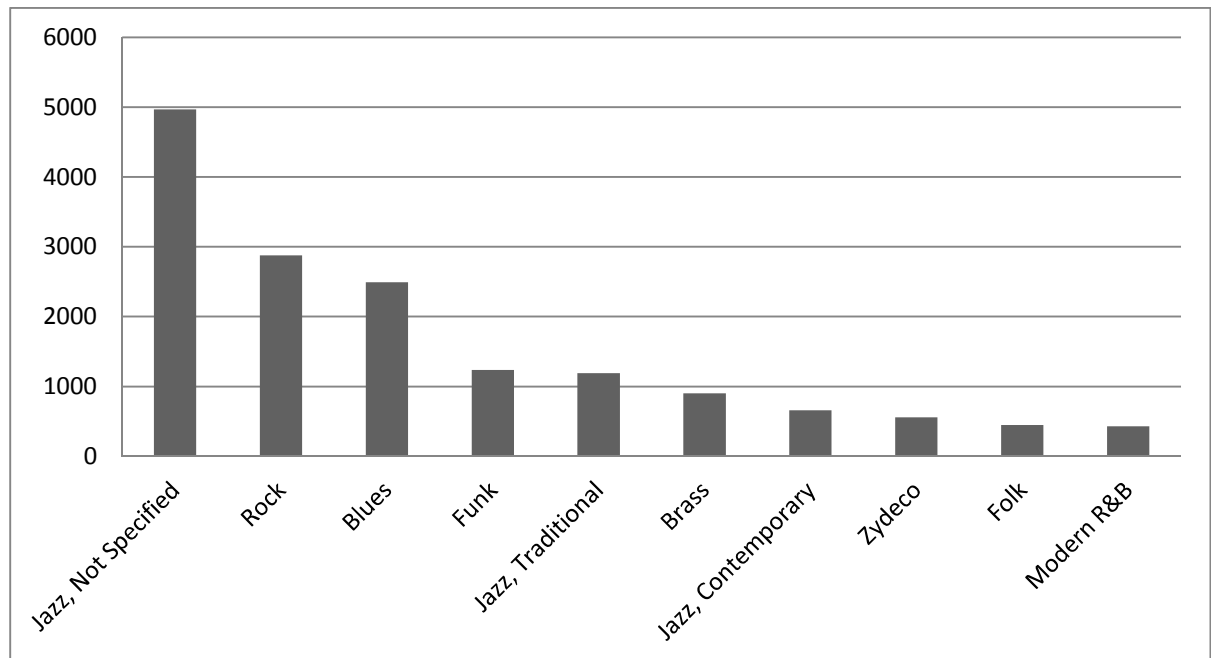


Source: Cultural Economy Snapshot, 2012, Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy

The dominance of the French Quarter regarding the performance of distinctive music genres is demonstrated by Figure 9 and Figure 10. Since Bourbon Street is responsible for most of the gigs in the city it also has a big influence on the performed music genre. The listed top three music types, such as "Not Specified" (including most probably Pop, Disco, Rap, Soul), "Rock", and "Blues", can certainly be attributed to the main touristy area in New Orleans. Its bars and venues are strongly catered to short term visitors offering a package of affordable alcoholic beverages, party atmosphere, promiscuous behaviour, and loud commercial music. On the contrary, the rest of the music genres given in Figure 10 can entirely be enjoyed on Frenchmen Street in the Marigny neighbourhood featuring those music genres which can be identified as more representative for New Orleans than Rock and Pop. Although that part of the city is also densely visited by tourists its venues do promote rather traditional New Orleans music genres, especially

the Apple Barrel and the Spotted Cat Music Club which are positioned on the first and third rank with 601 and 567 live gigs respectively during the period of January through June 2012.

Figure 10: Top ten genres by gig, Jan-Jun 2012



Source: Cultural Economy Snapshot, 2012, Mayor's Office of Cultural Economy

Apart of gigs in bars and venues throughout the different neighbourhoods in the city it is the streets of New Orleans that play a vital role for public music performances. The so-called 'street performance' can mainly be enjoyed in the French Quarter, especially along Royal Street which is historically known for musicians playing on the street. The corner of Bourbon and Canal Street is a common spot to listen to young brass bands (since 2010 brass bands are facing issues with playing on that corner due to law enforcing NOPD officers), Riverwalk along the Mississippi river is known for lonesome musicians singing with the wind, while the French Market area during the day and Frenchmen Street during the evening are well-known places for bands with multiple musicians playing predominantly traditional jazz and folk songs. The streets of the French Quarter are packed with street performers during major festivals, when tourists and residents alike are strolling in masses through the humid historical neighbourhood. The formations of bands performing on the streets do vary substantially. It might be a ten men brass band, a six headed traditional jazz band including a portable drum set and a rub-board, as well as a couple creatively performing commercial cover songs with an amplified violin accompanied by an

acoustic guitar, or individual musicians with a home-made West-African Kora (a 21 stringed bridge harp), Balafon, to a single practicing harmonica player or tenor-saxophonist.

### **3.2. Tourism related influences on music**

With the present chapter I analyse different influences on the local music scene which can be directly linked to the tourism industry. Music has been and is still a classic entertainment commodity. In New Orleans though, music has doubtlessly a large number of additional values, which are characteristic and significant for the city, its musicians, and residents. Music is almost considered a human right to New Orleanians, the right to perform music is claimed with various collective social reactions. The performance of music genres and the places where music is performed are representing a marker of social and racial affiliation. Presently these distinctions are used and marketed by tourism enterprises and the city. The commodification and commercialisation of music leads to conflicting scenarios between many stakeholders which are described in the following.

*"Street performance has to be performed on the street - otherwise it's not street performance"*  
(interview 1)

Appropriate to the city's important heritage of music and my research topic it were David & Roselyn<sup>54</sup> who coincidentally answered to the questions of my first interview in 2012. David & Roselyn is a couple that has been joyfully playing in the streets of the French Quarter but also at various national and international festivals since around 40 years. In the ongoing months of my fieldwork I have met and listened to David & Roselyn often somewhere in the French Quarter. They are fair weather musicians, performing with twelve instruments, two voices, selling around ten different albums out of their guitar cases. They have lived the development of the city and its musical heritage as cultural actors continuously since the 1960s. During the years of the African-American Civil Rights Movement, when interracial marriage was hardly accepted socially, David (white) and Roselyn (Afro-American) were deeply involved in voter registration in the South and many of their songs are inspired by the Civil Rights Movement. For both of them making music on the street is still a demonstration for what has been fought for: *"... our work on street performance is also civil rights because it crosses the limit, its freedom of speech, some musicians got arrested for it!"* (interview 1).

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<sup>54</sup> please refer to photo 8.



*"You have people that hate street performance, that think it's disgusting, you have people that love street performance, that come all the time, they contribute 20 dollars to the street performers and think nothing about it, there are people who start petitions, that street performers can be funded, ..."* (interview 1)

Albeit New Orleanians think differently about street performance, as described by Roselyn, it certainly contributed to the city's cultural rebirth when Royal Street had been opened again for public music performance months after the Katrina catastrophe:

*"After Katrina when they did not open up Royal Street again, people came up to me and asked for that I should go to the city and ask to do it again, but I was refusing and said hey: if you want it you ask for it, I'm not gonna do it! And then so many people kept saying that to me and I wrote a letter to the newspaper and two days later they opened and Royal Street was a mall again, you know they would have probably opened anyway but ..."* (interview 1).

The opening of Royal Street for street performance was a sign that normal life has returned to the city - and normal life in New Orleans means music everywhere and anytime! I met David & Roselyn for the first time on the day of the interview when I was participating at the monthly luncheon of the New Orleans Musicians Clinic (a private non-profit organisation with the prior goal to offer free health care for local musicians who are not in a position to afford health insurance). The luncheons have the objective of inviting patients for lunch and for making them aware of how to avoid typical physical problems and injuries of musicians. Typical problems are high blood pressure and not drinking enough water when performing in the heat on the street or stage, typical injuries might result from lifting up heavy guitar and bass amps, not using ear plugs on stage, and similar accidents from work.

As I was informally talking to some patients about my research I remember that one of the nurses, Felice, advised me to ask the couple for an interview: *"If you need info about music go and talk to Roselyn and David over there, they're gonna help you out for sure"* (personal communication). When I headed towards Roselyn, a lady that is impossible to be overlooked with long black dreads and wearing her typical violet dress, she was about to get acupuncture treatment. Roselyn was injured on her foot and faced difficulties walking, driving a car, or setting up an improvised stage and sound system on the street. Her husband David has long white hair underneath a black cowboy hat, a trimmed long white moustache and chin-beard. When

introducing to each other he lamented that he would have no other choice than entertaining strolling tourists and locals around the French Quarter as a single performer since both of them are dependent on generating income from street performance.

Like most of the musicians in New Orleans, David & Roselyn are also indirectly dependent on the tourism industry and directly dependent on the incoming tourists to the city. As indicated above, the number of 30.000 gigs a year can only be reached because of the steady demand of short term visitors, mainly from the US. Less tourists would result in less demand, therefore in less gigs offered by bars, venues or festivals, and hence in less opportunities for David & Roselyn to earn money. The tourism industry and music performances are certainly interdependent in a city like New Orleans resulting in some profound influences on each other as elaborated in the following.

### **Music is for free**

*"I don't like how New Orleans is often portrayed in the commercial world, it's portrayed as kinda free for all!"* (interview 10)

Based on the many interviews and informal talks with musicians before, during, and after shows I realised that one of the issues that musicians are facing is that music is perceived as a free commodity, by tourists and locals likewise. Only a few venues in the tourist area of New Orleans ask visitors for an entrance fee that serves for paying the band. In the French Quarter this applies to the House of Blues (which is in fact a music club chain showing bands that tour through all the "House of Blues" venues spread around the US) and the Preservation Hall (a "music museum" that opened in 1961 preserving *original* New Orleans jazz). On Frenchmen Street it is venues like Snug Harbor (one of the first jazz clubs that opened on Frenchmen Street in the beginning of the 1980s), a few bars do have cover charge only on weekends or on special occasions.<sup>55</sup>

In all the other venues where music is in fact for free musicians get paid differently and are mainly performing on their own risk regarding income. I have observed that most commonly bands and musicians are using tip jars to ask visitors for contributions at the end of a set

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<sup>55</sup> Other concert venues that are very popular for tourists and locals likewise charging cover fees are Tipitina's and Les Bon Temps Rulés in the Uptown area, the Candle Light Lounge in Tremé, and the Maple Leaf Bar in the Carrollton area. These bars are spread around the city and are not situated in the main tourist area of New Orleans though - visitors would have to specifically go to these venues to see a show, it is not probable that visitors just pass by occasionally.

(depending on the venue a set might range from 40 to 90 minutes). These donations are mainly the only revenue of the evening. Additionally, visitors are kindly invited to consume at least one drink per set when remaining at a bar,<sup>56</sup> at some venues bands take a ten per-cent share from the bar sales additionally to the tips. Visitors often do not consume one drink per set because many visitors just want to enter as many bars as possible at one evening and do remain a limited amount of time in order to check out the music, the venue, the toilet but do finally not consume anything. The bands often do not take a share of those sales but are rather dependent on selling their own CDs. While the band continues playing one musician usually gets up and walks around the bar collecting dollars at the last song of the set with the jar in one hand and with CDs in the other hand - often visitors like to take something home with them and instead of tipping the band they buy a CD with prices ranging from US\$ 10 to 25.

As expressed by my interlocutors it is especially locals who perceive music as a free product because they simply *"are not used to pay for music"* and they *"consider music as a free service because they live here"* (interview 2). The interpretation of that issue is furthermore described by Bethany Bultman, the Director of the New Orleans Musicians Clinic: *" ... locals treat it like their birth-right - it's free, it's here it's everywhere. I call it the nymphomaniac in the whorehouse - like you do not need to pay them [the musicians] because they [the musicians] really enjoy it - and they [the locals] don't think that the musicians also have to pay all!"* (interview 2).

Bethany makes reference to the fact that musicians do have a lot of expenses for music equipment such as instruments, amps, cables, mixer, microphones, stage outfit, but also the many hours needed for rehearsing and studying sets. Listeners usually do not think about these costs and therefore often refuse to pay for a service that is actually for free. Bethany is managing the Musician's Clinic since its beginning, around 20 years ago, and is constantly in contact with musicians and cultural actors in the performance sector, when interviewing her after one of the organised luncheons she stated that:

*"Everyone who was here today would tell you that they are desperate for income in what they do, their art that they do. Whatever pays the bills is very valuable to them. The important word is sell - if someone wants to pay for it that's great because most New Orleanians want it for free! Our culture is hard to sell locally and we have an industry who sells the city who exploits the culture but won't invest in it!"* (interview 2).

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<sup>56</sup> Big signs are put at the entrance saying something like *"NO ENTRANCE FEE - MUST HAVE 1 DRINK PER SET"* and if no signs can be seen the doormen kindly advise visitors to consume drinks while checking ID's.

Bethany addresses her critique to the tourism industry which is taking advantage of the musical entertainment that is in effect offered as a free service by venues to its guests, and is also including street performance as a free gift of the city to its visitors. Tourism promotion agencies put the music factor in the centre of their campaigns when trying to drag visitors to New Orleans. For example, the NOCVB systematically advertises that the best things to do in New Orleans are free of charge. On top of a published list of different activities that can be enjoyed for free is *"go and see music"*. Additionally, the NOCVB visitors guide even gives hints to tourists where these venues are located and where to find the best street performers giving free shows with the attribute *"do it like the locals"* (Official New Orleans Visitors Guide 2012, NOCVB). Hence, the ultimate message is that if locals can enjoy the free service of being entertained by world class music performances, so can tourists. While it is true that in the North-American "service-society" tips are given more naturally for services that seem to be free or complimentary than by international visitors, such kind of messages are not only disappointing for the musicians themselves but especially for the many non-profit organisations in the music sector. Those are working on social and economic development programmes to enhance income opportunities for artists trying to make a living with music.

While strolling through the French Quarter and observing street performers at their work during fieldwork I often could hear musicians inviting passing people to tip them with slogans like: *"the more you pay the better we play!"* or *"if you like the band tip the band, if you don't like the band tip the band anyway!"* (observation). I also remember David making a funny comment to a passer-by who wanted to request a specific song, so David responded to the person: *"if you have a song request, write it on a piece of paper [David shows a ten dollar bill] and put it into here [David points at the guitar case which is used as their tip jar]."* David & Roselyn never shy away from making passers-by aware of contributing to their performance with some dollars, for example, a sign in the open guitar case says in violet hand written hippie font: *"if you like our sound please stick around, if ya gotta split please leave a bit!"* (observation).

As I explained in an earlier section about the researcher on stage I also perceived some price-dumping attacks on our performances by venues where we used to play regularly and by new contacts who wanted us to play for free at their events. This experience made me even more aware of the fact that music, especially in New Orleans, is indeed a very appreciated cultural asset for amusement but it is requested to be a gratis extra at venues and events.

## Musicians suffer from low income

The sensation that music is principally a free service contributes to the fact that musicians suffer from relatively low wages. The "2012 State of the New Orleans Music Community Report" published by 'Sweet Home New Orleans' roughly estimates the number of musicians at around 4.000 individuals.<sup>57</sup> Based on their survey the average income of an individual musician was US\$ 17.800 in 2012, approximately 39% earned less than US\$ 10.000, and 40% were unemployed other than generating income through live performances. The report furthermore states that musicians are living of a gig-to-gig cash cycle resulting in over-dependence on local live performances leaving the musical community vulnerable. As I got to know from talks with musicians the standard unit rate for performances at a festival is at US\$ 106. At performances in bars there are hardly ever fixed fees for musicians since tip jars and the percentage of bar sales cannot be predicted.

Among my interlocutors the opinion about musicians that have to tour around the US or outwards during the touristically seen low summer season differs drastically. At one side, New Orleans is praised as a unique place where musicians do not have to tour around to make more gigs because of the many possibilities that exist in local venues or at festivals: *"New Orleans is one of the few cities where you can be a professional musician without leaving New Orleans"* (interview 10). But in fact, this concerns only individual musicians having a lot of contacts, who are playing with many different bands, allowing them to perform with three different bands a night. On the other side, the opposite version is articulated, that New Orleans is damned because although there are so many performance possibilities musicians still have to tour around during the hot summer season with low demand for live gigs. *"New Orleans has a lot of free music and the New Orleanians are not necessarily used to paying for its music, lots of musicians have to tour around in order to make money! The locals don't pay to hear the music, they consider it a free service because they live here!"* (interview 6), says Maida Owens of the Louisiana Folklife Program.

This concerns rather professional musicians having a more monogamous relation to one or two bands, some of them are supported by booking agents or labels. For example, brass bands often have to tour around in the summer because there are no second lines organised by respective clubs during the hot and humid months of July and August.

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<sup>57</sup> Sweet Home New Orleans speaks of self-defined musicians because of the largely informal nature of the New Orleans musical community in defining itself.

As mentioned by Jeanne Nathan the issue of low wages for musicians is a historical fact in the city of New Orleans which has not been interrupted so far. Many artists that were creating jazz in the French Quarter and its surrounding neighbourhoods around 1900 hardly could make a living with their music. The reason is because *"people didn't understand jazz"* (interview 47), Jeanne refers to the potential paying audiences that did not appreciate the new genre right away. Early jazz leaders such as Buddy Bolden, Jelly O'Morton, and Louis Armstrong mainly generated their income in the red-light district of Storyville: *"we had a legal prostitution zone - that was probably the most pro cultural government policy ever executed in the state of Louisiana"* (interview 47). Music was a key part of the cultural entertainment commodity consumed in the houses of pleasure.

*"Other sources of income was on the steam boats, up and down the river. Jazz moved culturally through the country! They moved to places like Chicago and New York City where there was a market, a music business industry, recording, ... steam boats were very important for the early American music and entertainment culture - because they travelled through the territory, to Ohio and a lot of states. Lots of theatrical productions, musicals, live music all on the boats! It was not only the passengers on the boats who were exposed to these kind of arts but also the residents living along the boat lines, when the boats stopped they did these performances in the little towns!"* (interview 47).

Jeanne stated that in Chicago and New York City a profitable music industry fortunately had already been established including high demand from the market of entertainment and recording businesses. Apart from music and theatrical performances on the boats the artistic skills were also staged in the towns and cities along the routes where the steam liners used to dock. This is how jazz got spread around the country and how musicians from New Orleans did early touring, some of them were lucky enough to sign label contracts for recording and promotion helping them to achieve world fame. *"So that is how they made their money - it was like ant trails! First to Chicago, New York City then to Hollywood! Jazz is in a lot of early American movies!"* (interview 47). But until today local musicians suffer from the lack of a professionally working music industry in the city of New Orleans. This leads to the lack of awareness among musicians about the legal protection of song rights, entitlement to royalties from proper song performances, the lack of training and knowledge about how to deal with booking agents, record sales, as well as performance and label contracts.

*"A lot of musicians in New Orleans talk rudely of all of the years of making music and not making enough money of it. A large part of what happened to them was that they were not professional in their working in the industry - because they did not have the training and knowledge of the industry. They got screwed a lot by not having contracts to their rights of music. They are obsessed with this until this day - they will tell you their story how they got screwed. But it was partially their fault because they did not protect their rights legally - the reason why they didn't was because of the lack of the music industry infrastructure in the city and their lack of education - it is like a chicken and egg situation." (interview 47).*

Often such situations as the missing payment of revenues or adverse contracts do not occur on purpose by profit-oriented music businesses, venues or agents but simply because of the lack of a proper system where such revenues are managed. Many musicians like Dooky Chase (Dooky Chase Restaurant), Pete Fountain, Kermit Ruffins (Kermit Ruffins Speakeasy Corner, Mother in Law Lounge) or even Irvin Mayfield (Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse) opened their own clubs and live music venues to have a more reliable source of income because of the difficulties they face/d with living only from making music.

### **Local vs. outside musicians**

According to my observations, the quantity of artists offering their musical skills is indirectly caused by the tourism industry. Lots of national but also international semi-professional musicians and bands (mostly white) became more aware of the city's importance in American music history and got attracted to the place especially since Katrina. They can be found on the music-tourism streets of New Orleans such as Bourbon and Frenchmen Street. Due to conversations with many performers I realised that mostly musicians from other states are staying in the city for a few months. During festival season (March through June), and especially during the weeks and weekends of main festivals (Jazz Fest and French Quarter Fest) it is the best time to get a gig in bars if not at festival stages. Music is purpose number one for tourists coming to the city at that time, hence these tourists do not shy away from tipping the bands more than usually. It is different during the weeks before Mardi Gras Carnival because people flying in for the Carnival parades are predominantly younger and less interested in music performances, as mentioned by Dorian who performed in the French Quarter for many years:

*"they do make a lot of money during Jazz Fest - Jazz Fest people tip, it's a good time to work, they have more money and they have an appreciation for the music ... that's what I found - at Essence Fest it was so bad that we stopped playing. It has to do with the time of year!*

*Convention people also tip because they don't get live gigs where they live and they are business people. Mardi Gras - HA! They really don't tip - it's a younger crowd in town!"* (interview 17).

These individual musicians and bands are taking advantage of the many performance options in clubs or doing street performance, or for touring in the city for an extended amount of time. I observed that making a lot of money is not always the main purpose. Playing gigs for free and collecting tips with a jar is accepted more easily, some are hoping to get discovered by talent scouts or to get a slot on a big festival stage (which hardly ever happens though). Playing for free is often times seen as an investment. Additionally, there are many (white) musicians who moved to New Orleans because they have fun playing traditional jazz in the many bars on Frenchmen Street catering to tourists. The rising influx of outside musicians has not become a severe issue among artists since locals and non locals are often playing in the same bands but it influences the supply of music performances of certain genres.

### **A natural ritardando of music?**

The term ritardando is taken from music theory and occasionally appears on musical scores advising the musician to smoothly slow down the tempo of the composition. In combination with the present chapter I am using ritardando in order to explain the fact that the immigration of musicians stains upon the slow evolution of music genres in New Orleans. As Norbert Susemihl states (interview 44), a Danish trumpet player performing good old traditional jazz in New Orleans since three decades for several months a year, local young black musicians are not as interested in playing traditional jazz as it was played in the beginnings of the genre. Their musical education is nowadays concentrated on a more modern sound, teachers and students at NOCCA<sup>58</sup> are moving towards another level of jazz in New Orleans - but "outsiders" (predominantly white) come to play in local bars and keep on performing old style jazz which is very much appreciated by visitors. Norbert, an enthusiast of old style jazz, regularly plays at Preservation Hall and the Spotted Cat, but also with the traditional Brass Bands of New Orleans, performing in the Candle Light Lounge. Back in the 1980s he had the chance to be on stage together with the veterans of the early jazz makers, those who had learned from and played with the Louis Armstrong generation, born around 1900. He keeps on playing these stylistic features because of the joy and personal necessity of preserving such a sound from the beginnings of jazz.

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<sup>58</sup> New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, an elite arts and music education institute where most of the recently successful New Orleans musicians graduated from.



Preservation Hall, a very demanded French Quarter based place by visitors searching for the experience of old style jazz, was opened by Alan Jaffe as a location where traditional jazz should be "preserved". It was primarily a stage for the Louis Armstrong generation, a place where nearly all famous jazz musicians gigged regularly. During our interview Norbert mentioned Alan's preference (which he had in the 1980s) to close Preservation Hall once all the great early jazz musicians from his list had gone - because the stylistics and the spirit of the original jazz creators can hardly be continued by musicians coming afterwards, Alan said. Fortunately, Ben Jaffe (a sousaphone player) convinced his father to keep the location in business and is successfully catering the many jazz performances to national and international visitors. Preservation Hall is functioning as a museum where the performance of old style jazz is put into a living showcase - and it is blooming. This is part of the general success formula of New Orleans tourism: "*... the thing that makes New Orleans so interesting and charming is the fact that it's still stuck in its traditional roots and very conservative when it comes to its roots!*" (interview 23) says Jan Rampsey, author in chief of the city's *Offbeat* magazine for music and culture. New Orleans is generally a rather traditional and conservative society. This is reflected in holding on to music traditions which at the same time is a successful strategy for the local tourism industry selling cultural products. Arthur Smith, Marketing Director of the Louisiana State Museum argues that: "*... we play the same old tune and lot of people like it because they feel comfortable - and lots of people expect it when they come here. It would be a lot more interesting if we encouraged the new*" (interview 29).

Chuck Perkins even thinks so far that tourism has been partially responsible for the New Orleans up-beat and celebratory notion of jazz. Respecting the history of tourism in New Orleans music always had an entertainment factor focusing on high quality "happy sound" music with low sophisticated content regarding the lyrics. Chuck signed a contract with a German label which is predominantly interested in his political statements and messages accompanied with rhythmic sounds, a rare combination for New Orleans. He furthermore states that visitors "*... don't wanna be hit with something too heavy - they wanna have fun and celebrate*" (interview 19), as a consequence the music development moves forward slowly.

Tourism influences the natural development of music says Delfeayo Marsalis, a very successful trombonist and music producer. He is performing weekly at Snug Harbor with his Uptown Jazz Orchestra (with up to 18 musicians) and plays at several national and international jazz festivals.

Due to his familial background, Del's father is the world famous pianist Ellis Marsalis, three of his brothers are also professional musicians, he has been observing and experiencing this influence for many decades within the local music entertainment scene from various angles - as a professional musician, a record producer, organiser of music events, and also in close collaboration with the tourism industry.

*"Tourism is helping to stagnate to some extent - if you are doing something and noone is watching you then you do it because you are interested in its development. Then someone sees it and says: I want to see you doing this. Then you are not as free to develop than the natural way you would have - because you have to make sure that these people experience that one thing they want to see"* (interview 42).

Del furthermore comments on the both sides of tourism influence which will be explained in more detail in the following chapters: *" ... there are two sides - very great musicians have more people to come and see them, so from that extent everybody is more happy because they are getting paid more, in a good mood - but at the same time there is the potential for stagnation, because we want to make sure that the people who are coming to witness get what they want to experience - so it's both I would say"* (interview 42).

What the visitors want to experience is based on certain expectations they are looking for. These expectations are predominantly produced by the tourism industry promoting the city as home of old style jazz, awaking the interest in travelling to New Orleans to see certain music shows. The natural development of music genres like jazz is hence slowed down because old style jazz is enjoying more demand on the market of (tourism) experiences - the product traditional jazz is sold more easily.

As shown above tourism directly influences the local music genres and is to some extent responsible for the ritardando of its continuous development. Young black musicians who are either studying their instruments at NOCCA (as mentioned by Norbert) or getting instructed on the street by family members and the neighbourhood network introducing them slowly into local brass bands, are more interested in changing the sound of New Orleans. The brass band's modern mix of music genres like jazz and R'n B is described in a fascinating manner by Matt Sakakeeny in his recently published book "Roll with it" (2013).

### 3.3. War on culture! The noise ordinance and its reactions

*"Music is our greatest renewable resource"* (Ellis Marsalis)

During fieldwork I realised at many occasions that musicians and culture bearers dislike to be regulated when it comes to the expression of the many forms of their art or traditions, be it in bars or in the streets. I participated at protest marches and protest second lines, meetings of members of the cultural community, observing how seriously the topic of regulating cultural activities is taken. I got informed about controversial issues during interviews, personal communications with musicians, bar owners, concerned people, and supporters of the cultural scene in the city, as well as during talks with the opposite side. If culture bearers feel constricted by laws and ordinances the artists, aficionados, and supporters unite as a bottom-up group and march against the *war on culture*. The anger is mainly directed against the city council, powerful residents and business associations (influencing the council), as well as NOPD officers (guided by the city government).

The negotiations and demonstrations for the right to perform are often accompanied by rather aggressive terms such as fight, battle, crackdown, and capitalism. These reactions are heated up with terms like noise, pollution, and urgently needed enforcement used by the counterpart describing unpleasant artistic performance of music and traditions in the public, including loud bars and shops trying to draw attention with so-called *canned* music. With canned music people principally understand music that is not performed live, hence music put on by self-proclaimed DJ's via CDs, mp3's, or radio stations. The expression canned music has a rather pejorative connotation paraphrasing music at high volume taking away the possibility of musicians to perform live, often in combination with what is going on along Bourbon Street.

Referring to the introducing chapter about music in New Orleans I already mentioned that dances accompanied by beats and rhythms on Congo Square were suspended by officers on a regular basis in the early 1800s. Official ordinances and regulations by the city council concerning the performance of music in New Orleans go back to 1856 when it was declared unlawful *"to beat a drum, or blow a horn, or sound a trumpet in any street or public place within the limits of the city"* (YOUNG, 2011). By 1917 resolutions were adopted that restaurants and bars needed to get mayoral permissions before presenting musical entertainment (YOUNG, 2011). More recent and rather infamous incidents of NOPD officers shutting down public music performances happened in 1996 when Trombone Shorty (as a young teenager) got arrested for

playing on Jackson Square, or in 2010 when the To Be Continued Brass Band was prohibited to continue their performance on the corner of Bourbon Street. Another incident happening during the days before the NFL super bowl final in 2013 was also due to unclear regulations of street performance:

*"We have a case of one person, the girl who plays the main role in the documentary Troubled by Water, she is also a rapper and performed during super-bowl on the street corner ... during super bowl we had the Clean Zone. She had invested to perform on the corner of Canal Street and talked to the office of Cultural Economy which said that it was ok - but then the NOPD came and said it was illegal. So she invested 2.000 dollars to perform and could not even start. So even with this office that is supposed to helping out, it is not solving these problems."* (interview 50)

Since the 2010 incident with the To Be Continued Brass Band the New Orleans City Council has been working on a revision of the existing sound ordinance and live music permits governing music clubs, venues, souvenir shops and other related businesses, as well as street performers in the French Quarter and surrounding areas.

### **Speakers ordinance**

There are several aspects affecting the rising number of noise complaints by residents. The first aspect I am going to describe concerns loud speakers, mainly concentrated on Bourbon and Decatur Street at drinking bars, souvenir shops, t-shirt shops, hustler clubs, and the like. Walking along the streets many times for research reasons at day and night while being on field visit in New Orleans I realised that such bars and shops clearly cater to tourists and one time visitors. Due to the massive amount of such establishments strung together every shop and bar tries to lure customers with something *unique*. Some do it with easy to recall names such as "Huge Ass Beers" or "Voodoo Vibe", others with bikini and under-wear dressed girls handing out promotion flyers. Most hope to attract crowds with loud speakers placed outdoors blasting canned music out on the street. These speakers are the main setting for the so-called "sound war" among the many bars and shops where one place needs to be louder than the other in order to get more customers. I talked to Wayne Phillips, a long-term French Quarter resident and "curator of costumes and textiles of carnival" at the Louisiana State Museum, who mentioned recent troubles:

*" ... an example: there was a recent fight of VCPORA with the City Council about loud music that was immanating from bars and clubs on Bourbon Street - there was a rush of incidence where club owners and souvenir shop owners put loud speakers in the doors, playing recorded music*

*not even live-music, just radio, pointed out to the streets, to attract people to come in to their businesses - because these speakers were aimed or hanging in the door there was so much noise on Bourbon Street, residents like me got that noise bleed into our private home - even the NOPD was complaining about it - they were not able to hear their radio communication when they were standing on the street in front of these doors - so it became a problem that split the interests between businesses that are trying to get more clients and tourists in these old buildings on Bourbon Street that were being rattled by excessive noise and French Quarter residents that were getting this noise bleed into their own property. Ultimately it was decided that the noise was excessive and new ordinances were enacted that will result in fines for people who are found guilty of doing this - so they cannot put a speaker in the door pointed towards the streets anymore, they have to aim the speaker in to the store!*

*I think it's only on Bourbon Street - also for bars! There is only a hand full of clubs off Bourbon Street that have live music venue - there aren't many - because there is so much on Bourbon Street. Those who live in the French Quarter we live with a certain amount of noise that we can tolerate but ... " (interview 18).*

Most concerns about noise have their beginnings with complaints by residents and neighbours lamenting about elevated volumes until late at night. In 2012 CSTI Acoustics was hired by private residents in order to examine if legal noise limits are exceeded.<sup>59</sup> The result was definitely positive with the highest frequency in residential areas throughout the French Quarter. The situation of official complaints by residents escalated when police officers could not communicate over the walkie-talkie anymore due to the high noise level on Bourbon Street. As a consequence new sound laws were enforced, directed at bars and shops trying to predominate over each other with bigger and louder speakers along the most touristy streets in the French Quarter. Hence, such speakers are not allowed to be placed next to the door directed outside of the venue anymore but only pointing to the inside.

This sound war between bars and shops can directly be blamed on the rising number of tourists coming into the city - each establishment wants to get more customers, sell more drinks, and seemingly needs to turn up the volume by 10 decibels higher than the neighbouring bar in order to achieve the expected number of guests.

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<sup>59</sup> The current noise regulation can be downloaded at the following link: <https://www.noisefree.org/cityord/new-orleans.pdf>, retrieved in February 2014.

Another concern about high sound levels is that it harms the sense of hearing of waitresses and waiters, DJs, other bar personnel and musicians, if live bands are booked for the evening and night hours. At the city council meeting of January 27, 2014, Deacon John Moore, a popular rock'n roll guitarist, singer, and bandleader (performing the song in the latest official NOCVB commercial) even demanded that speakers be totally "removed by all shops, bars, and clubs, because they are responsible for the music war of bars." On behalf of the New Orleans Musicians Union he furthermore stated that "it is bars with canned music against musicians who earn a living with the music performances" (City Council, January 27, 2014).

## **Noise ordinance**

Deacon John's statement leads me to the description of the second aspect for the ambitious reformulation of the noise ordinance. After the (more or less) successful intervention by residents and its allied associations concerning the speakers ordinance being controlled by the respective organs the same group of allied residents associations has been keeping on complaining about noise issues directed at live music venues also in other neighbourhood areas surrounding the French Quarter.

Apart of some neighbourhood associations and individual residents it is especially associations like the Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents, and Associates (VCPORA), the French Quarter Management Association (FQMA), and Hear the Music Stop the Noise who are complaining about noise issues and filing lawsuits against bars and shops. VCPORA is generally taking the lead when it comes to preparing and submitting new noise ordinance and zoning proposals to the city council and unite the voice of complainers in this respect. New residents who moved to New Orleans in recent years are often blamed for the present unfavourable situation of bar owners and musicians who are missing out business opportunities. Out-of-towners buying property in locations that are popular for tourists and bars are said to be responsible for the issues concerning the noise ordinance. The following poem by Johnny Vidacovich, widely renowned as a prominent New Orleans drummer, is synthesising what local musicians think about the noise ordinance and who is to blame for:

*I'm confused ... Is it a noise issue or is it a music issue?*

*Sounds to me they calling music noise, ?*

*I don't like this crap... Sounds like a bunch of rich people move here, then bitch.*

*Why don't they move back to their little vanilla villa.*

*The rest of what I gotta say is not nice.*

*Who ever is unhappy with OUR music, isn't from here.*

*Go home where ever you little rich quiet mansion is.. Piss me off*

-Johnny Vidacovich

Stacey who moved to New Orleans before Katrina attracted by the vibrant music scene is in contact with many performing artists and is a constant visitor of the many music venues in the city. Due to her friendship with lots of artists she shares their vision and stated:

*"People that live in certain neighbourhoods are complaining about the clubs and music and about how loud it is! The police is going in and shutting live music down - I feel that they [city council] are trying to make New Orleans like every other city in the US - which I call vanilla! They [new residents] don't respect the culture that was already there before they moved into a certain neighbourhood!" (interview 5).*

Based on my communications I was informed that rather obsolete zoning laws and sound ordinances were enforced by NOPD officers more often and, according to the accused bar owners, also more aggressively causing the abrupt shutdown of various popular neighbourhood venues. Such popular bars are Siberia, Circle Bar, Bacchanal, St. Roch Tavern, Jimmy's, and Mimi's in the Marigny being forced to interrupt their business as usual from the second half of 2012. Each venue had to suspend its scheduled music calendar for a period of time while the paperwork was taken care of - some bars totally closed their doors, others continued to serve drinks and food leaving out the music bands. A missing live music permit was mainly the reason for the temporary closure of the named bars. As a reaction to the unclear and sudden actions Kermit Ruffins, a successful and famous native New Orleans trumpeter, started to call the music community for gathering in his bar to exchange information, opinions, and to discuss the situation. Participants were and still are mainly musicians, concerned bar owners that were at constant risk of being reported or even shut down, frequent visitors of the concerned bars and music supporters.

### **MACCNO meetings at Kermit's Treme Speakeasy Corner**

The weekly meetings at "Kermit's Treme Speakeasy Corner" have ever since become the symbol for uniting against city ordinances and VCPORA allied groups threatening the business of small music clubs and its performing musicians. Kermit himself faced problems with getting permits (alcohol license and live music permit) for reopening the famed Ernie K-Doe Mother-in-Law

Lounge. The meetings soon got managed by the Music And Culture Coalition of New Orleans (MACCNO). The organisation emerged in September 2012 in response to the controversial increase in enforcement imposed on live music venues. Ethan Ellestad, volunteering community development worker and representative of MACCNO defines its role as a *"support structure and intermediary between club owners who are struggling, trying to figure out how they can have music"* (interview 50) because the institutional support is lacking in New Orleans. *"The problem is that the city is contradictory - what they say might not be what the permit says, the NOPD says something else and people end up in a run-around"* (interview 50), he furthermore presents the problems for venues while talking to him in the Tremé Café.

MACCNO's mission is to "empower the New Orleans music and cultural community through collective self-representation advocating in the interests of cultural preservation, perpetuation, and positive economic impact."<sup>60</sup> Additionally, Ethan noted that his organisation is interested in taking the lead for the music community, acting as an intermediate. That is why they started to unite the many different associations, groupings, and loosely organised musicians and bar owners. Their biggest problem so far is that they do not have the financial resources for any full time employees. They get a positive response from the music community, lots of participation at the meetings, and the backing of Kermit Ruffins providing his bar as a location for regular gatherings - but all of them are volunteering, so they cannot supply as much support as they would like to.

One of the ambitious volunteers is MACCNO spokesperson Hannah Krieger-Benson, a musicology student at Tulane University writing her thesis about performance rights in New Orleans. She is managing and moderating the weekly meetings at the Speakeasy Corner saying that *"in general, the musicians are tired of not being able to do anything, not being informed why some clubs are shutting down - the people want to know more about the legal situation, want to get directly connected with the problems"* (interview 48). I participated at several of such meetings in April and May 2013, a time period when various bars got reopened and shut down. At the MACCNO gatherings owners of bars and clubs (St. Roch Tavern, Mimi's, Bootleggers, etc.) in different neighbourhoods spread around the city, musicians like David & Roselyn, or Sue Mobley, the director of the non-profit organisation Sweet Home New Orleans are sitting around a big table and are presenting their individual problems with NOPD officers controlling their licenses or debates with neighbours complaining about loud music. The majority of issues

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<sup>60</sup> for more information about the mission statement of MACCNO: <http://maccno.com/>, retrieved on January 2014.



concerned cases about communication problems with the city government and the Mayor's office, with out of towners who only recently moved to certain neighbourhoods where regular complaints arise from, and issues with the new zoning ordinance. Issues with street performance were raised by David & Roselyn. Presently it is allowed to play on Royal Street with speakers until 20.00, at MACCNO it was discussed that the time could be extended until 22.00 using little speakers because *"there is no difference between speakers and horns - they are as loud"* (personal communication), according to Roselyn.

Next to issues with police officers citing noise ordinance changes by the city which were actually not true according to bar owners, complaints with neighbours used to be the main issue. The owner of the St. Roch tavern, made his statement clear: *"We are playing in defense here - that's not our problem - we should stand up and tell the people that this is the city of music - and if you don't want to hear music then go to Metairie"*,<sup>61</sup> furthermore he would like to ask the complainers a culturally moral question such as: *"We should face them and ask: do you believe that this is our culture?"* (personal communication).

Further experiences of participants with complaining neighbours led to the observation that *"they usually do not shut their windows"*, and that residents should actually be responsible for their own silence in the house, *"they should shut the windows and also get some sound proofing installations in their houses"* (personal communication). At MACCNO it was therefore discussed to suggest to city hall some mediating bodies for mitigation between bar owners and residents. Further it was proposed to get a lawyer for any document that is signed between a bar owner and the neighbourhood association or complaining residents. General ambient noise in the city was discussed as well as the probability that some of the regularly complaining neighbours might in reality be competing bar owners trying to shut down another bar?!

Ethan tries to cool down the emotional discussion and makes clear that neighbourhood associations do have an important influence in the neighbourhood areas, this is why bars should keep a good relationship to get the support of the locals. But *"there is always one neighbour who is complaining about music, trash, parking, ... "*, responds an upset participant: *"We have*

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<sup>61</sup> Metairie is in Jefferson Parish and hence not situated anymore in the city of New Orleans (Orleans Parish). It is a major part of the New Orleans Metropolitan Area. Concerning cultural topics New Orleanians tend to talk about Metairie with a pejorative connotation, emphasising on its role as a suburban location with a lack of live music performances, other regulations for the imitated Mardi Gras parades, and its high density of shopping malls.

*traditional New Orleans music like jazz and blues ... and not crazy DJ's or heavy metal music"* (personal communication).

On the other side of the table, Matt, owner of the Bootlegger's bar in the French Quarter, is presenting his case. His bar is registered as a restaurant although he actually does not want to be a restaurant, serving only burgers and snacks. Bootlegger's should be a live music bar because he books musicians and little bands every evening: *"I have Warren Battiste playing regular gigs at my bar when he is in town - he is a New Orleanian!"* (personal communication). But when listed as a restaurant it is not possible to have a music permit, additionally he is fighting against the House of Blues which is right next to him. Regarding the strictly handled zoning districts, it is only allowed to have one music club within a distance of 300 feet. The live performances at his bar hence would not be in compliance with the law due to the vicinity to the House of Blues. He also reports problems with other bars and shops surrounding the Bootlegger's putting up loud speakers in front of their doors which are *"sound polluting the whole block"* (personal communication).

During the meetings where I participated it was mentioned often that the city council would be presently working on new laws and forms for requesting specific permits with a one-stop-shop at city hall. Until this process has not finished bars would actually be allowed to continue having live music. Nevertheless, many participants exchanged stories about police officers checking permits and licenses with the aim of shutting down those bars who are not respecting the currently enforced laws. Ethan and Hannah took notes of specific cases in order to present the individual problems to city hall and the cultural economy initiative (CEI), specifically to its director Scott Hutcheson. They also tried to organise that city hall representatives would participate at the weekly meetings so the concerned musicians and bar owners would have the direct contact they are looking for. As city representatives usually do not appear at MACCNO meetings Ethan generally reports about his telephone calls and personal encounters with city councils and CEI representatives to the agitated participants. The officials would be content about the grass-root movement of MACCNO and thank for the presented suggestions, updates about the noise ordinance would follow, and apologies for the frequent change of laws would be communicated.

The major concerns of the music community were that with ever more bars being shut down musicians and DJs that were actually booked in the various venues lost their performance

opportunity and hence a regular income. This rising attitude of noise issues has been increasingly interpreted as an attack on the culture bearers of the city and their contribution to the cultural economy of New Orleans.

*"I was forced to sign a contract with the neighbourhood association that I would not have live music more than four nights a week - it's ironic that they [city council and tourism industry] use all the stuff to promote the city but there are times where they [city council] try to do everything they can to make it harder for the culture bearers to do what they do!"* (interview 19) says Chuck Perkins referring to the situation at his Café Istanbul.

### **Protest second line in support of music venues, DJs, and musicians in NOLA**

On April 25, 2013, I participated at the "Protest Second Line in Support of Music Venues, DJs, and Musicians in NOLA", starting in the Bywater and leading to the St. Roch Tavern. I was informed about the protest march at the MACCNO meetings, additionally it was heavily promoted on diverse pages on social media platforms (such as facebook.com). These pages belonged to loosely organised groups and movements such as Occupy NOLA, Bywater Rising, NOLA Rising, NOLA Noise, etc. For the organisers it was important that the event would be a peaceful march, that participants should be respectful to each other, especially motivating the participation of street performers, musicians, music venues, DJs, and citizens supporting the local culture. The participating musicians were urged to bring their instruments; tambourines, drums, and costumes for the rest. When a crowd of around 200 people (mostly white) gathered at the corner of Piety/Royal Street some representatives of movements opened the march with a short speech to let all the participants know what the event was all about: *"Let's show the city we are not noise, we are the economy! We are the culture! We are what makes this city great! AND NO ONE IS GOING TO TAKE OUR MUSIC AWAY!"* (observation).

Such battle calls made clear that the uprising was aimed against city hall which is blamed for the situation of the economic downturn in little neighbourhoods and the general regulation of culture. *"What Katrina did not take away is now taken away by the city!"*, the next leader with a cowboy hat screamed into a mobile loudspeaker. *"Music is US - don't take it away"*, with these words a trumpet player in front of me starts to walk, leading the crowd - on the backside of his t-shirt I could read in big printed letters "stop raping and pillaging our culture". The crowd was accompanied by two NOPD officers on Harley-Davidsons taking care of the security of the participants with blocking streets. Some protesters who brought their instruments started to

play typical second line songs, others accompanied with (improvised) drums, and some did hold up banners and posters. I gained attention of a guy behind me representing the Bywater Rising Movement (he had stickers on his shirt) which is furthermore concerned about the general impact of tourism and city ordinances on the Bywater neighbourhood. He held up a banner with a self-drawn design: within a circle crossed out in red I could see Mickey mouse's head and ears on the New Orleans fleur de lis. When I looked at the sign he smiled and tried to explain: *"Whether or not this Disney thing actually happens, it's a good symbol that relates to gentrification and turning culture into a stale, controlled commodity."* He furthermore illustrated what I have read in newspapers some months before, that the port of New Orleans has been planning to construct a new cruise ship terminal at Poland Avenue (at the Riverfront in the Bywater) for Disney Cruise Line Ships.<sup>62</sup>

Already from reading the promotion posts on the social media platforms I was convinced that the participants of the protest march would not only be concerned about the noise ordinance issues. The various "occupy" and "rising" movements used the event also to express publicly their opinion about the general discontent regarding a potentially massive influx of tourists and touristy businesses in New Orleans but especially in their neighbourhood. The culture bearers, musicians, and its supporting residents are concerned about the negative side of the commodification of music and culture which is often called the disneyfication of New Orleans - with the potential construction of a new port it is (ironically) the best term to put it. Many residents are furthermore afraid of that other areas of the city might become what Bourbon Street is at the moment - and Bourbon Street is in many eyes not representing New Orleans anymore but simply a commodified and disneyfied version of the city caused by the tourism industry. The clean zone during the super bowl final in 2013, as explained in the following, had made clear about what happens to musicians when their artistic skills are regulated to the extreme.

## **Zoning issues**

The above mentioned confusion about laws and regulations concerning the live music permits can be traced back to the current zoning ordinance by the city of New Orleans.<sup>63</sup> Ethan explains

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<sup>62</sup> article about Disney cruise ships at a new port in the Bywater:  
[http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2013/02/port\\_of\\_new\\_orleans\\_trying\\_to.html](http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2013/02/port_of_new_orleans_trying_to.html), retrieved in February 2013.

<sup>63</sup> for more information on the current comprehensive zoning ordinance in New Orleans:  
<http://www.nola.gov/city-planning/current-comprehensive-zoning-ordinance/>, retrieved in February 2014

the problem quite simply: " ... *looking at the zoning code, it's not set up well to elaborate that thing [the noise ordinance] - and so it is very difficult to get a music license here*" (interview 50). Having taken a closer look at the complicated zoning ordinance I was not surprised about what my interlocutors observed. Many stated that street performers (so called buskers), bar owners, but also NOPD officers are often poorly informed about what is actually legal and allowed. The multiple versions of zones, districts, and areas being split into a certain number of blocks do form the setting for the disarrangement, especially regarding the hospitality zone, the entertainment zone, and the cultural overlay district which were put into effect in 2004. Some of these zones were only created because different rates of taxes from hotels, restaurants, bars and other tourism related businesses are calculated, other zones were established because of certain permits. Jan Rampsey's office is situated on Frenchmen Street and due to her job she is well informed about the concerns of musicians and bar owners:

*"About ten years ago a lot of stuff happened on Frenchmen Street - the city stepped in and did a zoning district - a cultural district overlay - a special zoning! They could only have a tot of licenses for music, restaurants and bars! Not all of the venues on Frenchmen Street are in compliance with that overlay and theoretically they could be closed down!"* (interview 23).

The zoning codes and classification of districts regulates also street performance: *"Essentially it's illegal to play music in New Orleans, you have to get a special permit, technically for playing on the streets that's why cops shoot you down, and also in bars - you have to get a permit for live music!"* (interview 26). But in fact the permits for live music (in streets and bars) are only necessary in certain zones and districts - for example, in the entertainment zone street performers are allowed to play where ever they want (respecting a fixed time schedule) and live music permits as well as an alcohol license for bars are included. During special events such as the super bowl final of 2013 additional zones were ordered above the existing regulation, resulting in even more confusion not only among street performers:

*"Well, the clean zone - when the super bowl was here - everything that was allowed or not was dictated by the NFL - the idea is that they don't want anything that would conflict with their sponsorship or talk negatively about the NFL. You can't have a giant sign of Abita beer because the NFL sponsor is Miller beer. But there was also concern about the limits of street performance. Buskers and the police were uninformed about what actually happened. Around the Superdome, but it was extended to the French Quarter, to Marigny and Bywater, across the river, up Treme, all the CBD, ... Next to advertising it was unclear whether you were allowed to play music, it was confusing ... some people did not go out to perform because they were not sure if they get*

*harassed, and I think the NFL hired people to act as street musicians who were not any with local cover music. It was sort of the disneyfication of NOLA - this was the worst version. [ ... ] There was a tangled mess and chaos between the clean zone, NOPD, cultural actors, institutions, nobody knew what was allowed."* (interview 50).

At the MACCNO meeting following the protest second line where I participated Kermit proposed to organise a bigger second line with the participation of popular musicians, the Treme Brass Band, and at least a 1000 followers in front of city hall to get more press coverage because *"a Sunday second line in the Bywater doesn't interest many outside people from the press"* (personal communication). The issue is that bigger organised second lines need to have permits, especially after the Mother's Day Shooting in May 2013 such permits would be followed with even more interest. These freedom of speech events and protest marches, as they are called by the organising groups, need police escort for security reasons and for blocking streets - but grass-root movements such as MACCNO cannot pay the permit fees because it is a loose organisation, based on volunteering work. This is why Ethan is trying hard to unite the several loose associations in order to create one big voice fighting for the same rights. Once all the same thinking groups are under one umbrella power relations shift and potential protest marches can be organised in a bigger manner, getting more attention by city hall and the press.

In August 2013, Oxford Acoustics Inc., represented by the musician and acoustic consultant David Woolworth, submitted a study on the city's noise ordinance, enforcement, and the city's "soundscape" which was commissioned by the city council.<sup>64</sup> The study focuses primarily on Bourbon and Frenchmen Streets, as these contain a concentration of entertainment districts. It furthermore proposes recommendations for changes in the city's enforcement structure to handle noise issues. Soon after the report was published the neighbourhood coalition of VCPORA handed in their "seven essentials" list with recommendations for a city-wide noise ordinance at the city council stating that 16 neighbourhood and civic groups endorsed that proposal (RAWLS, 2013). It proposes higher fines for noise perpetrators, lower decibel levels, shorter business hours for bars and street performers, as well as that "all sound measurements should be taken at the property line of the sound's source" (WEBSTER, 2013).

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<sup>64</sup> the entire report "New Orleans Sound Ordinance and Soundscape - Evaluation and Recommendations. New Orleans, Louisiana." can be downloaded on the following link:  
<http://www.nolacitycouncil.com/docs/news/2013/Palmer%20NOLA%20Soundscape%20Report%20OA%2011-01883-01.pdf>, retrieved in November 2013.

## **'New Orleans means music!'**

As a consequence MACCNO and its allies also proposed a document requesting localised decision making, professional enforcement, more clarity of what is allowed and what is prohibited, and called for mediation - hence keeping out the criminalisation of music due to law enforcing NOPD officers. The "soundscape" report also proposed to shift the competences of enforcement back to the Health Department where it was before 1989 and to install trained sound enforcing personnel. MACCNO additionally started an online petition titled *"Noise ordinance for all New Orleanians"*<sup>65</sup> requesting that a new ordinance shall be introduced respecting the input and support from the cultural community. The petition text also states that the culture and music form the *"backbone"* of the city, enhancing the quality of life, creating income and opportunity for its residents - *"a noise ordinance that threatens the culture of New Orleans ... puts the very identity and uniqueness of the City in danger"* (MACCNO petition).

## **'Music is not a crime'**

The climax of the noise ordinance negotiations between MACCNO, the cultural actors and its allied associations on the one side, and the neighbourhood coalition led by VCPORA on the other side was reached on January 17, 2014. It was the day when city hall was literally invaded and surrounded by thousands of furious horns and drums. On that day the council's Housing and Human Needs Committee in city hall was supposed to discuss and sign the new noise ordinance draft which was introduced in December 2013, based on three of the neighbourhood coalition's "seven essentials" proposal, largely ignoring the recommendations of the "soundscape" report. In the forefront of the committee meeting many groups of musicians, artists, journalists, magazines, and MACCNO aligned associations encouraged to participate at the march against the comprehensive noise ordinance on Friday, January 17. Articles by journalists, music magazines, and other daily newspapers, digital messages via social media platforms, and edited videos contributed to raising public awareness about the current situation concerning performance rights and gig curfews on the street and in music venues. Due to the big response of supporters and a massive amount of articles criticising city hall and the noise ordinance intentions the mayor urged the city council to cancel the meeting the evening before. Too much public consternation over the perceived intent and impact of the ordinance had led to postpone the discussion (WEBSTER, 2014, A).

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<sup>65</sup> more information about the MACCNO petition: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/369/187/761/support-a-noise-ordinance-for-all-new-orleanians/>

Nevertheless, around thousand participants did not feel prevented from a united march against city hall on the day when the actual meeting was planned. With the support of grass-root organisations, popular brass bands, artists, and hundreds of amateur musicians armed with horns, trumpets, trombones, sousaphones, saxophones, clarinets, drums, guitars, harmonicas, rub-boards and anything that could make music the opponents of the dreaded comprehensive noise ordinance gathered on the entrance stairs of city hall with battle calls like "Music is not a crime". MACCNO organised t-shirts with printed slogans such as "Listen to your city", banners and posters were held in the air saying "We will be heard" next to a design of a New Orleans fleur de lis and the international sign of a WiFi frequency. People were celebrating the defeat of the *"city's most powerful lobbying organisation"* (VCPORA), as Sue Mobley put it (ETHERIDGE, 2014). David & Roselyn were playing along in front of a big poster, then Roselyn took the microphone and stated angst-inducingly: *"I've sued the city, I've sued the state, and I've won. If you come up with another stupid law, I'll sue you again!"* This initial statement of her speech was even posted on the social media platform Twitter by the association Save the Sound NOLA.

Around 30 musicians and another 300 supporters managed to enter the city hall chamber where musician Glen David Andrews greeted city officials with *"we're here to bury the noise ordinance"*, starting to play a dirge just as if it were a jazz funeral (BLUMENFELD, 2014).

With a renewed focus on regulating noise only on the eight most commercial blocks on Bourbon Street with an extension to other areas in the French Quarter the city council came together for another public meeting on January 27, 2014, which I could follow live on the city hall website via online-streaming. At the beginning a short statement about the usage of other terms than noise and ordinance was given by council members. Musicians were increasingly feeling offended when their music was actually treated as noise, according to the city council the term ordinance might remind too much on criminal actions. A new solution shall be sought to rename the noise ordinance into sound regulation. Consequently the floor was given to the public, each participant was allowed to speak for two minutes. Residents, business owners, music venue managers, and musicians did speak up, expressed their concerns, gave individual recommendations on how to solve the problems, and told from personal experiences about how they perceive the present situation. While some participants gave free rein to their frustration others came to the conclusion that *"people love New Orleans music because it is good music and not because it is loud music"*, musicians gave insight into their work on stage stating that *"club*



*owners want the bands to play louder - but in fact musicians do not want to play loud, they don't want loud speaker systems."* At the end of the meeting the city council stressed that it is hoping to pass a new Bourbon Street noise ordinance by April 2014. Furthermore, the city Health Department would be taking over enforcement of the noise ordinance from the NOPD and install a supervisor with three environment health workers (WEBSTER, 2014, B).

### **3.4. The case of Bourbon Street**

*"Bourbon Street still has more music going on in eight blocks than any other city in the US, it's amazing to me that Saturday night every bar has three different live bands up there - other cities don't have even 30 bands!"* (interview 10).

While there are doubts in literature if Bourbon Whiskey from the American South was named after the most famous street of New Orleans, the opposite is wrong without a doubt. It is nonetheless true that the name of the street, and maybe also the name of the whiskey, goes back to the French ruling dynasty (Maison de Bourbon) of the times when the urban plan of the French Quarter was designed, in 1721. Who would have imagined at that time that around 300 years later Bourbon Street would become globally known for ... for a place where visitors are *"listening to bad Rock'n Roll bearing out of clubs"*, and that it is constantly crowded with *"tourists who wanna get drunk and show their tits"* (interview 2), as one of my interlocutors described the present situation in the entertainment centre of the city.

Bourbon Street was once the boulevard for the city's high society, lined with luxurious hotels, fancy restaurants, noble bars and venues with live music entertainment acts. Horse carriages drove residents and visitors in their finest robes, the hotel ball rooms used to host Mardi Gras balls and other carnival events. Some decades before the 1900s the street slowly got to be known as an entertainment alley, with brothels stretching out from the city's red light district Storyville more bars and restaurants opened along the 13 blocks between Canal Street and Esplanade Avenue. Music, dances, burlesque and entertainment shows have been performed on Bourbon Street since more than 150 years for the joy of local residents and visitors alike. When talking to Jan Rampsey in her office on Frenchmen Street she told me her opinion of Bourbon Street:

*"Many years ago, 30 and 35 years ago, Bourbon Street was totally different - you could go and hear good music, go to a burlesque show - but we are talking strippers now! It was not lap dancing it was burlesque! For years and years Bourbon Street was known as a place to go party*

*but it was a place where you dressed up - a classier place! Over time Bourbon Street has become oriented or geared to the least common denominator of tourist - somebody that really wants to go and get drunk and stupid and be titulated by all the stupid stuff that's on Bourbon Street now! Over time Bourbon Street has changed - it's no longer a place where you go and hear music, it's a place where you just go to party!"* (interview 23).

Today especially the first eight blocks from West to East are touristically commodified to the extreme, locals who are hardly ever joining are complaining that *"the culture of Bourbon Street is a contagious disease, people who visit Bourbon Street do behave the same way off Bourbon Street as well"* (intervention at the city council meeting of January 27, 2014). The statement describes those visitors of Bourbon Street who do acquire a comportment of disrespect, barbarism, and *"not caring about anything"*, maybe due to the party atmosphere, maybe due to the open container drinking law, but certainly also due to its reputation being created by tourism promotion slogans.

When I am thinking back to my several visits at Bourbon Street for research reasons I can still smell the atmosphere. During the day but especially in the night Bourbon Street is nested in a cloud that stinks like puke, horse excrements, alcohol, cigarettes, and a broken sewerage system. In its high tide during big festivals and the weeks before Mardi Gras the street surpasses its carrying capacity, limiting the people to move where they actually want to, being squeezed, pushed back and forth by the masses. Most of the people, small and big groups of college kids, students, young adults, and couples alike, girls celebrating hen's night, boys feasting bachelor parties, male and female sport teams, and visitors up to their 70's are walking around with alcoholic drinks in their hands such as beer bottles, daiquiri cups, or granat drinks in green plastic containers, labelled with the name of the bars where the drink was purchased. All of the bars on Bourbon Street leave their doors open, doormen and women are doing two jobs at the same time - hustling people to enter the proper bar and ensuring its security. Sexy dressed girls and boys are additionally employed to lure guests into the bars with special drink promotions, free shots, entry without cover charge for live performances of cover bands. Statistical surveys say that the media age of customers is around 34 years and 76% of the visitors are on vacation (the rest might be conventioners and other business tourists who are seeking for entertainment possibilities); in 2012 Bourbon Street had 55 bars, 25 of which had live music entertainment, three sports bars, eight bars advertising "to go" drinks (PRICE, 2012), some karaoke bars, at least two bars called "Beer Fest", another two bars called "Mango Mango

Daiquiri", and other bars with interesting names. Right next to a t-shirt shop (of which there are many) you can find a hustler club, and next to a souvenir store (of which there are even more) you can step into another strip club being surrounded by ladies dressed in tights, underwear, or bikinis, wearing cowboy boots, high heels, or sport shoes. Most of the drink, eat, or music venues are not as crowded as the street is, but visitors are dancing, moving, or teetering to songs of cover bands playing rock, pop, and sometimes Rock'n Roll:

*"Because instead of playing traditional New Orleans music, Bourbon Street demands that they play the top 40, the stuff that's going to appeal the common factor! Music is just blend and top 40 - music that's on the radio anywhere! Bourbon Street caters in particular to tourists - 90% or more of their business are tourists! Locals pretty much don't go there - they just work there! It's very rare that you will hear some authentic Dixie-land jazz on Bourbon Street, you have to go off of Bourbon Street to hear that! So tourists affect Bourbon Street negatively!"* (interview 17).

Passing by the Cajun Cabin Restaurant, Turtle Bay, Tropical Isle, and hearing five different songs at the same time I suddenly get stopped by a big cross in front of me with ten persons chanting a religious song, distributing information flyers, holding heavy books in their hands. One of the fair haired ladies in blue jeans and a black sweater approaches me with an angry face, she hands me a flyer and is trying to communicate with me. I have to step closer to her because the loud sound cloud makes it hard to understand the words. Reading the flyer and listening to her at the same time I realise that she is promoting a religious congregation raising awareness about the sin of promiscuous comportment, excessive behaviour, and alcohol consumption. She opens the heavy book and points at some paragraphs, flips some pages and shows me another citation of the bible. While she leaves me alone for a few seconds I turn around and see the passing people pointing with fingers to the big cross and laughing, shaking their heads. The lady returns with paper and pen, wants me to sign something and donate some dollars. As I tell her that I first want to understand what I am going to sign she focuses on the next passing person. Looking around myself I get reminded on the words of Jan when we were discussing the present situation on Bourbon Street:

*"Today you cannot go and walk on Bourbon Street on Mardi Gras - not with kids! It's nasty, disgusting, I have nothing against nudity but there are many young women and guys, showing their tits and whatever just for fun, having sex on the street, everybody is drunk, throwing up - it's disgusting!"* (interview 23).

Continuing my walk I shortly step into bars with names like Voodoo Vibe, Voodoo Bar, Bourbon Heat, and hardly recognise any big difference to the other venues regarding music entertainment with high-up elevated stages, big drum sets, colourful electric guitars, somehow having the impression that I already heard 'Mustang Sally' somewhere else tonight. When I got to talk to Mary-Beth Romig, who is working in city hall for the New Orleans local organising committee as an assistant to the mayor for PR and communications, she told me that not even the official administration is content with the current representation of Bourbon Street for the city. She even extended the issues being borne in Bourbon Street on the French Quarter in general: *"The French Quarter has always been a party place, back in the 50's it has been a place for live jazz music with great legendary musicians, now it deteriorated, now you have hustler clubs and all these places playing loud music"* (interview 15).

Bourbon Street is an important location to market New Orleans as a destination because it is well known, especially in the US. Roland Guerin, a famous bass player in New Orleans puts it in other words like this: *"Bourbon Street is like the worm on a hook - to get the fish!"* (interview 39). Bourbon Street is often the stimulation for tourists travelling to New Orleans but *"Bourbon Street is usually a one day thing - people go there to say: I have done Bourbon Street"* (interview 39). Toni Rice, a tourism expert managing the NOMCTN confirms Roland's opinion: *"So although the marketing never talks about Mardi Gras Indians or the Tremé neighbourhood we know through surveys that visitors are not just interested in Bourbon Street - Bourbon Street is great and they wanna do it for one day but after that they wanna do something else"* (interview 40).

### **'Bourbon Street is like Las Vegas'**

*"New Orleans is mainly promoted as a trashy Las Vegas and a sin-focused party and Carnival city"* (interview 8).

Ben Jaffe whose Preservation Hall is located just a corner off Bourbon Street is upset with the tourism marketing and the current situation on the party mile: *"The things that are so special about New Orleans are not promoted to the greater world and Bourbon Street is like Las Vegas, it caters that mentality, that's a real challenge"* (interview 10). At the beginning of my research I was surprised of how often New Orleans, the French Quarter or Bourbon Street get compared to Las Vegas, Nevada, by my interlocutors. The common ground in fact is that both cities are often marketed as the "sin-city" which is then often taken too seriously by its visitors. But additionally

to the created image by tourism promotion slogans New Orleans has this historical aspect on which the impression of the sin-city is based:

*"Have you seen these commercials about what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas? That's kind of been the attitude around New Orleans since the beginning - if you look at its initial heritage of being based on pirates and looters and hookers, slaves, it has a very seedy history, it's like the underbelly, the dark place. We are based on that. So it's kinda always been that way, that people come here to do stuff that they would never do at home!"* (interview 5).

Although there are many reasons why people visit New Orleans *"many just want the silly Las Vegas - there is only one reason why you go to Las Vegas"*, these visitors were attracted by the sin-city and are therefore ending up on Bourbon Street adopting classical slogans such as: *"What happens in New Orleans stays in New Orleans - what happens on Bourbon Street..."* (interview 5).

Arthur shares the viewpoint of many locals who are working in the cultural tourism sector or are themselves cultural actors. Due to the marketing of the city as a party place the city gets exactly those tourists who are seeking out for party and soft entertainment: *"The CVB just made a research and the outcome was that a lot of people are bored! One of the issues is that it is part of the culture of the tourists - they are passive. People like the Disneyland, and Orlando, and Las Vegas, where a lot of the entertainment is thrown at you and all you have to do is consume"* (interview 29).

Arthur expresses his frustration that New Orleans as a tourism destination is actually a different place than Bourbon Street. In New Orleans the entertaining cultural events are mainly happening in the various neighbourhoods, in music venues spread around the city, and at street parades such as second lines - these events and locations are hardly promoted and have to be actively sought by the visitors. Since Bourbon Street is the only "passive" party entertainment location the visitors do not seem to be challenged enough by the offer and have the sensation of being "bored" - because they are not active enough to look for other entertainment possibilities outside the French Quarter.

The open container drinking law of alcoholic beverages which is applied in the entire French Quarter (just as on the Las Vegas Strip in Nevada) certainly contributes to the feeling of being in the *"adult Disney Land, it's kinda like Las Vegas but in a different way, it's like Las Vegas but with*

*heart and soul. Whereas Las Vegas is soulless and sandy - and I love Vegas - I had my best times there" (interview 5).*

### **Bourbon Street: cultural preservation and the working conditions for musicians**

*" ... no, not at all - it doesn't! It's taking away the traditional music! The tourism activity on Bourbon is taking that away!" (interview 17)*

As I have outlined in this thesis so far Bourbon Street is catered to mass tourism by NOCVB and other tourism marketing agencies. Its visitors are seeking soft party entertainment and actually get what they are looking for. An endlessly seeming street of bars with cover bands playing well-known radio songs, inexpensive drinks, fried food, gentlemen's clubs, and frivolous behaviour of partying groups means fun for many of its visitors being content with the amusement supply.

Having experienced the offer of musical performances on Bourbon Street by myself, I often talked with interlocutors (primarily musicians themselves) about the situation for working musicians. I wanted to deepen into my considerations about how the visitors and their musical requests, bar owners and their opinion about entertaining party music, and the general behaviour on the party mile is influencing performing musicians, their working conditions, their musical performance itself, and the general position of artists about the present situation on Bourbon Street.

My thoughts, hypotheses, and apprehensions that circled around in my head after having witnessed the scenes on Bourbon Street have been confirmed by many interlocutors. Especially the statements of Ben Jaffe do describe in detail what musicians feel when playing up on stage in a bar on Bourbon Street:

*"It's hard to maintain one's dignity playing music on Bourbon Street because of all the shit you have to put up with, all the suckers and all the beadheads, all the dude shooting yelling 'com'on play Sweet Home Alabama or Stairway to Heaven' ... that's the kind of mentality that you have to be able to tolerate if you are working on Bourbon Street, you either have to tolerate it or you are part of that mentality. ... A lot of the musicians playing on Bourbon Street are locals and are great musicians and really good bands. The music played there is not my cup of tea, but what they do is not easy - it's very rare to find a musician that can play six hours up there - I have all the respect of the world for people who are playing on Bourbon Street" (interview 10).*

Ben is convinced that in New Orleans tourism is responsible for continuing local culture like music - but in order to preserve the musical heritage the musicians need to be treated accordingly with giving them the opportunity to perform local music. With managing his Preservation Hall and being an active part of the Preservation Hall All-Stars band he is continuing a path that his parents had started, taking on responsibility for the musicians and the musical heritage itself. In his opinion, more venues should include such a mentality of responsibility in their business models in order to create a sustainable system that nourishes the musical community with benefits:

*"That's not what I see on Bourbon Street - that's the difference you know, you have great musicians on Bourbon Street but the bar owners don't give a shit about the musicians on Bourbon Street, the managers don't care. The reason there are bands on Bourbon Street is because those bands sell beer - and shots, and cherry bombs. That's why bands are hired on Bourbon Street"* (interview 10).

At Preservation Hall the musicians and their musical performances get curated and the visitors pay entrance at his venue to listen attentively to the traditional jazz music, on Bourbon Street the musical aspect is neglected:

*"Whereas on Bourbon Street you're gonna go wherever it's loudest, where people gonna have the best time. There is very few places on Bourbon Street that have the luxury of choosing what type of music they can present there. The bar owners on Bourbon Street couldn't care less about the music, they just wanna sell drinks"* (interview 10).

From other musicians who made experience with performing on Bourbon Street or who are in contact with colleagues rocking on those stages I got informed that the working conditions are very different compared to other locations around the city. Norbert Susemihl narrated that bands would have to follow strict directions regarding time, that sets and pauses need to be maintained to the minute - restrictions which are unimaginable in any other bar in town.

Wick Reid, a Rock'n Roll guitarist and music producer mentioned other and rather practical issues which makes it hard and sometimes inconvenient for musicians to perform:

*"If a musician has to play at a club on Bourbon Street and has to pull up and load all the equipment into the club, there are no loading zones. Once I loaded my guitar amp, I got a parking ticket for temporarily parking on Bourbon Street .. haha ... luckily I do not have to play on*

*Bourbon Street and only played there for a few times, and I never ever want to play again!"* (interview 26).

Concerning earnings when playing on Bourbon Street there was a general compliance to an amount of US\$ 45 per set and musician although the length of performed sets seems to be different in the various venues. Against my hypotheses that musicians would get paid more on Bourbon Street than in other bars (due to the high amount of visitors) I learned that musicians do not necessarily earn more money per gig but they get the possibility to perform at the same bar more often. In comparison, other local venues on Frenchmen Street do mix the bands more regularly and try to offer more different bands to their clients. The reason for this is because Bourbon Street has many one time visitors whereas other bars are frequented by visitors more often. *"I don't think he is making more money on Bourbon Street - but he gets that job more often than in other local bars. They play a one and a half hours set, 20 minutes break, I think they get paid 45\$ for each set, they might get 150\$ for three to six hours of work"* (interview 5) says Stacey describing the situation of a friend of her.

I also talked to Dorian Rush, Project Manager at the Louisiana Cultural Economy Foundation, who has been performing for many years on Bourbon Street. Along to her office job Dorian is playing the ukulele, sings, and is gigging in several bars in town with various band formations, having a good insight into the world of musicians:

*"... and you don't make good money on Bourbon Street as a musician. The only reason I know that is because I sang there for eight years - we had a great gig! The money that they paid to musicians is the same that they paid in 1975 - it has not gone up at all! Musicians on Bourbon Street rely on the tips of tourists to make their money - a lot of tourists come in for late night stuff, people in the 20's don't tip - they don't have any money, they spend all on booze! As a musician it's very hard, you struggle a lot, whereas on Frenchmen Street you get a percentage of the bar rang - on Bourbon Street it isn't like that -they pay you flat out per set! And they don't pay well - most musicians have to do seven to eight sets to make any kind of money!"* (interview 17).

Felice Guimont is not only a nurse at the Musicians Clinic and a Vodou practitioner but also an active musician as a singer-songwriter. As a native New Orleanian in the music business she also made some experience with performing on Bourbon Street and is constantly in contact with friends who are regularly playing there to boost up their monthly income. Even if she sometimes



tends to exaggerate with her descriptions Felice is very much aware of the actual issues musicians are facing:

*"I was told to never work on Bourbon Street, they call the musicians on Bourbon Street the walking dead - my band director works on Bourbon Street! It's true, in 2012 musicians work all day and barely make money on Bourbon Street - sometimes I see musicians playing for ten dollars an hour on Bourbon Street. Nothing has really changed to help the musicians financially - the city caters to tourists because they rely on tourism dollars to do a lot of things!"* (interview 7).

After we had exchanged our albums (musicians do not like to give away their records for free but are happy to exchange their artwork with the CD of another musician) I was asking Felice about what kind of influence the bad working conditions on Bourbon Street would have on the performance attitude and motivation of musicians:

*"Well, I think Bourbon Street tourism has a negative influence on musicians because it's not a better quality of life for playing on Bourbon Street - many musicians told me that they would never play on Bourbon Street - it's a negative connotation for musicians who perform on Bourbon Street - but some musicians like it because it's the drinking, the culture of drugs, prostitutes, ... last week a friend called me and wanted me to sing with him on Bourbon Street because their vocalist is on crack! A lot of those elements aren't good for musicians, and the sound is not good there either! But my band manager is dependent on that little money! There is that negative connotation, they [the bar owners] will do whatever they have to do to keep the tourists pleased at the musician's expense!"* (interview 7).

### **'Jazz is back on Bourbon'**

Walking up Bourbon Street I finally have reached Fritzel's European Jazz Pub and feel relieved as I see the street sign of St. Ann - I made it to the eighth block and crossed "upper Bourbon" as the tourist guides call it. Fritzel's is just one out of three venues which focus on the performance of jazz music, the others are Café Beignet, and a club in the Royal Sonesta Hotel that opened just a few years ago. Strolling back all the eight blocks of Bourbon Street again, I pass bars with duelling piano performers, solo musicians with a cowboy hat, boots, and a guitar chanting country songs, I see people begging for money next to self-proclaimed musicians sitting on a bucket and using plastic containers as an improvised set of percussions hitting it with drumsticks, I recognise a person who is painted in silver all over his body imitating some celebrity musician whose name does not come into my mind. My admiration of a girl playing harmonica with eyes closed in the middle of Bourbon Street while a sound cloud of felt 85

decibels is polluting the ambience (and my ears) is interrupted by Mardi Gras beads hitting my head from the balcony above - I look up and see a group of guys smiling at me, waving with their beer bottles, inviting me to go up and party with them. I suddenly realise that most of the visitors on the street have beads around their necks, wrists, feet, hats, plastic cups, and get reminded of Ben's term beadheads and the Bourbon Street habit that throwing beads at someone means that you like that person. I flee from the bad smelling Bourbon pedestrian zone into the Royal Sonesta Hotel feeling the desire of listening to some jazz or blues music. In the lobby I orientate myself quickly and focus the entrance of Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse, on the flyers and on the gig calendar next to the door I see names like Leon 'Kid Chocolate' Brown, Jason Marsalis, Leroy Jones and Katja Toivola, Roland Guerin Quintet, and other local bands. On the next poster promoting the Playhouse I can read in big letters the following slogan: *"Jazz is back on Bourbon."* I enter the bar and sit down to a concert of the local newcomer Kipori Woods, a "Blues Man from Down South", my all time blues guitar favourite, from now on, and best gift for celebrating my today's 29th birthday.

### **3.5. Synthesis - music in New Orleans is not commodified enough**

*"I don't use that word - I use optimizing the potential of artists, sustaining, making it possible for artists to live off their talent and creativity rather than having other jobs. Commodification is a loaded word, it is not neutral. But if you see it as neutral I would say yes, I am in favour of commodification, to a point."* (interview 47)

As described with the examples above the commodification of music certainly impacted its development (or stagnating development) also due to the rising importance of tourism throughout the city. Often I got reminded by my interlocutors that music has always been commodified because being a musician or producing music can be a professional job and a business. But also for non professional performers music is very often a source of income generation, and hence a commodity.

In New Orleans the people who are responsible for the musical offer in the city (such as musicians, music producers, event and festival organisers, and non-profit institutions with social programmes) are rather concerned about the fact that music is not commodified enough. The machinery of systematic commodification such as a music industry is missing. Most of the local bands and musicians do not work with dedicated agents or managers whose tasks would be to collect royalties (from performances at venues, streams in radios, merchandise, CD sales, etc.),

check performances (contact venues and festivals for performances in New Orleans, organise tours out of town, collaborate with the tourism industry), negotiate performance fees, and advocate the musicians in situations of certain issues. Booking agents working for the annual Jazz and Heritage Festival state that New Orleans would be the only place where they are negotiating directly with the bands and not with their managers. Positively accomplishing the many activities of self-management can be very time consuming and frustrating.

The non-profit organisation Sweet Home New Orleans has several programmes for supporting musicians in getting access to revenues they are actually entitled to receive:

*"We are trying to educate our musicians on ... if you are focusing only on gigging you miss out a lot of income that the tourism industry is bringing. They are providing for musicians the ability to tour without leaving the city - all of these tourists come in, they have the captive fans that they can access to when the tourists go home again and talking about New Orleans. It is not only revenue streams from fan engagement but also the revenue streams that the city pays into the PRO - the Performance Rights Organization - , any time someone performs live, they get paid not only by the city but also if they are registered with BMI they can access more income that way. And also if they are filmed they can gain royalties from sound exchange - basically the city pays tons of royalties but if people can't access them they don't see any of that money!" (interview 45).*

In general, it is not only the lack of knowledge and training of musicians who are not aware of how to get additional revenues or how to protect their rights of songs and performances. In many cases musicians are also lacking in computer literacy and basic management skills. The biggest problem though is that musicians are often underestimating themselves regarding how the professional business of music making should be approached, as expressed by Sarah Gromko giving a practical example:

*"It would be nice if all of the promotional products that they use actually pay the proper licensing fees to the people that they are using, and make sure that these people get their royalties. Of the music, images, everything that they use - if they paid a real rate for it rather than just doing a back-deal thing... Here it goes: we wanna put you on the front cover of that magazine - and we are doing it for YOU! In New York City it's like - ok then give me 50.000 dollars for the first year and for the next years give me royalties! For some reason the musicians here don't value themselves enough to know that when someone is using your stuff they gotta pay for it - it's your copyrighted material, you are entitled to money that" (interview 45).*

The missing system of a functioning music industry is mainly responsible for the low wages of most musicians, because the tourism industry does not pay directly but only indirectly through bringing in more tourists. Ben Jaffe explicitly mentioned where the sustaining money for the musical activities comes from: *"Tourist dollars and oil dollars in a very strange peculiar way are what support the music industry here - it's a bitter pill that all of us have to swallow every day."* (interview 10).

With oil dollars Ben makes reference to the main sponsors of the festivals organised by the Jazz and Heritage Foundation (Jazz and Heritage Festival sponsored by Shell), of the French Quarter Festivals Inc. (French Quarter Festival and Satchmo Fest sponsored by Chevron), and to the million dollar compensation payment of BP, causing the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico polluting the southern Louisiana coast, granting money to the tourism industry. The mayor requested a US\$ 75 million tourism grant in 2010 (City of New Orleans, 2010) which was supposed to pay for additional promotion regarding image cleaning and for dragging those tourists who missed out during the period of the catastrophe. With music industry Ben solely refers to local music venues, the event and festival organisations, as well as the musicians in New Orleans but not to a dedicated network of musicians and composers, music publishers, producers, recording studios, engineers, labels, editors, physical CD and online music stores, performance rights organisations, booking agents and promoters, talent and business managers, entertainment lawyers, journalists, instructors, as well as satellite, internet, and broadcast radios.

### **Ways of boosting the commodification of music**

*"TVs, movies and documentaries are also part of the cultural heritage of music - it's how music gets transmitted - it's a depiction of our culture in TV and movies which drags tourists here!"* (interview 2).

In order to diversify the commodification possibilities of music the city administration can certainly help with dedicated offices and actions, and would need to dedicate more attention to the city's heritage in general. With this dedication the government would also attract the music industry to settle down in a city where a lot needs to be done. Sarah Gromko talked to me about what Sweet Home New Orleans did in fact propose to the Cultural Economy Initiative:

*"In our report we urged them to open a music business office. They have an office of cultural economy which is broad based and covers everything of culture, except for music explicitly. Just as they have a film business office they should have one for music. [ ... ] The government does work a lot to bring companies of the film industry - and they need a music one because we have no music industry here, just a tons of musicians! We need a business support system where musicians can get the help they need in order to be business people. It's horrible because there are so many people calling me saying 'I need you' but I don't have the hours. I am the only single person! We need to bring the industry down here so that people have access to other people that do this!" (interview 45).*

Apart of public investment into administrative help for musicians the city is also dependent on investment by the tourism industry and private persons concerning attractive music related infrastructure. This could be represented for example through the establishment of museums dedicated to the importance of music in New Orleans focused on the educational aspect of visitors. Currently, this is satisfied only with a permanent exhibition about the history of Preservation Hall on the second floor of the Old Mint building right behind the French Market. Jan Rampsey, who is in contact with many cultural people due to her activity with the *Offbeat* magazine, is looking for sponsors and the perfect building for a music museum since many years but faces problems in finding final agreements with the city, the tourism industry, and influential business people.

Leaving aside historical museums and exhibitions, there are lots of creative possibilities to expand the educational music tourism offer which can be related to the combination of the intangible and the tangible elements of music. Investment into the reconstruction of houses and buildings where famous musicians used to live, perform, or record their music is one option. Sadly, the house of Louis Armstrong cannot be reconstructed anymore because City Hall was built upon it after the demolition of the former neighbourhood - but the historical J & M Recording Studio, where the early Fats Domino, Little Richard, Ray Charles, and early R'n'B music was recorded, could be used adequately. Located at the corner of Rampart and Dumaine Street, right between the French Quarter and Congo Square the building still exists "*... but it's a washateria now*" (interview 26), states Reid Wick, a musician and music industry professional due to his work as a production manager at The Recording Academy, an organisation which is better known for granting the Grammy Awards. The J & M Recording Studio could be New Orleans' version of the Sun Studio in Memphis, where Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Louis and Johnny

Cash once recorded. Today it is not only a museum, but opens its doors as a studio with the original equipment after museum business hours. Reid counts on the tangible part of music that interested visitors are ultimately looking for, additionally to listening to and seeing musicians play they also want to feel and touch music embodied by the original rooms, equipment and instruments with which famous musicians used to record globally successful songs. The museum shop could promote local musicians and give information about live performances, sell their CDs, books, and merchandise products, collect contacts to stay in touch and update interested visitors about potential tours and gigs out of town.

Apart of such individual investment projects the tourism industry should promote New Orleans generally more as a dedicated music city. In Reid's opinion, a music brand strategy is missing since New Orleans is the southern tip of the Americano Music Triangle. This geographical area containing Nashville, Memphis, and New Orleans have developed most of the distinctive American music genres (blues, country, jazz, R'n'B, Rock'n Roll) - the Americano Triangle is an innovative, multistate tourism venture pulling the different styles, stories and places under one umbrella for the sake of musical preservation and economic development (promoted among others by the Americana Music Association).<sup>66</sup> Territorial and urban branding is an extension of the commodification process associated with tourism and implies the marketing of a corporate-oriented version of urban culture as an object of consumption. Gotham states that the significance of branding as opposed to advertising and conventional place promotion, is that the distinction between the real city and the imagined city implodes and advertised representations become the indicators and definers of urban reality (GOTHAM, 2007: 10).

### **Support by non-profit organisations substituting the music industry**

*"New Orleans is unique and is a paradoxon - it's famous for music but we don't have a music business" (interview 35)*

For the purpose of helping local musicians to make a living with their profession there is a number of non-profit organisations supporting also upcoming music generations with social projects and services. To keep the music heritage alive in New Orleans local organisations like Sweet Home New Orleans, the Music Cooperation Office of the Trombone Shorty Foundation, the Backbeat Foundation, the Jazz and Heritage Foundation (including WWOZ, the Norman

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<sup>66</sup> For more information: <http://americanamusic.org/>

Dixon Foundation), the Tipitina's Foundation, the Ponderosa Stomp Foundation, the Music Rising campaign, among others, are dependent on public grants, private donations, some are generating income with proper activities like music events and festivals, or fund raising events like dedicated parties, dinners, bingo evenings, and the like. During my interviews with some of the above mentioned organisations I was informed that especially small dimensioned non-profit organisations and foundations (such as Sweet Home New Orleans or the Roots of Music Foundation) are facing financial difficulties with implementing their programmes: *"we are all fighting for the same little public funds that are out there"* (personal communication).

According to Maida Owen, working for the Louisiana Folklife Program, the primary reason for the financial issue that small organisations are facing goes back to the administrative state and city structures who do not fund such programmes extensively enough:

*"Louisiana does not have a strong commitment to the culture of preservation for the arts, there is lot of wealth but it does not go into foundations but into Mardi Gras and partying; just look at Pittsburgh - large amounts of dollars is in local foundations supporting culture and art - New Orleans does not have such a system"* (interview 6).

The organisations are providing a variety of activities like business training and economic empowerment, advocacy, talent scouting and promoting, booking agency, event and festival organisation, and networking. The mentioned organisations are in fact carrying out what should be accomplished by for-profit music industry related businesses - but in New Orleans there are just a few musicians who can afford the support of dedicated managers. As stated on the websites of the investigated non-profits, NGOs, and foundations their missions are often defined as safeguarding and preserving the cultural heritage of music with programmes that help local musicians in the challenge of surviving with their artistic ambitions. The broader goal is to create the capacity for growth in the musical community at large and to increase margins for individual artists and bands providing an opportunity for the infrastructure for music business to develop in New Orleans.

Business training and economic empowerment projects aim at giving musicians tools to manage themselves and become better business people. This includes a range of courses: how to set up a web-site; basic accounting; how to earn more money from music by giving information about the access to revenue streams from radio broadcasting stations, from Performance Rights

Organizations (PRO) such as the national BMI<sup>67</sup>, or how to gain royalties via SoundExchange<sup>68</sup> from songs that are used in digital media devices or music platforms, film or commercial productions. Musicians are trained about how to deal with physical and digital music distribution channels - a difficult task without having signed a record label contract.

An outstanding project building up proper infrastructure and an adequate working atmosphere for musicians is the *Seal of Approval* advocacy initiative under the *Empower Musicians* programme by Sweet Home New Orleans. It grants music venues a quality label if they "treat and pay musicians like professionals", having already established a network of ten venues in 2013 when the initiative had started. The main prerequisites the venues have to cover are the support of royalty streams to musicians through being licensed with PROs, transparent and fair compensation, and the use of good sound equipment, among others<sup>69</sup>.

Talent scouting and promoting is for example carried out by the Backbeat Foundation with the *Export NOLA* initiative. The event provides a branded platform for showcasing the distinctive spectrum of genres (not only jazz and blues but also Mardi Gras Indian and Brass Band) and bands of New Orleans, for both established touring bands as well as emerging artists. The event is presented at the premiere entertainment industry conferences in the United States. The showcases of Export NOLA is programmed and designed to attract national and international talent buyers, arts presenters and programmers to discover the varied musical genres of New Orleans and Louisiana<sup>70</sup>. The *Gig-Gator*<sup>71</sup>, a digital talent exchange platform initiated by the Jazz and Heritage Foundation focuses on promoting talents, featuring local musicians with dedicated information and song streaming. It is aimed at festivals and buyers of live performance engagements as well as at music supervisors for licensing music into films, TV shows, commercials, and video games.

Several non-profits are in the sector of events organisation, first and foremost to create fair-paid performance possibilities for local musicians and free entry for visitors. Next to the *Backbeat Jazz Fest Series*, a range of jazz concert evenings in various venues organised by the Backbeat

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<sup>67</sup> For more information about BMI: <http://www.bmi.com>

<sup>68</sup> For more information about SoundExchange: <http://www.soundexchange.com>

<sup>69</sup> See the list of approved venues and the requirements for the seal:

<http://sweethomeneworleans.org/best-venues-for-working-musicians/>, retrieved in January 2014.

<sup>70</sup> See the whole description of the Export NOLA initiative: <http://backbeatfoundation.org/export-nola/>, retrieved in January 2014.

<sup>71</sup> See the entire information about the Gig-Gator on: <http://talent.jazzandheritage.org/>, retrieved in January 2014.



Foundation, most of these events are big and small festivals which will be further explained in the chapter dedicated to Festivals.

The *Sync-Up Conference*, taking place during Jazz Fest and organised by the Jazz and Heritage Foundation, is a networking event for independent artists, labels, promoters, journalists, festival and event producers, and entertainment industry professionals. Leaders in music, film and digital media discuss a wide range of topics, from crowd-funding and independent distribution to how to use social media effectively, and organise touring. Scott Aiges, the main organiser of the conference, invited me to participate at the conference during our interview stating that: "*within the digital world it's able to live as an independent musician without labels. The conference is about teaching how to do this - it's a laboratory! We teach them how to make sustainable careers - teach them management skills and fundraising techniques*" (interview 35).

Innovative start-up business ideas mostly in the digital sector are furthermore presented and promoted by young (mostly local) entrepreneurs at the conference. An outstanding idea which was presented during the conference in 2013 was the *Digital Tip Jar*<sup>72</sup>. After the presentation I talked to its inventor Patrick who is a partial musician himself. The initial idea for the Digital Tip Jar was created at a brainstorming competition about how to use new technologies effectively for the music business. I have been in contact with Patrick for some time also to make the programming team aware of additional features that could be useful for the device. We have been specifically discussing and trying out to combine event promoting features of social media platforms (bandsintown) with the Digital Tip Jar making it easier to link concert calendars of bands directly on the Tip Jar page. He told me that he and his little programming team (a group of friends being musicians and computer engineer students) do not take any commission from the tips so far because they would need to grow and improve its usage first.

Scott is programme manager at the Jazz and Heritage Foundation and responsible for running the conference among many other community programmes funded by the foundation. With the

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<sup>72</sup> The Digital Tip Jar is a free service that enables bands to accept tips from fans and visitors using credit/debit cards or paypal. The tips are directly paid to the artists' paypal account. Each artist receives a unique QR code to display at performances, providing the audience with a handy way to tip the band electronically. On the Digital Tip Jar homepage up-coming concerts of the artists are promoted and a list of the top five most generous patrons of artists is presented. The idea was born due to the fact that credit cards and electronic payments are increasingly becoming the preferred method of payment among consumers while paper transactions are declining steadily. The digital tip jar is furthermore also increasingly used at free events and festivals where visitors can leave tips to the festival organisation. For more information: <https://www.digitaltipjar.com>, retrieved in January 2014.

various programmes Scott covers all age groups of musicians, starting from the kids, to young new comers, established musicians, and elderly artists, because making music ain't easy for nobody: *"early Jazz musicians were hard working men, music was done at the side, music as a career is hard and not easy - this is helping musicians to live only out of music, musicians are very poor here - they don't want to get rich - but just earn enough to be able to support oneself in a middle class way"* (interview 35).

He enthusiastically talked to me about the foundation's brand new programme which is called *Class got Brass* and works like this: *"we are using money as an incentive to get the schools to promote the culture. We have the situation where there is very little funding for arts education in the school system. You have a lot of kids who want to learn how to play an instrument but they don't have instruments. The schools are cutting their funding for art education in general."* (interview 35)

With that programme the Jazz and Heritage Foundation is focusing especially on brass bands because its sound is very typical for New Orleans while marching bands are common all over the US: *"brass bands are a maximum of twelve kids. You have marching bands all over the country - brass bands only exist here! [ ... ] Nearly every high school has a marching band - not a New Orleans style brass band, not a second line band, but they have a marching band which is the kind of band that has hundred kids in it and they dress up, you see them in Mardi Gras parades. They all have marching bands but they don't have brass bands, which is crazy, why would they not have brass bands?!? I mean, we are the only place in the world that has brass bands. We are the only place in the world where 14 year olds go crazy for brass bands, they love the Rebirth brass band, they love the TBC brass band, the Baby Boys, kids here love that stuff and you don't find that in schools"* (interview 35).

The programme tries to encourage public and private schools to participate at a contest. The incentive is that the school of the winning brass band gets financial support for purchasing instruments and equipment which is needed for musical education. Scott wants *"the schools to take the responsibility for promoting the culture"* and encourage the students *"to carry the culture forward"* (interview 35), and furthermore explained:

*"So we put up 30.000 dollars and said: ok, you band directors, if you have a 100 kids in your marching bands, make a brass band, a traditional New Orleans style brass band and parade in this contest, and the winner gets 10.000\$ with instruments for the school's band program,*

*second place was 6.000 dollars. It was a huge success - the kids were nuts - the schools needed a push and incentive. If the teachers don't have enough money for valve oil for the horns, for drum heads, for the snare drum or drum sticks, all the things that they need, here is an incentive - compete - create something that is specific to our culture and use your competitive energy to be better than your friends", as a natural response I needed to mention that this seems to me as a very American attitude and Scott answered: "yes, it is ... but it works HAHHAH!" (interview 35).*

In continuation he shortly talked to me about the programme executed by the Tipitina's Foundation called *Battle of the Marching Bands* which is also raising money for school bands. Some weeks earlier, when I was biking home along Magazine Street towards the Lower Garden District from a meeting in the French Quarter I realised some brass sound when I crossed Napoleon Avenue. On the Southern tip of Napoleon is the historical music club Tipitina's and I instantly decided to ride down the few blocks to see what would be going on there.

Blue lights on NOPD cars and Harley-Davidsons blocking the streets, vans and buses parking on the Avenue, a big white tent in the middle of the street, and a huge poster saying: *Instruments A Comin' Benefit Concert & Outdoor Festival - Battle of the Marching Bands*. I tie up my bike on a pole, take out my fieldwork diary, and start to wonder around. Seems as I arrived at the right time because two marching bands with at least a hundred kids each holding instruments in their hands are confronting each other right in front of the Tip's entrance. It is the band with white shirts and black pants on the left against the band with orange shirts and blue blousons on the right, all of the musicians are afro-American high school kids. In between of the two marching bands there are another hundred people standing and waiting, making their cameras ready to film the scene. Most of them seem to be parents, family, and non participating class mates. Slowly finding my way through the crowd I walk towards the main entrance of the tent which is a bit elevated, inside is a silent auction of paintings and other pieces of art. Looking around to see if I know someone who I can talk to I suddenly perceive a loud sound. Outside the tent the first marching band started to perform, the drum section with big guys in the back is beating in a marching rhythm, the sousaphone section in front of them is holding up their instruments, the trombones (only instruments) are dancing with the beat to the left and right, the saxophones are being lifted up and down, slowly the front rows with horns in different sizes are stepping into the choreography of moving instruments - in the very front there are kids with purple-yellow flags waving them artistically - the conductor gives a sign with his long baton and the sound of around 100 horns and drums is flooding the block. The crowd in the centre starts to move to the

rhythm but is very concentrated on holding up the cameras, TV teams are present with professional devices for recording the sound with big microphones and cameras on a stick to get a good shot. Taking some pictures myself I realise that Ben Jaffe is standing next me, greeting him I also get introduced to his wife but our conversation lasts shortly because of the loud music. Two minutes later the crowd cheers and applauds to the end of the song and the other conductor is counting in the cue of his marching band. Each band has the chance to perform two songs then the bands change and two other music teams are playing against each other.

I did not follow the battle until the end but could read on a poster that the winning marching bands got awarded their prizes in the later evening when Trombone Shorty and the Galactic band performed their concerts on the stage of Tipitina's.

### **Non-profit organisations providing social welfare services for musicians**

*"These people are really responsible for the perpetuation of the culture but are the ones who don't get the benefits of all the tourism money that comes into the city. That is central to our business - support those people who create the culture"* (interview 52).

Other programmes such as providing health care to musicians, music education for kids, or crime prevention - carried out by local non-profit organisations - are not substituting the missing music industry but are helping musicians to survive due to lacks in the social welfare system of New Orleans and Louisiana.

Regarding the provision of health care, the New Orleans Musicians' Clinic and Assistance Foundation (NOMAF)<sup>73</sup> is the "medical home" for more than 2.500 local musicians and tradition bearers (such as Mardi Gras Indians, visual artists, etc.) providing cost-efficient access to high quality healthcare. Its director Bethany Bultman told me that around 80% of their patients earn less than US\$ 15.000 a year as self-employed working poor and fall into the sacrifice zone of the Louisiana Medicate Fund, meaning that they earn too little to get federal health care insurance and too much for medicate coverage. Apart of offering health care services the clinic also organises monthly luncheons where patients are invited to participate in health awareness presentations. Moreover, the clinic manages the *Gig Fund* and is contributing additional payment to gigs of selected musicians. Additionally, Bethany talked to me about their already

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<sup>73</sup> For more information: <http://www.neworleansmusiciansclinic.org/>, retrieved in January 2014.

dismissed programme of financially supporting musicians to play at the airport welcoming guests with live jazz performances. A planned partnership project with the city and the tourism industry contributing to the expenses that could not be realised the paid airport gigs for jazz bands got cancelled:

*"we support musicians and have programmes where we pay their gigs so they can continue playing music and do not have to do other jobs like wrecking houses because otherwise the music culture would die - so we pay musicians to play at the airport. But the airport, the city and the tourism commission none of them wanted to contribute but then they were complaining when we stopped doing it! So we said we would continue to pay them but not anymore at the airport but in their communities - it never came through because we can't afford it."* (interview 2)

Many of my interlocutors made me aware of the outstanding mission of *The Roots of Music Foundation*,<sup>74</sup> initiated by Derrick Tabb from the Rebirth Brass Band, it is offering a music education programme for kids in public schools. Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to talk to Derrick directly about the programme because he always seemed to be very busy with either finding financial funds for his foundation or with playing for Rebirth. The website of The Roots of Music though provides extensive information about its activities - the foundation facilitates music history and theory as well as instrumental instruction and ensemble performance preparation. Furthermore, the young students (elementary and lower grade school) are supported by academic tutoring, mentoring and homework assistance. Participation is free and meals are included as the programme is scheduled in the late afternoons. Its objectives are manifold but focus specifically on keeping the children off the streets in order to stay away from violent crime actions. As Bill Taylor expressed it, the primary goal of the programme is *"to give children instruments instead of guns and drugs"* (interview 52). Crime prevention through music education is the device in a city that suffers from one of the highest crime and homicide rates in the US, mainly happening among the African-American population.<sup>75</sup>

Scott is collaborating with Derrick Tabb and knows the mission and activities of Roots of Music very well:

*"... we look at what he does with a little bit of envy - we have an education program too but we don't provide bus transportation or meals and instruments or tutors that help the kids with their*

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<sup>74</sup> For more information: <http://therootsofmusic.org/>, retrieved in January 2014.

<sup>75</sup> The violent crime rate of New Orleans in 2012 was at 430.9 while the US average is at 214.0 per 100.000. A total of 193 homicides were registered in New Orleans in 2012.

Source: <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-New-Orleans-Louisiana.html>, retrieved in March 2014.

*homework. His program is five to six days a week, ours is one day a week. It's remarkable what Derrick is able to accomplish - the question is if he is doing sustainable - the cost is 600.000 dollars a year and he doesn't have that money. It's not clear how he is doing it - he is in financial trouble, he needs money. They are asking us for support to get their kids to a big performance, but that is not exactly what we do. What he is doing is in direct response to the community, he recognizes what the needs are, you have young kids that don't have sufficient parental supervision at home, they don't have enough to eat, the music is a way to learn discipline which they don't get at home. He is providing a mechanism to supply these things that they desperately need - the kids are succeeding! He needs help because he is not a fund raiser" (interview 35).*

Another objective of the programme is to build up a nationally recognised marching band - a typical American brass and woodwind instrument orchestra with percussions consisting of around 40 to 100 musicians having a long tradition also in New Orleans. Since Katrina the public school system cut extensively on expenses for music education so that marching bands could hardly be afforded. As a consequence this kind of performance lost quality and significance among the young students. The Roots of Music is about to form competitive marching bands on a national level providing musical education, coordination of the bands, and transport to national competitions.

### **'Music is the most consumable product'**

*"In New Orleans music is a necessity and is paid for as such - in New York City music is a luxury and is paid for as such" (interview 58).*

During a personal communication with Connie Atkinson she synthesised a statement of W. T. Francis, a pianist, composer and arranger becoming one of the founding members of Broadway in New York City. Francis' interview with the *New York Star* newspaper was reprinted in the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* in 1890 (STEWART, 1994). Today, more than 120 years later, his observation is still valid for most of the artists performing in New Orleans. As explained with various examples the local music scene is exposed to a range of issues which do have an impact on the performing artists. Whether it is about the low income in general, the habit of taking musical performances for granted and as a free service of entertainment, or the public discussion of the noise ordinance putting live music in a bad light. Most of these influences can be traced back to tourism activities on which the big number of performances is paradoxically dependent on.

The music community is often blaming the difficult situation of musicians on the state and city government which are investing public money in tourism and other sectors, and hence care too less about the local cultural producers:

*"Sports teams - the state gives many million dollars to the Saints and the Hornets - I like both teams but they get subsidized with so much money - and when you look at the cultural community and the musicians in particular - how much support have they ever gotten from the government? The grants and subsidies for them is so small and maybe not calculable at all! [ ... ] ... as long as we keep these safeguarding measures we will always have great musicians in New Orleans, the ground work has been laid 200 years ago or more - that it would just keep generating itself but it needs to be supported in the schools, in the larger context of whether its tourism or cultural support. But it never really got supported - coming back to the topic at the beginning - does the city really call itself as a music city, does the city take the musicians and the music community seriously, we've never been taken seriously as an industry! We never really got ourselves together as an industry, we could improve on so many things if we would do that!"* (interview 26).

Reid Wick is not only criticising the missing public support but also the musicians and music businesses which have not come together to collaborate and act as a music industry but still work as single service providers. Additionally, he criticises that many musicians are not acting professionally enough in their business. Today musicians need to do more than just perform, proper management, networking, and promotion is asked more than ever before.

The activities of the tourism industry help to commodify the musical heritage of the city and it *"helps to fuel the continuation of the culture, especially for music and festivals - it helps to fund them! [ ... ] Tourism helps to keep the culture alive in a capitalist and consumption society - to do things it takes financial resources and tourism is obviously helping!"* (interview 43), is the conclusion of Cleveland Spears who is working with the city's NOTMC as a tourism marketing consultant. From Cleveland's tourism point of view it seems like the tourism industry would have only positive influences on the music artists in the city with giving them many opportunities to perform live.

On the contrary Eric Lolis Elie, a journalist, author, producer of documentaries with culturally historic content, and supporter of the culture bearers in New Orleans interprets the present

situation with the following example, explaining the relationship between the city administration and cultural institutions like foundations, non-profit organisations, and associations in the cultural sector:

*"To be honest the relationship between the politicians and the organizations is like the relationship between the zoo keepers and the zoo animals. The zoo keepers realize they would have no zoo were there not animals, but they don't exist for the animals but for the profitability of the city. This is basically how the political fathers and mothers of the city view the cultural institutions of this city"* (interview 32).

As described in the earlier chapters the cultural actors and institutions do not only feel exploited in a financial way but also to the point that social and cultural benefits are not properly provided to the ones that are in need. Lolis' opinion is that *"we have a fundamental disconnect between the culture as economy and the culture as culture"* (interview 32), which means that with ever more performances for tourists or in a tourism related atmosphere cultural performances and other activities are more becoming commodified and hence done for profitable reasons. The profitable reasons that are hidden behind the performances are tricky because *"you can become a caricature of yourself to please the tourist"* (interview 32) when culture is not performed anymore for the sake of culture. This topic is addressed in more detail in the chapter regarding the commodification of music festivals.



#### **4. Commodification of the living cultural heritage festivals in New Orleans**

The present chapter about the commodification of festivals starts with an ethnographic excerpt of a visit at New Orleans' biggest free festival, the French Quarter Festival, taking place in the very centre of the city. In this way, I would like to invite the readers to dip into a festival day as I experienced it.

##### **Inside the French Quarter Festival**

On a warm Saturday morning I am biking from my apartment in the Lower Garden District area to the French Quarter. Crossing Canal Street the traffic gets pretty dense and I am looking for a place to lock my bike somewhere at the first entrance gates of the festival at the Riverside - because my friends keep on telling me that I cannot enter the French Quarter on a bike due to the human traffic jam throughout the narrow streets of the Quarter. Equipped with the French Quarter Festival app on my phone and a paper map I walk towards the stage that I selected as interesting on the app. Friends warned me to go to the festival today because sharing the Quarter with 303.000 visitors can get exhausting. At the entrance I see big signs saying "*Keep the festival free*" below crossed out designed beer, coke bottles, and sandwiches. The entrance to the festival is free but visitors are kindly asked to not bring drinks and food into the area but instead buy it at the many stands. When the stands are making enough money the festival organisation can assure that the event will be free of charge the following year as well.

Having overlooked the masses of people from the Riverwalk I realise that I will not be making the 21 stages on the map in one day. Bunches of visitors are lying in the grass in front of the stage next to the Aquarium, others are equipped with plastic folding chairs and cooler boxes, even parasols are put into the lawn to keep the kids in shade. We decide to start the day with the Red Hot Brass Band, visitors do adhere to the call of consuming food and drinks only from festival stands since I have to wait in line paying my turkey leg and beer. Keeping on going along the windy Riverwalk we pass the main stage where Theresa Anderson is playing, which I got to know personally some weeks afterwards at her gig at Cafe Istanbul. During the last song of the concert we go towards a desk with merchandise articles right next to the stage and buy her CD, although she is Swedish she got the album released with one of New Orleans' biggest labels called Basin Street Records.

Nadia wants to see the Pavilion stage, I agree and there we meet Sasha Masakowski and Cliff Hines preparing their performance - we got to know both of them after our first gig at Cafe Istanbul. Finally we decide to leave the Riverwalk and enter the French Quarter, when walking inside the gated Jackson Square we realised to have lost our group of friends with which we wanted to stay together for the day - impossible among the crowd of visitors. At Jackson Square we enjoy the concert of Del Marsalis and his Uptown Jazz Orchestra, he performs a song about dancing with the second line and a grand marshal pops up on stage to dance in front of the musicians with a typical umbrella. Some people in the audience take out a white handkerchief and wave with the rhythm - these must be tourists! As we approximate the exit gate of Jackson square we pass by another food booth, buy a crawfish pie and a cup of Abita amber. Next planned stop is a gig of Norbert Susemihl at Preservation Hall but it will take us some while to get there.

We are passing St. Louis cathedral and suddenly I see a stand of the Offbeat magazine with Jan Rampsey and her husband sitting inside, distributing the journal to guests. The magazine features the festival as the month's highlight with lots of articles about performing artists and a special festival guide including a map. Jan seems busy so I just take some Offbeat stickers, while greeting I let her know that I would like to meet her for another interview.

Going up St. Peter at the crossing of Royal Street the masses get more dense, the air more muggy, the beer in my hand warmer, and Nadia already more tired. Trying to get through the narrow street without touching too many sweaty t-shirts I recognise the sound of David & Roselyn, sitting in the shade of a parasol, surrounded by listeners. I cannot get close enough to greet them and move forward slowly since Norbert might already have started to play. Abruptly there is no chance to go on and we have to stop walking. Ahead of us is the battle of dixie land bands - two stages next to each other, on each stage a dixie land band, playing one song in turn, waiting to exceed the audience applause for the other band which is rated by a moderator. We decide to turn around and approach the Preservation Hall from the other side, knowing that we have to walk along Bourbon Street for one block. Up on Bourbon Street the situation is comparable to a usual night - smelly air, too many people, loud music from speakers, hookers, amateur entertainers, sound from cover rock bands blurring out of bars. On the corner we see our lost group of friends drinking beer and watching the human circus passing the street.

Finally we arrive at Preservation Hall, the band is playing and we are not allowed to enter the hall anymore because all available seats (benches) are occupied. It is my first visit and I am a bit disillusioned, the hall seems like not having been restored since its opening in the 1960s, the walls are dark and spotwise without plaster on the bricks, the windows are dirty and old. We are allowed to look inside the front entrance where the band is playing - as the musicians are changing to a swing song two pairs are jumping up from the front row, dressed in colourful fashion from the 1930s and 1940s, and start to dance, resulting in frenetic clapping by the audience. Towards the end of the performance the lady at the entrance gives us permission to enter from the back door so we can take a seat on the old wooden benches. Although the hall seems worn out, dark pictures of musicians on the walls, with some malfunctioning air condition propellers hanging from the ceiling, the atmosphere and the sound that is created in combination with the wooden furniture and beams is astonishing. The sound, all instruments are unplugged and not amplified (Norbert is even singing without a microphone), is pure and of great quality, the people's finger snapping, hand clapping, and "yeah" cries, sound original and I feel like listening to a jazz band in the 1960s. The last song is over, the audience hardly stops to cheer to Norbert's band and we walk over to our trumpet friend to congratulate him for his performance.

Outside of Preservation Hall we get dipped into a smelling cloud of marijuana, beer, and gas emissions from heavy motorbikes, our festival app says that Kristin Diable is supposed to go on the songwriter stage at the Historic New Orleans Collection just one and a half blocks away. In a wonderfully cool patio decorated with lots of plants around 150 persons are standing and watching the blonde lady singing with her guitar and a stand-up bass player - this rather intimate concert is a welcome change to the big stages for many of the visitors listening to songs about love and New Orleans.

Walking back to our bikes on the other side of the French Quarter we are passing some street performers on improvised stages with speakers who did not manage to be on the official French Quarter Festival guide - still they are taking the opportunity to play in front of lots of passers by offering their records.

### **The researcher in the field (at festivals)**

During fieldwork my research concerning festivals was primarily focused on music activities, and secondarily on food and art activities. In particular, my research related communications and

interviews but also my visits at the various events and festivals concentrated at first on musicians and gigs, and secondarily on the culinary supply and arts sector. Other kinds of events and festivals as listed by the CEI Snapshot (specifically dedicated to film, literary, theatre, visual arts, etc.) did only play a minor role for my research activities since a more intense engagement would have overloaded my available time.

The reasons for this decision are based on my research focus as well as on personal interests. One of the reasons is the high popularity of music festivals for the tourism industry - not surprisingly, most of the festivals that are going on in New Orleans are entirely dedicated to music and these festivals do also attract the most visitors. Other reasons for concentrating on music festivals became evident during fieldwork. For example, as I am a musician myself it was more natural to talk to interlocutors about music festivals, about its organisation, performances, how to get a gig at a festival, and most certainly about the factor of tourism, and other kinds of influences. Since my research interest is generally about New Orleans' most commodified good (music) it was a quick step from talking about music in general to talking about music festivals. The music related forms of commodification and its arising issues as described in the prior chapter are also closely related to music festivals which are sometimes subject to negative commodification. Furthermore, the access to music festivals was considerably easier (for me) than to events dedicated to other sectors of the cultural economy.

Having spent my time in New Orleans during the months of the so called "festival season" in 2012 and 2013 I participated at lots of music festivals but also at a number of dedicated food events. The events called Freret Street Festival, Old Algiers River Fest, Wednesday at the Square, or the Jazz in the Park in Treme are defined as neighbourhood festivals (small-size) as they are organised by community based organisations, local non-profit organisations, and private clubs or initiatives. The focus of these festivals is mainly on supporting local musicians and bands, visual artists, promoting traditionally prepared food, and calling for the active (help with organisation and preparation) and passive (visit and consumption) participation of neighbourhood residents. Such festivals last for around one to a maximum of two days and are also seen as an expression of neighbourhood identity. Jazz in the Park takes place on a series of Thursdays in May and June and actually has a duration of around six days. Visitors are expected to purchase and consume locally produced art, food, festival t-shirts, souvenirs, or donate time (for preparation) and money (for other community projects in the area). Such events are considered as 'festivals by neighbourhood residents for neighbourhood residents' and are not drawing on tourists.

Generally, they are hardly promoted outside of the neighbourhood, you might see information flyers at supermarkets, any kind of stores, bars, hear an announcement on radio WWOZ, or find articles when flicking through local newspapers or journals - but you might not get information in travel magazines, on advertisement or bill-board promotions that are typically consulted by tourists.

I also visited some small to mid-size festivals which are specifically directed at tourists such as the Final Four Festival on the Riverside in the French Quarter. In March 2012 the final of the national college basketball league was staged over a weekend - and in New Orleans also sports event are celebrated with festivals. All the festivals that are organised in the French Quarter are mostly catered to tourists and supported by the tourism industry with sponsoring and marketing. Mainly because tourists do spend most of their time in and around the French Quarter. The same concept was applied to the weekend when the Super Bowl - the NFL Final - was played in New Orleans in February 2013. Furthermore, festivals dedicated to other categories such as food are also organised in the French Quarter, for example, the annual Roadfood Festival happening at the French Market, a zone which is generally heavily consulted by tourists in the search of local food. Occasionally, two festivals are organised at the same time in vicinity in the French Quarter - i.e. the Zydeco - Cajun Festival is staged at the Old Mint and the Creole Tomato Festival is staged right next to it along the French Market. Situations like these do happen when a dedicated music festival did not manage to have a license for vending food and alcohol or when both festivals collaborate in order to grow (in terms of visitors).

Among many others I also visited the popular Bayou Boogaloo Festival which is staged in Mid City right on the bayou. It can be classified as a mid-size festival with around 25.000 visitors in 2012 but is locally still more perceived as a neighbourhood event. Almost all of the artists, food vendors, businesses, and information stands of the various initiatives, NPO's, and neighbourhood improvement organisations are from the Mid City area. Organised by the Mothership Foundation and the Positive Vibrations Foundation, two local NPO's, it started as a way for recovery of the badly damaged area due to Katrina. It was initially a form to say thank you to the many volunteers who helped to rebuild houses and infrastructure, to revitalise the neighbourhood in general, connect neighbours, businesses, and to create an opportunity to celebrate the artistic and musical heritage of the bayou area. This "grassroots community festival" was rated as the "Best Neighbourhood Festival" by the Offbeat magazine in 2010 and promotes its approach to environmental and economical sustainability. The economical benefit

of the festival is then invested into social projects (such as habitat-building, playgrounds, supporting community initiatives, etc.) in collaboration with neighbourhood improvement associations.

Concerning the major festivals I had the chance to volunteer in 2012 and 2013 for two days at the Jazz and Heritage Festival, which is one of the few festivals charging entrance fees. When friends in New Orleans told me that young people do usually not buy their tickets for Jazz Fest but try to get a slot for volunteering I instantly started to look out for such highly wanted volunteering tickets. For my ethnography nothing better could have happened as experiencing the town's most famous festival as the locals do - for free! I will elaborate more on my volunteering activity in the dedicated section about the Jazz Fest below.

Together with the French Quarter Fest, the Essence Fest, and the Voodoo Experience Festival these events can be described as large scale festivals drawing on the attendance of "out-of-towners", national and international visitors. The festivals are organised thanks to big sponsors such as Shell, Chevron, Budweiser, Miller, Acura, etc., big marketing budgets, internationally famous musicians and bands, and are lasting for several days or weeks. The focus is also on promoting local music genres, traditional dishes and locally produced art. Generally, such events are geared more towards the consumption by tourists and visitors that do appreciate the offered products as something not daily consumable.

#### **4.1. Festivals and events in New Orleans**

Apart of the two major music festivals, the Jazz and Heritage Festival as well as the French Quarter Festival will be described in the following sections, New Orleans is offering a vast number of festivals focused on music, food, and the arts. Although I have been talking to interlocutors and musicians about the many small festivals the conversations often resulted in pro's and con's concerning the major events because they do have the most significant impact on the city.

Also smaller festivals do face similar issues as the big ones when locals complain about tourists discovering the little neighbourhoods and crowding those local events or when musicians complain about low financial compensation. For example, an incident came up with Chuck Perkins who was invited to perform at Bayou Boogaloo festival just one week before the event because another band cancelled its gig. It was just another visit at his Café Istanbul, where I

could always find Chuck preparing his bar for gigs or working in his improvised office, when I witnessed him calling musician colleagues of his band "The Voices of the Big Easy" trying to convince them to perform with him at the festival. Chuck faced difficulties in motivating five other band members to play for the standard union rate of US\$ 106 per gig per musician. At the end he succeeded to give a great live show at the festival but the musicians were not pleased with their compensation.

Producing a neighbourhood festival is not a simple task, particularly if big sponsors, the tourism industry, business associations, or a festival producing organisation is not one of the major drivers. When I talked to Toni Rice of the NOMCTN I realised that in a neighbourhood there can be severe power struggles when it comes to events. NOMCTN is the cultural tourism branch of NOTMC and focused on Treme regarding the 200 year celebration of the state of Louisiana. Toni, the city, and the tourism industry in general are interested in marketing Treme more for tourism activities but all of them are aware of the fact that the neighbourhood is not well prepared for hosting a big tourism event. The anniversary festival should have started a new annual festival in Treme but due to dissonance among the many loosely organised neighbourhood groups it might remain a single edition:

*"I started the festival as an attempt for touristically marketing Treme - but the power struggles in the neighborhood ... I envisioned the festival for celebrating the 200 years but it could be for every year in the neighborhood organized by themselves - but I doubt it's gonna happen because they would have to come together as a neighborhood. It does not fall under our mission to organize it every year. We can work and fund the event - but not annually. We don't do events usually - but this falls under a tourism event because of the 200 year celebration of the state of Louisiana" (interview 40).*

When I arrived at the Treme topic during the interview with Marci I was informed that even her organisation tried to start a festival and music events series in the black neighbourhood north of the French Quarter. Unfortunately, she was exposed to the same non collaborative situation as Toni and also urges the importance of finding accord among the neighbourhood groups:

*Marci: "Treme needs to get to act together in terms of having a unified neighborhood organization that's promoted. Some years ago I had the idea of doing some Christmas concerts at the church there. When we decided to do it and Mark Romig agreed to fund it, I went up to the neighborhood groups and said: if we start with these concerts can you organize guides for walking tours and give people opportunities to experience the neighborhood? But they were so*

*disorganized, the only option they gave me was the Treme coffee house. There should be tours about famous musicians but people there are not interested in doing anything. No group is organized enough to volunteer, pay tours, plan anything, even self-guided walking tours, it's not that hard, it is a small neighborhood. The French Quarter has everything - the Friends of the Cabildo do the walking tours, ... Treme is a living neighborhood, it does not have a lot of commercial stuff in, ... What does Toni of the Multicultural network say?*

*Bernhard: it is very hard ... many different organizations fighting for stakes ...*

*Marci: the Multicultural network came to us and asked us to help to plan their festival - we said yes of course, but then they cancelled every meeting and we could never help them. Toni is a tourism person, she is not a festival producer. This is where things get mixed up. I would go to Scott Aiges - it is his neighborhood and he would like to do it - his organization looks so good in the community!" (interview 51).*

But Scott at the Jazz and Heritage Foundation responded exactly in the way I expected when I asked him about Treme and the initiative of putting on an event that is tourism related. The foundation he works for is already organising two annual music festivals in Treme, the Rhythm and Dance festival at Congo Square and the Creole Gumbo festival, additionally the programme is nowadays focused on finishing the music, culture, and education centre. The foundation's strategy is to slowly create a tourism entrance gate to Treme through the newly constructed centre, which is probably a good start to establish new business ideas in Treme that are also tourism related.

*Scott: "there is the Treme 200 fest, Toni Rice, they have this initiative, promoting the neighborhood and people going there. There is not a tremendous amount of activity, the Backstreet Cultural and the African American museum, not a lot effort for that. We are doing what we can - we created the Treme Creole Gumbo Festival, it's moving to Armstrong Park, we are about to spend eight million dollars for converting the building next to us in a education and community center, with a 200 seat auditorium, seven class rooms, we will be the home for our music school, the heritage school of music, and it will also be open to the community as a community center for educational and cultural programming, we believe that by investing money in that building which is on the gateway to Treme, we create more foot traffic into that neighborhood, more visitors going into Treme, this will have an economic benefit, with more visitors there will come hopefully more cafes, art galleries, B&Bs, we hope that this will have an economical development aspect in the Treme.*

*Bernhard: so this is directly towards the development of Treme!*



*Scott: we got a grant from Art Place, they specifically fund projects that use the arts as a way to stimulate development in a specific area - they believe that this project will have a beneficial impact on the neighborhood and promote growth in the neighborhood with the art as the tool! We are spending a lot of money so we agree" (interview 35).*

Due to the interviews, visits for participant observation at various festivals, and participation of public NOTMC meetings I understood the many different objectives and reasons that are behind the numerous events. Especially when certain festivals with a particular topic are organised by business associations, let's say a group of art gallery owners in the French Quarter is creating an event that is focused on visual art, the situation can be explained as Asante from the Cultural Economy Initiative does: *"there are people who want to take advantage of tourism - so a lot of the festivals are usually trying to capture tourists, they wanna capitalize when there are conventions in town - a lot of festivals have popped up in order to attract tourists when they are in town for another reason!" (interview 37).* Business tourists who are in New Orleans for conferences and meetings of scientific or corporate associations are often targeted by certain festivals and events where visitors are expected to purchase goods. Furthermore, Asante explains that most of the small festivals are locally oriented and that most of the visitors are actually from the area. However, there are neighbourhood festivals that are nevertheless marketed by the tourism industry. The often undesired tourism promotion is applied to a certain festival when it is going on in a touristically seen low visitor month. In the following statement Asante mentions the example of the Po-Boy festival which is staged in November - since November is not a big travel month in the US the tourism marketing machine starts its engines to promote events such as the Po-Boy fest in order to fill empty hotel beds.

*"But the truth is, the vast majority of small festivals is mostly locally dominated. All of the festivals except the very large ones are locally oriented. However, the NOCVB and the NOTMC do advertise festivals in a variety of neighborhoods because they recognize the draw of tourists a neighborhood festival has, like to Po-boy festival in November on Oak Street, which was a grass-root home-grown festival based around a sandwich - and tourists come now! Tourism certainly has a growth effect on festivals, that's for sure, but it is always good? I'd say most of the time it is, I haven't had anyone really complaining" (interview 37).*

## 4.2. The festival culture of New Orleans

*"New Orleans has more festivals than weekend days in a year"* is an often cited saying by the tourism and cultural economy sector emphasising that in New Orleans music, food, and art festivals are also happening during the week and that sometimes two or three festivals are organised on the same weekend. When going through the list of all the 126 listed festivals that took place in 2012 it seems like that in New Orleans festivals would be organised for almost any reason. The Cultural Economy Snapshot 2012 subdivides the many festivals and events into eight different categories in order to have a better overlook of the types of events that are going on in the city. The study counts festivals based on the main dominant characteristic such as music, culinary, cultural and ethnic, film, visual arts, etc. Generally, all of the festivals and events do not just feature one category but cover a combination of aspects, the most common combination being music and food. No music festival could be successful without the offer of local food stands, selling delicacy dishes such as char grilled oysters or home-made everyday plates like sausage, rice, and beans; and no arts festival could get a smooth atmosphere without musical live performances. For example, the primary purpose of Jazz Fest is music though it features food and visual art in addition; the annual Po-Boy preservation festival features music and visual art vendors although its main focus is the multitude of food vendors serving the city's most famous sandwich filled with any kind of fried seafood, and is thus categorised as a culinary festival.

Since around the 1970s big music festivals have become urban traditional events in New Orleans. Today's longest lasting music festival, the Jazz and Heritage Festival, has started its operations in 1969 (still in another version, but was converted to today's festival a year later). The city's biggest music festival (in terms of visitors), the French Quarter Festival, had its beginnings in 1983. The Essence Fest featuring Afro-American musicians around independence day is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2014 (first produced in 1995). Since 1999 the Voodoo Experience festival is staging musicians around Halloween. With time passing, these distinctive music festivals continuously embraced other local cultural assets which are attractive additional features for visitors, particularly from the food and art sector. Not only the big festivals mentioned above but also smaller festivals (always in terms of visitor attendance) dedicated to other categories than music, food, and art (as shown in Figure 11) have started to take on an annual character especially since the substantial rise of tourism in the 1990s - and even more in the aftermath of Katrina in 2005 when the city has started to give more attention to the development of the cultural economy sector. The local festival economy has rebounded

impressively from Katrina and continued to grow since. As stated by the CEI Snapshot 54% of the 126 surveyed festivals have been established since 2005 and 58% of them have an age of less than ten years.

*"It's a festival culture!"* (interview 25) says Shana Walton, professor of linguistic anthropology at Nicholls University in Louisiana. She has conducted research about the Jazz Festival in close collaboration with Helen Regis from LSU and is personally involved in school festivals due to the passionate engagement of her daughter. During the interview in her kitchen Shana primarily talked about the many small festivals that are organised by schools and churches, which are mainly done for raising dollars. These school and church-based events are not included in the CEI statistics. They hardly contribute financially to the cultural economy industry in New Orleans, so the mayor's office does not raise enough interest in counting such events. Concerning cultural activities in New Orleans such small festivals are very relevant and typical:

*"This is only in New Orleans - not in any other part of the US. [...] ... on the state festival calendar and the city festival calendar there are not all the festivals - because they cannot catch all these little neighborhood, private and public school and church festivals!! They have music, bands, local foods!"* (interview 25).

The mentioned festivals and events, organised by church-based schools, are not directed to tourism at all but to the school and neighbourhood community. While music is entertaining the participants, the dollars are raised with bingo games, quizzes, auctions, and with selling home-made dishes:

*"The most typical New Orleans festival: Holy Name of Jesus School Spring Festival - is the best and biggest festival! People are making their favorite home-made dish a month before the festival - they would freeze whatever traditional recipe they make - and sell it frozen to the people coming! This made a fortune! People all around the neighborhood come and buy the home-made dishes! This is down at the nuts and bones of where the culture lives, right, that's how something gets passed along - you gotta cook it for the school festival, they gonna buy it, take it home, and eat it!! The mechanism for doing this is a festival!"* (interview 25).

What in other cities and states would be considered a party or gathering, in New Orleans and Louisiana it is called a festival, and this is *"connected to the way in which the marketing gets structured - it's the substrate ... it's the substrate on which tourism is building"* (interview 25).

Reid Wick interprets the case on a similar level and is in favour of using the term *festival* more on a marketing basis:

*"We could say that all of the American music originated here... but it is Austin saying that we are the live music capital of the world, Nashville is the Music City of the USA, Seattle is the City of Music, so one of the things that is missing is that we could easily say that New Orleans is the Festival Capital ... because every weekend in New Orleans or the state there is multiple festivals going on at the same time! You have very big festivals, medium size festivals and neighborhood festivals and some of them going on at the same time. So I think festivals are very indicative of what we are"* (interview 26).

In fact, festivals do attract a lot of (especially) American visitors, particularly from neighbouring states. The tourism industry is aware of its tourism impact and is heavily marketing the single festivals: *"we market a calendar of what is going on in New Orleans so that visitors can plan ahead - festivals are huge in the marketing"* (interview 41), says Amy Reimer who is sitting on the various tourism marketing boards of NOTMC, NOCVB, the Sports Foundation, New Orleans Wine and Food Experience, and the Greater New Orleans Hotel Association.

Although the big music festivals are primarily catered to tourism and the distribution of participants from New Orleans and outside is about 50/50 the events are still organised for satisfying the local cultural habits. Toni Rice, who is active in the tourism industry and also slowly entering into the festival production sector, makes clear that even without tourists the festivals would go on:

*Toni: "Let me tell you why this is an interesting question! WE LOVE our culture, food, music, festivals, parades - WE GO! We could have a festival and if nobody from out of town came - we would still go! French Quarter Fest - it is the 28th year - it started as a local festival and everybody goes to French Quarter Fest! If not one single tourist went we would all go, it's the same with music, food, second lines, Mardi Gras - we still go! We don't do any of this for people from outside of New Orleans - we do it anyway!"*

*Bernhard: But if there were no tourists - would you say that you could satisfy all the restaurants and musicians?"*

*Toni: No, we could not. There would be just less. But it would not go to zero. We would still do all the things! Yes, the tourism component is extremely important and beneficial, but there is a love of live here, so going to a festival is natural - this is what we are supposed to do - it's nothing out of the ordinary or anything special - it's just what we do!"* (interview 26).

Festivals are part of life in New Orleans, which also explains the high value of representativeness of festivals for the living cultural heritage in New Orleans, as already described in the chapter about the case study. In the present chapter I focus on existing cultural and social issues for residential visitors and performing artists due to the continuous commodification of festivals by tourism. I concentrate on the two biggest festivals which are promoting locally produced music, food, and art. The various issues range from the festivals' carrying capacity, leading to a decrease of local festival goers and an increase of outside visitors, to the matter of low financial compensation for local performing artists. Additionally, New Orleans residents increasingly have the opinion that local music and arts are less offered at the Jazz and Heritage Festival. Moreover, due to ever more expensive tickets, merchandise and food inside the fairgrounds, local visitors feel unwelcome because tourists are considered to consume more and hence bring more economic profit. On the other side, the Jazz and Heritage Foundation regards its Jazz Fest as a million dollar fund-raising event and invests the revenues in cultural education programmes and small festivals throughout the year. Smaller festivals are often organised around big conferences and meetings. They are consulted by business tourists to the city. This raises doubts about the ulterior motive of certain festivals in New Orleans. So-called neighbourhood festivals, organised by neighbourhood associations and culturally active groups, celebrate the pride of their urban community and its social as well as cultural characteristics including music, food, visual art, and the New Orleans way of life. Its organisers and visitors are hoping that the small festivals do not get promoted and then discovered by out of town visitors.

In the following I will give some more details about general festival data in terms of visitor attendance, contribution to the cultural economy, and festival diversity in terms of cultural sectors.

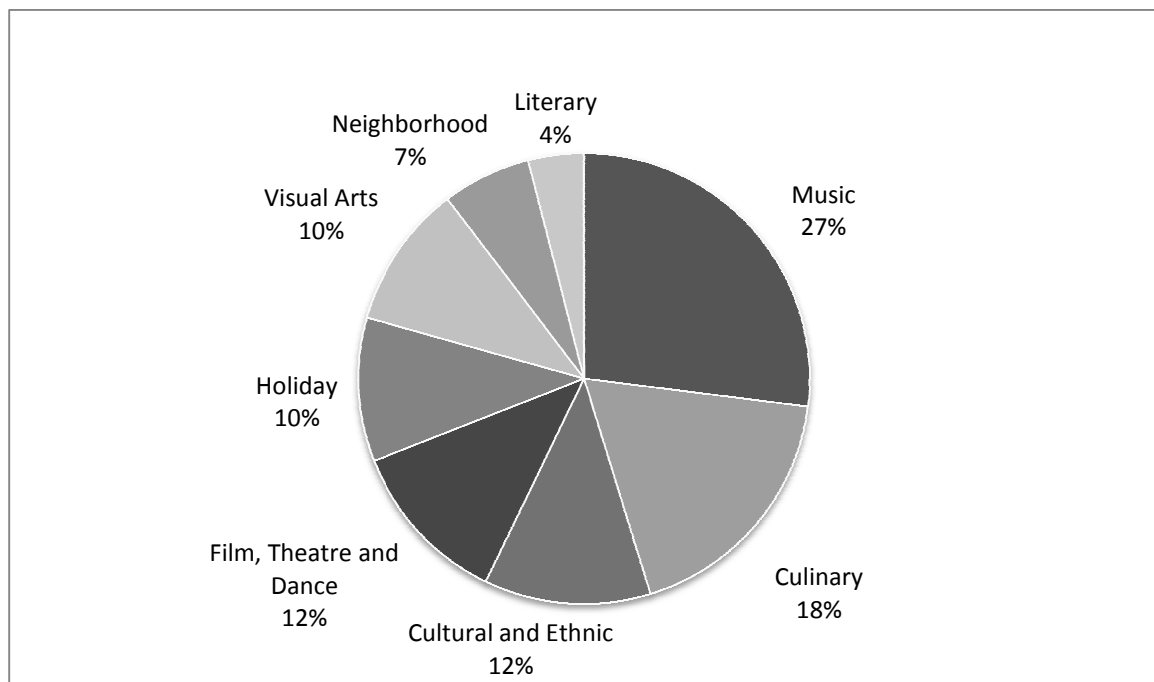
### **The variety of festivals in New Orleans**

Whether the festival is called Oyster Jubilee, International Beer Festival, Fête Francaise, Fashion Week, Jammin' on Julia, Film-o-Rama, Chaz Fest, Dirty Linen Night, Hell Yes Fest, or Folk Magic Festival, all of them are promoting local products of the culture and creative arts sector. The festivals and events are mainly realised by local neighbourhood or commercial associations, business groups, cultural foundations, and other kinds of groups of producers, entrepreneur, and artist groups with similar interests. The public sector, as usual in the USA, is hardly involved in organising or sponsoring such events. What all festivals and events in New Orleans generally

do have in common is the massive support by lots of volunteers, without which any of the events could take place in such dimensions.

In the pie chart below the categorical break down of the festivals and events is presented, showing the eight different categories in New Orleans as defined by the Cultural Economy Initiative in its Snapshot report of 2012.

Figure 11: Festivals and Events by Type, 2012



Source: CEI Snapshot 2012

Concerning festival attendance there has been a general increase at major events from 2009 to 2012 as stated in the Snapshot. Ever more people are attending big music events, markets, mid-size festivals like the Bayou Boogaloo, and smaller neighbourhood festivals (such as the Freret Street fest) every year. At big festivals tourists outnumber local visitors - in 2012 the estimated percentage of tourists enjoying the French Quarter Festival was officially at 51%.<sup>76</sup>

The big numbers of tourists at the festivals do result in a general high economic impact for the city. Out-of-town visitors spend most of their money on lodging, restaurants, shopping, other entertainment activities, and are also willing to attend festivals with entrance fees on more days.

<sup>76</sup> Source: University of New Orleans Hospitality Research Study for French Quarter Festival 2004-2012.

Regarding the French Quarter Festival, the overall economic impact of the festival was calculated with US\$ 259.5 million, resulting in a total of US\$ 18.2 million generated tax dollars for the city.<sup>77</sup>

Table 6: Major Event Attendance 2009-2012

Major Event Attendance	2009	2010	2011	2012
French Quarter Festival	441,000	512,000	533,000	574,000
Essence Festival	428,000	405,000	419,000	413,400
Bayou Boogaloo	20,000	23,000	27,000	25,000

Source: CEI Snapshot 2012

Although small neighbourhood festivals and events do attract primarily local attendees they continuously enter in the statistics of the growing economic impact on the city. They are mainly visited by locals such festivals are not promoted on large scale and are organised in order to bring residents of the neighbourhood together to strengthen the micro local economy. Entry to these festivals is predominantly free, causing a high consumption level of local goods such as food, drinks, artisan products, music records, merchandise articles, and others. The growth of smaller festivals in recent years is actually outbalancing the decreasing performance of big festivals (due to economic downturns) which depend on tourism. Therefore, the total economic impact of all festivals and events shows a relatively steady improvement of around three per cent as stated in the Snapshot. Rather difficult economic circumstances have affected tourist event attendees, but local events are thriving.

Apart of being economically important for local entrepreneurs and businesses the small festivals can actually serve as an incubator also for performers and visual artists, allowing them to earn some income, get stage experience, and reputation. Neighbourhood festivals are used to gain access to professional venues such as clubs and galleries. Musicians and artists benefit from constant exposure to new audiences and are enhancing their awareness in the public. Concerning the combination of festivals and food the CEI Snapshot comes to the result that 61% of all events and festivals listed, had ten or more food vendors. These are usually local restaurants, caterers, or mobile food vendors such as the popular "food trucks." The report further states that 100% of surveyed events would use exclusively local food suppliers. From my own research I realised that at some festivals local food vendors are particularly supported by

<sup>77</sup> Source: University of New Orleans Hospitality Research Study for French Quarter Festival 2004-2012.

the festival organisation, i.e., only restaurants which are situated inside the French Quarter can apply for a food vendor stand during the French Quarter Festival. For the Jazz and Heritage Festival only restaurants from New Orleans and Louisiana can participate with stands because the festival generally promotes the music and culinary heritage of the whole state. Hence, festival work most likely represents a significant portion of culinary economic activity for local vendors.

As stated in the CEI Snapshot "local festivals mean local expenditures". This means that economic impact from festivals is not only based on hotels and tourist dollars but also from locally buying and renting festival equipment for the many different activities. The report furthermore stresses that most of the mid to small scale events and festivals are "*created by locals for locals*" and that the grassroot festivals enhance the culture and "*bring our neighborhoods and population together.*" When putting the visitors of all listed festivals together it is estimated that the relation between local and non-local visitors is at 50% each, of course this relation changes significantly if we are talking about the French Quarter Fest or the Champagne Stroll on Magazine Street. But the Snapshot emphasises that all the festivals do represent a crucial part of both the tourism and cultural economies of New Orleans.

Festivals do have a significant impact on the number of gigs not only taking place at the festivals themselves but in the bars of the tourist zones and around the city. Festivals and special events increase performance opportunities for musicians. This has a large impact on the average number of gigs that are not related to a distinctive festival. Festivals taking place in the city tend to increase gigs on week days and any given day overall, the Snapshot shows that there are 47% more gigs on average on a festival day as opposed to a day without a festival.

I interviewed the authors of the CEI snapshot and recognised that Alison and Asante do face some difficulties with the cultural integrity of the festivals concerning the statistics in the report. The culturally overarching character of many events makes it difficult to categorise them, additionally the impact of big festivals on the music genre in general and its resulting high number of gigs tends to influence also the conscience about its continuous commodification:

*Asante: " ... and it's New Orleans festivals, that means it's also food and art festivals at the same time.*

*Alison: there are some that are more focused on something than others - but it's tough to categorize it. Sometimes music festivals are going on at the same time as festivals with food*



*focus - Creole Tomato Festival or Oyster Fest! There is some sort of complex relationship between tourism festivals and what goes on around the festival. Big festivals surely do influence the work available for local musicians - there is a meme out there that music has been sold out as a product so that it is not authentic anymore - a meme is an idea that has been repeated a lot, whether it's a fact or not. In this case the meme would be - I hear a lot that there is not enough authentic jazz out there in New Orleans but around 70% of musicians claim that they would be playing jazz!" (interview 37).*

As a European researcher in the US I quickly realised that not even one of the festivals I was informed about would be organised by a public body. Principally, festivals are all based on a private initiative, be it a business, foundation, association, non-profit organisation, or similar cultural group and club. For the author and director of cultural documentaries Eric Lolis Elie, this can be seen as a lost opportunity for the public entities regarding their potential contribution to "keep the culture going" when organising and sponsoring cultural events and festivals:

*Bernhard: "when you look at festivals, there is no festival which is organized by the city.*

*Eric: true, and what happens is that it is very different to the conception of Europe, where the Government takes an active involvement in maintaining the culture - in America it's becoming worse in the sense that the Government should privatize everything and cease to exist. And that's become by partisans and this idea that they believe that the Government should not get involved with this. It's a lost opportunity" (interview 32).*

There is only one event I came about which was actually initiated by the city Government some years ago. Scott Aiges, who is in charge of setting up the Jazz and Heritage Festival, as well as other festivals and programmes of the foundation since 2006, talked to me about the only public music festival I was informed about. Scott used to work for the predecessor of the actual Cultural Economy Initiative in the Mayor's Office as Director of Music Business Development: *"I organized an annual music festival - MO Fest (standing for Mayor's Office), a show case for New Orleans talents that was done during the two weekends of Jazz Fest, for musicians that did not get a gig at Jazz Fest, a very small festival - organized and financed by the city" (interview 35).*

Don Marshall, the executive director of the Jazz & Heritage Foundation, would also like to see more engagement of the city's public bodies regarding the financial or organisational support. Particularly, in New Orleans it would not represent such a big effort to fund a festival because the city is full of artistic initiatives and musicians that make it easier to stage a cultural event:

*"Luckily we have a rich culture - I mean if you go to Dallas with their rodeos and cowboys ... which is fine but we have so many products to draw visitors here, you could come any weekend and find music, food, another festival - it's sort of this organic type of environment that is perfect for tourism! We got a beautiful French Quarter to walk around and you can enjoy yourself easily. The city wants to have an impact but they never funded - there is never any funding ... there is this dynamic guy named Scott Hutchison at the Cultural Economy Initiative but there is no money allocated! They try to make things happen without money! They are positive and our mayor is an actor, a musician, he likes to hop up on stage at festivals, talented and creative - but do you give money to the arts or to the police department? While they can verbalize their support and help with little laws ... but they are not able to designate the money that's needed to do any of this!" (interview 20).*

It is not only the missing funding that is criticised by Don but also the missing facilitation for organising additional festivals and events which need to follow strict laws and regulations, making it hard to be financially successful with a festival (i.e. food and alcohol licenses, duration of events in public space, security and insurance costs, etc.). Furthermore, the preferred allocation of public money to the New Orleans Police Department instead of supporting cultural initiatives is a topic that was occasionally mentioned between the lines during interviews.

### **4.3. Tourism related influences on festivals**

*"Tourism helps to fuel the continuation of the culture, especially for music and festivals - it helps to fund them! [...] tourism helps to keep the culture alive in a capitalist and consumption society - to do things it takes financial resources and tourism is obviously helping!" (interview 43).*

The upper statement is taken from an interview with a tourism marketing consultant who works externally for NOTMC. Cleveland Spears, a young and dynamic boss of his own marketing agency, organises and promotes events for NOTMC. Includes the strategic planning for marketing of niche and multicultural products in New Orleans for the state of Louisiana. Certainly, in his eyes growing tourism consumption of cultural products such as festivals do positively influence the city because it economically sustains local businesses. With the following examples of tourism related issues at festivals I describe some points which the tourism industry has been neglecting to reflect about. The overall capitalistic approach of festival organisers is not always in favour of musicians and local visitors as argued on the next pages.

#### 4.3.1. The case of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

*"Jazz Fest is local though but it has so many different aspects that come from different places. At Jazz Fest music comes from all over!" (interview 42).*

Don Marshall welcomed me in a big meeting room of the foundation's main office on Rampart Street, two weeks after the festival. At the beginning of our talk he introduced me into "the making of" the foundation, the big festival, the small festivals, and the many programmes the foundation is carrying out year round:

*Don: "before the Jazz and Heritage Festival was started in 1970 there were attempts to create a jazz festival to have world renown performers but it never worked properly. During the late 1960s a group of business people had been gathering to figure out how to promote the city and recognize its culture, they decided to bring in George Wein, who was the founder of the New Port Folk Festival which was an earlier festival model. He created the idea of these festivals. City leaders invited him about creating a jazz festival - he really liked the idea of the heritage component where you would have in addition to the music sort of an outdoor event with food-booth and vendors selling unique New Orleans and Louisiana cuisine - folk artists demonstrating, celebrated indigenous culture like Mardi Gras Indians! They started off with a model of night-time concerts in the Municipal Auditorium and in the park, there was this big free festival - in the first year there was hardly anyone there, nobody knew about it, they say that there were more musicians on stage than in the audience. But they continued to move forward - it was held in Congo Square in 1970 and 71 - it started to grow and in 1972 they moved it out to the Race-track Fairgrounds!*

*Bernhard: the initial reason was already tourism?*

*Don: right, tourism - an early reason was to build tourism in New Orleans. What is unique about the festival and the foundation: the organization was set up as a non-profit organization - so basically you have a mission, the mission statements have changed over the years but the current one is about promoting and supporting the music culture. With the non-profit - if you do generate excess revenues you can spend them by fulfilling a mission. This organization, although it had financially its ups and downs, is in good financial shape and over the years developed numerous programs to help benefit the community. In my research I have not been able to find another non-profit organization that makes money doing their main thing which is the festival - we make money now and we take it and reinvest it - we give away 700.000 dollars to other artists, organizations, film-makers, exhibitions, festivals. We have four other festivals that are free where we are employing the musicians, we promote the blues culture and the cajun-*

*zydeco... we have the blues festival, cajun-zydeco festival, Congo-Square Rhythms festival and the Treme festival!"* (interview 20).

Mahalia Jackson, Louis Armstrong, and Ella Fitzgerald were the biggest stars at the first editions of Jazz Fest, but only a few people knew about the festival at the beginnings. In 2012, the Jazz and Heritage Festival attracted around 460.000 visitors, the annual budget for producing the festival is US\$ 24 million. There are seven festival days distributed over two weekends. Roughly 1.000 musicians are playing with 80 bands on ten stages and performance tents, next to enjoying live music you can listen to interviews with famous musicians. Stands inform about the activities of the foundation. A tent where CDs of the performers and festival compilations can be purchased is on the festival grounds. The festival itself is actually produced by Festival Productions Inc. (Quint Davis) and not by the foundation directly. Main expenses of the festival are the salaries for internationally famous bands, stage and sound equipment, advertising, logistics, and security personnel.

Among the bands and musicians there are many local artists performing jazz, blues, gospel, and folk music. But what draws the masses of visitors are American and international performers who are enjoying global popularity such as Bruce Springsteen, Bon Jovi, Eric Clapton, Foo Fighters, Arcade Fire, Christina Aguilera etc. playing mainly pop and rock music. The Jazz and Heritage Festival is the only occasion where the Jazz and Heritage Foundation makes dollars for financing other small festivals and cultural programmes: *"this festival is the only profitable, this is where the revenue for all the other activities comes from, all the other festivals are not profitable - only Jazz Fest is our annual fundraising event"* (interview 35).

The four festivals which are free of charge to visitors are the following:

- Crescent City Blues and BBQ Festival, established in 2006, it is staged in October and focuses on blues and R'n'B music;
- Congo Square Rhythms and Dance Festival celebrating the African diaspora since 2008, showcasing traditional music of Africa, hosting an arts market and the Class Got Brass competition in March;
- Louisiana Cajun-Zydeco Festival organised in June at the Old Mint, established in 2007 it showcases traditional folk music from Southern Louisiana;

- and finally the Treme Creole Gumbo Festival which was first presented in November 2008, giving the stage to New Orleans brass and jazz bands, and focusing on the traditional creole dish: gumbo.

*"We produce those festivals as a non-profit organization primarily to create more employment for our musicians - we create employment opportunities and we generate tourism. We bring a lot of tourists into the city"* (interview 35), says Scott Aiges, the foundation's programme manager. With the mentioned festivals, which are still in phase of growing popularity and visitors, the foundation is partly fulfilling its mission.<sup>78</sup> The foundation's mission for Jazz Fest though is to increase the number of tourists in order to redistribute the generated dollars from the festival to local musicians at the programmes' activities:

*"As an event Jazz Fest is very much geared towards maximizing its audience and attracting the largest number of people possible - it was like this for the last 25 years. The festival has its goal - maximizing its audience since the beginning - but it's also about promoting our local culture. Jazz Fest has found a formula that does that with a lot of help of big international headliners, Bob Dylan, Bon Jovi, Pearl Jam, there is just no denying of the fact that there is a lot of people coming to the festival who want to hear Bon Jovi, who never would come to hear Mardi Gras Indians or Brass Bands, but once they get there, they discover those things"* (interview 35).

### **Commercialisation issues of the Jazz & Heritage Festival**

During my research musicians, residents and interlocutors criticised exactly the above stated point, that the city's most popular festival is catering too much to tourism and that it is also continuously satisfying predominantly tourist needs:

*"I've been in debates with the Jazz and Heritage Foundation every year, why would a festival with the name New Orleans Jazz and Heritage feature all these people that are not related to jazz nor to New Orleans heritage ... and the logo is a second line. The festival is in many ways generic - they would tell you we hire all these local bands etc. etc., a very small percentage goes to the local performers, they spend all the entertainment budget on big names to get more and more people there, that having less and less to do with the city"* (interview 32).

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<sup>78</sup> Official mission of the Jazz and Heritage Foundation: "To promote, preserve, perpetuate and encourage the music, arts, culture and heritage of communities in Louisiana through festivals, programs and other cultural, educational, civic and economic activities." Source: <http://www.jazzandheritage.org/about-us>, April 2014.

Scott is often confronted with this criticism and is certainly aware that it is creating dissatisfaction for local artists and some confusion with the foundation's mission. Although he admits the issues with the festival's commercialisation he highlights the fact that commerce brings dollars for sustaining the programme activities and for promoting the local culture:

*"Jazz Fest, the big festival, reflects our mission of promoting Louisiana culture. A lot of people forget the big names like Bruce Springsteen, Foo Fighters, those are the names that get off press, that are also the ones that are responsible for thousands of people to come - but the festival is made up of 85 - 90% of local musicians, local talent is the vast majority of what's out there. The audience comes for the big pop bands, but once they are here they discover the local indigenous culture, definitely the festival is programmed with an eye towards maximizing the number of people who will come - both because the more people come, the more tickets are sold, the more money it makes, and that money then supports what we do year round - it supports our mission, it supports the cultural and the tourism economy - but it also brings more people who will be exposed to the authentic indigenous culture"* (interview 35).

The foundation is currently investing US\$ 8 million for the reconstruction of a mansion house (a former funeral home) next to the head-office on Rampart Street which will be used for the social and cultural programme activities. The "George and Joyce Wein Jazz and Heritage Center" will host the foundation's educational and community space for performances, events, competitions, and a music education school. In order to fund the new building the foundation needs to produce a profitable festival which does not happen without consequences:

*"The Jazz Fest is not what it used to be - it's not all about jazz and heritage, it's a commercial entity! It changed to bring in more people and dollars as a profit! The Jazz and Heritage foundation is a non-profit entity, the Jazz and Heritage festival is a for-profit entity - it's a festival that they put on to help to make money for their different programs and projects and for the new building they wanna construct next door to them!"* (interview 16).

The ongoing commercialisation and capitalisation of the city's longest festival bear also its traces on the dissatisfaction of local musicians who do not manage to get a slot on one of the seven festival days. If local musicians are not considered as highlights and outside bands are attracting the masses the financial benefits do leave the city with the national big acts. The result is that the money generated through the festival either goes to the tourism industry or to non local performers. Felice, a singer, songwriter, and head of her band is deeply connected with the music scene in New Orleans and suffers from recent directions the Jazz Fest is taking:

*"Festivals are private or not-for-profit organizations, mostly the money that they make really goes back to them being able to sustain themselves and pay the artist! Even the Jazz Fest being brought out by Shell ... most of us musicians and artist are extremely irritated and frustrated! Because if you are not a big big name artist you will not be making a hell out a lot of money - I've been singing on stage an hour for a 100 freaking dollars! One year Sting was there - I love Sting but... I heard he got a 100.000 dollars! There is a disproportion in regards to who benefits economically from the festivals" (interview 7).*

Felice criticises that local musicians are not equally treated as the big acts, not only concerning marketing and financial remuneration but particularly regarding general respect and the chances to get a gig at the festival. In her view, local musicians at the festival do not get respected enough in the sense that they are put into the light of being hard to commercialise:

*" ... and it gets so deep that the local musicians get passed up for national acts. The Jazz Fest used to be the Louisiana Jazz and Heritage Festival showcasing all the different music and culture from this area! But now it's getting to the point of generating dollars! The local musicians have been screwed over by Jazz Fest for YEARS! Local artists are treated like shit! The Neville Brothers did it! I don't know if it improved a lot since Shell took over but from what I understand: when I see musicians who did very good careers and get turned down for Jazz Fest, it's like: what do I have to do? [ ... ] It's always like: you gotta give us up-dated information, your band is not well-known, we don't know who you are! They ask you to make a gig, so you gotta find a bar, at Essence Fest you get paid by entrance ... you have to do all your PR, that's exhausting, and it's getting extremely competitive because of all the musicians coming from everywhere playing for free just in hopes for being discovered! It puts musicians in a lousy spot! My band is excellent - but what we have to do to get a 100 dollars each for a gig is ridiculous. But yeah... Jazz Fest is for the tourist... not for us!" (interview 7).*

Just because a band is from New Orleans does not mean that the band is automatically playing at Jazz Fest. My interlocutors mentioned several examples of bands that did not manage to enter the big festival. Shana told me about the Zebra band which was formed in 1975 in New Orleans, they published their first album in 1983 which achieved gold status (500.000 album sales). The hard-rock/metal band enjoyed state-wide *"a following crowd of the working and middle white class and has always been performing in New Orleans, but was only once invited to play at Jazz Fest"* (interview 25). Although the Zebra band has been producing seven albums so far they did not return to the festival in their home town *"because the Jazz and Heritage Fest did*

*not perceive them as a New Orleans band since they were not doing New Orleans music. It is hard to explain how you get involved in the New Orleans music culture scene - music is very raced, black and white, age class, social class" (interview 25).*

Another example is Maze & Franky Beverly, a soul band from the early 1970s. One of their most successful albums "Live in New Orleans" was recorded at a live concert in the city's Saenger Theatre in 1981, but they got *"invited in 2000 for the first time in 30 years of performance to play at Jazz Fest"* (interview 25). They have been booked by the Essence Festival as closing act for many years though.

Describing the above issues I come to a similar problem as already discussed in the chapter about the commodification of music where musicians and artists tend to underestimate themselves. In the case of festivals this underestimation concerns contractual power for gigs at festivals and regarding the call for more respectful handling of local artists. What I use to call the "festival paradox" is when festival organisers claim to sustain the local musicians but in fact they are paying very little. When I interviewed the non-profit organisation Sweet Home New Orleans in their office, situated above Cafe Istanbul in the Healing Center, this topic came up between questions about marketing of musicians and artists in the cultural sector:

*Sarah: "I am talking to Bernhard about if musicians and cultural people are content with them being marketed ... obviously the musicians are content with if they are put on a magazine front page, because why wouldn't they ask for the 50.000 they are entitled to for using the image?"*

*Sue: because they don't know about it!*

*Bernhard: are they underestimating themselves?*

*Sue: absolutely, it's a little like the Jazz Fest thing. Every other gig pays more than Jazz Fest, and people do not complain about that except they would know how much Fleetwood Mac makes. They feel pissed if they know the different contracts - they feel taken advantage of, which they are, but it also stems back into a whole brand of race, class, intersection around music and the arts and who is the face of the city vs. who benefits from the city. A lot of that is so expected that it's not even that people are satisfied or dissatisfied, it just is what it is, and it is what it has been for 300 years" (interview 45).*

Another fact that is contributing to the commercialisation of Jazz Fest and dissatisfaction of local people is the price for tickets. For the 2014 festival a single day ticket, the most basic ticket, has a cost of US\$ 70 at the door. While there are various categories for VIP tickets ranging between



US\$ 550 and US\$ 1.300 for a weekend allowing access to special tribunes in the shadow, front seats in tents, served free (chilled) beer, to some backstage areas, and parking, the foundation gives out free tickets to church congregations, schools, and Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs which are participating at the festival. Nevertheless, the average ticket price per day remains relatively high considering that the prices for food and beverages inside the fairgrounds are also above average prices of the French Quarter or other festivals. Felice and Lionel did express their disappointment about the popular festival and the general high fees for access: *"most people I know can't go - unless they get free tickets! And they do give a lot of free tickets to churches and organisations, but also the food is expensive there! You gotta have money if you go to Jazz Fest!"* (interview 7).

Felice admits the fact that tourism is certainly driving the festival culture in New Orleans but that it also stains upon the local disadvantage of restricted access due to high fees: *"tourism is absolutely essential for these components to drive - tourism is a vital necessity! ... Jazz Fest is for tourists because the locals can't afford a 60 dollar ticket!"* (interview 7). Furthermore, Lionel, he is active in the visual arts sector in the city and knows lots of musicians since he is always hanging around at Cafe Istanbul, also expressed his disaffection towards the commercial development of the festival: *"Jazz Fest ... it's too expensive now - it used to be free or 10 dollar entrance! It is more focused on tourists now - there is local food that local people could get anywhere cheaper or make it at home! There are musicians that are not representing New Orleans music! New Orleans musicians are not really highlighted!"* (interview 16).

### **Counter festivals and movements**

In reaction to the high ticket prices and to the many bands that do not get invited for playing at the Jazz and Heritage Festival a group of neighbours and musicians in the Ninth Ward started to put up a counter festival called Chazfest in 2007. It takes place during the few free festival days between the two Jazz Fest weekends. It is a one day festival with ten hours of live music, tickets have a cost of up to US\$ 20, food and alcoholic drinks can either be brought by visitors or purchased at the Truck Farm Studios where Chazfest is happening with two stages. Chazfest is a festival without any big sponsors, on their website it is only the Bywater Community Development Corporation that appears as the supporting entity. It was communicated that in

2014 the private counter festival will not take place due to time constraints of the organisers but an outlook to the event in 2015 is already given.<sup>79</sup>

Chazfest is not totally opposed to the big festival and calls itself an additional festival day to Jazz Fest. It is not claimed as a protest festival against corporate sponsored festivals. In comparison, Justice Fest can be interpreted as an event that is politically and socially directed against the general commercialisation of culture in New Orleans. Organised by 'Bywater Rising' and 'Occupy the Stage'<sup>80</sup> the event is an extension of the general protest movement of music related issues such as live music permits, shut-downs of music bars, street performance regulations, and noise ordinances. Since the occupy movement groups are very loosely organised the so-called Justice Fest is not a festival indeed but a title for activities that raise awareness about the "injustice" that musicians and artists are facing in New Orleans. Particularly, sympathising people who are living along the streets to the fairgrounds, where the Jazz and Heritage Festival takes place, are putting on Justice Fest shrines on porches and lawns in front of their houses. These shrines are stuffed with hand painted posters, signs, flags, printed and hand written information flyers emphasising that the oil industry is actually the biggest sponsor of the music and arts festival. They communicate that local musicians should not bow down to further commercialism by the tourism industry. Justice Fest is also in cooperation with the 'Art Not Oil Coalition', a UK based movement claiming to end oil industry sponsorship for the arts. Additionally, the shrines are equipped with images of locally popular musicians performing at Jazz Fest who are expressing the objection to the current methods of public administrations of formalising the cultural economy in New Orleans. Jazz Fest visitors who are passing by these shrines should be informed about the struggles that local musicians are facing.

On Sunday, May 5, 2013, the group who organised Justice Fest hosted a "second line for local music" taking place around the exit gates of the fairgrounds so that visitors of the last Jazz Fest day could be reached with their messages. At the time when the protest second line was walking through the streets I was volunteering inside the fairgrounds and could not participate to make observations. The protest second line was organised by the same group as the one that I visited two weeks earlier representing the same objective.

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<sup>79</sup> Source: <http://chazfestival.com>, April 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Occupy the Stage is a branch of Occupy NOLA (ONOLA) that is dedicated to artists and artisans.

## **The Jazz Fest beer and music experience**

When I told my interlocutors and friends that I was about to volunteer at the Jazz and Heritage Festival in 2012 all of them replied with the same saying: *"so you´all know how we are doin´ here!"* Generally, entering the Jazz Fest without a paid ticket, doing voluntary work is not as easy as it seems. Months before the festival goes on stage students are looking for opportunities to get something to do at the fairgrounds. Typically, the voluntary positions are not always the most convenient. So you could end up checking tickets at the entrance gates without an umbrella (to be covered from the burning sun). You could be standing at the race track crossings and give signals to visitors when they can pass (along the sandy tracks musicians, technicians, managers, or other staff get driven around the fairgrounds with golf cars where usually horses compete). As I did not want to sign up for doing just anything voluntarily I proposed to the festival organisation via the official website to be available for translation and interpreting activities in German, Italian, or Spanish. Unfortunately, this kind of service was not highly requested and did not qualify me to gain free access. As time was passing I used to ask many people if they would know any other chance to volunteer but most of them were looking for possibilities themselves. Finally, just two weeks before the festival should start I was introduced to Catherine at one of the many visits to Cafe Istanbul. Together with the Cafe´s sound engineer Catherine sometimes records videos and takes pictures of musicians performing on stage. She was among our first supporters for our own music project and asked me if I would want to help out voluntarily at a beer booth at Jazz Fest. She is the president of a social club and is responsible for creating a good team to work with.

Through Catherine I did not only gain access to the festival on a Saturday and Sunday but also to many locals who are active in a social club supporting its beer booth. The tickets were valid for the whole day and I was asked to work four hours selling beer and soft drinks. The Moisant Kiwanis social club of New Orleans supports programmes in the social housing, education, and health sector. The beer booth at the Jazz and Heritage Festival is the club´s biggest fund raising event in the year. Having realised another side of how Jazz Fest is using the commercial effect of its event I got some additional information on the festival´s social aspect from Don Marshall:

*Bernhard: "I volunteered at the social club Moisant Kiwanis - and realized your great concept of letting social clubs sell beer for raising money for their programs!"*

*Don: yes, it works! For example, we don´t allow organizations coming in and selling their things - part of our economic model is that we create our own t-shirts and that´s a huge revenue generator! We also create posters, the biggest economic engine of any festival in this country is*

*beer - there are groups that have been selling the beer and they received funds for that. That's been a fund-raiser for lots of these organizations.*

*Bernhard: how many organizations are there?*

*Don: about 20 or more fund-raising organizations at the Jazz Fest.*

*Bernhard: do you apply the same concept to all your festivals?*

*Don: we haven't because they have not grown that large, they are too small at this point. With our smaller festivals we are dealing with certain licensing issues and we will bring in a company that will do it with their license. For selling alcohol - it's a big deal for getting licensing sales at festivals! But for Jazz Fest because it's so big ... " (interview 20).*

Only when I returned to volunteer for the same club (at the same booth) at Jazz Fest in 2013 I realised that a share of five per cent of total sales remains with the social club, plus tips. This means that more than 30 club members selling drinks during seven festival days raise a total sum of a bit more than US\$ 20.000. Generally seen, a five per cent share from all your sales does not sound much but for the social club it is a very successful fund raising event.

The work at the booth is hard and busy, especially during the slots between noon and 16.00h on weekends, when I was asked to help out. Ice (in 20kg bags) needs to be carried out of the cooler truck and be put into big tubs where drinks get pre-cooled, drinks have to be taken out of the pre-cooler and thrown into other icy tubs which are based right behind the counter (there are about ten counters), packaging needs to be dumped, beers sold, cashed, and you need to spread good vibrations and smile! The club members cooperate like a family and are open to rotate often in order to take beer breaks. The festival visitors are in a good mood and small talks with them help to forget the busy job. Due to these small talks with beer ordering festival goers I gained a profound view of who actually goes to Jazz Fest, what the aficionados are looking for, and where the fans are coming from. Since I do not have a Louisiana accent when speaking English people asked me where I am from. Very often it was me who started the game of asking and guessing places of origin. Lots of visitors came from Louisiana and neighbouring states, and from any state in the US. International festival tourists were rather rare at the booth. Most of the visitors were up to do gags like instant arm wrestling, I used to take pictures of people with funny clothes (t-shirts with "I love Justin Bieber", pants, skirts, hats, etc.) and tattoos. Often I asked visitors what they are especially interested in listening to, what they could suggest me not to miss, from what stage they would arrive and going next to, if they would have insider hints, and where I could find the best food in my lunch break. Most of them talked about the big acts

but I was also informed about interview sessions with musicians inside the main tribune (an air-conditioned tribune where usually journalists report from horse races). Festival goers also informed me about the exact location of the cultural exchange pavilion, where the stand with the best crab-cakes would be, and about the Jazz Fest live recordings.

### **Second lines and Mardi Gras Indians at Jazz Fest**

During the days at the booth I served thousands of thirsty festival visitors, sun burnt, exhausted, sweating, but happy about the variety of activities that are offered on the fairgrounds. I was well prepared behind the counter and always had my camera and fieldwork diary ready for notes in my pockets. Every hour another Social Aid and Pleasure Club paraded by the booth along the main path of the area, so I ran out to see the grand marshals and brass bands followed by the second line. I observed the festival visitors if they were dancing and parading together with the club (as they were supposed to) or just standing beside to watch them. Some clubs were followed by a parade of beautifully masked Mardi Gras Indians in their most magnificent suits, drumming their tambourines and chanting Indian songs. I have been participating at several second lines and Mardi Gras Indian parades throughout the city but the festival's parades were without a doubt the most colourful. Brass bands with lots of musicians in uniforms, more dressed up dancers and club members than I have ever seen on the streets, and more suited Indians with masked kids of their tribes than usually appear on Super Sundays or similar parades. A bunch of security guys from the clubs and the festival organisation are creating a corridor for the parading members and Indians so they can keep on parading behind the bands. Often visitors jump between the suited and masked members in order to get the best snapshot but hinder the club to move on with the rhythm of the beat. Although everything is organised well, the bands are playing upbeat, and the grand marshals are dancing enthusiastically, I am missing a real second line feeling. Slowly I realise why I would have this strange kind of sentiment - the people following the band, the second line, are hardly existent. The more than 500 people dancing and shaking while drinking behind the brass band at second lines in the backstreets of New Orleans shrink to a following crowd of 20 to 30 club members at Jazz Fest. Festival visitors are mainly busy with taking pictures and letting the clubs pass, they do not seem to know that they are supposed to follow the band, or maybe they do not want to jump into the parade because they perceive it as a show and entertainment act.

Some weeks after the festival I had the opportunity to interview Tamara Walker, director of the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force. This task force is organised like an association of several

Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs and Second Line clubs. I talked with Tamara about the clubs that paraded at Jazz Fest and got informed about some difficulties that the clubs face with the festival organisation. Then I was able to understand better how clubs and the festival cooperate: *"... for the Jazz Fest second line clubs then get an opportunity to do at least one lap around the Jazz Fest and they are compensated for their performance. [...] The festival contacts the clubs and do contractual agreements and book the clubs throughout the festivals for the two weekends - each club gets a specific day and time for performing. Each participating club gets one performance during the festival"* (interview 53).

I was interested in who is approaching whom when it comes to the booking of clubs. I also want to know if the clubs were searching for parading opportunities or if the festival organisation would contact the various clubs. Moreover, I needed to know how the festival organisers would choose among the many clubs who are ready to perform at the festival: *"the connection is usually through a mutual individual of the cultural community that has some tie ins with the organization, clubs get contacted and people tend to contact a club that they are familiar with, the ones that are more popular among the cultural community"* (interview 53). The festival producing enterprise employs those clubs that are well-organised and experienced with preparing second line parades. The grand marshals and front row parade members are all dressed up in the same suits, the brass band has to be organised and everything has to be ready at a certain day - these tasks cannot be managed by every club on time.

*"However, the compensation varies and often times they look for the club people to participate for free and that is just not logistical at all. But some people ask the club members to do this free performance"* (interview 53), complains Tamara about the way the clubs are handled when it comes to payment. Because at the end the second line parades at Jazz Fest are fund-raising events for the clubs. The Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs are organising multiple events throughout the year for raising dollars in order to stage their annual second line parade on the streets - and Jazz Fest is one of them. What happens to local musicians, getting paid below the standard value, also happens to local social clubs.

The clubs do not feel compensated enough for their parades at the festival. One reason for this feeling is because all club members are contracted to participate: *"usually Jazz Fest requires your club to participate - the club! So whatever your membership is that is the anticipated number of attendees they are looking to perform. You have to provide them a list of membership with your*

*members name and if they hold a position, you have to hand that in" (interview 53). The festival organisation wants to make sure that as many people from the club are participating at the parade because only with a big following crowd the sense of a second line can be created. The festival visitors are rather not dancing behind the brass band, as explained above, so the many club members should give the sensation of doing a second line as they would do it on the backstreets.*

Another inconvenience for the clubs at the festival was stated to exist. This concerns the areas where club members could change clothes. Barbara Lacen-Keller, working for the city council, occupied many positions in clubs and founded the task force. In a meeting room in city hall we talked among other topics about issues of clubs at the festival area:

*"In the early 2000s we were experiencing concerns and issues at the Jazz and Heritage Festival with some conditions as it applies to the clubs. Mr. Norman Dixon Sr. was at this time coordinating the participating clubs and second lines at the Jazz Fest, there were issues with men and women changing clothes - conditions to change clothes, there was only one big tent for men and women for changing clothes, this was disrespectful!" (interview 36).*

This issue was confirmed by Tamara, saying that the situation is getting better with every year but things could still be improved:

*"I mean the club people are outdoors to get dressed, didn't have proper and adequate accommodations for performances with holding the clothes, ladies getting dressed outside, but the same applies to the male clubs when ladies of the same club were occupying the trailers. It is still not adequate - you come out to the festival early, your performance is usually 30 - 45 minutes, and you are stuck with carrying your stuff around for all the time! The situation is better, there is still some work that needs to be done - all clubs are occupying trailers, including the men, but for right now it's mainly females!" (interview 53).*

The task force also works as an advocacy body for the associated Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs. The task force is trying to solve problems not only at the festivals where second line clubs get booked. They also intervene at parades which managed by tourism related businesses, and at potential upcoming issues with NOPD officers at street parades. Additionally, the services of the task force covers copyright issues with pictures, and similar challenges as will be explained in the chapter about second lines and clubs.

## **More ethnographic experiences at the festival**

In one of my lunch breaks I ran over to the tribunes where Helen Regis was stationed in order to conduct her research at Jazz Fest. At a table she lets visitors draw an image of the festival on a blank piece of paper with coloured pencils. The visitors are simply asked to draw their vision of Jazz Fest. In the few minutes of my available time I also participated at her research. My drawing represents a beer can standing in the mud, inside the beer can there is a music stage with the words "Shell Culture", suited Mardi Gras Indians, seemingly flying brass instruments, drums, and notes in disorder. Due to the lack of time I could not depict all ideas and had to leave my artistic attempt unfinished as to be seen on photo 18 in the annex.

In another short lunch break I went to the blues tent where I fixed an appointment with Queen Kelly, a Mardi Gras Indian Queen of the Creole Osceola tribe. Queen Kelly works at the Jazz Fest for accommodating those visitors with the Big Chief VIP Experience ticket. Services included with these tickets are for example, preferred seating in the front rows and a special tribune. Kelly's duty was to check tickets and seat the VIP visitors, the same applied to her partner Flag Boy Zee on a special tribune at the Acura stage, the festival's biggest stage. I thought it was nice that Indians are welcoming the ones with a VIP ticket called Big Chief Experience although it could be that she accidentally was placed there because in fact the visitors would not recognise them as Indians since they were not dressed up.

A year before, in 2012, Queen Kelly was busy helping at the cultural exchange pavilion. In 1996 the festival hosted the cultural exchange pavilion for the first time in order to honour New Orleans' cultural ancestry. Every year the organisers invite another country which has had cultural influence on New Orleans throughout the history such as Spain, France, African and South-American countries. The national tourism boards of the invitees use this opportunity for showcasing the country's attractiveness and promote tourism. In 2012 the local Mardi Gras Indian culture was invited for the first time to host the cultural exchange pavilion. The space was dedicated to spotlight the city's Mardi Gras Indian traditions, history behind the tribes, to offer demonstrations of how to make the colourful suits as well as exhibitions on the music and lifestyle of the tribes. The Creole Osceola, Queen Kelly's tribe, also participated among the many tribes at question-answer sessions with prominent tribe figures and doing Indian practices in the public (very rare occasions). The tribes rotated with their presentations and practices. Fortunately, Queen Kelly's tribe did perform on the same day when I was volunteering at the festival just after I have finished my beer shift. The pavilion was decorated with Indian patches,



feathers, pictures and posters of Chiefs during parades, suits on puppets, crafts, instruments, etc.. Information desks where Indians worked on pieces of suits and patches were exhibited. When I entered the humid tent the Creole Osceola already started performing their practice, standing in a semi circle facing the audience. Chief Dalcour is singing an Indian song and the tribe members answering with chanting (songs like 'Chief black feather' and 'sew, sew, sew'), drumming the beat with tambourines, supporting the rhythm with clapping. Gang Flags and Flag Boys still wear parts of their suits but continuously take them off. The heat and humidity inside the pavilion were rising. I begin to teeter with my feet and soon with my body shaking to the tambourines, looking over to Queen Kelly who already took off her suit, sweating, singing loud, with eyes closed. I cannot help wanting to chant with the Indians but am not sure if I get the lyrics right, I am humming and watching Queen Kelly's lips hoping to be able to read some of the words, I look over to Zee and his Chief, both concentrated and going on with singing. Around 20 minutes later I feel tiredness taking over my body, the rhythm has not really changed but the song is another one, tambourines have been passed among the chanting Indians, rattles, drums, and other rhythmic instruments joined to support the songs. I see visitors going in and out the pavilion. I feel privileged to experience an Indian practice.

I have interviewed Queen Kelly before and after Jazz Fest and got to know that performing Mardi Gras Indian tribes do face similar issues as Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs since they also have the feeling of being disrespected by the festival organisation:

*"Jazz Fest is an investment for the tribes - you let yourself get used for the Jazz Fest, it might turn out good! My Chief knew that he was getting exploited and used. Mardi Gras Indians see their performances at Jazz Fest as an investment - they know that they get paid little money but they are going to perform anyway - to make some promotion and get some better paid gigs! Each group should implement its own actions - for the Mardi Gras Indians it is necessary to keep having practices, participate at festivals, make suits - the continuation of their traditions is necessary!"* (interview 4).

Queen Kelly is talking about the tribes that are parading throughout the festival area together with second line clubs. For the engagement at the cultural exchange pavilion the situation is diverse. In 2012 Queen Kelly was convinced that the pavilion would again be dedicated to Mardi Gras Indians the subsequent year based on the success it had, as we can learn from the interview:

*Bernhard: "what was your experience at the Cultural Exchange Tent at Jazz Fest?"*

*Kelly: good thing! It was the first time we had an own tent and that it ever happened - and they need to make it every year! That was the best pavilion they ever had and they have been doing it for years now, South Africa, different themes and countries - the Mardi Gras Indians was the best, the most popular, most people!*

*Bernhard: how will you tell them that you wanna do it again?*

*Kelly: it's not about telling them - they gotta ask you - and they will! That's the whole thing about the commercial thing again! My Chief has not been to Jazz Fest for over 20 years! He has not done it because he felt like Jazz Fest was not respecting him enough, not paying enough.*

*Bernhard: what was not respected?*

*Kelly: the pay, number one! Jazz Fest devalue the local performers - only big names are paid well! Our Chief did not wanna do it this year - we talked to him that we do have to move on with the times and change a bit although we do not want to be commercial and don't wanna feel devalued - but we have to keep up with the time! If we want to be a known and respected Indian gang Jazz Fest is not that bad! Those things were discussed before - how we are handled, what and how are we going to be respected, what was expected! We met four times before signing the contract!*

*Bernhard: how many tribes were there?*

*Kelly: every weekend they had five gangs exhibiting in the pavilion, each weekend a different set up gang, five gangs parading every day - maybe about 20 gangs in total! About 40 gangs are in New Orleans today! What I wanna know is how did they come to us and ask us if we wanna come to Jazz Fest? And I got to know that they wanted to have us because someone saw us on the street and we are not that kind of gang like Wild Tchoupitoulas or Wild Magnolias! This is because my Chief chooses to be like that! He is more old-school but he knows all the commercial Indians and performs with them!" (interview 4).*

From the description of the cultural exchange pavilion I got to know that more than 30 tribes participated at Jazz Fest in 2012 and that 47 active Mardi Gras Indian tribes exist in New Orleans. In 2013 the cultural exchange pavilion hosted native American Indians from all over the US. So the Mardi Gras Indians were put back to the usual Folklife Village where the native American Village represents a tent with four stands. One is for the Museum of Dance and Feathers representing the culture of Mardi Gras Indians and Social Aid and Pleasure Club where I met the museum's director Ronald Lewis. He was showcasing pieces of Indians and second line gadgets, a table with Indian crafts and pictures. Another table was stuffed with Cajun masks and

costumes, and the fourth table with the guild of sewers of Mardi Gras Carnival dresses and outfits (this concerns the Mardi Gras parades and not the Indians).

Next to Queen Kelly's hype and overall positive attitude towards Jazz Fest Felice mentioned some further negative aspects regarding the difference between big national acts versus local musicians and performers. Additionally, she criticises that for the tourists everything is presented in the best way but that in reality the situation of local musicians and Indians is different:

*"it's all catered to the tourists, all is great but the natives are still like a third world country - New Orleans is kinda like that - unfortunately. The tourism dollars use to go back to the tourism industry! [...] You know, Social Aid and Pleasure clubs and Mardi Gras Indians they go there as artists - they perform! It's almost like in Jamaica - there where the tourists are it is splendid and the people are beautiful - but if you go a block away from your hotel you'll see the worst squally! It's kind like New Orleans is!"* (interview 7).

Although the Jazz and Heritage Foundation, as owner of the Jazz and Heritage Festival, is actually organising the festival for raising funds in order to be able to support a multitude of activities in the cultural sector throughout the year the increasing exposure to tourists does not only bring positive effects. The focus on the tourism industry certainly disseminates national awareness about music and culture from New Orleans, which is also in favour of the artists. On the other side, the commercialisation of music and cultural performances as well as the commodification of local culture into a saleable experience at the festival days is often at the cost of local performers. Local musicians, dancers, club and tribe members do feel like sitting on the short end of the stick when it comes to financial compensation for the performances. When looking at the list of expenses of the festival organisation, they seem to be right. In the following I will describe the case of another big music festival in New Orleans, which faces similar criticism concerning payment, commercialisation, and increasing participation of tourists.

#### **4.3.2. The case of the French Quarter Festival**

Since 1984 French Quarter Festivals Inc., a non-profit organisation, is producing the annual French Quarter Festival where entrance is free of charge. Initially planned to motivate New Orleanians to visit the French Quarter more often, after the World Fair in 1984 only a few locals thought that the French Quarter would be attractive. Today it is the biggest free festival of the city. The festival did not only grow in visitor numbers but also in festival days. It started with

three days, in 2013 almost 600.000 music lovers were walking around the French Quarter over four days. Not only the French Quarter Festival is continuously growing but also the organisation's two other festivals (they are also free of charge): Satchmo Summer Fest in August (since 2001) and Christmas New Orleans Style (since 1985). All the festivals are promoted as music events for locals, showcasing the culture and heritage of the city, contributing to the economic well-being of the businesses within the French Quarter, and increasing pride for New Orleanians. Although the French Quarter Festival was originally directed at the attendance of locals it has been developing into a tourism highlight over the years, as to be seen on the festival's homepage presenting interesting visitor and economic impact statistics. With around 54.000 visitors at the Satchmo Summer Fest in 2013 the official percentage of attendees is 53% locals and 47% visitors. At the French Quarter Festival visitors outrange locals (49% locals and 51% visitors) coming primarily from Louisiana, California, New York, Texas, and Florida among the top five states, top five international visitors are from Canada, UK, Norway, France, and Germany. The official number regarding the overall economic impact of the city's biggest festival is US\$ 260 million. Around 1.400 musicians are active on the 21 stages throughout the French Quarter, over 60 local restaurants, and more than 2.000 volunteers are helping to make the festival a success. The main sources for funding the largest free festival in the South of the US are sponsorships (Chevron as main sponsor), beverage and merchandise sales, vendor fees, and an annual gala.<sup>81</sup> At French Quarter Fest no national or international big acts are performing, the focus is entirely on locally produced music celebrating and representing every genre from traditional and contemporary jazz to R'n'B, New Orleans funk, blues, brass bands, folk, gospel, latin, zydeco, classical, cabaret, and a few international jazz bands from Europe disseminating New Orleans style jazz.

*"The French Quarter Festival never started as a pure music festival - it just always grew bigger although the board didn't want it to get bigger" says Jan Rampsey, who has been sitting on the board of the festival since the very beginning. "Some people in the board are old-school French Quarter supporters - they do not want new and more stages in Armstrong Park or on Frenchmen Street - but it would be a great opportunity to also involve the neighboring areas - especially for Treme!"* (interview 23) is her further statement concerning the potential to grow the festival even bigger. Not only in terms of visitors but particularly in terms of expanding into neighbouring areas which are officially not part of the French Quarter. Louis Armstrong park in the North of the Vieux Carré lies within the boundaries of Treme (other small festivals are

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<sup>81</sup> Source: <http://fqfi.org/pages/detail/36/About>, April 2014.

organised there such as the Congo Square Rhythms and Dance Festival as well as the event Jazz in the park). Frenchmen Street is actually in the Marigny but would be perfectly suited for connecting stages from the Old Mint onwards.

### **Commodification issues of the French Quarter Festival**

*"The French Quarter Festival has now become way beyond local" (interview 28).*

Continuing the idea of expanding the area of the festival and hence attracting more visitors I am going to describe the two most cited issues during interviews, informal talks, and short communications with residents and people at the festival. These are, expressed in tourism terms, the carrying capacity of the French Quarter during the four festival days and the general issue of payment for performing artists.

#### **Carrying capacity**

The UNWTO defines tourism carrying capacity as "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction" (UNWTO, 1981). Concerning the festival the carrying capacity of the French Quarter is not respected which is leading to dissatisfaction of visitors and locals alike.

*"French Quarter Fest this year we had ... it was so crowded! Just like Jazz Fest! A lot of people told me that they won't go to French Quarter Fest anymore because of the crowds of people! What French Quarter Fest is becoming is more people here and making it like the Jazz Fest - so we are getting more and more tourists and fewer and fewer locals! It's not bad that festivals can be a resource for tourism - they certainly can - but it's all about managing the balance - and that's where New Orleans keeps failing the job!" (interview 22)*

Although Meg Lousteau and VCPORA, she is the association's director and spokesperson, are well known for criticising growing tourism development in means of visitor numbers, events, and investment, she is not the only one complaining about an overcrowded French Quarter especially during the festival. Kevin Fontenot, professor for history of the US South at Tulane University, also blames the city's tourism industry on promoting the event too much on the national tourism market:

*"French Quarter Fest was founded as a reaction to organize a free music festival for locals of New Orleans - because tourists were crowding Jazz Fest. Since Katrina French Quarter Fest is promoted as the South's largest free music festival, it was originally created for locals but the tourism industry turned it into an event - every year there are more stages, on a larger area, to host more visitors. The locals don't like that it is marketed for tourism, today locals don't even want to go there because there are too many visitors" (interview 11).*

Some residents do choose to not frequent the festival in the city's centre anymore. Particularly because it has changed into a tourism event - most of locals decide to visit the many other festivals that are organised in the neighbourhoods, where a rather local atmosphere is still existing. For example, Martha Ward, professor emeritus for anthropology and urban studies at UNO still visits festivals and the French Quarter but mainly at times when tourists are not crowding the places:

*"French Quarter Fest is a great example, this weekend, it's free and in the French Quarter Fest, it was developed for local people, for us, because the Jazz Fest was so expensive and crowded. The French Quarter was developed FOR the residents of the city, it's free to us - so NOW it's on the internet and an international festival and I can't go! Even though I went there for ten years - now it's too big for me! I won't see my friends because it's all full of tourists - and that's fine because they bring in a lot of money! And if I wanna hear that music or eat that food or experience the French Quarter then I will go when the tourists don't know about!" (interview 3).*

Another example is Amy Reimer, managing director of the International House, a luxury hotel just two blocks outside the French Quarter. She stays away from French Quarter Festival and decided to visit only one big festival a year which is Jazz Fest:

*Bernhard: "did you go to French Quarter Fest?"*

*Amy: I did not - they had 303.000 visitors on Saturday - which is insane! French Quarter Fest was started with the primary purpose to get the locals back to the French Quarter when it started 30 years ago! Clearly, it does get the locals in the French Quarter, and locals are still going there but it is not the quaint and intimate festival anymore that it used to be. It is my personal choice to only go to Jazz Fest and not to French Quarter Fest!" (interview 41).*

The executive director of the French Quarter Festival, Marci Schramm, is certainly content with her work and how the festival is growing each year. She is in the position since 2008 and is also responsible for managing the other two festivals that the organisation is staging in summer and

around Christmas. Marci defends the accusations that the festival organisation and the tourism industry are promoting the event more and more each year, and that both are taking the advantage of bringing in more visitors. During our interview she explained me how the festival is actually growing in a natural way:

*"You hear the locals complain so much that 'these festivals get ruined by the tourists'. The way it works is: if you throw a festival and it's a good event, people find out about it. For example, this weekend was Bayou Boogaloo, it started out very small and now it's huge, it is seven years old now! Like the Po-Boy festival uptown, it started also very small, now you can barely move because it is so crowded. That's what happens if you have a good event. But people complain a lot about it - tourists like it if they have the inside information about how to be like a local - which is what the NOTMC campaign does - it is really good! For years there has been this conversation that the city marketed itself as Bourbon Street for a long time - it is so smart now to getting away from this. Because people who are not from here think that the French Quarter is the whole city"* (interview 51).

I asked Marci also about the general strategy of French Quarter Festivals Inc. regarding the smaller festivals and if the organisation is planning to put on other events in order to attract more tourists. The tourism industry, mainly represented by the city's tourism promotion agency NOTMC, is collaborating with Marci in the fields of visitor targeting, event marketing, and also for finding sponsorships (Marci is on the board of the NOTMC marketing committee). As I found out, the main reason for organising the Satchmo Summer Fest was to drag tourists into the city during the tourism summer void (because New Orleans is not a nice place in July and August due to very high temperature and humidity levels). With additional festivals NOTMC is trying to distribute tourists throughout the year in order to keep hotel rooms occupied in many months and not only during major events.

*Bernhard: "do you think about putting on another festival? Does NOTMC approach you and say: Marci can't you just do another festival so we can get in more tourists?"*

*Marci: what we wanna do is take the one we got, the one in August and make it bigger, more days, take over the whole neighbourhood like we do for French Quarter Fest, we already got a great summer time event, all we gotta do is grow it bigger. The challenge is to find more money to pay for it, because our festivals are free! We are working hard to get more money for that! July has Essence festival, the biggest one in the summer - other challenges, September is hurricane season! Conventions, regular tourists don't come here because it is too risky. The climate is a big factor how things happen in NOLA!"* (interview 51).

Nature has a big influence for everyday life in New Orleans but especially at the end of August and beginning of September when hurricane season is menacing the population with devastating storms and heavy rain falls. The tourism industry is working on reserve mode during the risky weeks and also cultural events are hardly taking place. Mostly because outside temperature and humidity levels are only preferred by mosquitoes and because many New Orleanians flee from the potential storms already some weeks in advance. These natural circumstances present a challenge for the tourism industry and their goal to attract more visitors during months of low request.

*"We do Louis Armstrong festival in August, it is a festival that is growing but it is still difficult to grow it because it is so hot - people don't want to come when it is over a 100 degrees. It would be fabulous if we could do it, but I don't see the plan taking place to get people here in July, August and September - this when you need the big grow!"* (interview 51).

### **The dollar issue at the French Quarter Festival**

As musicians are complaining about low compensation for playing at diverse festivals, musicians playing at French Quarter Festival complain about not getting paid at all for the first 29 editions of the festival. Right on the festival's 30th anniversary musicians got paid for their performances directly from the festival organisation for the first time. Until then performers were responsible by themselves to find sponsors who would pay their gigs. Once accepted for playing at one of the many stages the bands needed to contact potential sponsors from any business sector who wanted to make advertisement on the band's stage. The bigger the stage and the later the gig would be scheduled the higher the probability that a band can convince some interested business wanting to promote their products or services due to a higher visibility. Jan Rampsey told me that only musicians who were inscribed at the Union of New Orleans Musicians got paid with a standard union rate at US\$ 106, and *"all the others had to find sponsors on their own to get paid! [...] In earlier years musicians did not get paid with dollars but with ads in magazines! [...] But this year is the first when the board hired a person for finding sponsors for all the musicians ..."* (interview 23).

I was surprised that the biggest music festival in New Orleans would not have paid the performers for almost 30 years and asked Marci about this issue which represented a challenge for musicians for a long time.



*Bernhard: "how come that last year it was the first time that the festival could pay its musicians?"*

*Marci: 30 years ago it was the only way to make the festival happen. There is lot of creative way to offer 21 stages of music and don't charge any of the visitors a dime! In Europe the government funds that! Here it is not like that! Everything we do is through finding corporate sponsors, grants through foundations, for years French Quarter Fest did not have any money so musicians had to go and find their own sponsor. If you would ask the Hilton for sponsoring your gig at the festival they could make ads on the stage, pay you, and we would not take anything from that! That happened for 28 years!*

*Bernhard: did every band succeed in finding a sponsor?*

*Marci: there are musicians who are in the Musician's Union, they were a sponsor and got paid through the Union contribution. A few years ago we realized that this festival is getting so big and we could not continue not paying the musicians, this is not fair. We started a new sponsorship program and found the money! In the first year it was over 100 new companies who wrote checks to pay the musicians, this year the biggest company paid 20.000 dollars to the musicians - we don't take any of this money. This is really to keep the festival going - it is so expensive to produce it - we pay for all the police, sandwich stands, garbage pick-ups, insurance - once you offer beer booths the event insurance rates rise! It's a lot of money to produce - so we are looking for different ways to pay for it. We have corporate sponsors, musician sponsors, beer and merchandise make a lot of money, all the food booths pay flat fee, ...*

*Bernhard: yes, many musicians talk about their fear that tourism exploits them - a dichotomy, like saying French Quarter Fest is cool but they don't pay musicians ...*

*M: so many people don't know what French Quarter Fest is, French Quarter Fest is like a mysterious thing - people don't know if we are part of the city, but we are a non-profit organization. Everyone in the neighbourhood, when there is about 500.000 people, thinks that we are making tons of money, but they don't realize that we are just making beer and t-shirt selling money. The corporate sponsors put in most of the money to make the festival happen. Musicians see the half a million people, all the food booths, but we don't take any of their money. We only invite local restaurants which is probably good for the nbh" (interview 51).*

As I was getting more and more involved into the festivals with working as a "beer tender", participant observation, and interviews with the executive staff, I tried to analyse the situation with a comparing approach between the Jazz and Heritage Festival and the French Quarter Festival. Both events attract a big amount of visitors, do have a considerable economic impact on the city's tourism industry, promote local music, food, and art, and do share similar issues

among the cultural actors of the city. But in fact, the two biggest music events of New Orleans are very differently organised concerning access, sponsoring, and investment of the revenues. *"French Quarter Fest has a total different mentality than Jazz Fest"* (interview 23) is Jan's conclusion about the comparison. This starts with the different ways of funding the festivals the organisations are producing as explained by Marci:

*"The Jazz and Heritage Foundation does a lot of really small grants for a lot of organizations - we received a grant for Satchmo Fest and it was 1.500 dollars. That is normal. They take a lot of money and give it to a lot of people - they spread it around so no one gets a lot of money. We are not a foundation - we don't have so much money. What we make, we spend most of what we make on producing the festivals, if we have some leftovers we put it to a fund, it is called the rainy day funding, so if we ever get rained out we have funds and don't run out of business. We do not have even a million dollars in the bank, the Jazz and Heritage Foundation has about 15 million dollars!"* (interview 51).

When interviewing Scott Aiges from the Jazz and Heritage Foundation our conversation naturally drifted into the topic of comparing not only the two big festivals but of analysing the internal and structural difference of the organisations which are putting on the major events. Since festivals are big business in New Orleans the main difference lies in the way how the revenues (if there are any) are used:

*Scott: "In contrast you have an event like French Quarter Fest, which attracts more people than Jazz Fest, and it's a free festival, and they don't have any headliners or big international stars, they have all local talents and they also bring in huge numbers of visitors, but those people are not paying money to get into the festival. It's just a question of how you choose to develop your formula.*

*Bernhard: so, what do you think about a festival that does not pay its musicians?*

*Scott: well I have a problem with that HAHHAHA! It's not how I would choose to do things [smiling]. The mechanism was that either they find their own sponsors or they accept a standard unit rate of 106 dollars per person - or they just don't get paid. Meanwhile the festival claims to bring in 400.000 people - so they get big sponsors like Budweiser - you would think that the sponsor would provide enough funding that they could allocate a budget towards paying the musicians. They don't pay their musicians so I don't know what their expenditures are. Advertising and logistics, stages, sound equipment is typically the major expenditure - but French Quarter Fest don't seem to earn a lot of money - a big difference between them and us, they exist for the purpose of putting on that festival - they don't have any programs. We put on the*

*festival to raise funds for our programs, we are a programming organization, they are an event producer - a non-profit that puts on events. [...] They don't do anything else than this event"* (interview 35).

Principally, for the Jazz and Heritage Foundation the Jazz Fest is a major fund-raising event which is necessary for financing the foundation's programme. For French Quarter Festivals Inc. the primary purpose of putting on the festival is the festival itself. The same applies to the other two smaller festivals that are produced as single festivals and are not funded with revenues from the big event. Since French Quarter Fest started its sponsorship programme called "adopt an artist" critics from the local music community got more quiet " ... *and finally everyone is happy!*" (interview 23).

#### **4.4. Culture as economy vs. culture as culture?**

*"We have a fundamental disconnect between the culture as economy and the culture as culture"* (interview 32).

As anticipated at the end of the music commodification chapter the question if certain cultural events such as festivals are organised for the sake of making economic profit or for celebrating the performance of music, enjoying local food, and showcasing Louisiana artisan products, rises again. Eric Lolis Elie is of the opinion that the objective of making culture economically attractive (not only for musicians but for entrepreneurs and the tourism industry) is constantly increasing. Particularly regarding festivals the rationale about the inner reason for organising a festival is challenged. Talking extensively to Eric I got to touch a sensitive topic which I did not succeed to discuss with other interlocutors. I guess it is because Eric is not a musician, neither does he organise festivals or events, he is not within the tourism industry, or a public body. Eric is a great observer of historically related social transformations within the different racial and cultural layers of New Orleans. Maybe because he is not part of any of the mentioned sectors he has an expressively critical mind about the practices of culture when it comes to consumption by visitors: *"Festivals have become kind of an industry, some of them are not profitable to make money but they all follow a certain pattern and attempt to be similar towards another. Both locals and tourists like them and it has become part of the cultural landscape"* (interview 32).

Eric notices that in New Orleans culture has been converted into an economic revenue system taking the example of festivals. Culture does not 'happen' for the sake of culture but for the

cultural economy. Hence the goal of certain events is not to 'generate culture' but to generate dollars with cultural activities. Regarding festivals, those are focused on generating more inbound tourism revenues which might lead to negative consequences, as they were discussed throughout the chapter.

*"There is a fundamental disconnect, our mayor who has previously been the Ltd. Governor of cultural recreation and tourism, he has pioneered this concept of cultural economy, he did that in part to convince people in the state to invest in this cultural things in the means of earning money. Well that is the anti-thesis of culture for cultural sake, or of celebrating these traditions as we New Orleanians were interested in it. So what you get is a commercialisation and commodification of our culture. [...] The big disconnect with the potential for local economic development is that when it becomes commercial it's in danger of dying" (interview 32).*

Furthermore, Eric's concern is the economic impact for the city and the tourism industry that is generated with cultural activities. Not because he is an anti-capitalist but because the many cultural activities in the city are increasingly organised with the goal to create economic benefits only - often the beneficiaries are not the cultural producers and actors.

*"The concern I have is that this is all consumer driven - so the question is not how can festivals strengthen the culture - the question is - how can festivals attract more people. So these things are not unrelated, if you attract more people you can hire more musicians and pay them more - but if the strengthening of the culture is not the primary question these festivals would not strengthen the culture - and that's my fundamental concern - the goal is not strengthening the culture, the goal is generating economic impact" (interview 32).*

As an example there would be French Quarter Festival and the fact that musicians did not get paid for 29 editions of the event that constantly grew. Above all, the main reason of the festival's creation was actually to lure locals back into the French Quarter so restaurants and businesses make some additional revenues - but it happened on cost of cultural actors. Elliott Perkins, executive director of the historic district landmarks commission at city hall, expresses a similar opinion about the ongoing capitalisation of culture:

*"Festivals were not necessarily part of the culture but it is capitalizing upon the culture - we have all the food and music! We do have festivals since a long time but there were issues with the local people at the French Quarter Fest and Jazz Fest for example - the festival was and is taking*

*advantage of local musicians who do not get paid as big money as out of town musicians"* (interview 34).

In continuation Eric stresses that those who capitalise on the culture are also the economic beneficiaries. Those are at the end only interested in making revenues which are generated primarily by outside visitors. With the term 'authentic' he means tangible and intangible elements of New Orleans culture which is *"something created by and for the people of the community ... used in the context of the society they represent"* (interview 32). In his opinion, the interest of preservation and enjoyment of those cultural elements are restricted to its creators and producers, while the organisers of events where such cultural elements are showcased, focus on its commodification and economic operability.

*"The only people that are interested in authentic New Orleans culture are the practitioners - and there is the fundamental problem - that's why the festivals and the foundations and the politicians are not interested in preserving the things in that way - they are interested in external consumption and not internal enjoyment"* (interview 32).

On the other side, Kevin Fontenot's statement shows that it has been the goal to generate money with culture since a long time in New Orleans: *"the city always adapted to satisfy visitors because this is the way how to make dollars"* (interview 11). Moreover, the general opinion of cultural actors that *"festivals keep the music going"* (interview 5) gives evidence that maybe the local culture is more an economically oriented culture in a generic way.

Regis and Walton (2008) analyse in their paper "Producing the Folk at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival" that, besides making economic revenues, the producers of the festival also produce the 'cultural content' of the festival and decide what shall be showcased. Thus, the festival producers control what kind of folk elements are presented and produced by the cultural actors, such as musicians, second lines clubs, Mardi Gras Indians, or Louisiana artisans showcasing their work in the folk village tents. It is not only the production of expressive cultural elements but also blackness and similar forms of otherness that are central to producing a concentrated experience of a hip identity. The production of culture reveals a reproduction of a racialised social structure. The analysis is based on several years of participant observation and conducting qualitative interviews with festgoers and focuses on how culture, hipness, and

authenticity are "*(re)produced for public consumption*" existing not only in the realm of heritage but also in the tradition of pop culture and entertainment (REGIS, WALTON, 2008: 401).

The reproduction of authenticity (hence, the commodification of culture in the form of entertainment into economic gain) is further analysed in the chapter analysing the commodification of second lines and Mardi Gras Indian events.

## 5. Commodification of the living cultural heritage parades in New Orleans

*"Don't ever say anything against Mardi Gras - ever!! It is a very conservative city in some ways!"*  
(interview 23)

At one of my meetings with Jan Rampsey she called my attention to one of the few lapses one could make in New Orleans - speaking pejoratively about Mardi Gras. Although officially staged only on 12 days until its mere end on Ash Wednesday, Mardi Gras is always and everywhere in New Orleans. As soon as one year's season is over, krewe<sup>82</sup> Captains begin planning their themes for the following year. Float<sup>83</sup> designers begin working on those themes and jewelers begin designing the gifts that have been commissioned. Year round the city's biggest and most famous parade gets promoted on the global tourism market. Year round visitors in New Orleans walk with ever longer and brighter coloured beads around their necks, hands, feet, and hats. They are throwing them from balcony bars on Bourbon Street in the hope of falling in love with boys and girls. Year round many other parades imitating Mardi Gras Carnival with the typical floats, spreading excessive party mood among the visitors, are organised for various occasions. While New Orleans is by no means a conservative place observing the city as an outsider, its population has nevertheless a traditional habit when it comes to celebrating Carnival - and nobody should tell them what to do, or how to do it better. The traditionalist thinking of New Orleanians is not only reflected in Mardi Gras but also in music. When looking at festivals such as the annual Jazz and Heritage festival the arrangement of the various stages, tents, and "villages" hardly ever changed since the 1970s. Second lines are heavily bound to the respective neighbourhood of a social aid and pleasure club, many second lines do still take place on Claiborne Avenue although the street was covered by the I-10 overpass in the late 1960s. Mardi Gras Indians learned how to make suits from their ancestors in the 18th century and are only adapting the material and colours to the modern world.

*"Mardi Gras defines the city - Mardi Gras is everywhere and year-round! That is why tourists have beads in July - tourists would not come in July when Jazz Fest is in May, but they do come in*

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<sup>82</sup> A krewe is usually a non-profit organisation with members paying annual fees. These members are responsible for managing, organising, and paying for the floats including any kind of decoration and equipment of the krewe parade, as well as the parading fees. The individual members pay for their own throws that are distributed from the floats.

<sup>83</sup> Floats are colourfully decorated mobile platforms on tractors, trucks, trailers or hangers that are towed behind, participants are standing on top and are distributing their throws. For a more detailed description please refer to the chapter about the case study.

*July although Mardi Gras is in February. The NOCVB puts up little Mardi Gras parades throughout the year" (interview 30).*

As explained in the description of the case study parades do principally not only cover Mardi Gras but also other cultural events. These are representing a similar Carnival character which is primarily based on floats, throws, marching bands, and crowds of cheering visitors. However, this chapter focusses on Mardi Gras parades because of its major importance for the city. Mardi Gras celebrates extreme popularity among its inhabitants and the tourism industry. Visitor and economic impact data do only exist for the Mardi Gras season and not for any other parade which are simply classified as 'events' by the Cultural Economy Snapshot. Most of my interlocutors could only think of and respond to Mardi Gras related parades, when I was specifically asking for other parades the given information often was not relevant enough to be taken into consideration for this research. Apart of the Mardi Gras parades others are hardly marketed by the tourism industry except of the Easter parades which focus on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-, and transsexual) visitors. The Easter parade tourism promotion is also part of the larger NOTMC strategy concerning gay tourism and marketing New Orleans as a gay friendly destination. Furthermore, there is little literature existing with scientific description about the annual St. Patrick's Day, Easter, or Halloween parades.

Moreover, for a more detailed analysis of Mardi Gras and parades I should have paid more attention when selecting interlocutors. Only a few of the people I interviewed had an active role within a krewe and even less ever had the chance to ride on floats. Therefore, I could analyse the commodification of parades mainly from the viewpoint of people that participated in the streets. Many of my interlocutors were involved in the local music scene, either as musicians, organisers of music events and festivals, or were attached to music in any other form. Since Carnival and similar parades do not have a focus on live music, except of walking clubs and marching bands leading and following the floats, many of my interview partners were limited in responding to my questions.

Scholars and authors such as Gotham (2012, 2011, 2007a/b, 2005a/b, 2002), Edmonson (1956), Hardy (2011), Kinser (1990), Laborde (1999), Mitchell (1995), Stanonis (2006), Roach (1996), among others, have analysed the commodification of Mardi Gras. Topics include its branding and marketing in the tourism industry, its production as an urban and societal spectacle, as well



as the historical development. Research about Mardi Gras was also done concerning its significance for the city, social class, and racial issues.

Regarding historical aspects of Mardi Gras, I refer to the work of Edmonson, Hardy, and Stanonis, describing the organisation of krewes, construction of floats, various forms of masking, and the role of kings and queens. Their works give an overview of the multitude of parades and the routes throughout the city, as well as information about the effects of Katrina. Mitchell presents a detailed overview of the historical rise of Mardi Gras from its early beginnings, to the first official parade in 1857, until modern times. This includes how the development of parades and its marketing contributed to the general increase of tourism in New Orleans. Gotham published relevant work regarding aspects of place marketing and the impact of tourism, commercialisation, authenticity, topics about who owns Mardi Gras, and the ambivalent relationship between culture and tourism. Furthermore, his publications also raise racial issues within the Mardi Gras Carnival parades.

At the beginning of the present chapter I give a short insight into a parade day in New Orleans. The ethnographic description of the St. Patrick's Day parade is followed by an analysis about the many regulations of parades issued by the city, in particular concerning Mardi Gras. The subsequent part contains an analysis about the tourism focus on Mardi Gras and the different opinions of New Orleanians about the tourism oriented Carnival parades. This information creates a solid background for understanding the topics and aspects analysed from the collected data. The illustrated issues and challenges of commodification are primarily based on the economic and interlinked tourism impact, having influence on Carnival related parades and the social as well as cultural structure of New Orleans. This includes the invention of (new) traditions for public enjoyment and for boosting the tourism industry which are perceived differently within actors and participants of parades. With the following aspects I show how such Carnival parades, particularly concerning Mardi Gras events, have effects on positive and negative commodification for krewes, residents, the tourism industry, and for the city authorities.

### **Ethnographic description of parades**

On March 17, 2013, the St. Patrick's Day festivities in New Orleans start with a protestant mass service in St. Mary's Assumption church, uptown at noon. Having arrived in time I observe the entry ceremony of nicely dressed visitors, most of the men in noble tuxedos, ladies in elegant long dresses. Orange, white, and green are the predominant colours of diverse outfits and

decorations such as hats, scarves, ties, bow ties, and similar. I feel a bit underdressed in my moccasins, blue short sport pants, a white shirt, and decide to follow the mass service from the upper floor inside the church, sitting close to the organ player on narrow benches. From up there I recognise a strict sitting order, men in tuxedos and white ribbons are sitting on the inner part of the benches (rows of benches on the left and on the right side of the central corridor), on the outer side are their ladies and other visitors, dressed in mostly green shirts and less elegant clothes. Although there are a few isolated green dressed ladies within the black tuxedos, men and women are obviously separated. In his speech, the priest reminds the visitors about the important role Irish immigrants played for the city of New Orleans and rolls up some historical facts. Around 1820 Irish people arrived in masses for constructing the New Basin Channel, starting to celebrate St. Patrick's Day officially in 1832 and with Carnival imitating parades since the 1950s.

Right after the mass the floats start rolling at one o'clock on Magazine Street, one block away from St. Mary's Assumption church, the centre of the Irish Channel neighbourhood. Nadia and I are walking down another block to the corner of Magazine Street/Jackson Avenue where the parade turns upwards to St. Charles Avenue. Quickly getting a beer before the first clubs and floats arrive we get a good spot for looking at the street. Barriers were put up by hardly ever visible NOPD officers to block off the waiting masses from the street. On the street the clubs are parading. Many people and families in front of and next to us are well prepared with cooling boxes. They are full of beer and food. The visitors are standing on top of the boxes, they came with leaning chairs for sitting in them, brought rollies for tired kids, and green decorations like flags, hats, wigs, caps, feathers, scarves, and similar.

The Irish channel parade is always on a Saturday. Thus, it is the event with the biggest number of visitors. The other six parades throughout New Orleans and Metairie accompanied with several block parties around March 17 do also attract people primarily from the Irish community as well as neighbourhood residents. Afro-American visitors are hardly present, in the walking clubs and on the floats I cannot see even one and along the streets only a few black moms with kids are watching the show. Marching bands with drums and brass instruments, as well as a bag pipe band are walking by, all dressed up in band uniforms or tuxedos, all of them are male. In between, a female dancing group (around five per-cent of them are black girls), doing some kind of cheerleading figures, is dancing to the sounds. Irish community clubs from Jefferson parish are walking by, followed by an Irish military veterans club, the first float is approaching us with

around 25 people on it. On an old fire fighter truck an extended family with lots of riding kids is seemingly having fun throwing down green and white beads. The riders are simply dressed in pants and green shirts, baseball caps, out of huge cardboard boxes and plastic bags they are randomly distributing plastic beads. Lots of clubs imitating krewes as well as cultural associations with names such as "The Channel Rats" are participating with self made floats or with walking clubs. Although there are not many live bands music still is an important element of the parade. Between the marching bands there are passing cars, tractors, and small trucks with DJs and juke boxes, also a dixie-land band is sitting on a trailer and towed behind. Walking clubs of predominantly young men in elegant tuxedos, carrying backpacks (probably full of liquor), drinking out of beer cans or whiskey bottles, are trying to move rhythmically to the sounds of the juke boxes while they seem to do drinking games (one guy with a whiskey bottle stands in the centre, his buddies surrounding him chanting something incomprehensible). Some of them distribute plastic roses and other flowers in Irish national colours to female visitors behind the barriers with kisses, sweating and spreading a cloud of smelling alcohol. Next to live or DJ produced music the consumption of alcohol seems to be as important for the male walking clubs. All of the clubs are dressed a bit differently, some wear green baretts, others green baseball caps, green scarves or similar cloths around their necks, most of them dressed up in tuxedos, smokings, elegant gilets or jackets with attached plastic flowers, many of them decorated with white and green beads.

After more than one hour of standing and watching the clubs walking by or riding on trailers and small floats, Nadia and I wanted to change spot. The sun already arrived where we were trying to catch beads and visitors got more crowding. Since there are too many people watching on Jackson Avenue we decide to cut through other small streets to avoid passing through the masses when getting to St. Charles Avenue. In the parallel narrow streets we are promenading upwards, I see many fences and gardens being decorated with beads, flags, balloons, and signs saying "open door party". This family seems to invite to its garden party also the indirect neighbours living some blocks up or down the street. Crossing another street I see the next BBQ party with people standing and sitting on the steps of the door front, taking beers out of coolers, walking around with steaks in their hands. The following party I pass is full of tuxedo dressed men and green robed ladies sitting on white tables with wine glasses. Another sign says "bring your own beer and you are welcome", unfortunately I just emptied my can and feel uncomfortable entering without anything. It is also my neighbourhood as I am living some 20 blocks more uptown and am passing these streets daily by bike. The whole neighbourhood

seems a garden party where family, friends, and neighbours come together, eating and drinking at formal or informal gatherings either with white tablecloths or just standing around the BBQ grill.

We are approaching St. Charles Avenue and people are cheering to the big floats rolling along. A colourful double-decker float, decorated on the front with the figure of topless Madonna, showing her boobs, a black banner saying "censored" over her nipples, the riders with caps or wigs hold bags filled with beads in their hands, trying to feed the thousands of stretched hands, some of the riders seem to be powered out already. Behind the half naked Madonna figure I see a DJ putting up the disco sounds, the floats are rolling at walking speed, eye contact with float riders seems to be important to enhance chances of getting more throws. The double-decker floats illustrate limitless topics such as a huge guitar or a shot gun house with riders on top of them. Participants are standing on the side, screaming, raising their arms, making themselves attractive to catch some beads in predominantly Irish (green, white, orange) and Mardi Gras colours (green, purple, gold). Beads additionally have different sizes, length, surface, weight, some of them with inlays of the various clubs. People like to catch green bracelets with clover, hats, slippers, plush and toy pets for kids. I am taking pictures of float riders throwing stuff into the crowds as suddenly a cabbage lands in my hands. Looking at Nadia, her neck heavily ornamented with beads, she shows me a carrot in the one hand and some garlic in the other! Glancing at participants I see that all of them are carrying the beads around the necks - showing the amount of beads caught seems a little competition among the crowd - everything else they catch ends up in bags. Parents snatch toys, give it to their kids showing a glimpse of satisfaction and joy, a second later their attention is fixed on something else. People here on St. Charles Avenue are also well prepared with portable chairs where tired moms or kids sit and watch out for the full bags of throws. Here, way more Afro-American participants are standing along the avenue. Riders seem to have never ending and never empty bags of throws and are looking out that everyone gets something, all visitors are involved. People in the back row look like being on a camping holiday, sitting in their chairs, surrounded by bags, drinking and eating sandwiches.

After one and a half hours of standing on St. Charles Avenue, carrying one bag full of cabbage and carrots, the other full of beads (although my neck suffers from the weight of the beads, too), and Nadia with another bag full of other kinds of throws, the last parade float has passed by. What is left is masses of trash on the street, plastic cups and bags, non caught beads, destroyed plush animals and toys, cabbage leaves, paper, cans, bottles, rests of food, etc. We are slowly

walking back to Magazine Street. Meandering again through the narrow streets the garden parties still have not achieved its peak. On Magazine we get attracted by a beautiful house with a seven-headed blues rock band playing on the front terrace, the house seems to be open for anyone and we are entering, having a look of what is going on. I recognise that the house is for sale and that the parade is probably used like a promotion event for alluring persons to have a look! At the next block crowds of green dressed beer drinking young people are dancing on the street, on the corner is an Irish pub with signs on the balcony saying "If you can read this, you're not partying enough". Close to the church where we have tied up our bikes another Irish pub is calling for the participation of neighbourhood residents to participate at the organised block party. At around six o'clock we arrive home counting the amount of beads we have caught - in kilograms, not in single beads!

### **The regulation of Mardi Gras**

Mardi Gras parades have always been regulated and were established as a tool of public order by social elites. Prior to the krewes of Comus, Momus, Proteus, and Rex Carnival related street masking and parading was unorganised and spontaneous in New Orleans. Loosely structured groups invited people to join masked parades and made up ad hoc routes throughout the French Quarter and some surrounding neighbourhoods. Before the 1850s, a unique three-tier system of whites, free people of colour (former slaves who were able to buy their freedom), and slaves defined race and ethnic relations in New Orleans. This three-tier ethno-racial system however was eroding and being supplanted by a rigid racial dualism of white against black, the result of an immense wave of Anglo-American immigration and local and state government efforts to segregate the races (HIRSCH, 1992).

The mentioned old-line krewes had the objective to eliminate the aura of spontaneity and promote order through a controlled procession by restricting participation and developing planned tableaux balls and costumes (HARDY, 2011). A new form of social differentiation between the "public" and the "private" spheres of carnival, separating activities open to the public, with organised parades, from those limited to the private krewes and their guests, with balls where access was allowed by invitation only. New lines of hierarchy and racial division in the celebration of Carnival were drawn by the 1880s. Insulated spaces for the wealthy and influential people were created and the minimisation of social contact with those of lesser class status was achieved (GOTHAM, 2007a).

Until today many krewes follow a code of secrecy. They wear masks and costumes to hide the identity of krewe members. Removing your mask during a parade is considered taboo and a cause of membership termination in some older krewes. Until the mid 1950s local segregationist laws prohibited the Zulu parade and other Afro-American clubs from parading on the popular Mardi Gras routes like on St. Charles Avenue and Canal Street, where most of the visitors are cheering for the floats.

An attempt to introduce an anti discrimination law for Mardi Gras krewes occurred during the 1990s. As tourism has come to dominate more areas of social life within New Orleans, Mardi Gras has become an event of contention, where residents, elite groups, and city leaders claimed to represent the "authenticity" of Carnival (GOTHAM, 2007a). In 1991 discussions about an anti-discrimination law separated the various groups. The law would prohibit Mardi Gras krewes and other Carnival organisations from excluding membership to anyone based on "*race, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, physical condition, or disability*" (GOTHAM, 2007a: 182). City council members proposed a law that banned discrimination in business-oriented private clubs that received public funds and subsidies. In the same year an anti-bias law got approved that would deny city services and parade permits for krewes and marching clubs that discriminated. While Afro-American leaders in New Orleans celebrated the ordinance as an important step toward eliminating racism in Mardi Gras, undoing the long-segregated Carnival structure, leaders of over 60 krewes condemned the law with arguments of having to cancel their parades with the result of less tourism in the city. As a consequence, the historical krewes of Comus and the Knights of Momus cancelled their parades in 1992, followed by the quitting of Proteus in 1993. The main reason for these organisations was that they wanted to maintain a tradition of anti-commercialism in Mardi Gras and resist governmental efforts to control private social clubs. The issues nurtured existing racial debates over who actually owns Mardi Gras, who has legitimate access, and who controls over the public space of the parades. The anti-bias law threatened the power of the old-line krewes that had been all white, all male organisations composed of wealthy business owners who explicitly excluded blacks, women, Jews, and other groups from their membership. After months of intensive discussion the City Council changed the proposed law and voted that all male or all female clubs could remain, also jail sentences and the enforcement of discrimination complaints were softened. However, the total failure of the anti-discrimination ordinance in Mardi Gras was through when the federal court declared the law an "*unconstitutional infringement on First Amendment rights of free association and an unwarranted government interference into the privacy of krewes and other organizations subject*

to the ordinance" (GOTHAM, 2007a: 186) in subsequent years. Supporters of the all male old line krewes argued that the racial ordinance was a kick-off to commercialisation that would undermine the tradition of tableaux balls and float parades. In the following years, many krewes opened their membership to women and Afro-Americans. In 1993, Harry Connick Jr., a famous jazz musician from New Orleans, created the super krewe Orpheus as a gender- and race-mixed krewe.

Regarding the operative laws for the parades, due to the historical development of not just social regulations about Mardi Gras a long municode<sup>84</sup> exists today: with chapter 34 the New Orleans Code of Ordinances regulates all carnival related Mardi Gras parades. Based on this code, krewes are obliged to get a permit fee per carnival club or truck with a cost of US\$ 750, fees for marching clubs cost US\$ 100. Additionally, clubs need to have insurance for their floats covering up to a total sum of one million dollars.

The municode primarily regulates organisational aspects so that all Mardi Gras parades can be perfectly staged - nothing is left to chance: dates of rescheduled parades are already defined in case of a rained out parade; parade routes for each club are exactly defined throughout the city, in terms of length concerning distance and time. If a float is not on time according to the schedule (with a delay of more than 30 minutes) the float has to pay a fine (of up to US\$ 300) or may even be totally cancelled. In case of breakdown or unforeseen other event preventing the float to start on time, it also may get cancelled at all.

With the municode the number of floats per parade is limited (each parade shall consist of no less than 14 and no more than 27 floats); the number of cars or mini-floats shall not exceed 14 or a number equal to 75% of the number of floats in a parade. Concerning marching bands, the number of such marching bands participating in a parade shall be not less than seven nor more than 30; one so called chaperone, which has to be visible with a badge, is responsible for a maximum of 15 marching participants; even the age of participants is restricted as kids with less than 12 years are not allowed to march, ride on a float or have any other role.

Section 34-17 about the riders states the regulation about masking, and general costuming, with the emphasis on that every participant *"shall be decently attired and no sexually indecent dress or characterization shall be allowed. In addition to the penalties set out for violating this chapter,*

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<sup>84</sup> For more information about the municode: <https://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=10040>, retrieved in May 2012.

*any person violating this provision shall be subject to immediate arrest and the float, vehicle or horse upon or in which the individual is riding may be seized and impounded by the police after the captain of the organization has been informed of the intended action."*

Another interesting section concerning the throwers and throws is 34-27 stating that riders or maskers are prohibited from tossing throws to the rear and/or front of their floats. No parade participant shall toss or hand out throws during the parade without first obtaining written permission and approval of throws from the organization. Marching units are not allowed to toss or hand out anything at all. Article V lists the prohibited throws, saying that no participant "*shall knowingly throw any doubloon, trinket or other throw which would be redeemable for or entitle the bearer to a prize or a discount on the price of any food, beverage, merchandise, service or admission to any event or which displays, conveys or communicates any commercial, political or religious message. No Mardi Gras parade participant, while participating in a parade on the parade route, in a parade staging area, or in a parade disbanding area, shall hand out, throw, or distribute in any way, any condom or prophylactic or any sexually-oriented device. Sexually-oriented device shall include but not be limited to any paraphernalia that is designed in whole or part for specified sexual activities as defined in the comprehensive zoning ordinance."*

On the other side, also the visitors that are watching the floats from the sidewalk do face regulations - if you are not happy with the throws you caught the article about throwbacks is applied: "*It shall be unlawful for a person to throw any object at a float or at any participant in a carnival parade."*

The most important regulation though which identifies Mardi Gras in Orleans Parish is written in section 34-7 about the prohibited commercial nature. "*No parade shall be of a commercial nature or convey or contain a commercial message, corporate or commercial sign, logo or symbol, or commercial signs, identifications or decorations except as expressly provided for herein. No advertising of any kind shall be displayed or used in any parade. No participants in any parade shall display in any manner in such parade any endorsement of candidates for elective public office, nor any endorsement of any issues to be voted on in an election. However, nothing contained in this provision shall be construed to prohibit the humorous caricature of current social events and issues."*



It was Chris Brown who made me aware of the municode for Mardi Gras parades and who introduced me to the services that the krewes established to help the city in coordinating the 35 allowed parades throughout New Orleans:

*"there is the Mayors Mardi Gras Advisory Board - the discussion board of the krewes and the city to organize and stage the parades - the city mainly interferes in supporting services for staging Mardi Gras with emergency, police, safety, cleaning; the police decides where the routes run! There is lots of politics in Mardi Gras and many city laws to stage Mardi Gras! Additionally, there is the Mardi Gras Civic Fund, funded by Rex to raise and provide services to help the city to run Mardi Gras"* (interview 31).

Although there are many regulations about parades and floats during Mardi Gras as stated above, in 2013 there was something else ruling even above these ordinances - the NFL superbowl was staged in New Orleans right in the middle of Mardi Gras season. The major rule, issued by the city and the corporate sponsored event, was: no parade could take place during the superbowl weekend. On the one hand because the city cannot provide enough policemen to accompany the parades and the NFL related events at the same time, on the other hand because the superbowl is a corporate sponsored major spectacle, totally opposed to Mardi Gras parades. This resulted in the obligatory shifting of parades. As some krewes do share their floats, meaning that two or three individual krewes use the same floats for their parades (floats are very expensive due to costs for design, construction, storage, etc.), it happened to the krewe of Choctaw of New Orleans (usually parading on Westbank in Old Algiers) that the parading slots were shifted and Choctaw was ordered to parade on the same day as the krewe of Jupiter in Baton Rouge. Since the NFL brings in its own rules and more economic impact on one weekend than parades, the city seems to be more interested in complying with NFL regulations than in letting the cultural actors stage their parades. A similar cooperation behaviour of the city authorities with the NFL has been described in the chapter dedicated to music where the NFL ruled over the city with their strict zoning code ordinances.

### **5.1. Mardi Gras and its focus on tourism**

*"St. Patrick's and Easter are not really tourism oriented, this is why people still love them! I would say Mardi Gras is the only parade directed towards tourists!"* (interview 22).

The tenor of my interlocutors and the literature I came across is that Mardi Gras has always been catered to tourism. 1857 is a turning point in the history of carnival in New Orleans. The

Mistick Krewe of Comus introduced several new customs including the system of krewes, themed parading, and exclusive tableaux balls. Spectators were separated from krewe float riders, influential business people of social elites that formed secretive organisations. Especially Anglo-Saxon politicians, merchants, lawyers, bankers, plantation owners, investors, hoteliers, and representatives of big international commercial firms participated as krewe members or were invited to the secret elegant balls (ROACH, 1996) - Carnival business tourism was one of the first objectives of the locally produced parades by the krewes.

In his CBD based office on the 12th floor Chris Brown, the president of the Krewe of Rex, explained to me why Rex was the pioneering club that turned Mardi Gras into a tourism event around 150 years ago:

*"Rex was founded in 1872 in the post civil war period during reconstruction time, this period was economically very poor and people were in depression. In these times there were hardly any visitors and no money coming in from the outside, the mayor ruled like a dictator and was against the native inhabitants. The genesis of Rex was a way to raise the local spirit and bring in new people - tourists! New Orleans had strong ties with New England and many tourists came from there to spend their money. Rex was founded by a combination of civic and business leaders. The Krewe of Comus was the first Krewe which was established and consisted mainly of daytime crowds who were dancing on the street. Rex put all these people together and created the King of Carnival - Rex was the first parading Krewe with the slogan Pro Bono Publico - for the public good! Rex was always a rather public and less secretive Krewe while all the others are very privately organized and secretive - Rex reveals always the real name of the King and Queen, other Krewes only make the name of the Queen public" (interview 31).*

An important motivation for creating the Krewe of Rex in 1872 was to lure tourists and capital to New Orleans in an effort to revive the local economy that had been devastated by the Civil War. Tourism was already conceived as a vehicle of place promotion to raise business interest in the city as a site of profitable investment and commercial growth. The contributions of Rex to the development of Mardi Gras were as ground breaking as the ones of Comus 25 years earlier. Rex, the King of Carnival, introduced to a system of mock royalty and to the official Mardi Gras colours (purple, green, gold). Alsp. Rex sent out "public" invitations to the annual parades (LABORDE, 1999). These royal invitations were distributed and served as a proclamation, inviting all people to come to the Crescent City to join the celebrations. Art posters and brochures were visible in train stations, plastered on train cars, posted on commercial centres, and placed in

public buildings around the major US cities (PRWEB, 2013). Railroad companies used Mardi Gras themes in their advertisements to stimulate travel, by the 1890s the local celebration had become nationally popular. At around 1900 American and European travel writers advised readers that Mardi Gras in New Orleans was a unique entertainment Carnival. It would express civic pride, community identity, and a local attitude of "Laissez le bon temps rouler". Until today nothing has substantially changed. Throughout the century, the growth of media coverage, international publicity, and promotional campaigns helped create an enduring public image of Mardi Gras as *"the most extravagant celebration staged in any American city"* (GOTHAM, 2007a: 23).

Another wave of crucial growth concerning krewes, parades, and visitor attraction occurred in 1969 with the creation of so-called super krewes. Bacchus debuted with the largest floats in Carnival history and introduced several new traditions such as having a celebrity rider as its king and an elaborate supper dance with marching jazz bands. Endymion in 1974 and Orpheus in 1993 copied the innovations of Bacchus, together they launched a *"new formula"* for enhancing the tourist appeal of Carnival (GOTHAM, 2007a: 174). Before the 1960s the Carnival krewes were limited to native born residents of New Orleans, krewe membership was a privilege and sign of upper class social status. Suddenly, outsiders could become kings and queens, and financially support their krewes from far away. A new era of ever more spectacular and entertaining floats was born. The leaders of these super krewes worked systematically with the Greater New Orleans Tourist and Convention Commission *"to attract visitors to the city, thus shifting from accommodating tourists to actively and methodically recruiting tourists"* (GOTHAM, 2007a: 176). NOTMC as well as NOCVB are constant partners of Rex for launching the Royal Invitation and dragging visitors to New Orleans (PRWEB, 2013). Bacchus, Endymion, and Orpheus have replaced the traditional tableaux balls with extravagant shows at the Louisiana Superdome and at the Morial Convention Center where tickets are sold to stage the big events characterised by mass entertainment and consumer culture.

Whereas the first krewes of Comus, Momus, and Proteus locked out new entrepreneurs from elite society and culture the super krewes provided a new set of collective representations for reinterpreting carnival. They became corporate recruiting tools to persuade wealthy business owners to invest in New Orleans. At the same time super krewes opened access to Carnival for visitors while denying it to locals who could not afford the high membership fees and tickets for

attending shows and balls. A similar development happened to the Jazz and Heritage Festival as explained in the respective chapter.

### **The ambivalent relationship between locals and tourists during Mardi Gras**

*"Today Mardi Gras is a worldwide tourist attraction but this is not the reason why we are doing it" (interview 9).*

New Orleans' residents are fragmented when it comes to changes of parade related habits and traditions. Locals do not only have an ambivalent relationship with out of town visitors partying at Mardi Gras but also with the parades themselves. Tourists cannot contribute financially to the parades directly. Krewes are paying for the floats and the organisation of the 12 day lasting event. Arthur Hardy was not the only interlocutor telling me that *"we would still have Mardi Gras without tourists and would do the party and floats for ourselves"* (interview 9).

This statement has certainly be proven in 2006 when Mardi Gras was staged around half a year after hurricane Katrina had destroyed most of the city and obliged many residents to leave. All interlocutors that mentioned the 2006 parades emphasised that it was *"the best"* and *"most beautiful"* Mardi Gras they have ever experienced. Not only because the parades represented a sign that the city was still alive, was going to be reconstructed, and back on the global cultural surface, but also because the participants were mostly locals, and not tourists as in every other year. The president of the Rex organisation, Chris Brown, explained to me why and how Mardi Gras in the devastated city of New Orleans was made possible during Carnival of 2006:

*"In 2006 the mayor asked the Krewes, especially Rex to organize the Mardi Gras parade because it was a similar period as in 1872, a post-civil war reconstruction phase of New Orleans, the aim was to help the local population and get tourist money in to improve the New Orleans economy. But in 2006 it was way more a local celebration, the Krewes did not want to be frivolous - meaning that the Krewes would party over the suffering of other people - so they had the idea of starting social projects for public services, in particular three projects. Project Gold: through the selling of plastic wrist bands they collected money to pay the NOPD to provide security during Mardi Gras and also to fundraise money to give it to the cops who lost their houses during Katrina. Project Green: get participants ready to help cleaning up the streets after the Mardi Gras parade because the city did not have the forces and money for the cleaning service. Project Purple: fundraising for Charter Schools, these are public schools that are run by private companies - Rex members volunteered in matching the needs for the charter schools - people*

*from outside New Orleans and Louisiana were donating money and furnishing, so Rex started the Pro Bono Publico Foundation which raised up to 1.2 million dollars until 2012, all this money goes into the fund and directly supports schools other krewes having smaller social projects going on"* (interview 31).

John Magill, an expert of urban history from the Historic New Orleans Collection, was one of the interlocutors stating that Mardi Gras would exist without tourists, and indirectly that it would probably be a better experience for locals: *"if tourism would suddenly disappear we would still have the street parties - the people are doing it for their own enjoyment! If tourists would stop to come to Mardi Gras we would still have it - in 2006 we probably had the best Mardi Gras ever"* (interview 28).

The interesting aspect of Mardi Gras is that participants can have different roles during the parades. While expressing social hierarchy was one of the founding principles of krewes staging carnival festivities this social system also extended to visitors. Those tourists who are participating on the floats as supporting members of super krewes do enjoy a higher social status as the ones who are trying to catch beads on the sidewalks: *"there is a big difference between the tourists who are watching the parade and the tourists who are participating in the parade - some Krewes have out of town members, they act like supporting visitors of the parade"* (interview 9).

Chris Brown also referred to the many different roles participants at parades can have, influencing the relationship of locals and tourists:

*"Tourists are one of the primary concerns of the Mardi Gras parade - it has always been part of our fabric. There is an opportunity for everyone to participate in Mardi Gras, in many different ways at various levels - this is also how this celebration has evolved: as a member of Krewe, organizational, riding on the floats, or not. People standing at the streets watching the floats passing by and catching beads ... many people who are working during Mardi Gras in different businesses"* (interview 31).

The relationship between residents and tourists can get difficult if New Orleanians have the feeling that certain standards of comportment during the parades (but also at other cultural events) are not respected enough: *"it has become so international because of carnival, and yes you can drink on the street and it's a fun-fan fair! Tourists get into this maybe more than locals*

*do because they don't know where it comes from. People do appreciate it as long as the visitors are respecting their property and their culture!"* (interview 16).

As explained in the chapter about music Bourbon Street has a special status in New Orleans where the ambivalent relationship between locals and disrespectful behaviour of tourists becomes apparent. The newly developed disrespectful tourist habits are for example: throwing beads from balconies along bars on Bourbon Street, distributing beads to boys and girls for kisses, donating beads to girls who in return have to show parts of their bodies. The traditional throwing and catching of Mardi Gras beads shall not be mixed up with Bourbon Street behaviour, as expressed by several interlocutors:

*" ... but the Mardi Gras parades organized by Krewees in their neighborhoods are not about tourists in Bourbon street or in the French Quarter - the floats cannot enter in French Quarter because they are too big. It is not like on Bourbon Street where people show boobs just to get five cent beads - at the Mardi Gras krewe floats things are thrown that have something to do with the krewe - little plush toys and stuff with the name of the krewe on, and veggies sometimes!"* (interview 14).

Also Jan Rampsey, who grew up in New Orleans, complained about the rather inglorious tourism influence on Bourbon Street where parades used to take place until the early 1970s. Tourists and the city authorities are made responsible for the substantial change resulting that the entertainment centre of the city is no longer visited anymore by locals, especially not during Mardi Gras festivities. In the sentence before the following citation Jan described how mass tourism took over the music scene on Bourbon Street:

*" ... the same kind of thing happened to Mardi Gras! The Mardi Gras culture is a very important part of the culture of the city! Mardi Gras was a very New Orleans celebration - I can remember, it's a long time ago, my parents used to take us to Bourbon Street for Mardi Gras! My parents dressed up like devils, they dressed me up like a fairy like "Mary had a little lamb", that's a nursery song everybody knows it from childhood in the US [Jan is singing to me the first line of the song: Mary had a little lamb his fleece was white as snow, everywhere where Mary went her lamb was sure to go]. I was dressed up like Mary and my brother was dressed up like a sheep! My parents pulled us in a wagon - and I remember this! Over time the people in the city said - we love Mardi Gras, I bet tourists would love Mardi Gras too! They started promoting New Orleans Mardi Gras - bringing in all these people who would come in for partying! Today you cannot go and walk on Bourbon Street on Mardi Gras - not with kids! [ ... ] ... everybody is drunk, throwing*

*up - it's disgusting! Local people aren't gonna go there! We live on St. Charles Ave - the vibe up there is totally different from on Bourbon Street! That's an example of how an indigenous cultural celebration has been commercialized and corrupted to attract visitors and it hasn't necessarily done anything good for the event itself! It's a lot of tourist dollars in the city! Unfortunately in New Orleans the whole economy is really based on tourism, there is no real industry here! There is the port, medical, ... the traditional forms of employment... the hospitality industry is way up there! It is very powerful in terms of economy for the city!" (interview 23).*

Although the tourism industry and the many visitors have turned Mardi Gras into a party event in the French Quarter, Mardi Gras season still has kept its family character for most of the residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This includes not only family visits of the parades along the streets, or family parading on the floats, but especially garden parties with close and extended family members, as well as neighbours. So called block parties (a big garden party or event in a bar where residents of the whole block are invited) are also usual gatherings during parades.

*"A lot of people that are out here on the neutral ground they have their tents out there, chairs, BBQs, crawfish bowls, for bigger parades they camp overnight because they make space for their friends and family. [ ... ] ... it's when people bring their own food, drinks, chairs on their parking lots - this is how I explain Mardi Gras to out of towners! Parades that go by might last for an hour, then you wait two hours while socializing until the next parade comes - and you are eating, drinking, dancing in the street! It's very family oriented!" (interview 5).*

While tourists are mainly concentrated in the French Quarter and are watching parades along Canal Street in the CBD and St. Charles Avenue, locals do participate at the parades that are floating by their houses. Additionally, visitors do especially travel to New Orleans on the weekend before Mardi Gras day and are not always outnumbering resident participants:

*" ... it depends where it is! On Napoleon Ave it is 80% locals, at Krewe du Vieux Carré one of the first parades in the period in the Bywater its 90% locals! It's one of the few parades that's allowed through the French Quarter. Most of the parades are too big and have to be outside! It's the very first parade - three weeks before Mardi Gras. It's all pulled by donkeys or people! Mardi Gras day is on a Tuesday - all the tourists usually come in for Friday, Saturday, Sunday and they leave on Monday. Whereas Mardi Gras lasts more than three weeks!" (interview 17).*

There are residents who are either totally opposed to the Mardi Gras chaos and leave the city just in time to avoid the tourism masses, others leave the city so they can rent out their apartments and houses very lucratively. Locals tend to enjoy the passing parades in their neighbourhoods also because they know that the closer the parades come to the city centre the more tourists are cheering for beads: "*... many locals go out of New Orleans for Mardi Gras - but many people just love it! Most of the parades start upon Napoleon when the parades hit Lee Circle roundabout, anything from there until Canal Street is gonna be tourists!*" (interview 5).

One of my interlocutors, Eric Lolis Elie, who is also a passionate author, published an article in the Washington Post about what is behind the tourism event called Mardi Gras:

*"For us, Mardi Gras is family time. We gather on our favorite corners to watch parades with parents and cousins and picnic lunches prepared by grandmothers (then) or bought from fast-food dispensaries (now). We don masks. We drink. We dance. We drink. We yell loudly. We drink. This we do, ever aware that the people on our right and on our left are the same people we will see during more sober times at work, school and church."* (ELIE, 2007).

## **5.2. Tourism related influences and commodification issues on Mardi Gras**

Mardi Gras has been influenced by the tourism industry since its first official parade in 1857. Nevertheless, there have been many crucial steps that developed Mardi Gras into an ever more important tourism event. Rex was responsible for the first big tourist wave beginning in 1872, the following characteristic change regarding the attire and decoration of floats was in the 1920s. Until that time the parades figured historical, Greek mythological, and literature topics on the floats. From the 1930s onwards popular and contemporary themes included caricatures of politicians and early celebrities of music and film have been used on floats. With these new attributes more visitors were expected to join the street Carnival shows.

### **Super krewes**

After an extensive private guided tour through the archive of the Carnival collection at the Louisiana State Museum right in the French Quarter, Wayne Phillips, curator of costumes and textiles, gave me some more background information of how tourism popularity has influenced the Mardi Gras parades in the late 1960s:



*"There is this new concept that started in the 1960s, the concept of the super krewe - the first super krewe was probably the krewe of Bacchus formed in 1969, there was a krewe of Bacchus in the 1940s surviving only for a few years, so it resurrected in the late 1960s. It was formed in part because it was believed in the 1960s that Mardi Gras was getting very boring, that parades were getting very predictable, uninteresting, tourism was starting to decrease, because Mardi Gras wasn't as interesting as it used to be - so Bacchus came along with a more modern parade with bigger floats and instead of crowning a member of their krewe as their king they would crown a celebrity, so they would pick a movie or TV star to invite to come to New Orleans and crown it their king - they would also have hard membership, and their membership policies were not as restrictive as what we call the old-line krewes like Rex and Comus, whose members draw exclusively from the affluent members of societies, usually older families - just anybody could join the krewe of Bacchus. It was a men's krewe - but they became very successful very quickly! There was also the krewe of Endymion, which is a little bit older than the krewe of Bacchus but started out as a very small parade. Endymion emerged as a super krewe in the 1970s, when they first paraded in a separate neighborhood in the 1960s, they did not come down to the downtown area of Canal Street. In the 1970s their parades were relocated down to the center, they began growing their parades and floats to unprecedented levels! By 1973 their parades got so big that they physically could not manouver the streets - they could not turn the corners!" (interview 18).*

Due to the physically growing floats which mainly started with the super krewes the fire and police department felt that the increased size of parade floats, and the crowds that gathered to see them, rendered the narrow streets in the French Quarter unsafe. The city issued a ban on parades in that historic area:

*" ... until 1973 Mardi Gras actually went through the French Quarter - but the crowds were getting so big that the NOFD declared it unsafe to have parades going down the streets in the French Quarter. Since that time there have been no big parades in the French Quarter - it is illegal!" (interview 18).*

For 117 years Mardi Gras parades were staged in the French Quarter, many of them by night, illuminated by fire and torches. Its light reflected from the two story buildings in the narrow streets. Today, this atmosphere is lost since parades are only allowed on broad avenues:

*"Particularly the people that are living in New Orleans and that make a living with Mardi Gras miss the little parades in the French Quarter. The little floats would have torch lights - flamboes as they were called - with the architecture rising on both sides this created that mystical aura*

*that you don't get when going down on Canal street or St. Charles Ave. That is something that tourism did change about the parades!" (interview 18).*

Continuing our talk in the middle of hundreds of historical costumes worn by kings and queens of diverse krewes, glass cases with posters, maps, invitations to balls, photos, and other historical documents of Mardi Gras events from the 18th, 19th, and 20th century, Wayne gave me more insight into the motivation of creating a super krewe and who is interested in watching such parades:

*Bernhard: "Are there other super krewes?"*

*Wayne: there is Harry Connick Junior, he is a musician from New Orleans, he was king of Bacchus in 1993 - he had such a good time as king that he started his own krewe! The krewe of Orpheus - the god of music - which seems appropriate for a musician to start that krewe - and Orpheus is a super krewe with big floats! Harry Connick Junior invites his celebrity friends, TV stars, music stars, entertainers, ... Bacchus still exists and they have a celebrity king every year! The krewe of Endymion has a king who is a member of the krewe, they invite a celebrity to be their grand marshal, which is an honorary rider on the float and their grand marshal is always a celebrity. There are other krewes with celebrities riding on the floats or even as their royalty. And that is strictly for tourists. The locals don't really care about seeing a celebrity king or queen, we got used to it and it's kinda fun to find out who the next celebrity king of Bacchus or the grand marshal of Endymion is gonna be but that was a tradition that was started for tourists! These celebrities don't give money to the krewes, they don't have to pay, they are invited as a way to attract people to watch the parade!" (interview 18).*

## **Beads and throws**

The topic of the famous Mardi Gras beads was another rather tourism-influenced issue that Wayne mentioned during our interview. While it is historically not completely certain when throws first appeared at the parades it is said that Rex introduced to glass beads in the Carnival of 1921, starting a trend that has lasted until today with substantial modifications:

*"The tradition of throwing things from the floats goes back to the 1920s, in early years the parade riders would only throw a few things - people would say that really up to the 1960s if you would walk home with one necklace of glass beads from a parade you would call yourself lucky! It was glass beaded necklaces, maybe candy, it wasn't a large volume ... throwing vegetables was only at St. Patrick's parades not during Mardi Gras - not food! Unless it's like packaged food like candy or cookies" (interview 18).*

At St. Patrick's parades in New Orleans and neighbouring Parishes float riders distribute flying cabbage, potatoes, carrots, and packaged noodles. At Mardi Gras parades it is only candies that are considered as eatable throws. All the throws are purchased by the float riders privately, it is those people who decide what they want to give to the visiting crowds of people. Often, throws contain small toys for kids such as plush or plastic figures and animals, lots of body and hair decorations such as hats, wigs, and artificial flowers. Other useful stuff that is thrown at a parade are cups (so you can pour beer into it) and plastic bags (so you can carry home your caught items with comfort). At the Irish parades especially men (smelling from alcohol) distribute roses and kisses to female visitors (hardly any ladies distribute kisses to male visitors), as I could observe on March 17 in 2012 along Magazine Street. However, the most common and most demanded throws by the participants standing on the streets are beads, distributed in masses at any kind of Carnival or Carnival imitating parade throughout the year. Once the seldom glass beads were only available at Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans. Today, plastic beads are imported from China in massive amounts of different colours - in this way, participants do not have to catch beads anymore to get some. Beads are available in any souvenir store, in many bars on Bourbon Street drinkers get beads with a cup of beer or can purchase them inside the bars, they are even for sale at Walmart:

*"The point is that now you can go into a store and buy all these beads in any souvenir shop! Until maybe 20 years ago you couldn't buy Mardi Gras beads - you had to catch them from a float! Obviously New Orleanians who live here do not go into the souvenir shop to buy beads - that is something exclusively seen as the refuge of a tourist - it's always the joke when you walk around the French Quarter and see people wearing beads it's like: I am a tourist - that's a sign!"* (interview 18).

Many krewes though have started to design special beads and include their insignias, crests, and emblems (called medallion beads), showing the mythological and allegorical figure of the krewe, a king or queen, crowns and signs of royalty, to differentiate their krewe and themes from all the others. This gives participants a unique reason to attend particular parades, to catch a piece of a specific krewe, and take it home with them. Additionally there are doubloons (imitations of coins) which have also been introduced by the Rex Organisation in the 1950s. Starting with aluminum coins these doubloons developed as successful representational throws of many other krewes by the 1970s. Since the big import wave has swept over from China such doubloons, in every colour one can imagine, are made out of plastic. These specially designed

throws representing the different Carnival organisations are usually not for sale. There exist groups for doubloon collecting and swapping and also a number of shops - physical and online - catering to these collectors. Today lots of different throws have gone high-tech with fiber optics, blinking LEDs, and other attracting attributes that make them desirable carnival gifts.

*" ... all the beads come from China but there are other types of unique locally made throws like prints and posters. But even the stuff that's made in China, a lot of it is specific to that krewe and you can't buy it! Like some of the beads have specially designed emblems of the krewe on so you cannot buy it at a store!"* (interview 18).

For example, the krewe of Muses creates, orders, and distributes more than 30 different items. They are modifying custom designed beads for every parade - the trend goes to bigger, longer, and wider beads every year. Since the late 1990s, when the amount of beads thrown from floats has started to over-satisfy the market (participants are usually catching more beads than they can actually carry home) a few non-profit organisations began to recycle trashed beads. Big bead collection bins can be found at the entrance of supermarket stores and other shops during and after Mardi Gras. The Arc of Greater New Orleans for example repackages and resells trashed beads to Mardi Gras krewes to be used in the next carnival season, since 2010 the amount of recycled beads exceeds 50.000 kg (PREVOST, 2012).

As I could observe throughout the city, beads that are taken home are often used as decorations for private gardens, street sided porches and fences, bicycles and baskets, as well as cars, and other items. Additionally, beads thrown from the floats that did not get caught often end up elsewhere and can be seen hanging from trees along parade routes (and in public parks), from power supply lines, power lines for street cars on St. Charles Avenue and Canal Street, and other locations.

### **5.3. Mardi Gras is big business**

Once brought to New Orleans from French colonisers, celebrating the catholic feast of Carnival in the mid 17th century, the first relevant organisation of a parade as we know them today (with floats, throws, and marching bands) was staged in 1857 with innovative ideas by the Mistick Krewe of Comus. Additional to the parades the tradition of holding tableaux balls (access is by invitation only) has survived until today when annually around 125 of such balls are celebrated. Other fund raising events have been established such as bingo games, elegant dinners, and

shows. In this way the mock royalty krewes can collect the money that is needed to construct floats, pay official fees, make costumes, employ marching bands, etc. The throws that are flying around from floats are purchased privately by the krewe members that have the privilege of celebrating Mardi Gras from above.

According to the Cultural Economy Snapshot (2012) Mardi Gras is celebrated by more than one million visitors annually (this number was reached since the year of 2010) with an overall economic impact of more than US\$ 340 million, per season. The economic impact has been calculated by Toni Weiss, professor in the economics department at Tulane University. She was commissioned to do research about the direct and indirect economic impact of Mardi Gras in the city. The report, which was done in 2009 and 2011 so far, was funded by the krewe civic fund. The objective is to present to city hall how much profit the city makes with of Mardi Gras. The aim is that krewes pay less fees and taxes for staging their parades and related events - because *"krewes don't want tax hikes"* (interview 30). Krewes are supposed to pay for parade permit fees which include police safety, cleaning and trash pick-up, and other services. Another big expense is for the insurance of floats and its riders. As stated by Toni the city is not interested in funding a deeper study about the economic impact of Mardi Gras because there is no budget foreseen for such a report.

*"The later Mardi Gras is the better for the economy"* (WEISS, 2011: 3)

Since the Carnival season has a different length every year Mardi Gras day can be at the earliest in the beginning of February and at the latest in mid March. If the king cake season is longer, people have recovered from the Christmas season and from Valentine's day (which is traditionally a strong day for florists and jewellers in the USA). Hence, the excitement and the willingness to spend money has grown. A late Mardi Gras also corresponds with university spring breaks, in this way students and others can stay in town for a longer period of time. Furthermore, krewes and individual members are very likely to increase their volume of expenditures for throws, gifts, balls, parties, and related events (WEISS, 2011).

Tourists usually spend the most of their budgets on lodging, food and merchandise. Locals spend their savings on entertainment, food and beverage consumption (for house and garden parties), merchandise purchases including Mardi Gras themed jewellery, clothing, and household decorations. Mardi Gras krewes spend their dollars on floats, costumes, licenses, party venues,

decorations, food and lots of other items related to parades and balls, float design, and storage costs for the floats year round. In addition to spending by krewes, its members separately spend money on balls, throws, costumes, jewelry, and miscellaneous services such as transportation within the city.

Public expenditure by the city government during Mardi Gras includes the maintenance of public safety and provision of public services. Key expenditures are police and fire department overtime and incremental property management, parks and recreation, and sanitation expenses. The largest city expense is overtime payments to police, primarily for maintaining the public safety and traffic control at parades and on Mardi Gras day. Clean up expenses funded by the sanitation department represent another large outlay. Some city departments actually make money from Mardi Gras activities through fees and rental of city-owned resources (WEISS, 2011).

Additionally to the listed direct spending of tourists, locals, krewes and its members there is in incremental tourism and brand value that is considered as an indirect economic impact of Mardi Gras for the city. From the 18th century onwards Mardi Gras in New Orleans has been an attraction to tourists. To support such tourism, the city developed an extensive infrastructure of lodging, food and drinking establishments, retail shops selling themed merchandise, and so forth, from which other events and businesses, such as conventions, which are actually unrelated to Mardi Gras per se, could and do benefit. Even outside of the Mardi Gras season, tourists are attracted to New Orleans by the Mardi Gras brand. The economic spillover effects of Mardi Gras are difficult to quantify, but likely to be very large (WEISS, 2011).

For example, by the 1980s Mardi Gras had become a year-round industry with hundreds of local residents employed in float building, museums (a permanent exhibition in the Presbytere and especially the Mardi Gras World by the city's most popular float builder Blaine Kern), and the mass production of souvenirs. On the other hand the production of the Mardi Gras beads, products, souvenirs, and memorabilia is no longer part of local craft skills geared toward local consumption. A handful of factories in China produce most of the beads imported to the US and are retooled for mass production and consumption. According to Gotham (2005a) the bead industry sells around US\$ 500 million of beads annually worldwide. Furthermore, the rise of the super krewes and the mobilisation of business elites to promote tourism through carnival are the catalysts for transformation of the local float-building market into a global industry. The New

Orleans based Kern company builds themed floats in different sizes for carnival parades around the world, with an annual revenue of more than US\$ 20 million from constructing and maintaining more than 300 floats for forty parades (GOTHAM, 2005a).

As an additional input of the financial aspect of Mardi Gras I would like to state the number that Toni Weiss has calculated regarding the net fiscal benefit to the city of New Orleans as a result of staging Mardi Gras which was US\$ 7.77 million in 2011 (WEISS, 2011).

### **Perceived and non-perceived protection measures from commodification**

*"We have a very firm law about not letting Mardi Gras become commodified - there is no corporate sponsorship of any part of Mardi Gras! Nobody owns Mardi Gras! It's the krewes and people going to Mardi Gras parades - that's the only relationship!"* (interview 22).

One of the particular features of Mardi Gras in New Orleans is the prevalence of historical traditions that discourage corporate sponsorship and advertising in parades. As mentioned in the subchapter about the regulation of Mardi Gras, section 34-7 of the city's municode bans advertising on floats and prohibits the throwing of beads with corporate logos. Hence, no corporation can be an *official* sponsor of Mardi Gras and there are no *official* Mardi Gras products or merchandise gadgets like posters, photos, t-shirts, beads, or costumes, because it is legally impossible to assign exclusive rights to the carnival event. Additionally, Mardi Gras takes place in public space, on streets throughout the city, so the parades cannot be commodified like festivals that are staged within a limited area, sometimes requiring an admission fee.

New Orleanians feel proud of this tradition and are happy that their parades do not feature "Miller Beer" on the floats like in Metairie or Shreveport. The newly formed super krewes, with (mainly prominent) out of town float riders that are invited to throw beads, are widely accepted and not perceived as substantial commercialised changes to the parading traditions as expressed by one of my interlocutors:

*"Parades are protected very well - we have not yet the parades become to be controlled by the tourism industry! Some of the super krewes like Endymion, Bacchus, Orpheus a lot of people and members that are involved in them are not from New Orleans! They come in for the parade itself! Harry Connick Junior has a lot of friends from Hollywood coming in and that's fine - but all members of the other krewes are totally locals! They are the ones spending their money on*

*throws and making the floats, pulling off the spectacles that are free for everybody!"* (interview 22).

Wayne Phillips also drew my attention to the particular organisational form of Mardi Gras krewes which is seen as a way of preserving local carnival traditions. He mentions the parades in Metairie where corporate sponsorship is allowed making the parades dependent on the willingness of businesses to invest every year:

*Bernhard: "is there a way for krewes to make money out of tourists?"*

*Wayne: no, the krewes are not for profit, they don't sell anything! Commercialism in Mardi Gras in New Orleans is prohibited - businesses can't advertise in a parade! Only in New Orleans it's prohibited! For example, there are parades that take place in the city of Metairie, it is in Jefferson parish - while New Orleans is in Orleans parish - their parish ordinances allow businesses to advertise on floats! A restaurant or a car dealership could advertise at a parade in Metairie - and that is always the issue! And that is what people seem to forget - Mardi Gras parades are paid for by the members of that krewe exclusively, the city doesn't give any money to them! The only thing the city contributes is of course provide police protection along the parade route, the members of the krewes pay for the construction of the floats, storage of the floats in a warehouse during the year, for the costumes, the ball, the parties, they hire all the entertainers and the decoration of the ball" (interview 18).*

Mardi Gras is not perceived as being controlled by the tourism industry and hence as being staged as a commodity directed to tourists because there is no financial dependency on the industry nor on the number of visitors: *"The spending on Mardi Gras is recession proof because it is not dependent on tourism - people do not cut on Mardi Gras! The tourist industry and tourists do and cannot contribute to any income of Krewes. There are no merchandise articles or anything produced by the Krewes what can be sold - the only thing that is sold by the Krewes is the tickets for their balls"* (interview 30).

Although locals are not content with many forms of tourism influences, a directly related tourism impact on the organisational scheme of the krewes is not perceived, as stated by Arthur Hardy: *"Tourism does not impact the structure or organization of Mardi Gras but it has impact on the city because of the all the money that is coming in!"* (interview 9). New Orleanians who are not members of krewes and other participants at parades are hardly aware of some form of 'creeping commercialism'. The subtle form of commodification that has penetrated Mardi Gras is



the business of selling memberships and riderships on floats. It has become usual that local companies extend invitations to business partners to join them riding on floats. Also non-local businesses have begun organising travel packages with the highlight of riding on Mardi Gras floats for specific business partners, customers, and employees. Mardi Gras has become a form of corporate entertainment to establish or strengthen business relationships. For example, Orpheus sells floats and rider posts to American Express, Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, and to the Hotel Inter-Continental. Corporate riders are urgently needed by some of the krewes to fill their positions. New Orleans residents are not willing to or cannot afford paying the high costs of riding on a float. For the krewes, the advantage of selling riderships to companies is not to find a sponsor to subsidise local riders but to fill vacant positions on the floats (GOTHAM, 2005a, 2007a).

Another example of rather unperceived commodification of Mardi Gras is what happens on Monday. In 1987 the old tradition that Rex, the King of Carnival, arrives the city by boat was reenacted (in former times, between 1874 and 1917 it was on Tuesday) and the new Carnival event was called Lundi Gras - Fat Monday. This was made available through a partnership between the city, the Riverwalk Shopping Mall (where the boat arrives from the Mississippi river), the Rouse Corporation, and the krewe of Rex. A new Carnival day with parades was added to the tourist package. Entrepreneurs of local businesses and residents actively use tourism to build new traditions.

New Orleans residents draw a firm distinction between the practice of corporate advertising (visible), the practice of corporate riders (invisible), and the adaption of parades to the growing tourism demand and participation of visitors (new traditions). The production of new and locally distinctive expressions of culture is hardly perceived as commodification whereas the visible commercialisation of Mardi Gras through advertisement on floats and throws is perceived as an exploitative comportment by the tourism industry and corporate enterprises.

#### **5.4. The greatest free show on earth as a reciprocal process?**

*"Mardi Gras has been called the greatest free show on earth because you don't have to pay anything to watch the parade because the krewe members are paying for all of it"* (interview 18).

The tourism industry likes to promote Mardi Gras in New Orleans as *"the greatest free show on earth"* because in fact the participation for locals and tourists is free at parades which are taking

place on the streets. For other related events such as the prestigious balls where mostly krewe members, locals as well as national celebrities on invitation can watch the individual krewe's crowning of kings and queens. For the big events of super krewes high priced tickets are sold for financing the various shows.

The fact that Mardi Gras is for free created some difficulties when I asked my interlocutors about intangible and consumable tourism products. The term consumption often awakened the concept of first purchasing a product in order to be able to consume it. In the following I give a short example of how such misunderstandings were created:

*Wayne: "parades aren't really a consumable product because it's free - you don't have to pay anything to go to a parade!"*

*Bernhard: well, you still can consume it when you participate!*

*Wayne: yes, you are standing there watching it and are participating in it. It's not like going into a club and buying the music you hear - it's like the reverse in parades - you don't pay to go the parade but catch all the things that are thrown at you!" (interview 18).*

In fact, krewes do not profit from tourists directly. The main profit from Mardi Gras stays with the city authorities and with individual tourism and marketing related businesses (hotels, restaurants and bars, merchants of carnival related products, transportation, tour operators, promotion agencies, etc.). Many of them are managed and owned by krewe members. This is also one of the reasons why almost all krewes once were secretive organisations.

Today, krewes are not as secretive anymore, the names of kings and queens as well as the names of members are often made public. Also the reasons for creating new krewes have changed and are not always focussed on making business relations. For example, Don Marshall, executive director of the Jazz and Heritage Foundation, created his own krewe. Its members and the 17 sub-krewes share the initial conception of bringing Mardi Gras back to the French Quarter, as well as being able to parade without much expenses and the many regulations which have been imposed by city hall. Parade topics are critical about the city government, address social issues of the local population, and involve many non-profit organisations which are active in the cultural sector as well as musicians in brass bands:

*"Ultimately we wanted do a parade during Mardi Gras, with brass bands in the French Quarter - I started and founded the Krewe Du Vieux Carré some years ago - it's all the artists, the groups that hang out in the bars ... all the crazy people, it's grown to be the most outrageous group of*

*people with a political theme very critical of government with social issues and stuff. [ ... ] It's made up a lot of different groups which come up with these themes!" (interview 20).*

Krewe Du Vieux Carré is the first krewe that is parading in the Carnival season starting on Epiphany day. The regulations of the municode do not have to be respected totally because the krewe is not parading during the official Mardi Gras period and does not come up with oversize floats.

Base on my knowledge about how krewes finance parades and stage them for visitors I often had to think about the concept of reciprocity which I wanted to apply to Mardi Gras and its krewes. However, my anthropological understanding of a reciprocal process was not shared:

*Felice: "what makes Mardi Gras parades so wonderful is that it's almost like the way of giving to people - because they spend a lot of money! You have to get your costumes, buy a lot of stuff and you have to get your throws! Mardi Gras is a wonderful way of giving back to the community! You don't have to have a penny for participating at Mardi Gras - that's the beauty of Mardi Gras! [ ... ] Mardi Gras is so deep - it's almost like a spiritual break from day-to-day life - because you can't escape it! Even if you want to you cannot work on Mardi Gras day!*

*Bernhard: is it like a reciprocal process?*

*Felice: it's like the rich giving to the poor! It's not like the typical reciprocal process that you describe. It's like giving the community a good time, everyone who is participating has a good time. It's not like you gonna make money for Mardi Gras, Mardi Gras is people utilizing what they have to have a good time" (interview 7).*

I started a further attempt in asking Arthur Hardy, a Mardi Gras expert, about the reciprocal character of krewes which ended in denial because of the absence of material goods that are exchanged: *"the concept of reciprocity can hardly be applied for the parades - the people on the floats are simply giving joy and happiness - everything they want to get back for organizing the big Mardi Gras party is also joy and happiness" (interview 9).*

Additionally, there is not only a lack of exchanging material goods by the krewes and the crowds but also a lack of monetary exchange since visitors do not spend their money directly for watching the parades as stressed by Toni Weiss:

*"Mardi Gras has no reciprocal system related to financial benefits - the Krewe members have to give money to the Krewe - between 5.000 - 100.000 dollars per year - but they do not get any*

*money back because you cannot make money out of Mardi Gras. All this money is spent for floats - constructed in Mardi Gras World - and stuff that is thrown off the floats like beads, plush pets, krewe gadgets, ... and for the organization of the Krewe ball where you only can participate on invitation" (interview 30).*

Chris Brown, as the current president of the Rex organisation, knows what it means to finance and prepare parades. He has the experience of riding on floats which is not automatic for each krewe member. As I showed with the municode, there is a limit of riders on the floats, and krewes count many more members. Since there is no financial reciprocity neither for the individual members nor for the krewes there is a very important intangible social aspect that is achieved with riding on the floats: *"only half of the Rex members do ride on the floats at the parade. There is no financial reciprocity - the only thing that is coming back is prestige of being a member or being the king and queen of carnival"* (interview 31).

### **Critics on Mardi Gras from within**

Although Mardi Gras parades are loved by the majority of New Orleanians some do express their concerns and critical opinions about the annual mega event. The critical voices cover issues which are linked to the tourism industry, its marketing strategy, and to the high amount of money which is invested by krewes to stage the parades. Moreover, the difference of obligatory fees for krewes (for parading with floats) and for Social Aid and Pleasure clubs (for organising second lines) as well as the persistent racial divide between whites and blacks do raise critical voices about Mardi Gras.

One of the critical statements about the touristic commercialisation of Mardi Gras and its strategic promotion comes from Arthur Smith. He is the marketing director of the Louisiana State Museums, his office is just one floor above the permanent Mardi Gras exhibition in the Presbytere building on Jackson Square. Arthur is not content with the overall picture of New Orleans that is sent out to the world by tourism marketing agencies because this influences also the way Mardi Gras is perceived by tourists and potential visitors:

*"tourists have a cartoon view of the city! Carnival, Mardi Gras is really a family deal! It's not booze and babes on Bourbon Street, and that's what we promote and give the image of the city, that's what we put out there - we allow gambling. But people don't come here for gambling, they go to Vegas - the residents of New Orleans are gambling and it just sucks money out of the economy! We are buying our own cliches!" (interview 29).*

The gambling issue is another aspect which Arthur heavily criticises regarding the city's marketing strategy. He dislikes the fact that New Orleans allows gambling in order to attract tourists but it is Las Vegas where people tend to go and play in casinos. In New Orleans it is mainly the local people playing with their luck.

However, the consensus of my interlocutors is: you get what you promote to. This means that if NOTMC is promoting Mardi Gras as an alcohol and fun based party event it is exactly those people who are then visiting the city during Carnival. An event which is promoted with certain cliches gets the attraction of a certain clientele: *"certain things attract different kinds of tourism - Mardi Gras attracts the lowest denomination, attracts people who want to do nothing but scream at the top of their lungs!"* (interview 17). Another critical opinion concerning the marketing issue is expressed by Ben Jaffe, owner of the Preservation Hall which is located right around the corner of Bourbon Street. His argument does not only concern Mardi Gras but the tourism stereotype in general: *"I despise the plastic beads for Mardi Gras, there is too much stereotype of New Orleans like spring break, Mardi Gras, party, show your tits, huge ass beer - that's not what New Orleans is to me at all, that bothers me a lot"* (interview 10).

Arthur additionally sees a relation between the ever growing masses of tourists and the ever growing parades focussing on the quantity of floats instead of the artistic quality. As the masses of tourists are growing so are the sizes of floats, quantity of parades, numbers of beads and other throws. In Arthur's view, the objective is to grow bigger in size and quantity leaving out the cultural and historic foundations of Carnival:

*"the art of the unique cultural and artistic element of Mardi Gras is gone - you have seen Wayne's costumes and the old pictures - these all presuppose some sort of cultural literacy about classical mythology - now there is no attempt to aesthetics, they are just bigger and bigger, like Bacchus and Endymion - they are just bigger but not better and there are too many of them! All what was good about them is all forgotten and what is cheesy and overdone is ultimately boring - the original cultural spirit is lost, it's all gone worse!"* (interview 29).

As indicated at the beginning of the present subchapter critical opinions about Mardi Gras are also directed at the krewes due to the massive individual spending of money on floats, throws, balls, and related equipment. Maida Owens, director of the Louisiana Folklife Program (which presently hardly exists anymore due to lack of financial resources from the state government),

confronts the wealth of Louisiana and New Orleans with other cities in the US. While in New Orleans millions of dollars are invested in parades that last for one day Maida gives the example of Pittsburgh where privately funded foundations support a larger spectrum of actors in the culture and arts sector, which are seen as preservationists of cultural activities in the city:

*"Preservation: Louisiana does not have a strong commitment to the culture of preservation for the arts, there is lot of wealth but it does not go into foundations but into Mardi Gras and partying; just look at Pittsburgh - large amounts of money is in local foundations supporting culture and art - New Orleans does not have such a system. The Mardi Gras parades need all the money, people pay to the privilege of being on a float. The walking Krewes are organized differently to the Krewes that have floats. The privilege of being a king costs a lot of money - all those resources go into these privileges rather than into foundations"* (interview 6).

Chris Brown is certainly aware of the critics that are directed at old-line krewes such as the Rex organisation. Defending such opinions about money that is spent on party parades the president responds that the dollars - spent by krewes - do mainly remain within the city (except of all the throws that are imported from China) and within the hands of artists such as float designers and builders, tailors and dressmakers, decorators, and also with musicians that are playing at balls. Moreover, some krewes do also support social projects throughout the year:

*"lots of people are criticizing Mardi Gras and the Krewes because all the money the members put into the Krewes and the parades could be used for public services and social projects, they say that Mardi Gras is a waste of dollars - but in fact it creates a big economy and employs a large number of people in New Orleans. Krewes are interlinked and work together on social projects and do work together for the organization of the whole Mardi Gras parade season"* (interview 31).

Additionally, *"the Krewes also pay for the marching bands making the music during the parades - with this money the schools can pay their educational music programs"* (interview 30) as stated by Toni Weiss. Hence, the krewe spending on parades does also benefit some schools who can invest in buying equipment of music instruments and band uniforms.

Mister Mardi Gras, as Arthur Hardy also likes to be called due to his annual publication of the Mardi Gras guide and some historical books about Carnival in New Orleans, is generally not a critical person about Mardi Gras but he sees some inequity concerning the staging of parades for different groups. Krewes, which usually have a large amount of money available to be spent

because of generous and wealthy members, are obliged to pay a reduced fee for parading - on the other side there are social aid and pleasure clubs, staging annual second lines, who have to pay a higher fee. These clubs are composed by mainly Afro-American members who often face difficulties in paying their annual membership fees which are partly used for financing the second lines. City hall plays a vital role in facilitating parades of different character:

*Arthur: "for a carnival parade there is a different set of fees, there is a fee structure which is very beneficial to the krewes! It's ridiculous how little they pay! Maybe about 500 dollars for a parade permit. The clubs pay three times that much or more! The clubs cannot parade during Mardi Gras - there are no second lines during Mardi Gras! The krewes pay a reduced fee because they are covered by a special ordinance! The official carnival parade ordinance that governs those parades giving them a preferential fee. Second lines are in another category - that's why they pay so much more! The city has recognized carnival as tourism generating for a long time, giving the carnival organisations preferential treatment! That's interesting!*

*Bernhard: so the city plays a big role for facilitating events!*

*Arthur: essentially the city subsidizes the carnival parades - the city provides public services like trash pick-up, police, for free! [ ... ] Now Jazz fest is becoming like that - the city says: the reason why you can't have second lines during carnival or Jazz fest is because we don't have the manpower! Which makes sense! It's very challenging to the police during Mardi Gras - but it's coming also to Jazz fest! The police is there so you can't have a second line!" (interview 9).*

As already mentioned in an example above, city hall often justifies the prohibition of parades (either the prohibition of Mardi Gras parades during the NFL super bowl final but even more often the prohibition of second lines during Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest) with the limited number of police officers assuring safety during such events. Arthur Hardy also admits that Mardi Gras parades (but also increasingly Jazz Fest) are making profit from city administrative services. These are provided for a lower fee or even for free because of the high economic impact of the mega events.

The formation of krewes has ever since been instrumentalised by influential New Orleans citizens to keep contacts, business relations, and a societal as well as racial order throughout the city. Until today, especially for the old-line krewes this rationalisation has not been subject to change. Many krewes still act in a secretive way, membership might only be allowed for males or females, and whites. It is criticised that New Orleans has always been ruled by the same families

and business networks which can be attributed to the early creation of certain krewes as expressed by Toni Weiss:

*"In the 1980s the city wanted to force the Krewes to let Afro-American people become members of Krewes - because of this issue some Krewes quit parading because they would not let Afro-American people in. Krewes are very secretive, most of them are single sex - Rex is male, Muses is female. Krewe members are usually upper class rich people who are living in New Orleans since many generations - the blue blood of New Orleans. The reason is mainly to build up and to maintain relations between certain family nets and businesses" (interview 30).*

With this statement the described mock royalty of krewes, represented through the roles of kings and queens wearing crowns and noble robes on the floats and at balls, gains another significant meaning. The mock monarchical and socially hierarchical system is still the basis for showing difference of social classes, segregation, social as well as economic power. The racial divide between black and white is persistent and visible in New Orleans in many areas. As it has always been difficult for Afro-Americans to join krewes, clubs, and floats they created their own organisations with Benevolent Societies as well as Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs. They were created and still function as networks for social inclusion and insurance. Second lines are the most significant form of cultural expression with which these clubs spread social aid within their membership, pleasure for their neighbourhood, and pride for the Afro-American community of New Orleans. Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs also celebrate their annually changing kings and queens, clubs can be all male or all female, and many of them have a secretive character, too. Before analysing the commodification of second lines and its respective clubs I conclude the present chapter with Mardi Gras imitating parades in New Orleans and throughout the state of Louisiana.

### **Mardi Gras without the 'cultural connection' - parade imitations**

*"... if you look back to the 19th century with Mardi Gras parades and the tradition of Mardi Gras it was always marketed as a tourism opportunity even in the 1870s, and it's interesting to compare New Orleans Mardi Gras to other Mardi Gras celebrations in Louisiana or across the Gulf coast - because as soon as it started working for New Orleans, when the parading tradition really became predictable and duplicated every year, and the effect of Mardi Gras on the economy became obvious - this is when other cities attempted to start their own Mardi Gras celebrations!" (interview 18).*



Although Wayne Phillips focusses with his work on New Orleans Mardi Gras parades he is also interested where this kind of Carnival expanded to. Especially throughout Louisiana there are several cities putting up imitations.<sup>85</sup> Some of them can look back on a long-lasting tradition, others were popular for just a few years and then ceased to exist. Often cancellations were a result of lack of cultural attachment and significance to the residents. In some cities Mardi Gras imitations did not evolve over time but were introduced from one year to the other because such events promised lucrative return on investment. The objective was not the continuation of a tradition, the events did not reflect a religious background, and the residents were suddenly confronted with a public floating party that was not totally embraced. Furthermore, the lack of money by private clubs and then by corporate sponsors, which are allowed and practiced everywhere else but in Orleans Parish, were the ultimate reason why some of the imitated parades could not be continued.

*Wayne: "But because there was this obvious impact that tourism was having on New Orleans as soon as the Mardi Gras parade tradition really took off in the 1870s, cities like Shreveport attempted to attract some of that to their own area - kind of marketing themselves to Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and it worked for a little while - there were Mardi Gras parades off and on in Shreveport until the 1920s and then it died out. It was also caused by the great depression that hit in 1929 and erased all of the disposable income of people to put on these unnecessary traditions particularly in a city like Shreveport where there was no cultural reason, not a means of cultural expressions - it was something solely for the enjoyment of locals and tourists - it wasn't engrained in the local culture as in southern Louisiana. However, as more attention has been paid to Louisiana from a tourism standpoint, i.e. Louisiana food was poorly understood outside of Louisiana until the 1970s, when you had celebrity chefs marketing their own products and cook books, starting to get famous around the 1970s. When that sort of became obvious when Louisiana was really marketing it's unique identity nationally, and other cities like Shreveport who had some experience with Mardi Gras and were seeing how crucial Mardi Gras was to the New Orleans economy, they resurrected it - so there have been Mardi Gras parades since the 1980s in Shreveport - and they estimate that their crowds at Mardi Gras parades are as large as in New Orleans! But they still don't have that cultural connection to it like we do in New Orleans because of the predominantly Latin and catholic background!  
Bernhard: they are still going on?"*

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<sup>85</sup> Please refer to the map of Louisiana in the annex for the location of the mentioned cities.

*Wayne: yes, very big parades in Shreveport - but not as many! We have 35 Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans, they may have half a dozen parades - but very big parades and large crowds!*

*Bernhard: have you been there?*

*Wayne: HAHA! [Wayne is laughing loudly, shaking his head] Shreveport is a relatively new city - it doesn't have that architecture or big festivals..." (interview 18).*

Louisiana's political capital, Baton Rouge, also recognised the economic power of Mardi Gras soon after the parades in New Orleans turned into a successful event and established Carnival floats. Wayne doubts that the interest of establishing and continuing a tradition was more important than making an annual economically profitable event in the case of Baton Rouge:

*"Another example is the city of Baton Rouge - it has some degree of history, not as old as New Orleans, but it is obviously the capital of Louisiana so it tends to focus a lot of its attention on politics with the Louisiana State University system. But in recent years Baton Rouge has tried to become more of a tourism destination by creating more museums, highlighting it's historical heritage, Baton Rouge is much closer culturally to New Orleans than Shreveport is to other cities! They have Mardi Gras in Baton Rouge - they have a long tradition of Mardi Gras! Baton Rouge is close enough to New Orleans that anyone who wanted to go to a parade could here! The economic impact of Mardi Gras is an undeniable heart of the New Orleans economy and therefore the Louisiana economy that other cities maintain their own traditions is an attempt to bring people into their towns" (interview 18).*

Other Mardi Gras style parades happen in New Orleans out of carnival season, such as the St. Patrick's Day festivities. Green-white-orange coloured Irish parades can be seen throughout the North-American continent around March 17, throughout Louisiana the parades do obviously imitate Mardi Gras with its distinctive characteristics of floats, throws, and marching bands. The biggest Irish parades are organised in New Orleans and in the neighbouring city of Metairie, the floats are often used for several parades in different cities since St. Patrick's Day is celebrated also two days in advance. While Mardi Gras is heavily promoted by the tourism industry the annual St. Patrick's Day parades do not have a tourism focus, they rather call on the participation of the Irish community and everyone in the city who likes to join and celebrate the country's holy patron. Such imitations are not always welcomed by New Orleans residents because many similar parades happen within a relatively short period of time - Mardi Gras, St. Patrick's Day, and the Easter parades fall into a time frame of around six weeks only. Some locals

therefore suffer from a parade overdose, although New Orleanians like to celebrate continuously.

*" ... we have way too many festivals and parades [ ... ] I am really being honest to you, it's annoying to me, and what it says to me is: that's all what we know how to do. Parades for example, every parade has to be kind of like a carnival parade. The St. Patrick's day parade, they are everywhere in the US, marching bands, politicians - but here it's like a spectacle - throwing food from the floats, the drunkenness, it's so same and boring. We have lost the vitality of the new - of doing things in the new way! I hardly go to any parade anymore, we killed that whole inventiveness of carnival, it's all very same now!"* (interview 29).

Some New Orleanians, like Arthur Smith with the above citation, are concerned about the inflationary use of Mardi Gras style parades. For example, music producer and musician Reid Wick observed on social media platforms that people demanded to have a parade even on Memorial Day: *"Mardi Gras is a given parade but there were people saying on Memorial Day: this is New Orleans, why don't we have a parade on Memorial Day? We should have a parade!"* (interview 26).

The reason for this might be grounded in the vital flexibility of organising events, shows, and parties having a touch of cultural entertainment. This starts from making music gigs, to organising festivals of different topics, and goes until putting up parades, as expressed by Stacey: *"we do like parades here - New Orleans will find any excuse to celebrate anything. New Orleans will find a way to make a party out of a sunny afternoon. But concerning the Easter parade - someone in the quarter decided to make an Easter parade so they did it. I guess it's getting quite big - but it's more for tourists"* (interview 5). John Magill also has the opinion that New Orleanians like to organise culturally entertaining events, not necessarily to lure tourists or to make dollars but to be active for and with their community and/or neighbourhood: *"people in New Orleans like to put on shows, not necessarily put on shows for tourists but they want to be seen!"* (interview 28).

Additionally to the biggest parades (Mardi Gras and St. Patrick's Day) there are annually organised parades for Easter and Halloween which are focused on the participation of tourists. The Halloween parades are combined with the Voodoo Music and Arts Festival and attract ever more visitors since the festival was staged for the first time in 1999 on the weekend around

October 31. As stated by Kevin Fontenot, historian for the Louisiana South at Tulane University, the continuous focus on tourism turned the Halloween festivities into Mardi Gras imitating parades: *"Halloween was always a big party for locals - but today it turned into a Mardi Gras parade and parties for tourists ... "* (interview 11).

The mentioned Easter parades are also about to grow in terms of visitor attendance and are marketed especially to LGBT tourists by NOTMC. Since the floats have not achieved the sizes of Mardi Gras krewe floats the Easter parades do still take place within the French Quarter and are organised by different groups in New Orleans. The topic of these parades is fashion and in particular the fashion of hats: *"concerning the Easter parades - it was always a fashion event where everyone had to wear fancy hats, it takes on the tourism aspect but it's still less marketed than Halloween"* (interview 11).

While the French Quarter Easter parade was officially staged for the first time in 1984<sup>86</sup> the Gay Easter parade is organised since 2000<sup>87</sup>. Although I did not perceive any visual connection to Catholicism at the parades, Dorian Rush did teach me that the Easter parades do have a religious background, today it is combined with homosexuality, alcohol, fashion, and partying:

*"Oh, the Easter parade is very traditional in the French Quarter. There is two groups of people in New Orleans that do the Easter parade - one are the wealthier uptown debutants, having little floats and flowers, they get dressed up, the whole thing is about the Easter hats, they are magnificent, then you have the gay culture in New Orleans which is very high and you have never seen Easter until you have celebrated Easter in New Orleans! It's the hats - it's a huge hat making competition in the gay world - it's not necessarily in the quarter, there is also something called like Bun-archy - it's like Anarchy and Bunny mixed together so everybody dresses up like bunnies, they go bar-to-bar, it's like 150 people, slowly growing, everybody buys wrist bands and all the money goes to animal shelters, they get drink specials in bars, they dress like crazy bunnies, some of them are leather bunnies, fuzzy bunnies, naked painted bunnies, Easter is pretty big here - catholic town!! It marks the end of the fasting! It's a very big celebration because people are eating badly again, drinking and smoking. They are wearing large decorated hats!"* (interview 17).

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<sup>86</sup> source: <http://www.frenchquartereasterparade.com/>, retrieved in May 2012.

<sup>87</sup> source: <http://www.gayeasterparade.com/>, retrieved in May 2012.

## **6. Commodification of the living cultural heritage second lines and Mardi Gras Indians**

The purpose of the present chapter is to show how second lines and Mardi Gras Indians are commodified as tourism attractions and to analyse the reasons why it has not been as successful as with other cultural elements in New Orleans so far. I have interviewed persons that are in favour of systematic commercialisation, club and tribe members that have a rather preservationist attitude towards their cultural expressions, and people that do not see a great potential of letting the Afro-American cultural heritage of the city become commodified for tourism purposes. Due to the diverging opinions by my interlocutors it was very important to understand the significance of such parades. Participant observation at events organised by Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs and Mardi Gras Indians was hence of major importance to comprehend the motivations and to try to see these situations in an objective way. In order to give a feeling about what a second line can look like I start the chapter with some ethnographic material from a second line on Mother's Day in 2013.

Continuously there are some explanatory paragraphs concerning the description and organisation of such second lines, followed by observations at a Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday parade and a detailed analysis about the Indians. After the description of the most significant forms of cultural expression for the Afro-American communities in New Orleans the analysis of its commodification is presented.

### **Observations at the Mother's Day second line 2013**

*"... some people will randomly bring a gun and just PAMPAMPAM!" (interview 7).*

It is May 12, 2013, Mother's Day, and the day after a long night. At one o'clock I wanted to be ready to start parading the annual Mother's Day second line, organised by the Original Big Seven Social Aid and Pleasure Club, taking off at its home at 1825 Elysian Fields Avenue. It is led by the New Birth Brass Band, the Stooges Brass Band, and the TBC (To Be Continued) Brass Band, around half an hour walking distance from my apartment on Esplanade Avenue. For the Original Big Seven Club, today's Mother's Day second line is not only the highlight of the weekend, after events organised on Friday and Saturday, but it is the highlight of the entire year. Additionally, it is the day when I finally had the chance to experience a second line together with one of my

interlocutors, Mardi Gras Indian Queen Kelly from the Creole Osceola. It is probably our last chance of parading together since the second line season will soon be over and my fieldwork period will soon be finished. Queen Kelly and Zee joined the Vodou wedding and after-party until very late yesterday night where our friendship deepened.

I told my Italian friend Marco to put on some closed-toe shoes because it could get crowded, I did not want to anticipate too much about what to expect from a second line but just left him excited with some words like: it will be exhausting and heavy, but I guess you'll like it! The only person he would trust was my - now - wife Nadia, she nodded her head and he followed the few instructions I gave. When we finally left home and were on our way to what I use to call "second line hunting" I told my companions to stay together close when parading - otherwise we could get lost in the expected crowd of people. When several hundred Afro-Americans are rhythmically moving to the beat of the bass drum and the sousaphone, swinging to the melodies of the trombones and saxophones, meandering through the traffic blocked backstreets of New Orleans, eating, drinking, smoking, sharing a street party with their family, friends, and the whole neighbourhood, you easily can get lost due to the overwhelming amount of impressions and the will to understand of what is actually going on here - especially as a white guy.

Although I held the route sheet in my hand I was not well prepared for the second line - because I was not very familiar with that part of the Seventh Ward and only knew the big streets that would take me home, from crossing them by bike. I neither knew the bars where the crowd would stop to take a break, and a beer. With another look on the route sheet I recognised that the names of the Junior King and the Junior Queen were published, and that a guy named Justine had the position of Big Shot - as I did not grasp exactly what it could mean I decided to not scare Marco and Nadia about the potential of witnessing a shooting. As far as I understood, the second drinking break would be at a bar somewhere around St. Bernard and North Galvez Street, so I thought the best chance to catch the crowd would be waiting close to that bar. Since I was already experienced with second line hunting I knew that it is difficult to seek out where the crowd would go and when they would arrive at the supposed points for resting, when you have not followed the parade from the beginning. Signs of being close to a parade are: black people in party mood, lost feathers and empty plastic cups on the streets, slowly driving NOPD cars, and the distinctive sound of a brass band in the air. As we arrived at the corner of St. Bernard and Galvez Street I was surprised to not having noticed any of these signs and instantly questioned my orientation skills. Though I was not in possession of a smart phone with a google

maps app or any other kind of map of the city I did not feel lost or nervous but simply surprised that the second line has not arrived yet. According to my experience the crowd should have made a certain distance, but I could not hear any brass band sound from the coming or the leaving direction. No police car, no mobile trucks with grillers, no vendors with cool beer, just a few pink decorated ladies on the other side of the street talking on the phone, seemingly agitated.

We stop walking and I send a text message to Queen Kelly, my confidential Mardi Gras Indian and second line information source. We are supposed to meet along the route and then parade together through Mother's Day. The ladies, probably a mother with some friends and daughters dressed up with pink feathers and hats, are crossing the street, the oldest one still talking on the phone, shouting, crying. I approach them and calmly ask if they would know whether the parade has already passed by or not. To me, her response was unexpected and shocking, and suddenly the above citation of Felice came into my mind.

The lady, panic-fuelled, tears in her eyes, ends the phone call, turns to me and talks about a shooting, guns, blood, dead bodies, stupid people, a stopped parade, everyone ran away, many injured, police, and that we should go home right now. Although she speaks in a confused way it is not difficult to understand that the Mother's Day parade of 2013 has turned from a joyful family party into a violent chaos. The lady tells me again and again in a loud voice how many people would have got killed and injured, that the parade is over and that we should go home now because there is nothing else to be seen - in my view she wanted to send us home because of our Caucasian skin. Instantly, I try to call Queen Kelly for getting more accurate information but she only responds via text message, confirming that there was a shooting about 15 minutes ago, everything is fine and the crowd is getting ready to restart the parade again. Against the will of Marco, Nadia, and the lady, I start walking towards the crowd because I want to see what has really happened, and maybe the parade would start again! Going down St. Bernard towards Claiborne Avenue there are more people on the streets, walking away from the location where the crowd was parading. Queen Kelly sent me her location and was waiting for us. Groups and families are walking, standing, waiting in the shadow of big trees, drinking, and sitting on cooler boxes on the sidewalks, talking on their phones, exchanging the hottest news about what is and what would be going on. Seemingly disappointed that some idiots destroyed Mother's Day people are looking pissed off and somehow aggressive that their Sunday did not turn out to be the party they waited for. From the conversations I figure that a shooting on Mother's Day was

the least to be expected, on any other parade, but not today. I ask some men if they knew something more precise about the injured people, something more about the location and if it was safe again, and some accurate information if the parade would start again - but if there was a shooting, enough is said. Underneath the I-10 many more people are waiting in the shade, on the other side of St. Bernard lots of cars and walking families are going in every direction. I see guys with their horns and saxophones, smoking, having a beer, no signs of panic anymore. Some grand marshals and other beautifully dressed up members of the Original Big Seven take off their white gloves. Finally, I see Queen Kelly and Zee. After we had embraced each other I get introduced to another queen of her tribe, an elderly lady, sitting in the car, and to other Mardi Gras Indians and friends of her family. They are hoping that the parade would restart again but Zee doubts it because the parade participants seem to have lost the mood of dancing on the streets. I want to get a beer and water from a street vendor, and see musicians putting their instruments into the trunk of a long red Cadillac. The party is over.

The word of mouth has spread quickly, police cars are leaving, and the crowd dissolves slowly. My targeted street vendor closes his ice box, puts it on his bike, and rolls off. Queen Kelly is on the phone again with someone of the second line club, while I am discussing with Zee about the shooting, regular gang fights and their constant show off, the inefficiency of police presence and the parade costs for covering the cops. I hear Kelly informing Nadia that they would drive home again and continue Mother's Day in their garden. We get a cordial invitation to join them for a BBQ but have to reject as we arranged to meet friends after the parade in Louis Armstrong Park. We stand around talking and watching the scene of frustrated people leaving the streets, of club members taking off their costumes, musicians drinking, and only hear some rap music in the background from cars.

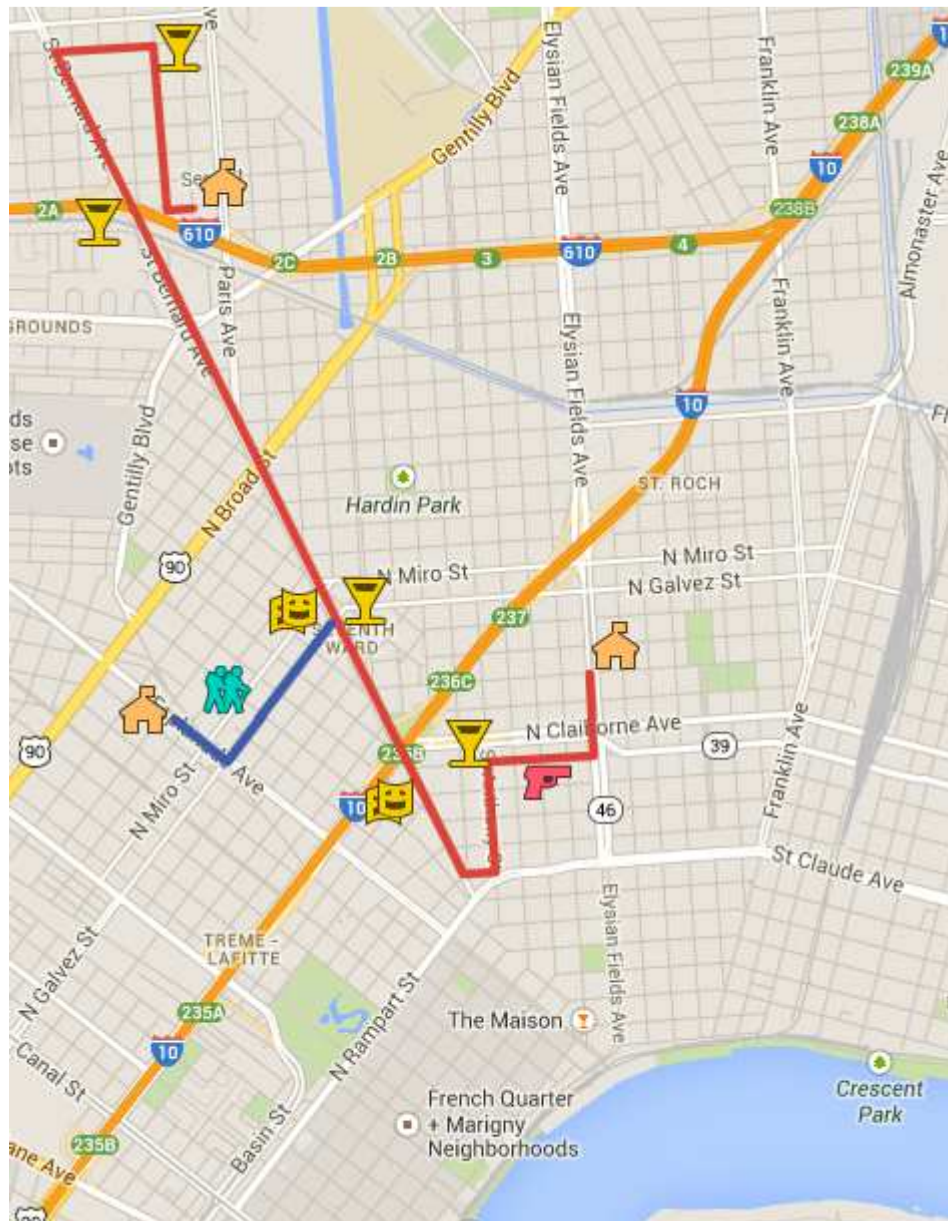
Queen Kelly, together with her family and some Indian friends, were late at the second line as well and did not join the parade from the beginning. She tells me that the last shooting she is aware of was in 2007 and that there were probably less incidents due to increased police security along the route since then. After another phone call Queen Kelly tells us that nobody got deadly shot, only a bunch of injured people - but you never know exactly how many injured persons because some would run away and do not attend hospitals. They are afraid of being reported at the hospitals, of giving official personal information, and of being interviewed by the cops if they were involved or probably knew the gunmen. She argues that participants are pissed off, not only because their party got cancelled but also due to the lot of money that got wasted -



thousands of dollars for permit fees, brass bands, dancers, costumes, speakers for the party caravan with loud music, decorations; all the bars as well as the mobile food booths and drink vendors on trucks lost business today. And probably the permit fees will get raised again because more police escort is needed. She hardly could believe that the parade was actually cancelled because of all the hard and long preparation work throughout the year. A second line needs to be organised in detail and financed by the whole club - lots if not all of the club members are involved in fund-raising activities! It's innocent participants that got hurt!

We greet and hug each other before leaving the cancelled parade, I thought Marco would have enough of second lining although he has not yet listened to the joyful sound of a brass band leading the crowd through the backstreets of New Orleans.

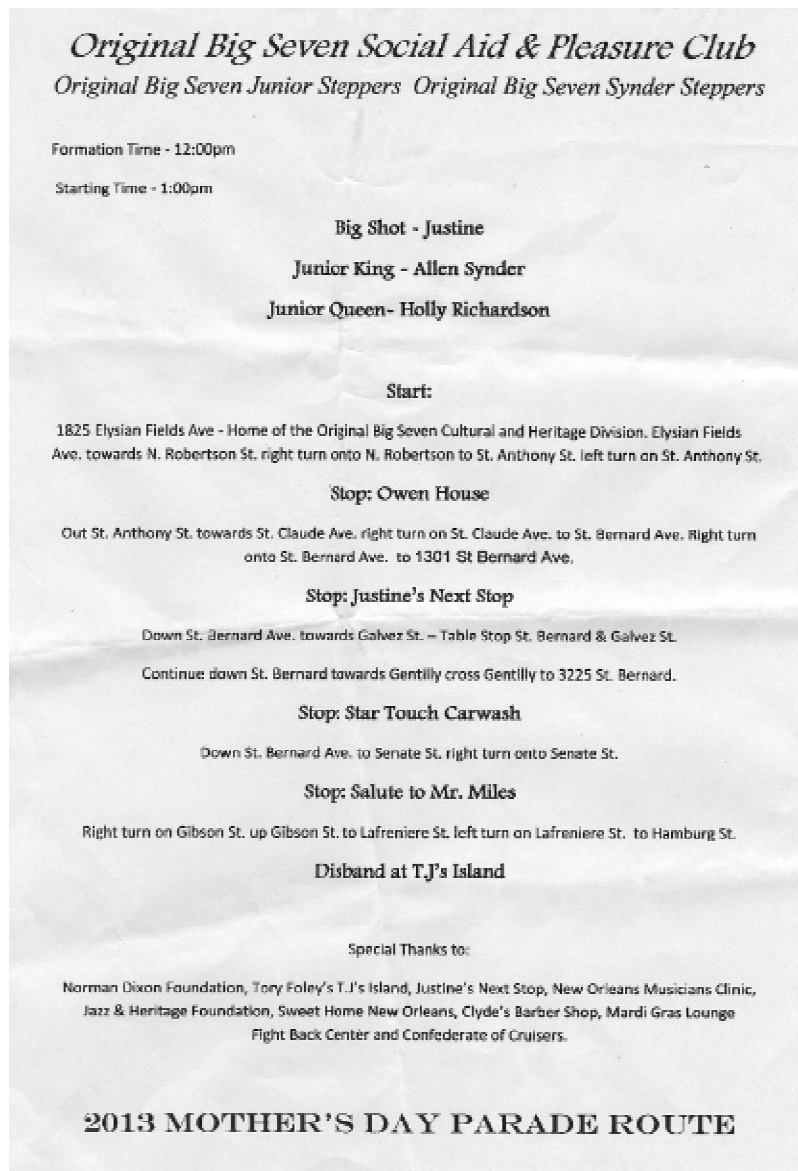
Figure 12: Mapped route sheet of the Mother's Day second line



Source: data based on google maps, elaboration by the author.

Looking at the map, I started walking towards the expected meeting point (symbol with two faces) of the second line from the house on the left side (location of my apartment), following the short blue line. Instead of meeting the second line I got the information of the shooting from the pink dressed ladies and walked down to the meeting point with Queen Kelly. The long red line illustrates the planned route of the Original Big 7 Club. The parade started after 13.00h at the club house on the right side, the shooting happened at 13.45h, relatively soon, at the intersection of North Villere and Frenchmen Street. The cocktail cup symbols illustrate the bars where the parade was supposed to stop for resting and drinking.

Figure 13: Route sheet of the Original Big Seven Social Aid and Pleasure Club's second line



Source: Original Big Seven Social Aid and Pleasure Club

A route sheet of a second line, organised by a certain club, gives information about location and date of the parade. Detailed addresses of bars are often not given because of their location along the route, mainly on turning corners or big street crossings. Illustrations and maps are usually not part of a route sheet since second line participants mainly live in the area and know the streets, furthermore, routes hardly change and generally follow the same streets every year. At the end of a route sheet thanks are given to eventual sponsors and supporters (in this case the second line was supported by the Norman Dixon Foundation), as well as to the bars hosting dancers, musicians, club members, and the rest of the crowd. Route sheets are distributed one

or two weeks ahead at second lines and events of other clubs in order to increase the number of participants. Since a few years, route sheets are also distributed at the Backstreet Cultural Museum, sometimes they can be found on the clubs' website and facebook pages. Radio WWOZ also publishes route sheets and Action Jackson, with his show "Takin' it to the Streets" gives information about when and where second lines are going on throughout the city.

Although, according to the route sheet, the second line was planned to walk along North Robertson Street, the parade actually went one block further South (location of the gun symbol on the map, Figure 12). As soon as the crowd turned the corner off Elysian Fields Avenue onto North Villere Street, just one block ahead crossing Frenchmen Street a young man fired in the air and struck 19 participants according to official reports. Fortunately, nobody was deadly insured as most of them got graze wounds to the body. Three wounded participants had to undergo surgery as bullets got stuck into their bodies or due to other severe injuries (The Times Picayune, May 12, 2013).

### **6.1. Description and organisation of second lines**

*"A second line is an expression of free movement, this spirit is in everybody and it gets automatic - just when the base drum starts bummtschakabummbumm [...] you forget that you have to pay your bills tomorrow!"* (interview 33).

Second lines are traditional, popular, always politicised, and in the meantime also commercialised street driven parades by the Afro-American working class community (REGIS, 2001). Second lines are based on the distinctive sound of New Orleans brass bands, led by colour-suited grand marshals, followed by a crowd of dancers, street grilled and home-made food, cool drinks from bars and mobile vendors, and can be simply described as a moving neighbourhood celebration organised by Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs or Second Line Clubs. Such parades are predominantly performed in the poorest neighbourhoods of New Orleans creating an alternative social order (REGIS, 1999). According to the findings of my research the parading season is from September through June with a summer break of more than two months because of climatic reasons. Although there are more than 50 Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs (not all of them are actively operating), actually there are 32 parading clubs occupying 39 Sundays of the year, including three Super Sunday parades staged by the Mardi Gras Indians. 21 of the parading clubs are organised under the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force, a non-

profit entity that assists clubs and is an advocate for their activities within communities and with the city government.

The clubs' activities are organised and financed by its members, varying from club to club the membership is between 30 and over several hundred persons. Some clubs do only allow male members (i.e. Perfect Gentlemen Social Aid and Pleasure Club), some are restricted to female members (i.e. Divine Ladies Social Aid and Pleasure Club), others do not have any membership restriction and also include non Afro-American supporters. Based on the information published with the Music Community Report of Sweet Home New Orleans (2010), members tend to spend ten per-cent of their household income (14% of personal income) on the parades.

Organised second lines, as we know them today, were created by the Young Men Olympia Benevolent Society, celebrating its 130th birthday in 2014, which is the oldest and last remaining benevolent society in New Orleans. The Young Men Olympia began as a kind of community insurance association which was supported by dues and fundraisers. It protected community members in times of illness and defrayed the cost of funerals - a special package including jazz bands, special tombs, and a stipend for the remaining family of the dead. Back then, second line parades allowed clubs to advertise the kind of music and flair prospective members could expect at a funeral should they join the club (ODELL, 2014). Historian Jacobs (1988) writes that by the end of the 19th century almost all black residents of the city belonged to such clubs and that by 1913 between 250 and 300 black benevolent societies were active in New Orleans. The creation of the Young Men Olympia and the subsequent clubs was not by accident. At that time strict segregation laws and high mortality rates ruled the city. Clubs often had their own pharmacists, physicians, undertakers, cemeteries, which were accessible to black residents of the city and members of the clubs. Some societies also began to play an important role as labour organisations combining the functions of mutual aid and insurance with that of labour unions (BREUNLIN, 2009). The structure of benevolent societies was based on their existence of advocating for proper funerals and burials, care for the old and sick members, and organise charity events. Other clubs were additionally providing entertainment for their communities in the form of picnics, parades, dinners, and balls to come together and discuss social issues of the day. With the time, clubs have been changing their kind of services, activities, and objectives as Tamara Jackson, president of the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force, told me:

*"But as challenges and societies are changing your aid changes - the advocacy effort changes. After Katrina the clubs were helping rebuilding in their neighborhood - that was their aiding and giving back. They helped the elderly community to get their houses, bring folks back, memberships worked together, to help get their members back here in their city, and then there is the linkage of the lack of help-care insurance, many cultural people and musicians don't have insurance, then the advocacy efforts grew, you have Sweet Home New Orleans, the New Orleans Musicians Clinic which was set up to help the second line clubs, Mardi Gras Indians and musicians with help care. As time goes on the aid portion might change based on how society has changed - as it relates to violence right now is a big issue, a lot of the cultural people are serving as mentors for minors. We try to be more active and reactionary to what happens, they are still aiding their communities and their membership just in a different light" (interview 53).*

This is also the reason why second lines are not only organised by traditional Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs but also by Second Line Clubs whose only objective is to organise the annual parade, without offering other kinds of charity services or activities for the members. Still, the main reason for organising the second lines for all such clubs is to *"continue to bring people together to express key values of respect, dignity, solidarity, honor, and style through coordinating parades, dance, and collective ritual of moving through the city together"* (BREUNLIN, 2009: 131).

The clubs' mentioned key values of respect, dignity, solidarity, and honour are not only expressed through social aid services but as well through the pleasure activities reflecting historical, social, and cultural significance as I learned from Tamara. The street parades are an expression of freedom, of overcoming daily challenges, celebrating the difficult and joyful moments of life together with the community:

*Bernhard: "(...) and pleasure comes for the one Sunday parade?"*

*Tamara: The pleasure activity comes from within and not necessarily on physical aspect, even though it is a pleasure to host your annual event, but your annual event is reflective of your hard work over the year, it is reflected of your ancestor. Second Line come from slavery, from the Jim Crow era, the significance of Sundays is because slaves were only allowed on Sundays to intermingle, they market their goods, sow, and exchanged fresh fruits and vegetables. [...] They did sowing, and dancing, and singing but they celebrated life, they celebrated the struggles and challenges that existed. And this was the way they communicated with each other, troubles and tribulation, with songs and dance, and this is the significance of the clubs having the parades on*

*Sunday. Everything is signature, from the corsage, to the colors, to the decoration, everything has a meaning - you may see, oh that is pretty and beautiful - but to the club it means something different. This is why they hide the colors and keep it as a secret until the day of the parade, the whole ensemble is secretive. That's expressive of the organization - and an organization could have some challenges throughout the year - so they are sure to come out to express the hurdles and struggles they face, and are overcoming ... everything has a meaning!"* (interview 53).

Barbara Lacen-Keller, director of Constituent Services at the City Council of New Orleans, community activist, founder and member of Social Aid and Pleasure and second line clubs as well as creator of the Task Force, additionally explained to me:

*"the goal of the second line is a celebration, you would go to your neighborhood, it derived out of the church, and you would go to your neighborhood and pick up people along the way ... it allows the participation of those who choose to - some just choose to stand and watch - some choose to follow. [...] The whole thing is, it is a culture, it is a custom, a celebration of a strong traditional culture, it's rivalry just like a football or basketball game. Clubs is like a rivalry, they are keeping each other who dresses the best, who colors the pretty. It is a traditional good, fun way to show a sense of unity"* (interview 36).

The analysis in the present chapter also includes the commodification of jazz funerals, such processions are organised and carried out by Social Aid and Pleasure clubs and are pictured in the case study description (chapter 2.3.4). In the following I do not always refer distinctively to both kind of parades in order to keep the flow of reading.

### **The cost of a second line**

Grand marshals and club members that are dancing in front of the brass band are dressed up in the equal suits, waving feathers, decorations, their hats, the insignias and emblem of their club. The club's king, queen, dukes, dancing on floats pulled by trucks (accompanied by R'n'B music blasted by speakers), are also equally dressed. The colours of the attributes are changing with every annual parade, being released only on the parade day. Apart of buying, sewing, and working on the suits, dresses, and decorations, the clubs need to hire a brass band and get an official parading license which is issued by the city. While the cost for the permit is US\$ 50,25 the obligatory police escort fee is US\$ 2.075 per second line. A brass band costs on average US\$ 2.000, the suits and decorations can go up to US\$ 1.000 for one person.

When Action Jackson, a DJ and host of the show "Takin' it to the streets" at the local WWOZ radio station, invited me to his house in the Lower Ninth Ward for our interview he made me put on his actual king suit, telling me that he sometimes has to reject being king for the various clubs where he participates:

*"it's an honor to be the king of a Social Aid and Pleasure Club and for the second line for one year - but it costs you a lot of money to make your suit! You can work off your financial contribution with supporting and helping out at fundraising activities, if your suit costs you a 1000 dollars and you support many activities you might have to pay only 300 dollars at the end for your suit because the collected money is taken for this!" (interview 33).*

Action Jackson is a regular and honorary member of several clubs due to his role as a community activist, promoter, and organiser of parades, events, shows, concerts, DJ nights, and similar of the Afro-American community in New Orleans. Therefore, he knows what it means to organise and finance second lines. The costs for the parading equipment are covered by membership dues. Some get supported by a certain business community, but most clubs finance their activities with year round organised fund-raising like suppers, raffles, bingos, dances, picnics, disco nights, concerts, and the street vending of food and drinks at second lines of other clubs. In total, a single second line has a minimum cost of around US\$ 10.000. Many clubs do have subdivisions (like satellite clubs of a main club) which are also parading on the same day as the main club. On the one hand because the permits for second lines are limited and on the other hand because some costs can be split. Usually, each subdivision brings its own brass band and organises an own float pulling truck for kings and queens. For example, the Young Men Olympia will parade with its six subdivisions at their 130th anniversary parade in September 2014, each one with a brass band.

Also Barbara Lacen-Keller has organised many second lines in her life until she decided to lay down all her positions a few years ago because the voluntary work got too demanding and time consuming:

*"They have to raise money because it's a self-sufficient culture. The club that second lines doesn't raise money on that day. It is a self-sufficient culture, so they raise money year-round to put on the parade - because the cost of the permit, pay for the music, the clothes, ... they are selling sodas, food, being dancers. Until they had the Norman Dixon Foundation they did not have no help - except for Jazz Fest. This was a fund-raiser because the clubs got paid to parade there - but now they don't pay them only they also give them the foundation money. One club parades at*



*their own second line and other clubs sell food and drinks to raise money for their parades - this is how it works! If I am having a parade this week you gonna sell your stuff, if you are having a parade next week, I'm gonna sell my stuff! The clubs that are doing the parade can't sell anything because they are having the parade!"* (interview 36).

The Norman Dixon, Sr., Annual Second Line Parade Fund, which is part of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation supports 32 permits a year with a disbursement of US\$ 750 without which many of the clubs could hardly afford to perform their annual highlight.

### **The Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force**

*"You can't gain the respect of knowledge of a culture if people are ignorant to what the culture is"* (interview 53).

The task force was founded by Barbara Lacen-Keller in 2000 when parading clubs experienced some issues at the Jazz and Heritage Festival as stated in the respective chapter for festivals. In the following years the task force developed its advocating position for the clubs concerning issues with the police, increasing permit fees, and for mitigating issues at tourism related performances at festivals, for conventions, and at other occasions. Based on the interviews I got to know that the task force organises bimonthly meetings with associated clubs discussing economic challenges for financing parades and new vendor permits.<sup>88</sup> They host community meetings with picnics in parks, offering free food, providing resources for education and health care, and have information stands for crime prevention programmes, organisations, and agencies. After Katrina the task force focused on helping the clubs to make revenues, to have enough financial resources to sustain the parades and to *"get the people back and to keep the culture going"* (interview 53). It supported the clubs with logistical and organisational activities *"and making sure the laws are applicable to what we do - we kind of stepped away from funding because money puts people in a different focus - and with the task force we did not want to be about money, we wanted to be about encouragement, empowerment and enhancement of what we do. We give some financial perks of course, but money is not the primary focus"* (interview 53).

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<sup>88</sup> Starting in the fall season of 2013 every mobile food and drink vendor along the routes at second lines is obliged to have an official vendor permit. The task force is in favour for this new regulation because of issues with mobile vendors and bar owners that have to pay an annual alcohol license according to the Alcohol and Beverage Ordinance (ABO).

The task force, together with their attorneys, is not only supporting the clubs when facing issues with the NOPD, tourism related performances, and problems with copyrights for pictures, but is also very keen on educating the people in clubs about why they are joining and what is the purpose of a membership and of parading itself:

*Tamara: " ... we are not supporting people who are not supporting the cultural community. We have a very powerful voice and position in the city.*

*Bernhard: so you feel very empowered?*

*Tamara: Yeah! We definitely feel strong, we've come so far with this organization, it was Barbara's vision to get us together, to make sure our voices was heard and that people understand what we do. Every opportunity we get to educate somebody about the cultural pertinence then that is what we need to do, that is part of our mission - education is the number one goal" (interview 53).*

## **6.2. Description and organisation of Mardi Gras Indians**

*"Mardi Gras Indians are paying tribute - their existence is an homage that they are paying to American Indians and to their ancestors - to get through slavery" (interview 4).*

Mardi Gras Indians speak of themselves as being organised in tribes and gangs, about 50 of such Indian tribes are said to exist in New Orleans as of today. Hurricane Katrina had a strong impact on the Indian unity since many of them had no other chance than to leave the city. According to a study made by Sweet Home New Orleans (2010) the urban tribes and gangs have largely recovered from 2005. The study surveyed 32 tribes which stated to be at about 80% of their 2005 membership. On average tribes have seen a 26% increase in child participation, mostly due to the many Indians that are holding classes and courses, teaching the young members the art of designing, creating, and sewing the elaborate suits which are the most distinctive characteristic of parading Indians.

In the chapter about the description of the case study a historical overview of the development of Mardi Gras Indians, their tradition of parading, as well as the strong Indian influence on music in New Orleans is presented. In the current chapter I focus more on the Indian tribe identity, the significance of the suits, and on the importance of practices (performed in private space) as well as parades (performed in public space) taken from data collected during the fieldwork. This information serves for underpinning and understanding the arguments concerning the commodification of Mardi Gras Indians for tourism purposes.

In the following I present some ethnographic material from a participant observation at a Super Sunday event in 2013 before giving detailed information about the organisation of Mardi Gras Indian tribes in New Orleans.

### **Super Sunday**

It is April 14, 2013, and not just any other Sunday in New Orleans. Today is the last day of the French Quarter Festival, there is a second line going on downtown, and the Super Sunday parade in the Seventh Ward - a busy day for an anthropologist in the field. Leaving French Quarter Fest I am biking North to do observations at the event of Mardi Gras Indians where I am supposed to meet Queen Kelly and Flag Boy Zee dressed up in their suits. The only information I got from Queen Kelly was that the penultimate stop of the parade would be at Bullet's Bar and end at a park somewhere close to it, Hardin Park. So I am riding up St. Bernard Avenue hoping to instinctively find the Indians crossing the street.

As I am about to pass Dorgenois Street I can see some mounted police men and blue blinking Harley-Davidsons perceiving a breeze of drums, without a doubt I am lucky and found the parade quickly. I can see three police men on a horse, about five motor bikes, more than five cops on bicycles, and even more cops walking around in uniform and yellow warn vests, most of them Afro-Americans. As I am tying up my bike on a light pole I pass the seemingly bored police men, take some pictures of the horses, and walk along to the end of the parade. A strong cloud of marihuana fills the air, drumming seems to come from every direction, tambourines are shaking, Chiefs are singing, the surrounding rest answers to his lyrics. There are about eight different tribes participating, or even more. From the information that I found online I remember to have read only about five tribes participating - but here are definitely more. Each tribe is led by the Chief, dressed up in his most beautiful suit, some other Indians around him - Queens, Flagboys, and even little kids - the Spyboy some meters ahead of the Chief. The suited Indians do not have tambourines, only the accompanying people that surround them are drumming. Big drums, small drums, bass drums, tambourines, not less than four different kinds of percussions are walking next to or behind the Chief, on his sides people are tuning into the beat with cowbells, whistles, and other improvised instruments such as cans, imitating percussions. Sounds like a Brazilian carnival, just more monotonous! The suited Indians walk slowly, sometimes show off to people taking pictures and videos with their cell phones (most probably family members, friends, or people from the community), stop and walk whenever

they want, some of them hold guns and other weapons in their hands - the suit seems to be heavy and hard to wear under the humid afternoon heat - "*you are so pretty*" yells a big lady behind me. The guns, spears, tomahawks, are reflecting also the weapons that are illustrated on the suit's patches - horse riding or fighting scenes against white men - tribes and its suited members are also imitating battles with other Indians: confronting each other with weapons they walk in circles, open up their hands so that the long feathers seem even more impressing and frightening. Obviously I did not carry a professional video camera with me and had quiet conscience when taking pictures, as long as I was not standing in their way when clicking it seemed to be widely accepted, as I could observe from the many other people videotaping the performances with their mobile phones.

Only male Indians wear face paint and their feathered head crowns are bigger, heavier, and have longer feathers than those of the Queens. Female Indians are not supposed to fight and hence do not need war-painted faces. The long black dreaded hairs on both genders do also have ornaments. I am passing the many tribes of which I do not know what their names are - differently from second line clubs the Indian tribes do not hold flags with their name on it. One tribe has predominantly bright yellow suits, another one is purple pink with three little kids in front of the Chief, holding feathered signs saying "Flag" or "Spy". I only recognise Chief Kentrell Watson from the Golden Blades, he and his tribe members (mostly his kids) are dressed in elaborately ornamented red orange suits, on the patch of his head crown is written "Boom By Yah", I got to know Chief Kentrell at Cafe Istanbul when performing with Chuck Perkins.

NOPD officers are walking and riding along on their bikes but are not interfering, they are present, busy with blocking streets but no incidence occurs that would need any other intervention. I am surprised about why this Super Sunday can even take place on a Sunday when French Quarter Fest and another second line is happening. During Jazz Fest weekends second lines are usually not allowed because the cops are needed for securing the festival area - how come that it works out today?

On the door steps of a crowded bar which is the last stop of the parade, right across Hardin park, I am standing next to a guy without teeth, we smile at each other, cheering with our beer bottles. He offers me a cigarette but as a non-smoker I refuse and ask him if he would know how many tribes were participating. While I am taking some videos with my cell phone I hardly can listen to his words due to the sound of the many drums passing by. Chanting Indians,

tambourine shaking and whistle blowing companions stop walking in front of me, the first tribes are entering the park creating some Indian traffic jam. I ask the guy next to me if he were an Indian but he shakes his head. He lives in the neighbourhood and likes the suits, he obviously likes to drink, too. Unfortunately, he is not very informative and I step over to the corner where many Indians lay down their head crowns, front patches, and weapons on the side walk. Family members are watching the pieces of suits, standing around, eating grilled chicken, smoking.

I walk inside the park where many Indians already took off almost all of their pieces which form the heavy suits. Something is uncomfortable with me, the different tribes seem to intermingle, the brass band laid down their instruments, drums are everywhere on the floor, somehow I feel a bit intruding into a space that is not supposed to be visited by white guys like me (and I still have not seen another one). Finally Queen Kelly calls out my name and I feel relieved, we hug each other and I cannot identify the big black guy next to her - still fully suited apart of the head crown, with a scarf on his head, half of the face painted white and two long dreaded braids, she has to tell me that this is her partner Zee! Feeling totally embarrassed Zee hands over a big joint and instantly forgives me. I ask them questions concerning the sewing of suits and take pictures of shoes and patches, only now I realise the extremely detailed beaded artwork sewn onto the various parts of the suit. From the left Chief Kentrell is approaching me, I am happy that he recognised me but as I am still the only white guy this was not a hard task. We exchange some words and he tells me to be content with the parade although it got hot and heavy during the last hour. Zee advises me that he is going to take his car so they can drive away the big suits and Queen Kelly smilingly tells me: *"we better have to go now - 'cause stupid things always happen at that time! After the parade people are drunk and stoned and someone could just get out his gun and shoot around!"* The final moment of Indian parades and second lines seem to be the most dangerous as participants are more intoxicated. Together with Queen Kelly and her son we are walking outside the park and order a cocktail at one of the mobile pick-up truck bars while waiting for Zee to come and load in the suits.

### **Mardi Gras Indian parades**

Compared to the official 12 day lasting Mardi Gras parades during carnival organised by krewes and the 39 Sundays occupied by second lines in the streets of New Orleans staged by clubs, Mardi Gras Indians have only a few parades throughout the year. The parading highlight is the morning on Mardi Gras Day, followed by a night parade on St. Joseph's Day and three Super Sunday parades of which one is Uptown, one Downtown, and one on West-bank. Mardi Gras

Indian tribes are broadly divided by these three areas which is mainly visible through the style of suits with varying forms of patches and illustrations. For the parades Mardi Gras Indians do not have to pay a permit fee. Indians are exempt from the fee because they are not formal bodies like clubs or krewes. "*The city recognizes us as a different flavor than a second line*" says Chief Miller, president of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian Council (NOMGIC). Furthermore, Indians do not tend to have a fixed route when parading: "*we can't have a route - our route is where we go, if we try to give a route, it is very difficult to maintain that route*" (interview 55). However, this refers more to the parades on Mardi Gras morning and on St. Joseph's Day. As I could observe at the Super Sunday parades in all three parts of the city Indians follow a route which is also made public on WWOZ by Action Jackson.

Chief Miller and his NOMGIC is responsible for organising the Super Sunday parade in the uptown area on the third Sunday in March, said to be the biggest Super Sunday parade in terms of tribes and the participation of second line clubs (e.g. the Young Men Olympia and the Lady Buckjumpers) and at least three brass bands. Other organisations similar to the council such as R.E.A.L. and the Tambourine in Flame organise their Super Sunday event in the downtown area and on West-bank. Numerous tribes from the different areas of the city do not only participate at the event of their core organisational body but also at other Super Sunday parades. Queen Kelly and the Creole Osceola is one of the tribes which I could follow parading at all three Super Sundays. They have fun parading and want to show their suits on more occasions. Additionally, a Super Sunday is a moment when the whole tribe comes together and meets others, celebrating the common Indian heritage and the ancestors is the focal point of the parading ritual. A parade usually ends in a park where all tribes meet, non parading Indians (not every tribe member is suited and not everyone is participating in the parade as percussionist or singer) might have prepared a BBQ grill and some cooling boxes for drinks, a big stage for a DJ putting up R'n'B, hip-hop, or rap music entertains the resting or dancing crowd.

Additionally to the parades held in public Mardi Gras Indian tribes also celebrate so called Indian practices on a regular basis. These are strictly private and take place in houses, on porches, in gardens, and in community rooms. During Jazz Fest in 2012 I participated at a very rare occasion when one of these practices was performed in the Cultural Exchange Pavilion. Basically, tribe members (male and female) are forming a circle, are shaking tambourines and keeping the rhythm with big drums, and are chanting traditional Mardi Gras Indian songs. Usually, Indians

are not masked when doing these practices which are also a form of tribal meetings, serving for gathering, discussing, exchanging ideas and news about the sewing process.

### **Clashes with the police**

I had the feeling that at parades of Indians even more police officers are present than at second lines. A certain occasion was my participant observation at Super Sunday on West-bank in 2012 and 2013, it was the biggest crowd of people that I have ever seen at parades of Afro-Americans in New Orleans. NOPD officers were present at every corner, to block the streets, show physical presence, and avoid violence between the various gangs. During the parade and until the entrance of the Indians in the park the cops (on the West-bank parade I witnessed more white cops than at others) did nothing but looking angrily and doing their job. When the programme of the DJ was over and hence the whole parade actually found its end many police cars started driving up and down the Boulevard with blue lights and extremely loud siren. I had the impression that the NOPD wanted to loosen up the crowd and officially stop the parade (that was already over). Many participants were walking along the Boulevard, looking at the pimped cars and motorbikes, and got more aggressive against the officers. Two big black guys approached me (I was again the only white guy) and advised me to leave with the words: *"you better not be here right now - go home, the party is over."* I do not want to accuse the NOPD for killing the party because I am sure that their command was to open up again the many streets that had been blocked right after the DJ would stop playing. Before opening the streets to normal traffic the officers had to be assured that parade participants would keep walking on the sidewalks. But in my opinion this could also happen in another, more human, way.

In recent years, one of the most prominent clashes with the police and Mardi Gras Indians have occurred in the neighbourhood of the Creole Wild West around A.L. Davis Park where their uptown parade starts and ends every year. On St. Joseph's night in 2005 NOPD officers ordered the Indians to take off their suits as, reportedly, residents complained about the people on the street and the loud drumming. When the Indians appealed to the City Council claiming harassment a public hearing was organised. The meeting ended abruptly when Chief Montana of the Yellow Pocahontas had a fatal heart attack at the podium.<sup>89</sup> Since then violent clashes between the NOPD and Indians have not been officially recorded anymore but accusations of

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<sup>89</sup> I refer to a documentary film titled "Tootie's last suit" in which this story is documented very well.

Indians that officers would be misunderstanding and not respecting parading Indians, especially when speeding police cars try to quit parades, are continuous issues.

*"Right before Mardi Gras day the Indians had a meeting with the police chief, (...) it's all about them not knowing, about education, they need to know what they are doing and not doing, they are not knowing and totally disrespect us"* (interview 4) is the statement of Queen Kelly when I asked her about the role of NOPD officers at Indian parades. She would like to see Mardi Gras Indians and the police department sitting at one table and discussing about cultural awareness raising.

### **'We say: hey, are you masking?'**

*"The suit itself was only a mask, that is why we call it masking, what is behind the mask is what really counts - and what is behind the mask was Africa that was being practiced"* (interview 55).

The origin of Mardi Gras Indians is based on the native American Indian heritage which is expressed through suits, music, and parades. In June of 2013 I was finally able to set a meeting with Howard Miller, Chief of the Creole Wild West and president of the NOMGIC, a still rather informal organisation representing 21 Mardi Gras Indian tribes. Under Chief Miller's guidance, NOMGIC has tasks similar to the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force as explained above, concentrated on advocating the tribes and educating primarily young Indians.

*"The core purpose of the council, when we first came together was to further our culture, to make sure that this thing lasts another 200 years, that people keep involved, and to keep it going"* (interview 55).

For the interview Chief Miller invited me to his house. We sat down in the air-conditioned quiet living room at a long dark wooden table, Chief Miller, a tall man in his 60s, was dressed in a grey business suit and a blue bottom shirt, wearing heavy golden rings on his fingers. His gentle and elegant movements, a deep calm voice full of wisdom, and a big picture on the table showing himself with a class of young Indians designing their suits, spread this kind of aura that I somehow expected when talking to a Mardi Gras Indian Chief. But Chief Miller is not the guide of just some of the tribes in New Orleans but of the Creole Wild West which is said to be the oldest and first tribe of Mardi Gras Indians. During the interview Chief Miller got several phone calls of which he did not respond to even one. Chief Miller did not treat me as a journalist, student, or



anyone who wanted to know something about Indians. His comportment was filled with that certain kind of respect against a person that I have not felt from any white American that I interviewed during the fieldwork periods. Chief Miller wanted me to understand what the Indians were, who they are, and where they are about going to.

*"We Mardi Gras Indians come out of slavery, when we came out as Creole Wild West, the main thing was trying to hold our African heritage intact - that was the number one thing. Trying to hold some secret of Africa intact, because that is where we are original from. The second lining thing was to come out dressed in these suits to uplift the community, the people, get them something to see that was positive - because everything of us was negative at that time. We had no connection to where we came from, could not even talk about where we came from, could not use our own name, our religion, and everything was against.*

*But here are some people that who was in slavery, that ran away from slavery, they found a safe haven with the Native Americans, and they knew where they come from and knew their culture - and so these people was teaching other people about themselves, about who you are and where you are from and what was the greatness of you! You are not what they say that you are! And so that's where it came from - and this is what we was doing - we came out!"* (interview 55).

According to Chief Miller the native Americans and the Africans (fleeing from slavery into the Louisiana swampland) had much in common from the very beginning of their meeting. These cultural commonalities laid the basis for the respect against each other, the social integration into the tribal organisation, and finally the adoption and continuing of native American Indian practices. The suits of Mardi Gras Indians is what remains to be seen in public regarding the ancestral tribute.

*"So the suit is a mask, that why we call it masking! We say: hey, are you masking? Yeah, I am masking! What is behind the mask is what really counts! Because we could not come out there as Mandingo and Wild Tootsie, or anything with Africa - because it was forbidden! But the true Native American was able to address and connect with because it was similar to the stuff that we do! We have a lot in common - Native Americans and Africa: they have spears, we have spears, bow and arrows, hatches, tomahawk. They wore feathers, we wear feathers, they wore paint, we wear paint, one had a witch doctor and the other had a medicine man - but they both form the same task! So by then, we had so much in common we would mingle with them, we can easily carry out what we do!*

*And it is the same with the clothes - we had so much in common, so we wore what they was wearing! And when people saw us, they automatically thought that this was Indian - so that is why we would call us Indians" (interview 55).*

The formation of urban Mardi Gras Indian tribes started in the decades after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the American South. Afro-Americans were creating their identity when they did not follow the Native Americans into reservations given by the state authorities. Chief Miller described that process in a pragmatic way:

*"And then after the Civil War lot of Native Americans were put on Reservations, but we said: hey wait a minute!*

*And they said: oh, but you are black Indians.*

*We said: Black Indians, oh ok.*

*Then somebody said: no, define that, what do that mean Black Indian?*

*We said: well, we are not really Indians, we say like we are Indians and are dressed like Indians for Mardi Gras!*

*Then they said and labeled us as being Mardi Gras Indian! And we accepted that name - and to the day we still call us Mardi Gras Indians.*

*When we came first they called us Indians, because we were dressed like Indians - now the suit itself was a mask, and what was going on behind the mask was Africa. While today this is deluded and watered down by some, but the essence is still there" (interview 55).*

Respect, mutual trust, and conscience for and by Mardi Gras Indians are significant pillars in the social and cultural stratification of tribes and gangs. These characteristics were clear to me from the first meeting with Queen Kelly when she told me that in her tribe "breaking feathers" means that there is no way to come back to that tribe. But I got more aware of what is behind the significance after the following question I asked Chief Miller:

*Bernhard: "how is it watered down and deluded?"*

*Chief Miller: because in the beginning many was called but just a few were chosen - you had to be trusted to be one. You had to be accepted - because in the beginning we didn't know who was who. And you could not be trusted, because we didn't know if you gonna run back to your master and tell him what we are doing. So it was a secret society at the beginning, the Indians were a couple of a secret society, it was hidden. Everything about Mardi Gras Indians was hidden. And that practice went on for a while, even when I first started masking Indian, I was told to don't let anybody know that I was masking.*

*I started in 1969, you didn't show your suit, if I were sewing my suit and you came here, I would hide it until you leave. Because this is what I was told - this is an old custom coming from the beginning of the teaching about this here. We didn't want anybody to know who we were and what we was doing.*

*Because if the European America would have knew this, they would have stopped us - because it has something to do with Africa - and everything in this country about Africa was forbidden - so it had to be a secret. It had to be: who we gonna let in here? Is he real? Can we trust him? Is he one of them housebrothers who is going back and tell the master what we are doing, or is he one of the fioldbrothers who hate the master? We had to know who you were at that time.*

*Today, anybody can mask. But they would not accept it back then - you had to know about who was doing and about what it is about. You have many Indians today who still don't know what it is about - they would tell you: My mama or Grand-daddy was an Indian, was a Choctaw, or was this and that, but that is not what it is about. Even I can say, because my Grandmother was Cherokee, but I never talk about this because I don't want it to get it mixed up - because this is separate from what we are doing. Yes she was a full blood Cherokee, yes I have Indian blood in me, but that is not what I am doing, Cherokee - I am doing Africa."*

Chief Miller criticises that some Mardi Gras Indians are not aware of the significance of their native American ancestry and heritage. In his opinion, these tribes and its members would not respect the secrecy of their Indianness which sometimes results in rivalry: *"and the time this could happen is when you are out there and not aware about what you are about. And these are mocking and disrespecting the culture, so it will bring trouble"* (interview 55).

### **A new tribe is born**

*"Mardi Gras Indians is about neighbourhood and community. Family no."* (interview 55)

When touching the topic about the creation of new tribes during my talk with Chief Miller I recognised that the organisation of Mardi Gras Indians is more based on neighbourhood community and less on family ties, which is somehow similar to krewes organising Mardi Gras floats and Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs preparing second lines. Membership to these groups is neither directly related to family ties although it often happens that children enter the same krewe or club. One of the differences to Mardi Gras Indian tribes is that their hierarchical system, based on Chiefs, Spy boys, Flag boys, and Queens, is more fixed on certain persons and positions for a longer period, while kings and queens at krewes and clubs tend to change every

year. If a Flag Boy feels ready to guide his tribe as a Chief, although this position is already taken, there are two options. Either the Chief places the Flag Boy into his position or the Flag Boy creates his own tribe of which he is Chief.

*Bernhard: "could new tribes just be created? What if some of your kids in class says, can I make my own tribe?"*

*Chief Miller: Yes, that is how it happens all the time, that is how all tribes started, from the Creole Wild West with the Great Brother Timroe who was born in 1800. The Creole Wild West was the only tribe, but when people moved out of this area, he encouraged them to start something over there. This is how the tribes got all over the city because of brothers.*

*There were some people who said: I think I am ready to be a Chief - but they could not get a Chief within the Creole Wild West - and I want to start something new!*

*And he said: yes sure!*

*And this is how new tribes start - and it is still today!" (interview 55).*

Most people that I got to know during fieldwork who either are Mardi Gras Indians or are very attracted to them were not born as Indians. From their childhood onwards they have always been in contact with Indians due to their parents, family, neighbourhood, and community who have been sympathetic to and were befriended with Mardi Gras Indians. They used to participate at Indian parades, play music together, and became close friends. For example, Chuck Perkins is not an Indian but he is always surrounded by Indians in his Cafe Istanbul from tribes like the Golden Blades and the Wild Magnolias, some of them also played on his album "A Love Song for NOLA". On this album, Chuck recorded several typical Mardi Gras Indians songs with its characteristic drumming and singing. At one of our many talks I asked him whether he ever wanted to become a Mardi Gras Indian:

*Bernhard: "have you ever thought of becoming a Mardi Gras Indian?"*

*Chuck: yeah man, I've thought about it. I love that - I love the Mardi Gras Indian thing! I thought of it - I've always wanted to do it but requires time, effort and energy, ... " (interview 19).*

There is also Felice Guimont who is intrinsically tied to the community of clubs and tribes. Although she is not an Indian Felice makes music with Indians and sews suits together with the Queen's Council members, she helps organising the Cultural Exchange Pavilion with the focus on Mardi Gras Indians at Jazz Fest 2012, and takes care for them as a nurse at the Musicians Clinic. Another example is Barbara Lacen-Keller who had various important positions at Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, at the Task Force, and who also became a Mardi Gras Indian. Some years ago she

resigned from these positions and is neither participating at the Indians anymore due to the high investment of time. The case of Queen Kelly is again different: although her parents were not Indians she was raised with kids of various tribes. When she fell in love with Gang Flag Zee she was incorporated into his tribe and became Queen of the Creole Osceola.

*"Mardi Gras Indians is about neighbourhood and community. Family no. Nobody in my family was masking Indian. And some people look at me as being one of the highest respected Chiefs there is. It is not a family thing although some make it a family thing. This don't belong to me! And I cannot try to hold it like a lot of people do - try to hold it in their family. You are supposed to pass this down to the best person qualified to do this job! Not my son, not because he is my nephew, or best friend - is he the best person to lead us? This is why things are so much messed up and twisted and turning now, because some people try to hold it in their family. And the chances are that their family did not even start it" (interview 55).*

Chief Miller is aware of that many tribes are handling this issue differently. Many tribe leaders want to keep their power within the family and tend to appoint their sons as new Chiefs. Often he witnesses that these decisions are not advantageous for the tribes since sons might have other objectives as their fathers and guide the tribe into another direction which in the eyes of Chief Miller is not the right one.

*Bernhard: "are other tribes thinking as you?"*

*Chief Miller: NO! There are lots of other tribes who don't know what I know! A lot of people think that it is best to give it to your son - but I can prove to you that it is not so! Cause everyone who gave the tribe to the child the tribe went fffff! They are not the same - the chances are high that it was somebody else who gave it to your father, that was not kin of them. Now when I look at them, and examine all of the tribes, because I do know the history of all of them, and when I examine them I do not see none of them manifest to where their father was at! I see people and their tribe was better leaded than the one that was given to my son. I have seen it over and over. It should not be a family thing if you continue - you gotta give it to the best person who can lead it! Don't give it to me because I am your son - I gotta qualify! Is that the best person in the tribe, is he representing best the tribe, bringing it further, can I teach the people or lead the tribe? Can I lead the tribe amongst men? If I don't have that qualification then I should not have that position.*

*I come from a long line of the greatest of Chiefs, nobody can deny to be the greatest of Chiefs. When we talk about Brother Tim, Robby Lee, Fletcher, Donald Harrison, John Williams - there is*

*no Chief that is greater than others! Tootie Montana was a great Chief - I don't deny that - but even his father came from the Creole Wild West! Before his father went down there, they did not even have any Indians! Alfred Montana, Tootie's father started his tribe - one of the oldest! Lots of people are just: ah I give it to my son, keep it in the family. They don't belong to me - it was inexistent when I came along. And even today, I am a door-keeper at this time - tomorrow it will be somebody else! And hopefully we will teach them the same thing - that don't belong to you! Recognize that it don't belong to you! And you should give it to the best person that could represent this tribe and carry it further!" (interview 55).*

### **Mardi Gras Indian suits**

*"Suit money is money that you have" (interview 4).*

As demonstrated in the subchapters above suits are of major importance to Mardi Gras Indians. A suit is the individual but also the tribal visible expression of their Indian identity in public. Suits are hand sown, every Indian sews its own suit, male and female. Usually, Indians start to design and prepare the first steps of the new suit after the last Super Sunday parade - sewing season is hence from June until the day before Mardi Gras and a suit is usually worn just for one parading season: from Mardi Gras day until the last Super Sunday in May. At the Creole Osceola, as I got to know from my conversations with Queen Kelly, the Chief is the overall suit designer (concerning the homogenous colour of feathers, number and size of patches, length and size of feathers on the head crown and other parts of the suit, etc.) but the individual Indians of the tribe can decide about the symbolic content on the various head crown, front, back, arm, and boot patches. Creatures such as snakes, tigers, dragons, sphinx, scorpions, and similar carry symbolic meaning in terms of strength, power, fight, history, and the universe. Often, fighting scenes of Indians against white cowboys using guns, spears, tomahawks, bow and arrow, as well as horse riding images are beaded on the patches. Eagles, wolves, bears, skulls, red skinned native Americas, black Afro-Americans, dancing and music making Indians doing practices, and also female Indians are frequently used images on the different parts of the suits. Although the outline of the suit design is given by the Chief the individual tribe members have influence on the creative design of colours and material that is used for the patches. Gangflag Zee for example, often takes his ideas from artistic drawings of African masks. Although he lives on West-bank his tribe is following the downtown style using predominantly rhinestone, beads, sequins and perls. At the Creole Osceola nine members were masking in 2013.

Additionally to the feathered parts and designed patches, Indians carry weapons such as guns, spears, or tomahawks, and other attributes representing their position, they can additionally be decorated with crocodile heads or skulls. The head crowns can also be decorated with crocodile heads or horns. Spy boys and Flag boys often carry feathered signs with beaded patches saying "Flag", "Spy", or the name of the tribe. Non suited tribe members might walk aside of the Chief with feathered signs saying "Big Chief" and the name of the tribe. A full suit can have a weight of up to 50kg and a height of 2.5 meters. Some Indians, like Big Chief Victor Harris of the Mandingo Warriors, are also wearing a full mask additionally to the suit. The cost for the material used for a single suit can go up to US\$ 5.000 or even more - the several thousand hours for drawing, sewing, and beading are not included.

Similar to second line organising clubs and carnival parading krewes the Mardi Gras Indians do also have fund-raising activities. These funds do not serve for paying parades, equipment needed for Indian community events, or the suits but are rather considered as raising money for charity activities. Especially the Mardi Gras Indians Queens Council, a group of Queens from different tribes around the city, raise money *"to do things like book bags for school kids, Christmas and thanksgiving baskets for the elderly"* (interview 4) and regard these activities as charity rather than social aid.

Knowing that Mardi Gras Indians are primarily from the rather poor working class of New Orleans I almost naturally asked Queen Kelly why such funds would not be invested in the suits since the cost is relatively high. Being aware that the many tribes handle this topic differently, in the case of the Creole Osceola it works in the following manner:

*"... any money we raise is not for suits! Suit money is money that you have - I am sure there are clubs who think in another way - making gigs and raising money for suits! But we take it as a personal thing because you buy your own stuff because it's your suit! You know what you want - it's a personal thing - you are an Indian because you wanna be an Indian, not because you have to be an Indian! And one way of showing of how much you wanna be an Indian is to invest in yourself!"* (interview 4).

Concerning the recycling of suits - taking the feathered parts and patches totally apart in order to put them together again in another design for the next season - the tribes are also thinking differently. This does not always depend on tribal or Chief decisions but also regards the

individual family housing situation (suits need a lot of space), or the member's opinion of what he or she wants to do with the suit. For example, Queen Kelly keeps her suits:

*Bernhard: "do you recycle the suits? Take them apart and put them together?"*

*Queen Kelly: NO, I fill up my house with them! I got like four or five suits! Once I visited another queen's house which was full and said: oh, that's what everybody does! So I am not the only one that has its house full of suits - houses turn into museums! It's good that they look good but - as longer you are Indian the more suits are in your house - as long as you have different places like Fayaya - they store it in the Backstreet museum!" (interview 4).*

Chief Miller also used to collect and save his suits for many years until hurricane Katrina destroyed his artwork in one night. But not only since that time he has been teaching young kids who want to become Mardi Gras Indians. Every Saturday afternoon, around 20 elementary to high school kids are listening to the Chief and learn skills necessary to join a tribe. What has been passed on for generations by family and tribe members is nowadays also, still rather informally, institutionalised by such courses which are also carried out by Big Chief Darryl Montana of the Yellow Pocahontas. Giving such lectures has the objective of acquiring young Indians who one day might found their own tribe or take over positions in existing tribes, keeping the Indian culture going. On the other side it can also be seen as a programme of crime prevention. Similar to non-profit organisations as demonstrated in the chapter about the commodification of music these programmes try to keep children away from crime, drugs, and alcohol. In 2012, Chief Howard Miller was awarded the Best of the Beat 2012 Heartbeat Award from the Offbeat magazine. The teaching sessions are not only about sewing but also about learning the history of the Indian culture, the significance of the formation in tribes, as well as the spiritual practices, dances, and chants.

*Bernhard: "where do you put all your suits?"*

*Chief Miller: before the storm I had four suits, now every suit that I make, I tear 'em down and put it on children! I reuse them, every one! I have a suit right now, it is up - people come and takes picture. But if it gets close to Mardi Gras day, I tear 'em down. But some kids gonna wear that! They gonna wear what I wore! Different parts, other designs, ... I don't let them up and get dusty!*

*Bernhard: I have seen a suit for sale in a shop in the French Quarter, for 750 dollars.*

*Chief Miller: but I guarantee somebody will buy it! A suit costs a thousands of dollars, and my work is not included! We make different types of suits, there are suits with two and three parts,*



*some are all bead, rhinestone, tear drop, sequins, plume, mambo, ribbon, this is where I come from! So I learned how to do these suits! rhinestones are most expensive - they might not be the prettiest, but the most expensive. But at the end of the day, four or five kids are gonna enjoy that when I tear it down! There was an American Museum in Africa who came to me, I am going to make a suit, wear it and donate it to the Museum! Why should I be so selfish to hold it when there are so many kids who want to have it, work with it, kids who come from broken homes, ... before the storm I had four and was looking at them! But the storm came and took them away!"* (interview 55).

### **6.3. Signs of commodification of second lines and Mardi Gras Indians**

Members of Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs and Mardi Gras Indians do often intermingle at various fund-raising events, concerts, or other occasions of the Afro-American community. The clubs and tribes are occasionally parading together at Super Sunday events in the backstreets of New Orleans but also at tourism related situations such as the Jazz and Heritage Festival or other events organised by the tourism industry. Due to the common active as well as passive participation of both groups at parades, as musicians, organisers, suited dancers, food and drink vendors, or as participants in the second line crowds, the clubs and tribes are often confronted with similar forms and issues concerning the commodification of their cultural heritage. This is the reason why I choose to present the various cases in one chapter and not in a separated manner for second lines and for Mardi Gras Indians.

Parades of suited Mardi Gras Indians, parades of second lines, and even processions of jazz funerals are increasingly being incorporated into the tourism product supply. The parades are transferred from the poorness and disorder of the backstreets of New Orleans to the meticulous, air-conditioned, and clean convention centres and hotel lobbies. If not performed indoors for a group of hundreds of international pulmonologists or exhibitors and traders of agrochemical products the parades might also be organised within a few blocks of the French Quarter, leading the conventioners from one hotel lobby to the other. Videos and pictures of such tourism oriented parades are then used for promoting the destination New Orleans as an authentic and original place where street based parades with loud brass music and wild dancing still can take place. With slogans as seen on a bumper sticker that is sold in souvenir shops along Bourbon Street saying "New Orleans: We Put the 'Fun' in Funeral" such staged parades for conferences, conventions, or big corporate meetings are marketed. Among the performing black musicians such gigs are called "hotel gigs" or even "white gigs", they are asked to play a standard

repertoire and appear in traditional uniforms, the musicians are walking behind the dancing parade marshals being equipped with typical umbrellas, distributing white handkerchiefs to the unfamiliar participants. At so-called mock jazz funerals even a priest, mock mourners, a coffin and widow woman are part of the performance package. Such parades might last for one hour, after a few blocks the staged party is over, musicians are not sweating as much, no neighbourhood bar is visited, and only the paid musicians and dancers do really know what they are doing.

During my fieldwork in 2012 I participated at a gallery opening in the French Quarter. The inauguration party was organised one day before Jazz Fest would open its gates with the Rebirth Brass Band playing, a second line club with dancers performing in front of them, Queen Kelly and some of her tribe members being suited and showcasing their Indianness. One police car was blocking the street at each end and the parade was not really a parade since the crowd would only move within this one block - therefore the dancers, musicians, and (white) followers walked up and down only one block of Chartres Street, in front of the gallery Rebirth formed a circle, inside which the grand marshals, dressed in grey suits, orange shirts, green ties, and bright hats, laid down their feathered signs and started to dance around the insignias. The white participants, equipped with cameras and backpacks, watched the performance, showing some doubt if they should move and dance. Most of them chose to stand still and watch although the Rebirth rhythm was quick, upbeat, soulful.

*"Second line pictures that they [the tourism industry] use, are second line pictures taken in the French Quarter, they are not official annual club parades. Tourism often focuses on a very small portion of the city ... "* (interview 37) says Alison Gavrell from the Cultural Economy Initiative, she is well aware that second lines are marketed by the tourism industry for drawing visitors to the city. Images of second lines for the tourism promotion material are taken at those parades which are organised for visitors, where the surrounding seems family friendly, the background is filled with jungle like balconies of French Quarter houses, and beautifully dressed Afro-Americans dance to exotic and entertaining parades that always have some touch of carnival.

For example, the French Quarter Festival celebrates its opening with a second line - in the French Quarter, of course: *"the festival for years has been a three days festival - Friday, Saturday, Sunday - with the opening second line on Friday. Now we start the festival on Thursday, but we kept the tradition to do the second line on Friday - it is huge! It goes from*

*Bourbon Street to Jackson Square. And this is great about NOLA that people embrace traditions a lot more than anywhere else!"* (interview 51). It is surely the biggest tourism oriented second line in the city with numerous employed parading clubs, brass bands, and dancers. Other organised second lines are not in the programme of the French Quarter Fest.

Apart of these, souvenir shops in the French Quarter often sell attributes of jazz funerals in form of t-shirts, plastic skulls, or images on beer cups. Entire souvenir shops are even called "Jazz Funeral" and are equipped inside with a horse pulled black carriage transporting a coffin, a skeleton with a cylinder on his skull making the driver.

### **Tourism-centred and neighbourhood-centred parades**

*"The parades are very much marketed to meeting planners, it is rare to start off a convention without a second line. With the police escort - not always Mardi Gras Indians but maybe a high-school marching band, every big meeting starts off with a second line - it's so much New Orleans - it's so unique!"* (interview 41)

The issue that was coming up often during interviews, observations, my own interpretations, and thoughts was that, also in the case of second lines, there seem to be two different kinds of second lines going on in New Orleans. The ones that are organised by Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs with hundreds of participants following a brass band through the poor neighbourhoods, and the ones that are particularly staged for visitors and tourists at hotels or convention centres, in the streets of the French Quarter, in the Casino, or at the Jazz and Heritage Festival. *"New Orleans tends to produce two versions of everything"* (interview 37) was an often cited statement by interlocutors, with the common remark that one is real or authentic and the other not real or fake.

Scholars like Regis (2008, 1999), Walton (2008), Sakakeeny (2013), among others, have written about this dichotomy of staged (organised for visitors in tourism environments) and not staged parades (organised in Afro-American neighbourhood locations). Regis (1999) states that the staged performances are produced to disguise the street-based neighbourhood parades when they become an icon of the city's culture at the same time. The publication of Regis and Walton (2008), based on several years of conducting interviews and participant observation at the Jazz and Heritage Festival, is an attempt of stepping beyond this dichotomy of saying that a second

line is either staged<sup>90</sup> or not staged. The most obvious difference for the performing club is whether they get paid (staged) or not (not staged). When performing for festivals the practice of doing a second line often results in folk marginalisation. Regis and Walton come to the conclusion that at the Jazz and Heritage Festival the clubs and tribes perceive the dichotomy of real and fake differently than the outside participants. When I met Helen Regis, professor for Anthropology at the Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, in a café in the Marigny neighbourhood she told me that especially at the Jazz and Heritage Festival many different audiences are perceived by the parading individuals, facilitating the feeling that the parade is not produced for visitors only:

*" ... at Jazz Fest the clubs bring friends with them - they bring part of the neighborhood into the festival and it helps them! Of course the festival allows this because they realize that it makes the parades better, you can't just have the band and the club parading ... and eventually white people who don't know how to parade! They are encouraging other people to dance with them - there is really a curriculum, they are demonstrating a teaching and creating that interaction that is characteristic of the second line. There is a chance for out-a-towners of New Orleanians to learn how to dance - even there it's a mixed audience! There are the security people at Jazz Fest who might do a quick break and dance with them, they might be from their neighborhood because they are all Afro-Americans. All but the manager - it's completely segregated! There are people coming out of the food booths and dancing with them - even at Jazz Fest at the most staged second line there are people from the neighborhoods!"* (interview 21).

Furthermore, she mentioned that also at neighbourhood second lines there is a multitude of different audiences of which the dancers, musicians, club members, and residential participants are aware:

*"They see themselves as having a variety of audiences even when they parade on the street - there is not just one community audience when they parade in neighborhoods - even locally there is people who may not be part of the community but were at the parades! People who follow jazz music, photographers, anthropologists, ... they want the brass bands! But are they tourists? Maybe they live in New Orleans - the police is an audience! There is a variety of audiences!"* (interview 21).

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<sup>90</sup> For example, the Jazz and Heritage Festival usually approaches the clubs and tribes, asks them for parading at the festival at one day and negotiates a fee. In 2013 a second line was also dedicated in form of a jazz funeral to Uncle Lionel, a historical drummer of the Treme Brass Band who died in 2012. Seen from that point of view such parades can be interpreted as staged because they are specifically performed for a certain event in order to be consumed by festival goers and tourists.

At this point I do not want to go into a deeper analysis of authenticity at Afro-American parades and rather refer to the publications listed above. Instead, I analyse what parts of such parades are commodified and how the tourism industry as well as public authorities try to commercialise second lines and Mardi Gras Indians. Throughout this research I speak of tourism-centred second lines/parades and neighbourhood-centred second lines/parades to explain the difference of what locals would call fake and authentic. Moreover, when speaking about authenticity I refer to how the term is argued in the book "Debating Authenticity" (FILLITZ, SARIS, 2013). Authenticity is not approached as an anthropological category but in the way the term is used by my interlocutors, city residents, on tourism ads, and in the moment of the cultural production on the spot.

The following extract of my interview with representatives of the Cultural Economy Initiative shows that there is an increasing tendency of trying to reproduce such parades (but not only) out of the neighbourhood environments for showcasing them to visitors in controlled locations. *"Our goal is to help to develop the cultural economy to create authentic cultural places in the city that will appeal to people"* (interview 37). For example, Jazz Fest is such an "authentic cultural place" where traditional parades are organised in a way that they "appeal to people". In the following I will also analyse why the parades which are organised in the neighbourhoods do not "appeal to people" and the reasons why the tourism industry stands away from promoting the participation at such events.

### **Tourism promotion issues**

Second lines, jazz funerals, Mardi Gras Indians, vodou related events, and even gospel music are labeled with the product term "multicultural traditions" on the tourism marketing website (managed by NOTMC), the main promotion tool with tourism relevant information about the location.<sup>91</sup> A silhouette of a second line is used in the logo of the Jazz and Heritage Festival, a suited Mardi Gras Indian shaking his tambourine appears in the NOTMC promotion video<sup>92</sup> - Afro-American related cultural events are a visible part of the tourism marketing strategy. With the experience of the "exotic other" and the Southern black culture the city lures its visitors. But once the tourists are in town they get a "bastardized" version, another often cited local expression for the staged parades. In addition, clubs and tribes or their individual members

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<sup>91</sup> Source: <http://www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/multicultural/>, retrieved in June 2014.

<sup>92</sup> Source: <http://vimeo.com/92523005>, followyournola promotion video by the NOTMC, retrieved in June 2013.

lament of not getting compensated for the images that are used for tourism promotion (which was a trigger point for copyrighting suits and outfits). An even more powerful critic goes into the direction of the city government (working in close collaboration with the publicly funded tourism marketing corporation) which is accused of regulating the cultural expressions of Afro-Americans too rigorously, as mentioned by Chuck Perkins:

*"The thing that always struck me, when New Orleans is promoting itself some of the first things they do is putting up pictures of Mardi Gras Indians, second liners, parades, by the same token they have been trying to make life for these people miserable - to make it harder for them to do what they do - some years ago they raised the fee for the second line parades by astronomical figures to make it difficult to have second lines. It's ironic that they use all the stuff to promote the city but there are times where they try to do everything they can to make it harder for the cultural bearers to do what they do!"* (interview 19).

High licensing fees for holding second lines, lots of (annoying) police presence at Mardi Gras Indian parades, and the strict adherence to when such parades are actually allowed to take place are the restrictions that prevent or complicate the Afro-American community from organising street-based parades in their neighbourhoods. At the same time the tourism industry (the face of the city to the outer world) is selling such parades in a tourism centred form. *"They feel used! Because the city is showcasing them on their advertising and tronning them out when there is a special event but they really don't do much to support them otherwise!"* (interview 22) - second line clubs are not only interested in receiving financial remuneration for tourism organised parades but would like to see the city to invest in the cultural clubs in the form of social benefits, as Tamara Jackson for the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force told me after I switched off the tape. Direct but also indirect investment by the city into Afro-American community projects would be helpful as a return for being marketed in the tourism industry. Some Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs regularly fund social projects, i.e. the New Orleans Bayou Steppers club finances the "Silence is Violence" project which is managed by Tamara. The city does not support this crime prevention programme geared towards fighting against violence which has effect not only for the one club but eventually for the young generation from poor black families around several neighbourhoods: *"The city does not support them with sponsoring or grants but it would be an investment in the city's culture - ask me why they are not supporting these projects! Because of ignorance, the city is ignorant and does not see the chance of supporting the culture indirectly, with these projects the community is self-sustaining its culture!"* (interview 53).

Through the voice of the Task Force the clubs have the unison opinion that they would prefer getting indirect club and parade funding, which is used for community projects, when their images and "their culture" is promoted and staged for tourism. The sense of collectivity is a distinct characteristic of clubs and Indian tribes where the wellbeing of all members is of high significance.

The same applies to Chief Miller and his class who is in contact with the state of Louisiana to acquire some funds: *"I talked to the State Capital we talked about funding, and we tried to show him how important it is that we need this fund to carry on our culture, because we have a culture here that needs funding, we need it for our Council. So I went there and they would ask me if I and some of the tribes would be part of what they was doing for tourist attractions here in the French Quarter. So I spoke to the Lt. Governor and his assistant and they gave me a number where I should call because they have funds, they could possibly donate us grants. [...] Because what I do other than masking as Indian, is teaching kids, I have a class - I take this out of my own pocket. I and my friend from the REAL organisation we fund this out of our pocket - in the last years we always had around 20 kids but this year have 20-some kids. [...] They should give money to support these kids - not for myself because I have been masking for 40 years and have supported myself. But these kids coming from broken homes and poor families, it is a way out for them, a self-esteem, it is positive for them!"* (interview 55).

Scott Aiges, responsible for the music and arts programme funded by the Jazz and Heritage foundation, is in contact with many musicians, clubs, Indians, and organisations working in the culture and arts sector. He is certainly aware of the arising issues that are partly based on the touristic promotion of Afro-American related cultural events - because of the missing financial contribution or support from the city the Jazz and Heritage Foundation is funding several parades (through the Norman Dixon Foundation), community development projects (the music school in Treme), and plans to be involved also in crime prevention programmes:

*"You hear a lot of people complaining that the city and the tourism organizations which are responsible for advertising New Orleans as a tourism destination, they use the iconic images of New Orleans culture, Mardi Gras Indians, brass bands, jazz musicians, they use that in their ads - in order to get people visit New Orleans - fair enough, I would do the same. The complain arises that they feel that the city or the government is using elements of the culture to sell the city but they are not necessarily also providing direct support to the people in the culture, they are not*

*giving grants, not providing other types of financial support, they are not making their lives easier when it comes to parade permits or the fees they charge for police protection for these permits, you have to get a permit when you do a parade, to hire police to escort the parade, that's the law that's necessary for public safety, that's fine, but certain groups cannot afford the costs" (interview 35).*

Additionally to the Jazz and Heritage Foundation, there is a small tour operator-like enterprise which tries to sustain Afro-American cultural events with exposure to tourism, it is called The Real NOLA. Bill Taylor, its director, has been working for some decades with Mardi Gras Indians (he is even a member of the Mardi Gras Indian hall of fame), brass bands, and second line clubs due to his job as a DJ at WWOZ, the management of the Tipitina's Foundation, for the famous New Orleans musician Trombone Shorty, and now as the manager of Trombone Shorty's Foundation. Bill is not originally from New Orleans but got attracted to the city for many reasons: *"history is so much alive, it feels like a living history here, and that is unique!"* (interview 52). Especially after hurricane Katrina he started to create strong bonds with the black cultural community through Tipitina's programmes such as donating feathers and beads to Mardi Gras Indians so they can sew their traditional suits or facilitating the organisation and finance second lines. Today, Bill manages his tour operator business with the goal to make sure that tourists are aware of what they actually experience and that the performers get the benefits they are entitled to: *"The people know me as a supporter of their culture, there is a trust level here. A huge part of our business model is ensuring that all the tourist dollars go directly to the hands of the people who create the culture - I think sometimes that gets passed by"* (interview 52). Bill does not have lots of experience with the local tourism industry but rather listens to the voices of the performers, who are often claiming disrespectful working conditions and low payment: *"These people are really responsible for the perpetuation of the culture but are the ones who don't get the benefits of all the tourism money that comes into the city. That is central to our business - support those people who create the culture"* (interview 52).

### **Creeping commercialism**

*"I don't know how knowing that you have a larger audience could not impact you, in some way. I just don't see how it couldn't affect you, unless you were a super person"* (interview 25).

In the following I give some examples of how the commodification as explained in the prior subchapters and the commercialisation by the tourism industry of second lines and Mardi Gras



Indians have an influence on the related performances. The presented influences mainly have their origins in the increasing participation of visitors not only at tourism but also at neighbourhood centred parades of second lines and Super Sundays. Tourists slowly get aware of the events taking place in the backstreets also through the growing use of images in TV such as the HBO "Treme" series, documentaries, various festivals, and tourism promotion material: *"Mardi Gras Indians are now more public, they are in movies, the HBO Treme show, the Jazz Fest pays them to wear suits"* (interview 33). These influences are principally not presented as a pejorative impact to the Afro-American culture. Due to the more frequent presence in the public the various groups also benefit from general empowerment, awareness-raising of their cultural expressions for local residents and tourists, and overall enhancement of respect for the traditions. However, the prevalence of the arguments and examples that came up during interviews speak of rather non advantageous influences. In general, I noticed that the concerns of influences with disadvantageous character were more perceived by white interlocutors and less by Afro-Americans, who are actively involved in the parades. Concerning tourism participation at neighbourhood centred parades Helen Regis realised a similar tendency:

*"When I asked people in clubs about it they didn't have this anxiety about it - people who had anxiety about were white people, who were worried about that it would get ruined if there is too many outsiders coming in! Club members have faith in the power of the event to transform you!"* (interview 21).

For example, Roselyn responded to my question, if tourism participation at jazz funerals would be perceived as disturbing, that as long as visitors do follow some basic rules they are not truly noticed: *"tourists would not be disturbing at jazz funerals - the more people at the jazz funeral the more important was the person - they would not be disrupting the services! Just don't get in front of the band to make pictures!"* (interview 1).

Jan Rampsey, editor in chief of the Offbeat magazine, is currently not aware of some influences but compares the development of potential tourism impact with events such as the Mardi Gras carnival or the situation on Bourbon Street:

*"Over time people have become more aware of these celebrations - people are now going to Mardi Gras Indian meetings and second lines, especially white people! Because those things are all black culture! Now you see white people, tourists going there - there is nothing wrong with that but there is probably something that's having an impact, corrupt, bringing a creeping commercialism into the indigenous celebrations - just like what happened to Mardi Gras and*

*Bourbon Street. There is always a push-pull between culture, arts and commerce!"* (interview 23).

Robert C. Tannen, a long time engineer and artist who has been living in New Orleans since the late 1960s, has a close opinion to Jan in the sense that continuous commodification of culture with the ulterior motive of making economic benefits would have an influence on the performances:

*"Today there is minimal impact, but the more over time it will be more a tourism thing. Because the managers of cultural industries use the second lines and Mardi Gras Indians as examples of cultural production - through photographs and films, live performances ... over time the authenticity of second lines and Mardi Gras Indians is naturally reduced. That is something that happens throughout the world. The more you commodify the cultural the less authentic it becomes. It requires the producers to be intimately involved, while it is being managed now by people who want to increase the economic benefit and export"* (interview 49).

The increasing appearance of second lines and Mardi Gras Indians in public spaces where they can actually be seen - the backstreets of New Orleans are also public spaces but the parades are not noticed on a big scale - is also a process of empowerment for the parading groups. For example, second lines are nowadays used by the white population as an instrument of freedom of speech through demonstrations (as explained in the music chapter where the march against the noise ordinance was called a "Protest Second Line"), or as a tool for raising awareness about the benefits of biking through New Orleans via the event "Bicylce Second Line", hosted by the organisation Bike Easy.<sup>93</sup> *"Certainly their recognition, acknowledgement, and cultural importance of them has become more"* (interview 47), says Jeanne Nathan, noticing the positive effect that tourism indirectly has on the black parading communities: *"Although the tourism industry is strongly incorporating them they mainly march and parade for themselves, according to their events and traditions and not for the pleasure of anybody else - I would not say that it is a steep trend, but more a flat trend that they are increasingly turning up at cultural tourism events!"* (interview 47).

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<sup>93</sup> The bicylce second line is hosted by the non-profit organisation Bike Easy which is promoting the use of bikes in New Orleans. Such second lines are organised during neighbourhood festivals such as the Bayou Boogaloo, Po-Boy Fest, or the Gentilly Festival. I participated at the event in June 2013 where more than 500 bikers followed a (white) brass band sitting in a trolley which was pulled by a pick-up truck - the objective is imitating a second line while riding on a bike.

As a consequence of being confronted with second lines ever more often for tourism reasons in the French Quarter and at festivals, articles in magazines, journals and newspapers, commercials, videos, TV series, on logos, etc. the term second line is slowly suffering from an inflationary use as mentioned by Toni Rice from the Multicultural Tourism Network. The reconstructed second lines that are staged for the entertainment of tourists are pushing the act of second lining and the term itself into a position of being the reproduction of the ultimate tourism experience - of something that would be totally common for the whole population of New Orleans. But in fact, second lines are a cultural event and expression of Afro-Americans that developed over the last 150 years as explained at the beginning of the chapter. Additionally, second lines also become a tool for the expression of public opinions and get used for public demonstrations by the white population of the city. The following excerpt of my interview with Toni Rice is tough focused on the high frequented production of second lines for the tourism sector only:

*Toni Rice: "A second line is just people in the street - that's basically what it is. A group of people, getting in the street, they start up walking at the same time and walking in the same direction. That's the way a tourist would see a second line. But a second line is actually a funeral procession and people still do those also but it's watered down now. The term second line is very watered down.*

*Bernhard: what does 'watered down' mean?*

*Toni Rice: it was strictly a funeral procession. That's the way it started - the family was in the first line, the mourners were in the second line - that's where the second line comes from.*

*Bernhard: so how did it happen?*

*Toni Rice: more people are doing it - and doing it for fun. On Mardi Gras day go and drink and you'll see rolls of 200-300 people just second lining - just get together and just walk and second line. It's a second line but it's not a real second line. It's not an authentic second line - and the tourists would not know the difference. They do second lines all the time, any day of the week, you have a convention of nurses come in - their meeting planner can set up a second line for them, they get a permit to close up the street - but it's wonderful to visitors because they have never seen anything like that before" (interview 40).*

Community worker and first spokesperson of MACCNO Ethan Ellestad is also worried about the touristic reproduction of second lines and jazz funerals with a controlled character. In his view, such staged parades put second lines in the corner of being a party and entertainment event.

Music, black dancers, umbrellas, and white handkerchiefs are focalised stereotypical attributes at tourism centred parades - social order (black musicians are playing and white tourists are entertained), fun (black musicians are playing upbeat and white tourists perceive an amusing experience), on controlled streets (NOPD officers are blocking streets for the parade and tourists feel safe) are the three main characteristics that such parades are based on. The potential danger and violence that neighbourhood centred second lines are regularly exposed to are clearly avoided for the tourism staged parades, the city together with the tourism industry therefore try to produce as many staged second lines so that tourists do not feel the desire to experience a parade in a stereotypical poor and dangerous neighbourhood, as it gets communicated by various hotels:

*"The down side is if it is continued to push things save and controlled, which is where lot of the street culture goes. A second line taken out of the street loses its meaning - because the whole point is being in the street and taking it back to the streets. So when you take a second line from the Convention Center to the Riverfront it is just a parade and performance - it is not a second line. A second line is made up of the people in the neighborhood. It is not just the band and a bunch of tourists waving with their handkerchiefs ... that is not a second line. I think the danger of it is, the more you bring that centralized the less opportunities are to benefit - the centralization of tourism is the danger. One thing that I struggle with is the promotion of second lines in the tourism industry but simultaneously sending the message of hotels 'don't go pass Rampart Street because it is dangerous'." (interview 50).*

### **'Whoa Lil' Brother'**

Regarding the Mardi Gras Indians, the increasing interest of the tourism and entertainment industry in including them into festivals, tourism centred parades, and other events gives the Indians the chance to more publicity. In this way, more different Indian tribes show up at venues, commercials, and other public events. For example, Chief Kentrell Watson from the Golden Blades started to perform on stage together with Chuck Perkins a few years ago. Chief Kentrell is about 190cm high, weighs over 100kg, when being on stage singing and drumming the tambourine dressed in his wide feathered red suit he seems the centre attraction - and Chuck (also tall and big) somehow disappears in the background. Chief Kentrell is married and has three kids (in 2013 they were three, four, and seven years old), all of them are masking - his whole family parades at Super Sunday events, sometimes on a music stage, gets booked for private parties, shows at the convention centre and other events by tourism businesses. When I

was once chatting with him at Cafe Istanbul he proudly said *"we are rockin' and rollin'"* and told me that every person and tourist that come to the US has potentially seen him and his family. At second 3:48 Chief Kentrell and his family appear in a US Homeland Security video with the title "Welcome: American Portraits", at every international US airport this video is shown to immigrants waiting for a stamp in their passport.<sup>94</sup> The video welcomes the travelers with portraits of Americans such as tobacco chewing modern cowboys on wild horses riding over dusty hills in Texas, truck drivers on lonesome highways in the desert of Nevada, smiling waitresses in suburban coffee shops, happy families skiing in the Rocky Mountains, watersliding kids in Disney Land, and a gang of white suited Mardi Gras Indians dancing on the porch of a double-shotgun house in New Orleans.

*Chuck: "it's having some effect on Mardi Gras Indians - for a while, Mardi Gras Indians only showed up in second lines only in poor black neighborhoods, and now since it seemed to be more of an interest you are starting to see Mardi Gras Indians performing in venues, places, to crowds where you would not have normally seen them 15 years ago.*

*Bernhard: but you are performing with Mardi Gras Indians as well - 15 years ago they would not have performed with you?*

*Chuck: well they did - but only the main guys such as the Wild Magnolias with Bo Dollis, the Wild Tchoupitoulas, but they were like the main performance bands" (interview 19).*

Among the music performing Mardi Gras Indians exists the difference between those who do commercial music and those who follow traditional music. Commercial Indian music is considered such as from the Neville Brothers, the examples mentioned by Chuck, and as explained in the chapter about the description of the case study. Their music is supported by various instruments such as a drum set, bass, guitar, piano, eventually some brass instruments, and can be categorised as soul, R'n'B, and funk music. The lyrics to these songs do have an Indian character, meaning that composed stories and poems talk about the Mardi Gras Indian spirit, their life, fights, tribal relations, and similar contexts. On stage you can see suited Indians with tambourines who are also singing in chants, musicians playing other instruments are usually not Mardi Gras Indians themselves and hence do not wear suits.

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<sup>94</sup> Watch the video Welcome: American Portraits at minute 3:48 to see Chief Kentrell and his family: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NpHwYrIXWY>, retrieved in June 2013.

In opposition, the traditional music making Mardi Gras Indians perform with their suits on (seven or more suited Indians on stage), only supported by tambourines, drums, and singing chants, exactly like at the Super Sunday parades. The lyrics to these songs do also have Indian related context, are rather monotonous, with the Chief (or first singer) singing first and the surrounding Indians answering with chants, a single song can last until 20 minutes, with the rhythm being kept by the tambourines and drums. Sometimes the drum section quickly changes rhythm and syncopations, playing a changeover into another song without a break - in such a situation songs can seem never-ending!

*"In general, Mardi Gras Indians are not good individual singers - they are better cultural performers than musical artists"* (interview 24), is a well interpreted description made by Donna Santiago - as a booking agent, tour and gig manager she has been working also with Mardi Gras Indians and brings them to performing at venues and festivals around the US.

Mardi Gras Indians making commercial music are performing at Jazz Fest, the French Quarter Fest, and other neighbourhood festivals. It was only once that I had the chance to listen to a traditional music Mardi Gras Indians concert at the Bayou Boogaloo Festival in 2013. More often, I have seen Indians chanting and drumming at Cafe Istanbul, after they have performed with Chuck Perkins and the Voices of the Big Easy. After they have been on stage with Chuck and his musicians, Chief Kentrell, Spyboy Honey, Albert Homes, and other Indians got together in a corner of the stage and chanted for half an hour, it seemed like an improvised Indian practice. They were very concentrated, shaking the tambourine and singing without noticing the few visitors that stayed in the Cafe. Since Chuck was raised up with Mardi Gras Indians friends, he is very interested in the Indian culture and also thought about entering a tribe. This led him to integrating Indian songs onto his album "A Love Song for NOLA" and to invite Indians to perform with him on stage, at his own club, at local festivals, and also internationally when he toured around in Germany and Switzerland in the summer of 2013.

*Chuck: "people are paying more attention to it - before Mardi Gras Indians did only music with drums, tambourines, basses ... now they do stuff that sounds more like rap - they do different kinds of music now!"*

*Bernhard: I like the Whoa Lil Brother song on your album very much!*

*Chuck: yeah, it's kind of a response they are singing [Chuck sings: Whoa little Brother ...], that's more like the Mardi Gras Indian style, it's a pure Mardi Gras Indian song! Bo Dollis might have*

*been the first guy doing this kind of Mardi Gras Indian songs - with rhythm and more instruments! I am performing with Honey Banister - but he has played with Bo Dollis before! Bo Dollis got his first recordings in 1972 - the first who took it from the neighborhood and bringing it to like a national level!"* (interview 19).

Bo Dollis and the Wild Magnolias were among the first Mardi Gras Indians who took traditional tambourine and chanting based songs, recorded them in a studio with more instruments, brought the songs from the streets to the stages, and started to do commercial Indian music in the 1970s, selling LPs around the US. Today, Bo Dollis is not in the physical condition to keep on performing on stage anymore, instead of himself, his son Bo Dollis Junior has taken over the band. Although Bo Dollis Jr. is certainly a good singer and entertainer not everyone among the Indians is content with his kind of performance of Mardi Gras Indian songs. I have seen the concert of Bo Dollis Jr. and the Wild Magnolias at French Quarter Fest in 2013 and was surprised by his kind of performance as I could compare it to many other gigs of Indians in New Orleans.

The front man is dressed up in wide white pants, white sneaker shoes and a white gilet, a long silver chain with the bling-bling letters BO attached on the bottom, wobbling around, white sunglasses on his head, silver earrings, and a white watch on his wrist. Based on his outfit and moves he seems to me as imitating a rap star like Jay-Z. He is accompanied by Big Queen Rita and three other suited Indians (in a dark red, blue, pink and green suit) playing the tambourine and chanting, a drummer, a piano, guitar, and bass player (the musicians are white). The whole show is very much concentrated on Bo Dollis Jr. alias Gerard, a black rap-star like figure in a white outfit, bouncing around on stage with a microphone in his hands, trying to heat up the audience with words like "make some noise", quite unusual for Indians. His father, Bo Dollis Sr., is sitting in the front row and said some greetings at the end of the concert when his son jumped off the stage and held the microphone to his mouth. The gig is at one of the bigger stages along the French Quarter festival area, sponsored by Abita Beer. On top of the stage Abita Beer has a commercial sign saying "Culture on tap".

*"I don't think that is going anywhere. And I love him - I love Bo! [ ... ] Bo Jr. is a great kid - but he is lacking the knowledge what he is all about! And once he started thinking about ME, ME, ME, I, you have lost. For this reason I am saying - what he do - this is ok. But if I was him, what would I do? I would go back and learn all of my daddy's records and that is what I would sing. Because it had more powerful meaning than what he is doing"* (interview 55).

Chief Miller has a clear mind about Junior's performance style and interpretation of Indian songs which can be certainly seen as a new development. For my analysis it can be interpreted as another form of commodifying Indianness and related music. Indian songs mixed with a rather modern style of rap has the potential power to appeal to a bigger visiting audience which is confronted with Indian music maybe for the first time. For Chief Miller this is a form of "watering down" not only the musical but the general Mardi Gras Indian heritage: *"you don't have to do that because your father did meaningful music even though it was commercial. But he [Bo Dollis Senior] talked about what we do and put a twist to it! And it had meaning!"* (interview 55).

During an interview with Ronald Lewis from the House of Dance and Feathers I also discussed this issue. When I spoke to him, sitting in his museum which is full of artefacts by Mardi Gras Indians, second line clubs, pictures, and books, Chuck Perkins was with me. Chuck drove me over to Ronald and stayed during the talk which was very helpful, since Ronald's accent is tough to get and it seemed like he would misunderstand some of my questions and concerns. The major issue with the growing commercialisation of Indian music like it is done by Bo Dollis Jr. is that the Indian context of the performance gets lost.

*Chuck Perkins: "his daddy broke the mo! Junior tries to live in his daddy's shoes but he just ain't got it!"*

*Ronald Lewis: [ ... ] his daddy was not just a great cultural singer, his daddy was a great Mardi Gras Indian. And this is what people respect first - that the suits over the decade that Bo Dollis Sr. put out there along with being one of the great cultural singers" (interview 56).*

As also stated by Queen Kelly, the promotion of Mardi Gras Indian culture and heritage is important in order to be respected. The sole objective of making economic benefit with staged entertainment by using Indian suits, tambourines, and transforming traditional songs into commercial music is rather interpreted as pejorative commodification of Indianness. About her partner Zee Queen Kelly explained me that *"he wants to be an Indian - he is not trying to be an entertainer!"* when I asked her about the musical passion of the first Flagboy of the Creole Osceola.



#### 6.4. Other signs of commodification: copyrighting suits and outfits

Mardi Gras Indians and second lines clubs recently started to put copyrights on individual suits and costumes to protect intellectual, artistic, and creative property. The main concern of this protection measure is in fact the financial commodification of parading outfits; in case a photographer takes a picture of a suit and is then lucky enough to sell that picture (to a magazine, a television station, a book editor, print post cards, etc.), the owner of that suit is actually enabled to receive royalties of the sold picture. Since second line dancers and Mardi Gras Indians are not primarily interested in making money out of the suits, their major concern is that other people might benefit from their artistic skills, in order to disable this mechanism many choose to put copyrights on suits and costumes. Tamara Jackson from the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force is facilitating the copyrighting process for members due to the collaboration with an attorney who knows the legal situation as it relates to photographs taken outdoors, which is a complex case.

Tamara mentioned that *"legally they can do that, and unfortunately they do that and sell it. And of course the second line clubs don't get a quarter! [...] ... this has been an issue that we are ponder in making for how we can make sure that folks are not taking our photographs and selling our pictures, because they are selling it to the French Quarter and they put it in their businesses and are selling the photographs overseas!"* (interview 53).

Chief Howard Miller also works with attorneys and recommends to the parading Indians of his council to protect their suits with the same rationale as the Chief of Queen Kelly does since a few years:

*"The tourism industry makes big money with us and the pictures they sell, we are mad with this! At the last Mardi Gras my Big Chief recommended to us to make a copyright of our suit - so that if someone takes a picture you can prove that it's yours. Lawyers recommend as well to protect your rights for the suits. Others make money with the suits and you cannot demand to make money! There are photographers that made careers out of our suits - and we do not get any benefit"* (interview 4).

The difficult case of preventing photographers from taking pictures in public space and even more from selling these for profit was also a topic when I interviewed Ronald Lewis, member of several Social Aid and Pleasure clubs and founder of the House of Dance and Feathers, a privately-run museum in the backyard of his house in the ninth Ward:

*"This is what you call public demand - if you are on a public space in New Orleans any photographer got the right to take your picture. If you see your picture and that person got 500 dollars for your image then you have a legal problem. There is a grey area! [...] Yes, you have these legal problems but then you see all these Indians on facebook putting their images in a public space. It is a grey area" (interview 56).*

The copyright topic seems to me as a form of empowerment act of the Afro-American community not only against the often cited tourism industry but in general against commercially oriented intentions with the suits, costumes, and the parades as a whole. Suit and costume owners are enabling power over the division of potential benefits between them and photographers. But this conflict also comes along with confusion since there is hardly any photographer who is able to sell pictures for a high price. As noted by Don Marshall, Executive Director of the Jazz and Heritage Festival, photographers and Indians should work in a collaborative way since both of them are active in an artistic field and somehow need each other:

*"You have the Mardi Gras Indians - they spend huge time for doing the suits - you have photographers who are also artists, who are struggling as well - they may take a picture but they may or may not sell the picture! There needs to be some resolution where a photographer would say that if they sell the picture they would give a percentage to the Indian tribe - you cannot track an individual! [...] I know a photographer who came here in the 1970s and documented the Indians and New Orleans culture in general, and I sometimes wonder if he has enough food because he does not sell a lot! At the same time if photographers would not have documented Mardi Gras Indians culture for the last decades people would not even care! It's a tough issue and I know there is a lot of resentment in the Mardi Gras Indian culture of photographers - and everybody has to be very sensitive to that!" (interview 20).*

Donna Santiago, who is not only the founder of the Backbeat Foundation, helping musicians to follow a professional career but also an attorney for artists, has the opinion that the copyrighting of suits for Mardi Gras Indians *"is actually not really necessary, they are afraid of others making money out of photographs taken from their suits - but in practicality it has no application because no one is ever gonna sue a photographer for publishing pictures"* (interview 24). Furthermore, Donna indicates that many copyright offices do not register arts and clothes. She notices the general confusion among Indians and club members that *"registering and protecting*

*of artistic and intellectual property is not the same, this is what Mardi Gras Indians do not know"* (interview 24).

Wayne Phillips of the Louisiana State Museum even argues that Mardi Gras Indians are consciously entering the discussion about copyrighting in order to gain financial benefits from their artistic and cultural activity of sewing the suits:

*"Indians take advantage of their attained respect, e.g. with copyrighting their suits. Mardi Gras Indians is a street culture - everything always happened outside - the copyrighting is preventing this heritage of street culture. A suit is not the equivalent of a painting - the point of this tradition is not to make money - especially not for Mardi Gras Indians. Images and pictures taken by photographers are sold by others, but not from the Krewes. Mardi Gras Indian suits are the most extraordinary expression of culture - I don't like to feel that they are taking advantage of it!"* (interview 18).

Wayne makes a comparison to the structure of carnival krewes who cannot claim any rights or financial benefits from selling photographic or video material of their masking outfits and floats because nobody owns Mardi Gras - and the same is valid for Mardi Gras Indians. Due to this he observes a direct relation between the Indian suits and the possibility of commodification through copyrighting which legally enables possessors of a share.

### **Commercialising Mardi Gras Indianness in the French Quarter**

*"... those guys don't belong to nobody, they never was with nobody. If they were with somebody they would know that they are not supposed to be down there!"* (interview 55).

The form of obviously commodifying one's Indianness and suits is defined as an offense to the Mardi Gras Indian culture as argued in the present section. Indians are organised in self-proclaimed tribes going beyond blood and family ties as I have learned from Chief Miller. In some tribes *"breaking feathers"* (interview 4), the passage from one tribe to another, is allowed and possible without any further consequences for an individual Indian. Membership rules concerning admission are differing from one tribe to another. But what seems to be valid for all tribes is that Indians can only act as Indians when they belong to a certain tribe, individuals who "play Indian" without a tribal affiliation are not considered as Mardi Gras Indians.

Strolling around the French Quarter, the tourist centre of New Orleans, for doing participant observation I noticed an Afro-American man standing on the corner of Jackson Square, highly frequented by visitors: he is dressed like an Indian, wearing a bad in shape looking suit (missing feathers, dirty shoes, no patches), beating and shaking a tambourine without any feeling of rhythm, chanting to it with incomprehensible words. I get closer to him, perceiving the smell of alcohol, and spot a basket with some dollar bills standing in front of his feet. I walk by and observe his "performance" from the other side of the street, about one minute later tourists approach him, take some pictures holding his spear and tambourine while touching the feathers, leave some dollars and continue their path.

I talked to Queen Kelly about this observation and got answers that I partly expected: *"the poor ones on the street are called renegades - they are also Mardi Gras Indians but do not get the respect because they do not have a gang or chief or an order. They think that they can do it alone, without a tribe - but in fact they are not of an Indian nation, they do get no respect at all of all the tribes."* (interview 4).<sup>95</sup> Mardi Gras Indians never perform as an individual and would neither do parades in the French Quarter, unless it is an organised tourism related event where a brass band, second line club, and a Mardi Gras Indian tribe is paid to do a small parade. Lonesome riders trying to make money for playing Indian are not considered as being part of any tribe:

*Bernhard: "what about the Indian in the French Quarter?"*

*Queen Kelly: you mean that Indian who says he is an Indian in the French Quarter, who takes dollars for tourists taking pictures with him? Real Indians don't do that! We don't even know where he comes from - we don't know him - he ain't in no gang but he is saying that he is a Mardi Gras Indian and he is doing pictures with tourists for 10-20 dollars saying that he is a Mardi Gras Indian but he is not! People who use the Mardi Gras Indian name and their respect as ways to commercialize it and make money from tourists - they are not respected! We are all trying to figure out who that guy playing an Indian is! That's totally disrespecting!"* (interview 4).

When I raised this topic during the interview with Chief Miller he got very angry about the person taking money from tourists for playing Indian. As soon as I mentioned "French Quarter"

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<sup>95</sup> The term renegade was only used by Queen Kelly. Other Mardi Gras Indians can have different terms, for example, Chief Miller mentioned that he would not call this individual Indian a renegade because *"you gotta be part of something if you are a renegade, this is an asshole!"* (interview 55). Chief Miller wanted to emphasise that the Indian in the French Quarter never belonged to an Indian tribe and hence cannot be called renegade, presupposing that he would have been part of a tribe some time ago.

at the beginning of my question he interrupted my sentence, already knowing what I would be going to ask:

*Bernhard: "Sometimes I walk through the French Quarter ...*

*Chief Miller: That's a DISGRACE! That's a shame! That is totally embarrassment, they should be arrested [...] Number one, they are not Indians - where they got those suits from, I don't know! Number two, that is mockery at the highest level, it is disgraceful and shameful. No way in the world you are supposed to be down there with a box, taking pictures for to put something in the box. That bring the Indians to all time low, this is why I say that - Indians is a sacred culture! It has a significant meaning! So then you take it and wipe your feet on it like that? Man, you don't deserve it!" (interview 55).*

The French Quarter is not only perceived as the tourism centre of the city but even more as a symbol for the systematic commercialisation of New Orleans and its cultural heritage - and whoever, especially concerning the Afro-American community, is acting or performing in that tourism part of the city is probably exposed to cultural commodification, which in this case leads to a negative influence on the whole Indian community:

*"Look at them - they are dirty, filthy, drunk, ragly, they don't represent us - they don't have nothing to do with us! They are not connected to no tribe! But what is happening is that they would tell you, he is this and that - but he is nothing! Where he got that suit from? Probably some family member or friend or somebody they know, passed away, they stumbled up on them!" (interview 55).*

This negative influence has also been witnessed by Jeanne Nathan, executive director and founder of the Creative Alliance of New Orleans, a long time resident of Treme and activist in the arts and cultural sector of the city: *"Then for the first time this past year I saw this dressed up guy in front of Café Du Monde. It doesn't make you feel comfortable about what has happened to the purpose of that costuming - now it's being done of collecting pennies on the corner" (interview 47).*

### **Mardi Gras Indian suits for sale**

Another sign of commodification of Mardi Gras Indians that I have noticed through observations is the following case. Throughout my research in the field I have seen suits not only at parades being worn by Indians but also in museums and at shops in the French Quarter. I was particularly surprised by an orange feathered suit in a shop for antique furniture on Decatur Street. In

comparison to the many suits that I have seen at various parades that one was not of extraordinary beauty but rather simple, based on bright (almost neon orange) and long feathers with some green decorations from fabric. The price tag said: Original Mardi Gras Indian Costume - 750\$. I learned that Mardi Gras Indians always speak of suits when referring to their parading outfit. Often they would feel offended if their suits are mixed up with costumes (Mardi Gras carnival krewes speak of costumes which stands in opposition to the Mardi Gras Indian suits). Wayne Phillips, Curator of Textiles at the Louisiana Museum, was not surprised by my discovery of the 750\$ suit, telling me that some Mardi Gras Indians would sew suits for selling them to museums and eventually to shops. Queen Kelly's reaction to my question about this topic was very different:

*Queen Kelly: "That's a big NO NO! You are not supposed to sell your suit! Did you interview Chief David Montana? David sold his suit and he almost got backboned when they found out! Donald Harrison sold his suit and they are mad with him! He sold his suit to HBO and that's how HBO figured out how to make their own suits! We feel like Donald sold us out!*

*Bernhard: you feel like he sold the secret!*

*Queen Kelly: YES! Because this is how they figured out to make them, they just break them down. If you don't make a copyright on it they just copy your own suit and make money on it! Is it really worth it to get 5-10-20.000 dollars? That's not good at all!" (interview 4).*

Queen Kelly mentions the case of Chief Donald Harrison, who reportedly sold his suit to HBO, a US American private television channel which produced the drama series "Treme". A series that tells the stories of New Orleans residents, including musicians and Mardi Gras Indians, trying to rebuild their lives, homes, and cultural practices some months after Hurricane Katrina hit the city. Unfortunately, I was not able to talk with Chief Donald Harrison or producers of "Treme" about this accusation and hence cannot confirm if suits were really sold to HBO and then reproduced.

Queen Kelly from the Creole Osceola, a very skilled and passionate suit designer and sewer, would never sell her artwork. The reason for this is similar to the pictures taken of her being suited - she is afraid of that others could make revenues and capitalise on her hard work without sharing these benefits. Moreover, the special skill of producing such suits should only be transmitted to persons who decided to be part of a Mardi Gras Indian tribe, to persons who would not have the idea in mind of how this skill can be used for commerce:

*Bernhard: "Wayne Phillips, the Curator at the LA state museum has two of them! He told me that other tribes just sell them to trade with it!*

*Queen Kelly: yes, they wanna make money - but that's almost like selling your culture, Bernard! selling your suit is like selling a piece of your culture! If you sell it to a museum for educational purpose, only for exhibition and you know that they not gonna break to figure out how to make it their own, I can understand that - that's acceptable!! But selling it to people who just wanna do it on their own - that's not what you are supposed to do - they must start as we started! That's like giving them a shortcut, like selling your culture! If you are selling your culture it means that you are disrespecting it that's how I feel! Yes you can hire and pay me for a show and exhibit my culture, perform and entertain for you! but you can't pay me to teach you how to do it! all the meanings... it's all about the heart, love, respect for the culture" (interview 4).*

Chief Miller, Ronald Lewis, and Queen Kelly, are not totally opposed to commodifying Mardi Gras Indians as a cultural institution or to capitalising from related elements such as suits, music, or performances such as concerts and parades: *"it's not bad to make money - it is about what you do and it is about how you do it, how you use it!" (interview 4).*

### **Identity issues among second liners and Mardi Gras Indians**

Tourism-centred parades often evoke dissonances due to an identity issue among different clubs and tribes. These cultural producers often do not have a commonly shared mind of how to confront their clients, how and if negotiate performance fees since parading is not a money oriented event. I talked to Ethan Ellestad about this internal issue which also contributes to the difficulties of the collaboration within neighbourhoods for events or tourism related activities such as guided tours or museums:

*"One issue that came up from the cultural bearers is that there is no consensus amongst the communities of what should happen and that leads to that some groups are undercutting themselves unintentionally. So you might have a group of Indians that feel like it's their culture so they perform for free because it is what they do culturally - but there is another group that says no you should be paying us like musicians or other performers. Because of that, some groups are underpaid because it is assumed that they should not be paid as anybody else. It is going to be an ongoing issue until they do not find a consensus. There is an internal issue and identity issue. With Indians and photography it is the same story - other people making money off their*

*records. It is an insult to see someone else selling the image and making money of it! The copyrighting of suits has been a movement towards dealing with that issue" (interview 50).*

A similar issue is described with the example about Bo Dollis Jr. and the Wild Magnolias - the mix of appealing commercial Indian music with a front man acting like a rapper finds positive and negative opinions about the modern commodification of Indian culture. The following statement is an excerpt of my interview with Ronald Lewis, founder of the House of Dance and Feathers, a privately run museum in the lower 9th Ward which is situated in the backyard of his house. Ronald is rather open-minded concerning the commodification of culture regarding second lining and Mardi Gras Indians. He made me understand that not all Indians are thinking like Chief Miller who is rather conservative about the cultural practices. Ronald considers also the personal background of the individuals before accusing them of disrespecting certain cultural values and activities.

*Ronald: "look, this is my book that I sent to the White House and this is the letter that I got from President Obama, saying that he thanks me that I educated him. We got a small part of mainstream - we see a very small financial impact. We have a better control about destiny now than we did in the past - we are in position of what we wanna do or don't wanna do. Some choose to go down there and wear and exhibit their suits in the French Quarter and then there are some that say 'I ain't gonna do that under no circumstances'.*

*Bernhard: what do you think about the people who show their suits in the French Quarter?*

*Ronald: a Mardi Gras Indian gets very little return on the suits - you pay and pay and what you get over time is the glory of making the suit and of the people standing in front of you and telling you what a great job you had done. But it is not an economic return. Most of us work hard for their suits, cleaning hotel rooms, cooking in the kitchen, working in hotels, washing dishes, cleaning the streets, ... but if someone is standing in the street and showing the suit in front of tourists to get some dollars I can't say that he is doing anything wrong ... because the job market is not easy in New Orleans.*

*Chuck Perkins: well, I know that there are some of the Indians who are upset about them but I know what you are saying. Some people like Honey, he is performing live with me, and he has got some level of integrity ... but there was this one dude who set up a shop right in the French Quarter and he got a lot of people upset with him, a lot of Indians upset with him. What do you think about that?*



*Ronald: I must say, even though I am a traditionalist. But being a traditionalist you gotta go along with logics, too - we don't know about the circumstances of that person. We don't know how that person has been since Katrina - we might say, oh man he is exposing this and that. But we don't know how many mouths he got to feed. So he can do something to enhance his life.*

*Bernhard: so would it be ok for you if Indians sell their suits?*

*Ronald: well guess what!?! You spend thousand of dollars and man hours to do that suit - and then there is someone who wants to give you 20.000 dollars for your suit ... your rent has to be paid ... and then it is your choice. Some of my friends put their suits in my museum - one of my friends left his suit here for four years and just got it back. You know what I told him? Thank you - I am happy to do that for you!*

*Bernhard: is it a donation for you or because they don't have any place where to store it?*

*Ronald: I don't know. He just pulled over his vehicle one day and said: 'hey I am tired looking at my damn suit - put it in your museum!' So, is it storage? Is it exhibition of his work? It's all of that! We have always embraced each other with cultural values" (interview 56).*

The demand for the commodification of Mardi Gras Indians makes them act and react differently. The various tribes and clubs handle the transformation of culture into something palpable individually. This variance results in issues about group or tribe identity. One aspect which is still commonly shared among these communities is that many feel treated in a disadvantageous way: *"in New Orleans there is always the us vs. them issue, New Orleans vs. the rest of the USA - we and the others, who are different. The issue is - the others are making money out of the New Orleans people"* (interview 58).

## **6.5. Second lines and Super Sundays are not for tourists**

*"Not everyone can handle going to a second line!"* (interview 52)

In the present section I discuss some reasons why second lines or Super Sunday events that are organised in the various backstreets and neighbourhoods of New Orleans are hardly visited by tourists. These reasons range from lack of public information about the parades, missing touristic infrastructure that could facilitate the participation, and mainly the reputation that such second lines or similar parades are often accompanied by gang violence and deadly shootings. The latter fact does not only prevent tourists from participating at second lines but also locals.

First of all, as a visitor to New Orleans but also as a white resident who is not involved in the second line scene it is difficult to have access to the information about when and where such parades take place. Although Action Jackson publishes route sheets and announces such events in his show on WWOZ, one can sign up in a list for getting information about events organised by the Afro-American community (for example in the Backstreet cultural museum is an open list, and other community leaders have e-mail list sending out relevant information various times a week), you would not find announcements in local newspapers, the TV, or any other conventional information channel. Word of mouth is the most common tool for spreading knowledge about such events. *"As a tourist it is hard to get info about second lines, you can sign up at the Backstreet Cultural Museum but that's it"* (interview 14), says Diane Grams, professor for sociology at Tulane University who has been studying second lines for the last five years. *"Second lines are not accessible - it is meant for its own audience, it's not made for external consumption like the other parades are"* (interview 34) is another statement made by Elliott Perkins, he lives in Treme and second lines are walking by his house every other weekend.

Another reason was mentioned by Bethany Bultman, director of the Musician's Clinic: *"Second lines are not really for tourists, it's only for people in the neighborhoods because they know where they are gonna be, tourists wouldn't go because they would look at all the black people and get scared!"* (interview 2). Certainly, the fact that at neighbourhood parades Afro-Americans make up more than 95%, white tourists or participants who are usually not confronted with being the minority could get a feeling of fear, for whatever reason. I have participated at numerous second lines and Mardi Gras Indian Super Sunday events and never got "scared" just because I had the impression that I would be the only white person. Sometimes I got an unconfident feeling when parades came to the end and I did not know exactly where to go, what to expect, where to look at, whom to talk to, what to ask, or whether it would be time to leave. I touched this topic when talking to Chuck Perkins who is of the opinion that: *"Generally I don't think that people are xenophobic - people don't give a fuck about white people or strangers participating at a second line - nobody would stop and turn around and look at them. They might look at the person dancing and say: look at that goofy white girl over there. But that's it! You don't cause a kind of disruption - you go there and have a good time"* (interview 19).

Moreover, visitors to the city are usually not aware of the neighbourhoods where these parades take place. Although New Orleans is not a very big city and you could eventually arrive to all the parades by bike (exactly as I did) most tourists face difficulties with discovering districts of a city

that they are unfamiliar with - especially if the surroundings do not seem safe enough: *"most second lines take place in neighborhoods that tourists simply are not aware of, tourists won't feel comfortable in certain neighborhoods"* (interview 37). Furthermore, Gavrell's colleague noted: *"it's informal - as a tourist you would need a guide and map that tell you where does it start, when, how long does it take ... and second lines don't work like that - they may stop at a bar as long as they feel like!"* (interview 37). At the controlled and order friendly tourism centred second lines all these worries do not exist: the visitors are accompanied by a guide, they know when it starts, where it leads them to (usually just a few blocks), and feel safe throughout the spectacle.

The most significant aspect though why tourists do not participate at neighbourhood centred parades is because they are labeled as being dangerous. Usually, second lines are only mentioned in the local news if a fatal incident happened due to a shooting. Tourists who would like to inform themselves at hotel lobbies about their participation get responses that they should not leave the French Quarter and the Garden District because everywhere else it might be too dangerous, especially concerning the parades. I also stepped into several tour operator shops in the French Quarter in order to look for information about the neighbourhood parades. Most of the answers I got was that you would never know when the parades take place and that it could get violent.

*"A lot of the tourists are alerted to believe to not go to those communities because they are dangerous, so they are limited! Unless some tourists who know somebody, and most of the ones that participate are from New Orleans or students, they go to universities and hear from someone local that it is going on. Friends are bringing them there! But tourists are not going there because hotels are telling them that it is too dangerous"* (interview 35).

Barbara Lacen-Keller, founder of the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force, also mentioned that hotels would support spreading the ill-famed perception of second lines: *"a lot of people think that second line is violence, that is further than the truth - because it is not about that. But hotels and concierges would not recommend tourists to go to a second line, saying that it is too dangerous"* (interview 36).

In the following I present some more voices of why second lines have the reputation of being dangerous parades and would therefore not be suited for the participation of visitors.

## Violence and danger at second lines

*"You can use your mind, you ain't got to use your gun"<sup>96</sup>*

Gun violence has been a constant partner of second lines (REGIS, 1999; CARTER, 1995). Although the number of deadly accidents decreased significantly in the last decade the parades have a violent reputation. Sometimes the attacks are triggered by fights between antagonistic neighbourhood or city wide gangs, sometimes the shootings are caused by too much intoxication with drugs or alcohol and sudden decisions with fatal results are taken - in general I share the opinion of Amy Reimer stressed during our interview at the LOA bar: *"there are just too many guns out there"* (interview 41).

With every shooting the parading clubs are afraid of the potentially rising fees for permits issued by the city council in order to cover costs for NOPD officers. Apart of blocking the streets and controlling traffic the police is also responsible for ensuring safety at the neighbourhood parades. Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs are recently increasing the collaboration for elaborating strategies to prevent crime. *"On the route sheet you can read: leave your guns and weapons at home [...] the police follows the parade in a radius of four blocks and go on side streets!"* (interview 33) says Action Jackson. Many of the deadly shootings happen in the side streets of the parades - not all of the incidents are cases where bullets hit random people in the parade.

Helen Regis noted that the violent reputation of second lines also increased because deadly incidents which were not directly related to the parades often got reported as caused during a second line. Cases of murder that happened in the side streets on a Sunday afternoon typically were labeled as shootings at a second line:

*"Civil rights attorneys have been successful in demonstrating that - maybe they did not change the perception of people you were talking to but - they really changed the Times-Picayune reports on shootings - and they really had an impact! Now the newspaper will write a story about a shooting on a Sunday but they don't automatically say that it was at a second line - they investigate to see and if it was more than a block away they don't necessarily blame the second line for the shooting. Whereas in the past they would automatically say that the shooting on a Sunday afternoon was at a second line"* (interview 21).

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<sup>96</sup> citation of the song "Whoa lil Brother" from the album "A Love Song for NOLA" by Chuck Perkins

Most of the almost daily homicides somewhere in the city of New Orleans take place among young Afro-Americans by violent gangs or family feuds, fighting about money, drugs, revenge, these cases also increase the general perception of shootings at neighbourhood parades, resulting that many locals are afraid of getting injured or murdered: *"there is still lots of crime in New Orleans if you read the news! Most of the homicides are directed at young Afro-American men - it's not evenly distributed. The perception of danger that some people have is displaced - they are not the target! They could get caught in a cross-fire which happens! We have a real problem with homicides but the second lines don't cause it!"* (interview 21).

Based on the many gun shootings caused by and within the black community *"there is still a lot of prejudice against second lines and Mardi Gras Indians - a lot of middle class people, black and white, don't wanna be out there! They don't even wanna be exposed to the risk - and there is a certain amount of risk. Living in this city is a constant risk!"* (interview 21).

This constant risk seems to be part of the cultural heritage in New Orleans, as mentioned by some of my interlocutors. The violent habit among the residents is not only based on racial issues as one would imagine: *"It's for some reason in that culture, that there is a mix of traditions and an unfortunate component of the tradition is violence"* (interview 7).

Especially Tamara Jackson, as the president of the Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force but also the manager of a crime prevention programme funded by a club, is personally struck by the many shootings that are harming visitors of events taking place in the public. Not only second lines and events by Mardi Gras Indians are suffering from attacks, also festivals and Mardi Gras carnival parades have been targets of shootings during the last years:

*"The culture of violence and gun violence that exists here has impacted all cultural events here - Mardi Gras had several shootings within two weeks that just had it, they had a big shooting for Halloween in the French Quarter, Jazz Fest had a shooting two years ago that killed a tourist, the French Quarter festival had a number of shootings and happenings. Unfortunately, it has been becoming a norm here that public events are attractive to criminal elements, and irregardless to what that event is - you have to just keep in the back of your mind: there is something that can possibly happen!"*

*And you have to have that mindset going on because the objective of hosting the event is supposed to be an enjoyable, celebratorious occasion, you are not looking for to be mugged by violence but hey, it happens here. It happens here" (interview 53).*

Action Jackson, member of several clubs as well as organiser of parades and other community events, also knows that shootings do not only happen at second lines or meetings of Afro-Americans as the general public views the situation: *"It is always unsafe when big crowds of people gather, no matter if it is the superbowl or big concerts - it's the change of the people and today's society that acts stupid in crowds - it's not only at second lines" (interview 33).*

*"This place is unique in its own - food, culture, and violence" (interview 53).*

During the interview in the office of Tamara Jackson I had to smile when she pointed out the above stated three main characteristics of New Orleans. I instantly got reminded of the holy trinity that is promoted by the tourism industry, being composed of food, music, and architecture. Deadly incidents at public events are certainly bad publicity for the tourism sector. If they happen though, everything is done to suppress the information - especially at tourism prestigious events like the Mardi Gras carnival parades or the two major music festivals. Although tourists are not the target of shootings at second lines it can eventually hit them - and this is something the city and the tourism industry would like to avoid: *"the tourism industry would never want to promote second lines because of the crime" (interview 24).* Donna Santiago's statement concerns neighbourhoods centred parades only and probably makes clear why so many staged second lines are organised for New Orleans' tourists.

*"A second line is a tourism resource but also a danger ... I can tell you some of the comments that I heard my whole life about people to come to see second lines and Mardi Gras Indians: 'these white people get their ass killed' - that's what they say. Tourists are trying to take pictures but it takes two minutes to get off the path of a second line and wind up in a very dangerous situation" (interview 7).*

Felice Guimont, she was frightened by shootings at second lines her whole life and never wanted to participate, points out why tourists can potentially become easy victims at neighbourhood parades. As I described with the observation at the beginning of the chapter, second lines are winding through the streets, have many turns, and move relatively quickly - although people are

dancing to the brass band's music the pace is close to a march. Out of towners who are impressed by such second lines can easily get distracted by taking pictures of the parade but also of the surrounding neighbourhood - houses, gardens, trees, people, cars, police, loose power supply lines, etc. can be interesting snapshots. But all of a sudden the crowd has moved forward and you might be standing alone in the middle of a wide avenue or a narrow side street and be the object of a mugging or even more severe crime. Throughout the many interviews and stories about shootings, violence, and other incidents at second lines I collected some rules that visitors should follow if they are planning to survive, I would like to share the two most relevant:

*"Rule number one: never go to the end of a second line - this is when most shootings happen, people are getting drunk, all of them know where the end is!"* (interview 24);

*"You should always stay close to the band because they are never the target!"* (interview 24).

When talking to people about the bad habits of second lines I often got warned to participate - but most of the warnings were mentioned by white interlocutors and friends who probably never experienced a second line in the backstreets of New Orleans. The connotation of danger to the local second lines was noted more often by those who read about shootings in the newspapers than by club members, organisers, or regular dancers. There are only a few white interlocutors of which I know that they participated at second lines outside of the French Quarter or tourism related events, who also warned me to go to the black neighbourhoods:

*Amy: "to how many second lines have you been since you are here?"*

*Bernhard: four or five?!*

*Amy: what were they for?*

*Bernhard: well, they were organised by Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs.*

*Amy: who was the audience? who was there watching it?*

*Bernhard: I was the only white guy!*

*Amy: HAHHAHA! [Amy breaks out in laughter]*

*Bernhard: these were not staged for conventions downtown! The last one was on West-bank!*

*Amy: the real deal! You are lucky to be alive! Those are getting a little rough! It's not a black and white thing! I have been to many! They are a little dangerous these days! There are just too many guns out there, and drugs! Not from the people that are in the clubs but those locals that go and watch! Sadly, and that's part of the dying culture! There is always bad stuff going on! Don't do that again! They are amazing to see but you really need to be aware of what's going on around you!"* (interview 41).

The most fear inducing case concerning the violence at second lines was told to me by Felice, as a local R'n'B musician, singer, and entertainer she is in contact with many Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs and Mardi Gras Indian tribes, she also has close relationships to club and tribe members due to her work at the Musician's Clinic and is regularly involved in preparing events with the Afro-American community.

*"I don't say don't do second lines - I say just be careful! When Bethany once went to a second line an old lady talked to her and said: when you see that crowd start running, you better turn and come and get on my porch so you'd be safe! I went once in my life! And that was enough!"* (interview 7).

During our interview on the pool of her condo Felice depicted what she experienced at the only second line that she ever visited. I take a larger piece of our conversation where she also explains the preparation phase of the parade back in 2004:

*"I went to my first second line when I walked with the baby-dolls, that's like an old cultural tradition back many years ago, around Mardi Gras the prostitutes would dress up like baby-dolls and give the little poor kids in the neighborhood money and candy, they also walked with the skeleton, the bones-men, like Sunpie! So we have brought that back in 2004, Miss Anthony K Doe died, her husband was Earnie K Doe a very well known singer here, there were a lot of musicians like Neville, James Andrews, Sunpie, ... a lot of different artists decided: let's bring old Mardi Gras back! For Afro-Americans they used to celebrate Mardi Gras on Claiborne Avenue, my mom, I was too young to remember that - they said it was the most beautiful property in the city, but the city decided to build a highway and they built it right through it in the 60s, and this ruined the whole culture. But Afro-Americans still go and celebrate on Claiborne with all the concrete under the I-10, they do Mardi Gras parades, the Zulu Club still passes down there, they do BBQs, have bands, families get together. The amazing thing is, regardless of what man did, the spirit makes the culture stay in that same area. And that's the same route they use a lot of times for second lines, but they have also second lines around different parts of the city. I did not go to my first second line until 2004 when all the baby-dolls, the Mardi Gras Indians, the bones-men get together. Second lines pop up year-round, you just hear about it by word-of-mouth, or you are driving down the street and the traffic will be blocked off and you see a second line passing - you won't see a second line advertised on the newspaper, all you gotta see on the news is who got shot. Really, they even had a song, Gregory D wrote this song in the 90s called "Running with the second line" and it was a hilarious song because he talked about how it used to be: somebody*



*was going to get shot! And that's why natives here are amazed and how the tourist come to the second line and that they are ignorant to the fact that they may not leave alive! Because it gets PAMPAM, somebody is gonna do something stupid - it's an unfortunate component of the culture, there are some ignorant people who live in New Orleans. The majority of people is wonderful but some are ignorant, they are doing sabotage - and this is nothing new, it's going on ever since! They are shooting anyone, somebody with whom they had a confrontation or somebody they don't like at the second line, some people will randomly bring a gun and just PAMPAMPAM!*

*Like on Super Sunday when I was with the baby-dolls, it was the most fantastic thing we ever saw, we were marching with the baby-dolls, we got to the Mother in Law Lounge which was Miss K Doe's Lounge, sure enough, in about half an hour all we hear is people breaking out and running and screaming and hearing gun shots, we opened the Mother in Law Lounge and let the kids running in and slammed the door - somebody started shooting and if anybody never told you about that, it's bullshit because I know it, I lived here my whole life. My parents would not let us go to second lines because we knew what kind of stuff would break out there - nine times out of ten somebody is going to have a fight and somebody is gonna get shot - I hate to sound cynical but I'm being authentic and accurate about what happens" (interview 7).*

Concerning Amy's statement about the 'dying culture' of second lines I shortly explain its reason. Although the shootings have decreased in the last decade second line clubs are facing ever more difficulties complying with norms and regulations due to high permit fees and a limited number of days when parades can take place. These limitations are part of the city's crime prevention strategy at second lines but at the same time it contributes to the decrease of parades in general: *"because it was getting to the point that the police was trying to prevent the Social Aid and Pleasure Club members and Mardi Gras Indians from even parading, because of the violence"* (interview 7). Especially in the years after hurricane Katrina discussions about raising permit fees and other forms of regulating second lines due to the high crime rate split the city, as stressed by Donna Santiago: *"at a parade in January of 2006 there was a shooting at a big second line - the fee was about to being raised to 4000 dollars and second lines are only for poor and working class people. Second lines are a type of freedom of expression! The city tries to kill the black cultural performances on the street because of the danger!"* (interview 14).

I met Tamara Jackson one week after the shooting at the Mother's Day second line and took the occasion to ask her about potential consequences for the parading clubs because she is also

convinced that *"it's too frequent and there is something that we gotta be doing wrong at some point"* (interview 53). In the newspapers I have read that the fees are not going to be raised and that the clubs are invited to closer collaboration with the city and the NOPD officers. A few years ago the situation and relationship between the city and parading clubs or tribes was very different, as mentioned by Kevin Fontenot: *"the result is that the police says that Mardi Gras Indians are the catalyst for crimes. The cops simply say: if the Indians weren't there we wouldn't have these crime problems!"* (interview 11). This time it seemed as the mayor would follow another strategy concerning street violence - the traditional neighbourhood event was not blamed for the shooting; the parades were called a crucial part of the city's culture; and the clubs' commitment to preventing gun fights was praised. Tamara was relieved that the usual street crime debate would not start over again: *"This shooting on Mother's day, we have not had an incidence since 2007, so I think we did good. We had not had an incidence that directly impacted a second line route which means that the change and our messaging and the diversity played an important part in this! But I think that incidence on Mother's Day would have happened whether a second line had passed or not"* (interview 53).

With the last sentence Tamara wants to point out that the second line itself was not the trigger of the violence in the streets on Mother's Day. Crimes happen all the time and way too often in New Orleans, that Sunday the route may have chosen the wrong street at the wrong time. Armed rivalry among young men in such neighbourhoods is exactly what Tamara is trying to avoid with the Silence is Violence programme, based on education about the significance of cultural expressions and parades, and on the strengthening of communities through establishing connections in the neighbourhoods.

### **Protection measures from commodification**

*"They don't want to be commercialized - they don't want to have a website where everybody can call them"* (interview 40).

Regarding my analysis, Social Aid and Pleasure clubs organising second lines as well as parading Mardi Gras Indian tribes do feature a certain kind of conscious but also unconscious forms of protecting their cultural events from being commodified by the tourism industry. The performances staged for tourism oriented events, at convention centres, in the streets of the French Quarter, or at festivals are strictly perceived as working occasions. The working conditions for such tourism oriented performances are not always optimal, as mentioned in the

case of the Jazz and Heritage Festival and concerning the average low financial compensation for Afro-American cultural groups. Clubs and tribes are forming umbrella institutions for a stronger representation claiming what they are entitled to. As they are demanding a certain standard of working conditions from employing bodies and are developing protection measures against the exploitation through video and photo material for marketing reasons, they are as well standing up and claiming their rights to perform the traditional neighbourhood events through negotiations with the city council. The groups are constantly disputing on two fronts: against tourism related businesses in order to be equally treated with other artistic performers, and against the city government in order to enhance their rights for continuing the traditions on the streets as well as for preventing to be blamed for certain circumstances such as crime rates. Often, deep rooted issues between blacks and whites accompany those negotiations, as noted by Tamara Jackson:

*"The city always has reasons to raise the permit fees, but if they have their reasons we have our attorneys to combat that reasons. So this is basically the nature of abuse here, they come up with reasons we come up with attorneys. I am being honest, it is the respect of the culture ... it does not get the respect it deserves but the amount of attention they do with marketing and promotion. And the fact that shootings happen, they happen everywhere. You don't raise the fees for Muses, Bacchus, and Rex, so what's the difference with the second line clubs, I don't get it! But they tried that once and of course we went to court, we sued them and we won! But we still pay more money than any other cultural group in the city!"* (interview 53).

The strict differentiation between staged parades and events in the neighbourhood, mentioned at the beginning, can be demonstrated by the following excerpt of the dialogue between Chuck Perkins and Ronald Lewis. The performances that are paid by tourism related businesses are approached in a different way than traditional parades in the neighbourhoods:

*Chuck Perkins: "I participated in these mock parades - I was a priest at a mock jazz funeral! The guy Carl Mack - they had a dancer from a Social Aid and Pleasure Club, good brass bands, and then they go to the French Quarter and play it ... whether it is the dancer or the brass band or me - everybody know what's fucking what. And the way it is some corny ass shit, the bands know it, everybody knows it, and they go through it, and they get paid and as soon as they say 'ok it's over, here is your check' they get the check as soon as they can. But they know the difference when they are doing that and when they are in the street. And you can tell when they are doing it, they are clear about what they are doing: 'ok we are done.' But when they are on the street doing the real shit - it is a totally other thing. And with music it's the same thing - you can feel*

*the difference from what is real and from something where they get paid. That has been going on for a long time - but they know the difference!*

*Ronald Lewis: when your day comes to parade in your neighborhood - that's a day of shine! But on the commercial side I am doing this shit to go and get paid my bills. This is what we do! It is going through emotions when our day comes! Guess what - we are no stupid people by no means. We rule our culture and nobody else. [...] What separates us is that we know how to sew a suit - many can do a patch, but only us know how to make a suit. The skills of doing a patch and suits is our lived culture. We survived segregation, slavery, hurricanes - and we are still here! We won't let us stop by terrorist acts" (interview 56).*

The mentioned terrorist acts by Ronald Lewis are when organisations or individuals from outside the community are trying to give orders, instructions, or rules to what and how it needs to be performed. Meaning that the cultural groups do not tolerate any influence and are therefore exempt from potential impacts by the tourism industry through staged performances. Toni Rice, who is booking these groups for tourism oriented performances has a good insight into the parading clubs and tribes and how they are confronting such events:

*"Their culture, the indoctrine and the way you initiate it is not gonna change because more people wanna see them - that's their culture, this is the way they do it, they are not interested in possibly making money from it because it's more than that to them! They are not gonna change the way they indoctrine and they won't change the way they do things to package it that it would be more pleasing to the tourism industry" (interview 40).*

Furthermore, Toni also noted an example regarding Mardi Gras Indians and their differentiation between private practices and public parades:

*"The Sunday before Mardi Gras day all the chiefs and tribes come together to chant and pray - it is not open to the public - you have to be invited - they don't want a public spectacle because that is not what the culture was founded on. They could not care less about a public spectacle - they do it in private, on Sunday, in a different place, you have to be invited. They don't want the public to know where the Indian prayer session is taking place on Sunday before Mardi Gras. They don't want people to bring cameras - they don't wanna be a tourism product. If they can from time to time benefit and make some money that's fine but they not gonna change their culture to be a tourism product" (interview 40).*

As I asked Tamara Jackson if Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs would like to do more performances that are paid by tourism businesses in order to have more funds for their own programmes or parades, she responded that most of the clubs have an ambiguous interest. At one hand they would rather refrain from working with the tourism industry because of the bureaucratic hurdles concerning contracts, payment, taxes, and administrative work, at the other hand they know that such performances are a public stage for spreading knowledge about their cultural parades - and they would want to educate the tourism industry and the visitors why such second lines exist as well as eliminate the common perception that these dance-driven parades would be uncontrolled street parties for entertainment:

*"I think they don't because of the bureaucracy that exists with the tourism industry, and I think they do because of the nature of respect that needs to be behalf on what we participate in and what we do. I think our first premise would be education cause folks really don't understand the second line culture, education for tourism industry and conventions, that people would just educate on why and what we do! Some people would look at it as it would be a street party when it goes far beyond that - it has cultural pertinence, it is our ancestral heritage, one of the few things that Afro-Americans were allowed to engage during slavery. So it really has some history pertinence and folks do not really embrace that side" (interview 53).*

Moreover, parading clubs do stay away from working with clients that are too invasive, in the sense that their performances would need to follow regulations and have limitations. For example, at tourism related parades the clubs are asked to bring a certain amount of members, the parade needs to start at a specific time and place, putting pressure on the responsible persons from the clubs but also on the dancers and musicians - this, among other reasons, is something the clubs are not willing to accept:

*"It is twofold - it is a lot of politics that exists here, that folks just rather not be part of. They go and continue and be part of their clubs and make sure that their clubs is marketed best to their abilities. But at the end of the day people don't wanna get caught up in the bureaucratic movement that exists in New Orleans. Some organizations tend to want to control your environment, and that is just not what is going to happen with the second line communities. When they come in they are looking to do their job, they are doing their job to the best of their abilities, in terms of how they know how to do it. And nobody from the outside is coming to control it" (interview 53).*

## **Mardi Gras Indian culture is about defiance**

*"Mardi Gras Indian culture is about defiance - you hear it in the songs and lyrics and see it in the images of patches and suits" (interview 56)*

In the present subchapter the term defiance is used as a metaphor for a subconscious protection measure from commodification but also for the prevention from any outside influence on Mardi Gras Indians as well as second line clubs. Sitting in the House of Dance and Feathers somewhere in the ninth Ward with its founder Ronald Lewis and my friend Chuck Perkins we had an intensive talk about the performances of the various cultural groups in front of tourists and in their familiar neighbourhoods. As a musician, Chuck tried to explain the circumstances with a comparison of the performances between Indians and R'n'B bands. While music bands let their performances guide from the demand and feedback (satisfactory or unsatisfactory) of the audience, Indians and second line clubs are acting differently. Ronald and Chuck agree on the fact that such parades are not driven by external influences, meaning that suits, outfits, songs, or dancing moves are not (or only minimally) staged to specifically please the visitors' expectations. It is rather the mental than the physical distance of Indians and clubs to the spectators that ensures certain impacts:

*Chuck Perkins: "take a R'n'B band ... they let themselves guide from the audience what they gonna play. But the Mardi Gras Indians are different. Let's say a crowd is 50% black people [...] and 50% whites [...] these dudes right here they are like:*

*'look, we know what the fuck we are doing and it's ok for you to stay right there and watch and do whatever what you wanna do, but stay the fuck right there. Don't get over here!'*

*It's a kind of dynamics where, like having people saying:*

*'oh we got white people we better do it so',*

*but they are like:*

*'ok we have white people but these motherfuckers stay right [...] there, so we are doing what [...] we are doing. Like, stay over there and be cool and don't get in the [...] way. Your ass might not make it out of here - so there stay and shut the fuck up.'*

*And that is different from a R'n'B band who are like:*

*'look we got some tourists so let's make them motherfuckers happy ... we are going to do like äh ... When the Saints Go Marching In ten times, so it's because they are drinking and having fun with it.'*

*These dudes are right now ... maybe it's gonna change at some time ... but from what I can see, [...] right now these dudes don't give a fuck. Bitch you could come out here and watch all you*

*want but you gonna stay your [...] ass right there and get [...] out of the way. You see what I am saying?" (interview 56).*

Concerning the Mardi Gras Indians this mental distance is partly developed through the year-round activity of sewing patches and suits. As I explained with more detail at the description of the suits, the patches often illustrate images of fighting Indians with tomahawks, guns, spears, riding on horses, having war-paint on their faces. Designing and creating such patches takes many months. When sewing, the Indians are constantly thinking about the layout, use of colours, and how the individual fighting scenes will look like - often, the images show scenes of white cowboys or sheriffs getting killed, threatened, or tortured.

*"When you are working on a suit for a year and see that defiance images all the time it is in you - you are concerned with it all the time - the songs are about fighting, not bowing down and not giving up for any reason" (interview 56), in the view of Chuck, these patches subconsciously make Indians feel strong, reminding them of not getting subordinated, especially to white people. Additionally, the songs that are performed by Indians (as explained in more detail in the respective section) also speak about such concepts - getting prepared for the fight in the morning (Let's go get'em - early in the mornin' - let's go get'em - give no warning ...), living without fear (Whoa lil brother - when you livin' dat life you can't be scared ...), etc.*

*Chuck Perkins: "there is a certain thing that comes with being part of this group - a certain defiance. Even when you look at these patches you will see native Americans with guns and arms - putting on them motherfuckers and BAM shooting them. You are sewing that year around and that has some affect on you as well. You can't believe that - you gotta say that can't be a part of what you are taking to the street and then you get around with white people who are tourists and then you all lie down and let them put their feet on your neck. That is the defiance that comes along with it! That may not just come along with a typical R'n'B band who is trying to get paid.*

*Look at this patch - this is a strong motherfucker on a horse and you see what he got right here? We are putting on your fucking ass! It is even in their songs: 'don't bow down! Don't know how! Never bow down! All day long! Never bow down, NEVER!' That is the whole part of what they are doing - we can't be like that and then when you see some outsiders you are on your knees!" (interview 56).<sup>97</sup>*

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<sup>97</sup> Please refer to photo 27 in the annex.

Jeanne Nathan, working in the sector of the creative arts and economy, also has the impression that the time and labour-intensive work on the suits is one of the major reasons why Mardi Gras Indians are preserved from tourism commodification:

*"I think the key thing that will prevent that from becoming full-blown and corruption of that culture is the expense in time it takes to make a suit! Their tradition is that you don't ever wear the same suit - for every year another one! The process of making a new suit is laborious. I don't see them tracing around at tourism locations and events at a museum ever because of just the preciousness of making that costume. I see them preserved from exploitation from tourism - just because of the time and cost of making their suits! Will their come along some kind of fake tourism version of Mardi Gras Indians? There are certain tribes that perform more regularly than others [...] it is maybe only a fraction of the total tribes who are performing" (interview 47).*

One of the most important points though why Indians are protected from commodification is because economic benefit generated through parades for tourism related clients is not the objective. The main objective of Mardi Gras Indians, as depicted by Chief Miller, is to ensure the continuance of the culture. Robert C. Tannen, living in Treme since four decades and having a cultural arts project in the ninth Ward, advances an opinion that: *"The culture of the Mardi Gras Indian tribes is for the most part not driven economically - it is driven by the belief that it is the appropriate and correct thing to do. It is consumed locally, local consumers are more important to those people than tourists or export interests" (interview 49).*

Regarding the parading second line clubs, the independence of financial income from tourism oriented parades is also an important factor when talking about protection measures from commodification. Moreover, having control over certain cultural elements seems to be even more significant in order to be prevented from external influences. Barbara Lacen-Keller was very passionate when we met at city hall for our interview. She explained to me that club members, similarly to Mardi Gras Indians, take special care about that their parades are not being controlled or regulated by the city, clients, or external participants. Furthermore, non Afro-Americans that are dancing or visiting the (particularly neighbourhood) parades are accepted with a special privilege: *"I am not saying that you or anybody else does not have the right to participate - but what I am saying, me, and I am glad it's all me, [...] Barbara Lacen-Keller, say and will always say to the day she is gone on to our heavenly home, second line*



*culture belong to Afro-Americans and over the time we have allowed the privilege of others to participate" (interview 36).*

As the founder of several Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs as well as its Task Force Barbara has always been protective about the role of second lines and its members. In her opinion, education and awareness-raising about the significance of second lining among descendants of club members and local Afro-American kids in general are the most valuable measures for its protection: *"to be a part of a second line, to be sincere about second lining, it is something that's in you, that of course you wanna protect it, make sure that it's preserved to the sense because if not it's gonna become extinct. What we need to do as Africans, we need a stronger curriculum of it in our schools because a lot of people have issues with the culture because they are not knowledgeable of the culture. If they were knowledgeable they would have more appreciation for it" (interview 36).*

Barbara clearly addresses the crime issues at second lines which are mainly committed by young Afro-Americans who are not aware of the deeper meaning of second lines and the work of clubs in general. Finally, the clarification of the question regarding who is in possession of the second line culture is also of importance to her. With the conscious knowledge and belief that second line culture belongs to Afro-Americans the parades would also be protected from commodification and external impact: *"Second lines was just a black thing, it's not a problem for others to participate, but what I want to make clear is that it belongs to the Afro-Americans, it is a unique culture of Afro-Americans. [...] There are other nationalities that choose to participate, and we have allowed them the privilege to participate but it does not belong to them - it is uniquely ours, ok?!" (interview 36).*

## 7. Commodification of the living cultural heritage religion and belief in the supernatural in New Orleans

As indicated in the description of the case study I intend to analyse the cultural practices and expressions of the living cultural heritage element religion and belief in the supernatural in New Orleans. With this analysis I highlight currently existing issues of its commodification by the local tourism industry. The description of how religion and belief in the supernatural, particularly Vodou<sup>98</sup>, is marketed by the city and its tourism businesses, what kind of related activities and products are offered, as well as the general vision of Vodou to the city's visitors are the focus of the present chapter. In contrast to the public and touristic image of spiritual belief systems I depict the central aspects of the Vodou religion with notes from observations.

Although Catholicism is the prevalent religion in New Orleans, especially the spiritual belief system of Vodou is heavily marketed by the tourism industry, always combined with something that is supposed to appear 'scary' to visitors. This can be done through *Voodoo tours* in the French Quarter, Vampire, cemetery or haunted city walking-tours, several Voodoo related museums, entertainment venues, bars, cocktails, souvenir shops (stuffed with t-shirts, dolls, crystal balls, tarot cards, skulls, etc.), even music festivals and other events bear its name. Because of this high visibility and superficial importance of Vodou, the supernatural, and superstition for the city I decided to include its commodification into the analysis of the cultural elements. My hypothesis is that if there is so much offered about Vodou that can be consumed, watched, or experienced, it might also have an important status among the residents. Eventually, I realised that Vodou is taken seriously as a religion and practiced as such only by a very small percentage of the city. But as a visitor to New Orleans one might think that Vodou plays a significant role for all New Orleanians.

The relationship between New Orleans Vodou and the tourism industry has been going on since the 1800s, travel guides already marked the Vodou performances on Congo square as distinctive attractions (BUTLER, 2011). Butler mentions that both tourism and the popular culture imagery engaging Vodou serve to preserve its continuance and prominence in the city, the religio-economic function of the tourism practice of Vodou has been of vital importance. Davis (1998)

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<sup>98</sup> Throughout this thesis I follow Sallie Glassman's suggestion of spelling the word "Vodou" to differentiate the religion from the "lurid, celluliod image" (2007) used by the common American term "Voodoo." All other terminology regarding Vodou also follows the orthography of its Kreyòl terms as used by Glassman, 2007.

and Anderson (2005) further state that the Vodou commodities for sale around the French Quarter are exclusively constructed for a white tourist audience, rendering them 'inauthentic'.

This chapter does not describe religion, belief in the supernatural, and Vodou as such but tends to analyse how religion and Vodou are (re)produced and used in the tourism industry as a commodity. Many interlocutors mentioned that Vodou would be just something that is sold as a 'gimmick' to tourists but does not have any relevance for the city itself. At one side I analyse this 'gimmick' version of Vodou. At the other side, in order to understand the difference, I give some examples of how the religion is practiced by the small local Vodou community by which it is lived as a belief system. While the tourism version can be witnessed easily throughout the French Quarter, making observations at religious ceremonies of Vodou was a challenging task. Through several contacts that I have made during my two fieldwork periods I could participate at three ceremonies: a head-washing ritual on St. John's Day in the lobby of the International House Hotel, a Vodou wedding ceremony in the private peristil of Sallie Ann Glassman, and a weekly organised Vodou ceremony on Saturday evening under the guidance of Sallie, in her peristil, with an adjacent procession to the shore of the Mississippi river.

### **7.1. Religion and belief in the supernatural as a commodity**

A Bourbon Street bar called Voodoo Blues, the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum on Decatur Street, and the Voodoo Spiritual Temple on Rampart Street are the most iconic Voodoo related tourism attractions in the French Quarter. Apart of these and the catholic St. Louis cathedral as well as the old Ursuline convent with its church on Chartres Street, hardly anything else can be related to religion in the city's tourism centre. Other places throughout the city where money is made with belief in the supernatural and superstition are the cemeteries. The oldest catholic 'cities of the dead', as they are also called, which are in walking distance to the French Quarter are highly frequented by tourists either as individuals or in groups by the French Quarter Phantoms and Ghost Tours (holding hand paper fans in form of a bat). The elaborate stone crypts and mausoleums in white marble and other tombs made out of bricks on the famous cemeteries like St. Louis number one, two, and three or Lafayette cemetery number one are tourist attractions and also marketed as such on the NOTMC website. The tombs embellished with decorative artwork are above ground, more due to French and Spanish tradition than to reasons of water flooding and the swamp underground of the city, as often explained.

## **Observations of tourism-centred religion and belief in the supernatural in the French Quarter**

The French Quarter, as the touristic centre of the city, gives the impression that belief in Vodou, the supernatural, and stories based on superstition are viable characters of New Orleans. Thanks to Hollywood movies such as *Interview with the Vampire* (RICE, 1976), *Angel Heart* (PARKER, 1987), *The Skeleton Key* (2005), among others in modern times, and to the writings of Lafcadio Hearn (1878), William H. Coleman (1885), and George Washington Cablé (1886) in historical times, the tourism industry is strongly capitalising on the city's reputation of a place full of mystery. On Jackson square, in front of the catholic St. Louis cathedral, around ten persons offering predictions into the future are waiting for customers in their mobile office like installations. During the many months I have spent in New Orleans, crossing Jackson square at least four times a week, I have only noticed a few of the palm hand readers who were actually busy doing their profession. Illuminated colourful spiritual candles and perfumes are supposed to lure uncertain tourists to pay for looking into the future, getting information about love, luck, success, or protection which are the main topics written on chalk boards standing besides the tables. A tattooed, long-bearded, bald patched, overweight guy leaning in a worn out camping chair follows my footsteps, giving me a deep glance with his eyes trying to make me nervous, insecure, and obviously come to his desk. Petting his transparent crystal ball while a dog is licking his knees, he is trying to get attention by passers-by such as me - I step into the game and pretend to be attracted by his constant and rigorous look into my eyes. As soon as I take out my fieldwork notebook and start writing my observations he looks off and focuses other persons. Another seemingly bored lady with an indefinable hair colour, smoking a cigarette and playing with her cell phone, offers services such as psychic readings and future telling with the help of tarot cards (see photo 28 in the annex).

My concentrated observations get distracted by some individuals jumping around in full Mardi Gras carnival outfits in purple, gold, green, masked, lots of beads around their necks, asking me if I would like to take a picture with them, presenting a big jar with some dollar bills. I refuse with a kind gesture and wave them away, being annoyed that they disturbed me when taking notes. In order to play a usual tourist and not dispersing too much suspicion that I am actually observing the various psychic readers, I decide to enter St. Louis cathedral where the air is not as humid, hot, and the sun is not burning my skin. Meanwhile I have visited the cathedral several times but still make my rounds up to the altar area since I am generally interested in sacral architecture, I get reminded of the fascinating Bach concert that I visited a week ago, the altar

room was equipped with a big screen where we could watch the performance of a young French solo musician who was filmed while playing the organ, above the entrance behind us. My memories get interrupted by the sound of a brass band outside on Jackson square, it is always the same four to five Afro-American musicians lounging around on the benches playing rather unmotivated common songs, the trumpet seems out of tune and the beat of the bass drum not in line with the sousaphone (see photo 7 in the annex).

After my body cooled off and I finished writing notes I exit the cathedral for a second round of observing Jackson square with a focus on the visionaries. My eyes get struck by a cardboard with the words 'The World Famous Voodoo Bone Lady' which is standing on the head of an alligator, showing teeth and big glass eyes. Behind the table, stuffed with a crystal ball, plastic skulls, candles, and other boards with information that the lady offers readings promising love, luck, success, protection, and an invitation to visit her homepage [www.voodoobonelady.com](http://www.voodoobonelady.com), the black Voodoo bone lady is reading tarot cards for a person sitting in front of her. I approach the obviously most inviting table on Jackson square but do not have the courage to take a picture or speak to the bone lady since she is busy with a client, her look tells me that I should wait a bit until she has finished her services but I decide to keep on walking through the French Quarter focusing on the tourist appeal of Vodou.

Wondering up St. Peter Street I see a long queue of people standing on the left sidewalk waiting for entering Preservation Hall to listen to a jazz gig. Another equally long queue is standing on the right sidewalk and at first I did not realise for what reason. I cut through the lane of people, families with kids, and enter a tobacco store to buy some Randy's. As I ask the guy at the counter what these people would be waiting for he says that they are about to take off to do a walking tour with the Haunted History Tour operator next door. I step outdoors again and notice that every participant holds a paper hand fan with a painted skull on the front and the name of the tour operator on the backside. The lady at the entrance is busy selling tickets, 25\$ each for the different tours. A board besides her announces the meeting points for the various tours with special topics such as cemetery, haunted history, vampire, Voodoo, scandal and ghost tour. Now I remember to have seen groups of people around the French Quarter with the same paper fan standing in front of St. Louis cathedral, St. Louis cemetery, in front of some mansion houses and historic villas, and along the Riverwalk. I want to get myself informed about the services from the lady, dressed in a robe from the 1800s, asking standard tourist questions when it would start, how much it costs, and what I am going to hear or experience. I am told to look up at the

website and she hands me a flyer with some basic information, not containing more than I could read on the board in front of the store. I approach one of the guides who tells me that the tours are a mix between facts and fiction, scary stories and urban legends are told about certain persons that once lived in specific houses or stroke terror in places, he seems to have a passion for acting and excuses himself but he would have to gather with his group now. On another commercial board I notice that The Travel Channel recommends the haunted history tours as 'a must do' in New Orleans.

### **Cemeteries as a tourism attraction**

The topic of the New Orleans cemeteries was touched only by one person out of around 60 qualitative interviews that I conducted. Cleveland Spears, working as a consultant for the *followyournola* NOTMC marketing strategy (launched in May 2013) mentioned that the city could promote the cemeteries even more than they already do. Based on this comment it seems as the local cemeteries would not be commodified enough in the eyes of the tourism industry. I have visited the central grave grounds of the city various times for making observations and always met guided groups of up to 40 persons visiting the tomb of New Orleans' "Voodoo Queen" Marie Laveau, the family mausoleum of Hollywood star Nicolas Cage, and memorial tombs for fallen soldiers in World War two, on St. Louis Cemetery number one, right across the French Quarter. The guides are dressed up in their actor's outfit and speak about buried persons, why they have died or that they still might wonder around as ghosts, entertaining the group with a mix of fiction and historic story telling. At the entrance/exit Afro-Americans are selling cold beer and water, horse carriages are waiting for tired tourists to be driven around the streets. All cemeteries in the city close its gates in the early afternoon at 14.30 - when talking to interlocutors, friends, and acquaintances about my visits to the cemeteries they would often tell me that these places are frequented by homeless people looking for valuable objects tourists lost or laid down on tombs of famous persons. In the evenings the cemetery areas are considered as rather dangerous places because of drug and gun dealers or alcohol addicts. A preservation society and the non-profit organisation Save Our Cemeteries is declaring itself responsible for keeping the most beautiful tombs intact, take part in conservation work, educating the public, and for caring about that visitors would not be hit by moving or falling pieces of marble. In fact, many crypts and tombstones seem to be abandoned and not taken care of. On many gravestones I could read that the last person buried was several decades ago.

## **Morbidity in New Orleans**

The cemeteries in New Orleans are frequently-encountered reminders of mortality - perhaps even more significantly in a city with a history of disaster, disease, and violence. Human-induced disasters such as battles and wars, nature-induced disasters such as flooding, several yellow fever epidemics wiping out a high percentage of the city and daily violence are responsible for constant confrontation with death and hence for the morbidity in New Orleans.

*Martha Ward: "This is a city of very high mortality - it used to be much worse but it's still!*

*Bernhard: yes, New Orleans has this kind of morbid aftertaste.*

*Martha Ward: yes, this preoccupation with death - it's brilliant! [...] the French and Spanish who settled here, Catholics, had a very strong relationship to dead customs and mourning, grieving. The French called this the cult of the dead or the cult of death. It was because people were always dying - and also because they were always thinking about the afterlife and they were always seeing ghosts - it's just very common! They weren't scary but just always living with people who died" (interview 3).*

Martha Ward, emeritus professor of anthropology at the University of New Orleans, is the author of the book "Voodoo Queen" (2004), she has been studying and writing about superstition and the belief in the supernatural for many decades. Furthermore, she is constantly involved in helping Sallie to prepare the public ceremonies and is part of the city's Vodou community: *"Let me tell you this story about the tourism industry: tourists love to come and be part of this cult of the dead - and they think this is about Voodoo. But Voodoo was a ... these were very caring women in the communities who took care of others in all kinds of ways! They fought against slavery and helped slaves with a lot of problems ..."* (interview 3). In continuation she talked about the time after hurricane Katrina when journalists and tourists wanted to come to the city to experience the disaster - special "Katrina tours" were organised by local tour operators, showing tourists around at those neighbourhoods with the most damage, it was the interest in death, morbidity, also called disaster tourism, that visitors drew to the city:

*"After Katrina this was a terrible wasteland, mile after mile total destruction, cars piled in trees, houses washed into each other you can't even see where the road was, death everywhere - they didn't find bodies for months! There were stories about what had happened to people, now we know the stories about policemen who murdered a bunch of people ... so lots of people wanted to come here and see that, some of them because they cared and some of them because they were morbidly curious. A sick impulse. We who lived here and tried to rebuild the city had a*

*serious conversation among ourselves whether we should permit outsiders to see all this and take pictures, make comments. It was incredibly painful. We didn't know what to do - whether let them in and encourage them, there were people who wanted to run tour busses through the lower ninth ward, lake view, Gentilly, east New Orleans, St. Bernard parish!"* (interview 3).

Jordan Krummel, an anthropology Master student at Tulane, explained that New Orleans might have another approach to death because of its historical background: *"during history the city has been wiped out very often but it always has been rebuilt after fires, epidemics, plagues, flooding and spoil. People have seen all the disaster and death - this is why they believe more in supernaturals, especially poor people believe more in supernaturals and in religion"* (interview 8). Helen Regis' article (2001) partly analyses the ongoing adaptation, transformation, and re-appropriation of death rituals and memorial gestures by individuals, groups, and for commercial interest, especially regarding jazz funerals which also have some morbid aftertaste *"because somebody's gonna die for a jazz funeral!"* (interview 27).

It was criticised by Marci Schramm, executive director of the French Quarter Festival and sitting on the NOTMC board, that the participation of tourists at jazz funerals, which are actually private family celebrations, is marketed by the tourism industry: *"it's someone's funeral it is not a tourist attraction, it's someone's life and the family is there - tourists don't understand boundaries, they think it's a big show, it is not appropriate to take pictures of a funeral"* (interview 51). In her view, education and awareness-raising about how to comport oneself at such ceremonies should be communicated by the tourism industry. Marci also mentioned the All Saints day tradition of New Orleanians, which is particular since people do not only clean, white-wash and decorate the tombs before they get blessed by a Catholic priest (KRUMMEL, 2013) but they also tend to have family gatherings with pick-nicks and live music.

*"The one thing I am glad of what tourists have not discovered, and I hope it is not marketed yet, is All Saints day - it is a special holiday here, it is such a catholic city, people take a day off from work, go to cemeteries, they clean and wash the graves, and go and have a party or pick nick at the grave side. It is a wonderful thing - it is a special local thing. My point is, I think they [the tourism industry aka NOTMC] need to watch to what they are the world inviting to participate in"* (interview 51).



## Religion as entertainment

*"The question about religion and spirituality is that you would not have Mardi Gras and Carnival here without Catholicism" (interview 29)*

With the above statement I became aware that religion, whether its Catholicism or Vodou, in many different forms is actually transformed and commodified into tourism entertainment activities. This evokes issues concerning the representation of religious content, ceremonies, and the practice of its belief. Especially regarding Vodou, doubtful information given to tourists at certain tours and the selling of products, particularly souvenirs, tend to shed a contorted light. Often, the difference between tourism Vodou ('fake') and practiced Vodou ('real') has been highlighted during interviews and conversations with my interlocutors, as illustrated with an example by Martha Ward:

*"I don't consider Vodou as an art form - you can do a Vodou tour and stuff but Vodou is like being a catholic, nobody pays you to be a catholic! It's a religion! [...] all these Vodou or vampire tours are just crap! It's ridiculous. People who really practice Vodou don't sit at the street corner and sell shit!" (interview 2).* Martha is not displeased with the fact that tourists are trying to consume Vodou in any form but rather with individuals and businesses that are selling a distorted version of it: *"Vodou is a tourist product because it's just playing bullshit. The only people who pay money for that crap are tourists" (interview 3).*

During the interview in Martha's living room we soon got to speak about the strict differentiation between the commodified tourism version of Vodou, which is offered in the French Quarter, and the places where actual Vodou practitioners, locals, and spiritually interested persons go to practice their belief and buy religious supplies. Moreover, she mentions that most tourists are not even interested in knowing what Vodou really is but that they are properly looking for the entertaining aspect of it:

*Martha Ward: "New Orleans is a striking integrity. Elsewhere you get a bastardized version.*

*Bernhard: but not here?*

*Martha Ward: well, sometimes - all the Vodou shops are airlocks, they are all fake. I love them, they are wonderful - they don't know what they are doing or selling, the tourists go away happy!*

*Bernhard: are you happy because those fake products at least raise some awareness of Vodou among the tourists?*

*Martha Ward: no, I don't think so! That's ok! The mythology is fun - it's an American trope - a stereotype! It's a very important word in scholarship, meaning that this is an idea that everybody*

*has that they think is true and they don't question it. I would be happier if they bought more of my books, but that's ok - they are sold in the shops! It reads well but it's still scholarship and I like the mythology and it grows in huge amounts! Voodoos have never been hidden in New Orleans - but even the locals don't have a very sophisticated appreciation of it. The shops are fine, most of them are doing the best job they can but they can't explain the truth because that's not what tourists want. They are located in the Quarter, there are some that are outside the Quarter which are much better. I go to the F & F on North Broad Street - it is a botanica, that contrasts with the tourist shops in the French Quarter. F & F sells to all the people who want spiritual merchandise, like candles. The Healing Center is the best example of Voodoo in town!" (interview 3).*

The general opinion about the commodification of Vodou in the city is that the religion itself does not increase incoming tourist numbers - in other words: *"Voodoo is like a gimmick when you are here - Voodoo itself is not attracting visitors and does not generate new visitors - they get attracted to Voodoo once they are here!"* (interview 24). Although tourists are certainly aware of the mystic Vodou related reputation of New Orleans, the consumption of souvenirs, books, the visit of museums, or eventually the acquisition of spiritual supply is a rather spontaneous decision, as also noted by Chuck Perkins: *"Voodoo is definitely a niche kind of thing! Even people that are not interested in Voodoo may wanna check it out!"* (interview 19).

The tourism industry tends to produce an entertaining part not only of Vodou but also of other cultural elements as described in the prior chapters. This has certainly different reasons, it might be for security causes as in the example of second lines, for generating dollars and tourism influx as in the case of music and food festivals, and for fulfilling specific expectations of a haunted city. All the produced characteristics of New Orleans regarding black magic, ghosts, and scary horror stories are clustered in Vodou: *"tourism does the industry make gimmicky things - that's exactly what happens to Voodoo!"* (interview 24). Alison Gavrell from the Cultural Economy Initiative highlights the fact that the tourism sector reproduces cultural events like second lines and Vodou related products in an entertaining manner that differs from how cultural elements are lived and practiced by the local population: *"there is an entertainment side of second line and a real side - it's a two sided coin, pretty much like Voodoo, if you go to the French Quarter you see people second lining and Voodoo shops but it's not the real second line and not real Voodoo practitioners - those are for tourists. It's not the real culture"* (interview 37).

Moreover, the most common way Vodou can be consumed by tourists is via souvenir shops (tangible products) or the mentioned Voodoo-tours (intangible products): *"the only thing you can do is go to a Voodoo shop and buy something HAHA! You can't go and see a Voodoo ceremony somewhere, people think that you can, but you cannot! [...] Voodoo is a religion, I am sure that somewhere something is going on but not that anyone knows about it"* (interview 51).

Due to my weekly music gigs with Nadia at the Loa bar, which is situated in the International House Hotel (IHH) two blocks off the French Quarter, I participated at a head-washing Vodou ceremony on St. John's Eve in the hotel lobby with Manbo Sallie Ann Glassman. Although a 'real' Vodou ceremony is annually celebrated in a hotel that naturally is catering its services to tourists, the ceremony itself is part of the general marketing strategy. I talked to Amy Reimer, the hotel's general manager, who explained that the International House does not intend hosting such events primarily for attracting new visitors to either the hotel or the Loa bar but rather for expressing the hotel's local character. The ceremony is certainly promoted and the hotel is interested in welcoming many guests but the event particularly serves for creating the image of the International House:

*Bernhard: "(...) and last Friday there was the Vodou celebration at the International House!*

*Amy Reimer: yes, that goes back to the beginning of IHH 14 years ago, when Sean developed it he wanted to make sure that International House Hotel was not just any new hotel. He picked holidays on the New Orleans calendar that are special and he picked St. John's Day. We celebrating on St. John's Day is just more to keep the culture alive and to keep IHH in the forefront of being a true New Orleans hotel and not just one that you can pick up in New York City. It is marketed out for locals and tourists!"* (interview 41).

Sean Cummings, real estate developer in New Orleans and owner of the hotel, is keen on giving certain meanings to his buildings. In the International House he does this through organising special events about art, design, architecture, food, music, film, and through religious ceremonies. The events are mainly visited by people who are active in the cultural and creative economy sectors, intellectuals and influential persons in the city, as well as international guests. Special exhibitions for Fat Tuesday, music performances, or so called rituals for St. Joseph's Day, All Saints and All Soul's Day, Christmas, and St. John's Eve have the objective of placing IHH as a local New Orleans boutique hotel.<sup>99</sup> The Vodou ceremony, held by Sallie, is therefore less promoted as a consumable product where visitors and tourists are expected to participate but

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<sup>99</sup> Source: <http://ihhotel.com/rituals.html>, retrieved in June 2013.

more as an asset - calling attention to the press (especially travel magazines and writers of various blogs for luxury hotels) and the local people. Thus, the hotel makes such ceremonies accessible while putting IHH and the Loa bar in an interesting light:

*"This is part of the promotion strategy - we invite influential people so publicists have something interesting to talk about. We do interesting and meaningful parties that mean a lot to us, the guests, the locals, the press! It is absolutely promoted to the locals - we love the locals. I mean, Loa is a local bar"* (interview 41).

## **7.2. Observations at religious ceremonies**

In fact, as I participated at the head-washing ceremony on St. John's Eve I met many acquainted faces of people that usually came to listen to our gigs at the Loa bar - these were either locals, business contacts and friends of Sean as well as other people who work in the hotel or his real estate development enterprise, or hotel guests who regularly spend their nights in IHH when they are on a visit in New Orleans. Amy also told me that IHH does not have a big budget for marketing but rather organises such *"sophisticated events"* (interview 41) in order to spread voice (through the press and word of mouth) about the hotel and Loa bar.

When I have interviewed Martha Ward some months before the event she stressed that it would be the most beautiful Vodou ceremony that is openly accessible - she is a close friend of Sallie and generally supports her in preparing but also partly implementing the ceremonies that are taking place in public spaces - these are the head-washing ceremony at Loa, the ceremony at St. John's Eve at the Bayou, and a ceremony at a cemetery in the night of All Saints:

*"Sally does one, which I think is even more beautiful, in the lobby of the International House on Camp Street, downtown, the International House asks her to do it because they have tourists from all over the world. It's advertised in the newspapers - there are usually a hand full of tourists there - and for Sallie I go early and I am available to explain to the tourists what's going on - Sallie offers an explanation at the first. But it's within the context of Voodoo itself, of the spirituality of it - and the tourists have questions about 'what's going on?' They have naive, innocent and simple questions, they don't know enough to ask anything better. But I sit there for her and for New Orleans and I explain and I normalize Voodoo for them, I make it normal and knowable, I defuse the scariness of it! People like the Hollywood version: bones, ghosts, graveyards, dark curses, ... they like all this stuff!"* (interview 3).

Martha helps Sallie in explaining what Vodou is off the tourism industry, especially at the days of the public ceremonies - to people who never participated at something similar before or who might have never thought about the substantial difference between tourism Vodou and practiced Vodou. First time participants often emanate from a stereotypical assumption of what Vodou is and how it is practiced in New Orleans:

*Bernhard: "but what does Sallie think about the Vodou commercialization in New Orleans? Does it impact her work somehow?"*

*Martha Ward: these are things people don't come in well about. You have to go and see and experience to understand - otherwise it's just opinions. On June 23 there is a Vodou ceremony on Bayou St. John, open to the public and tourists - it's advertised on the internet. I sometimes take film crews from Japan and Germany there, or Americans who are like barbarians compared to these Europeans! It's a beautiful Vodou ceremony, it's public and it's for tourists and advertised - but they don't know what it is so they can't come because it isn't real to them - they want African American women biting the head off a chicken. I'm serious - that's the American idea of what Vodou is - they want wild pagan dances and people stripping off their clothes and sacrificing animals and you know that stuff is not gonna happen. It's a serious ceremony and Sallie is an amazing practitioner, incredible to handle so many people! The real thing is that at the same time, the same week, St. John the Baptist is honored throughout the Caribbean and New Orleans and his day is June 23, St. John's Eve" (interview 3).*

### **Head-washing ceremony at Loa**

When I entered the lobby of the International House Hotel in the afternoon of June 23, 2012, Sallie and three white dressed practitioners already slowly danced around a white, high, wooden, flower painted pole which was put in the centre of the hall. Three male percussionists, dressed in white with headscarves, are drumming the rhythm to which the practitioners and the visitors softly move their bodies. Most of the visitors followed the few instructions of the invitation saying that they should all come in white clothes, they are sitting on the floor and couches or standing along the walls, within a certain distance to the centre dancers - other visitors are having a drink in the left wing of the lobby where Alan, chief bartender of the Loa bar is mixing cocktails. For the Vodou deities, the Loa, a monumental altar with candles and offerings in form of white roses, flowers, bottles of rum, champagne, white wine, jewellery such as pearl bracelets, necklaces, earrings, and other decorations for body and hair such as ribbons or barrettes, is prepared where usually the open access computer for hotel guests is placed. The ceiling lights are dimmed so that the candles standing on the altar, around the pole, on the

reception desk, and spread around the lobby would shimmer mystically. Sallie leads the traditional celebration (it is already volume 14 since the hotel opened its gates) through singing, speaking, praying, and calling the spirits in the Kreyòl language - I can only understand some few words which sound like French, Spanish, English but do not get the context of the phrases. The singing and calling takes turns between Sallie and a female practitioner, periodically all practitioners repeat certain phrases or seemingly refrains of songs and prayers. Sallie draws powerful 'vèvè symbols in cornmeal on the floor, circularly around the centre pole, while she is calling on the spirits. The rhythmic section leads the beat and accompanies the singing with three different drums, looking like congas, one of the drummers also hammers with an iron stick on a piece of iron - sending chills down the spine due to the truly penetrating, shrill, but wonderful sound. After around half an hour only a few visitors tend to step on the floor and dance around the pole - taking off my shoes, as everyone did, I also step into the ring of dancers and move to the beat. Then all participants receive a small candle decorated with a ritual 'vèvè painting' to light the soul's way forward.

The drummers stop to play and the lady next to Sallie explains in a calm voice that everyone is cordially invited to become baptised by a head-washing ritual from Sallie or from herself. They would prepare a bowl with mint, sparkling wine, rum, different herbs, potions, perfumes, grapes, bananas, an egg, and some other ingredients that I did not understand well, the liquid will be put on one's head which is covered by the scarf, spirits will be called and you are supposed to keep the scarf on overnight until the next morning. This ritual may well bring on significant dreams that evening, perhaps ones that foretell the future. The drummers start playing again, the sound of iron hitting on iron fills the lobby and some other visitors join the dancing circle around the pole. As soon as Sallie and the lady have finished preparing the bowls they first renew the baptism ritual to the practitioners, then the drummers, then to the first visitors which seem as having already participated at several of such ceremonies. I step into the short line of persons who are waiting and watch the remaining visitors checking out the altar, looking at the cornmeal drawings and offerings standing around the pole, the drummers take sips of rum and wine and keep on playing. Now it's my turn of getting head-washed, I lay down the candle, the lady asks me if it were the first Vodou baptism for me and if I would allow her to put the liquid on my head-scarf. I answer accordingly, get down on my knees and a wonderful relaxing smell of mint, rose water, and white wine pleases my nose. She tells me to keep on the wet scarf until tomorrow morning and pay attention to my dreams which should be very positive - some phrases in Kreyòl accompany the act of moistening my head, her hands deep in the bowl,

I lean more forward and down, my face above the liquid. The steely sound thrills into my ears, in tune with the Kreyòl words, the smell of mint arrives in my lungs, liquid dropping down the forehead I am reflecting about getting Vodou baptised, the lady's fingers almost massage the scarf, and I seem to get closer to a spiritual experience. With my eyes closed I do not feel her hands anymore, the last word in Kreyòl gave me the impression that the ritual was over, I slowly lift up my face and do not know anything else to say than thank you.

### **Wedding ceremony**

*"Music, dance, and artistic expression are the heart and soul of Vodou. The religion itself is an art, a dance, a drumbeat, and is inseparable from the rhythms, forms, colors, and images that animate it." (GLASSMAN, 2007: 11)*

The idea of getting married during a Vodou ceremony in New Orleans was initially born with a side comment about how Nadia and I would imagine our wedding in general. Surprisingly, Nadia took my side comment serious and encouraged me to organise such a Vodou wedding, without even knowing if such events would exist. First, I got in touch with Felice, asking her if Sallie Glassman would be interested in holding a ceremony for us - she set me in contact with Sallie who replied with a very positive feedback, asking me how many guest we would like to welcome and where it could take place. We proposed locations like the Healing Center, Cafe Istanbul or the Loa bar but Sallie recommended to celebrate the wedding directly in her peristil in the Bywater. Ceremonies of such importance and joy would be more beautiful to be held in a private place without potential spectators who would not be part of the group of friends, and she was totally right. If we would like to have some drummers she would prefer to pay them since musicians in New Orleans, like everywhere else, hardly ever perform for free. We agreed on a certain budget and set a meeting in Sallie's shop to talk about what would actually happen at a Vodou wedding.

We met Sallie in her shop, the Island of Salvation Botanica located in the Healing Center. There she sells spiritual supply products such as candles, aromatic oils and tinctures, potions for love, luck, protection, power, as well as herbs for cooking, medicinal and magical use - on the jars is written Dragon's Blood, Jalap root, jasmine, and much more. Additionally, there are perfumes, tarot cards, artisan products from Haiti such as necklaces and bracelets, crucifixes, rings, skullbeads, Haitian metal work, decoration, lamps, wooden figures of angels and winged animals such as dragons, mermaids, and elephants, etc., various books about spiritual belief and Vodou,

figures and statues of saints in different materials, gris-gris bags with coloured feathers, incense sticks, bath salts and soaps, flower and rose water, and special liquids such as Thieves Vinegar and Dragon Blood's ink. Sallie sells these supplies because they "*help people reach the spirit*" and the candles do "*help the spirits see*", sequin flags representing different Loa are hanging on the walls, paintings of the spirits of the dead in skulls and bones, and some artwork made by Sallie herself is available in the shop. Her white and long-haired dog Ayida is relaxing behind the door.

After a warm greeting I timidly ask Sallie if she could explain to us the process of a Vodou wedding ceremony, because we want to know what to expect and also plan on informing our guests. She says that it is going to be a wonderful event, sophisticated, exquisitely beautiful, elegant, creative, especially if we are going to bring friends and guests who have never participated at something similar, with a group of up to 30 people it would create a beautiful atmosphere in her private temple, which is a restructured and adapted shotgun house in the Bywater. We will call on spirits, invite them to the wedding, and hope that they join the ceremony - spirits have no physical bodies, speaking, dancing, lifting objects, drinking, or eating is impossible for them - only with our permission they borrow our bodies for a time in trance and possession. The objective of the ceremony is possession through dancing - you go beyond the borders of your own identity and go outside of yourself - some spirits that we call would possess someone of us. In order to attract the spirits the guests and participants are supposed to bring offerings - Sallie does not use any animals as offerings because she is vegan - she does white Vodou and not any form of dark or black Vodou where 'magical' things happen. All of the different spirits have different likes. Hence, according to the specific spirits that we are going to call, the guests should bring certain offerings - in order to understand better what she wants to say, Sallie makes a simple example: we should imagine this situation like if we would invite our grandmother to dinner, we would offer her favourite food and drinks to let her know that she is welcomed and honoured. During the ceremony we will call on Ezili Freda Daomé, and on Ayida Wèdo with her husband Danbala Wèdo. We call Ezili Freda for matters of the heart, love, and beauty, we call Ayida for hope and happiness, for security in a marriage, to keep it faithful and solid, and we call on Danbala for serenity and peace. Ayida and Danbala are represented by a serpent, or two serpents, because Ayida herself dances with the serpent who is Danbala, and Ayida's head is the serpent's head, reflecting the reptilian serpentine nature of the Goddess - together they form the series of rising and relaxing tensions that reflect the muscular movements of sexual union (GLASSMAN, 2007). During the ceremony Sallie would also prepare a gris-gris bag for us, it helps us to achieve our goals and protects us from harm, we should cut our



nails, take some hair, and she would put these ingredients together with a selection of herbs, a sprinkle of perfumes, a feather - at the end of the ceremony she will hand it over to us.

Sallie tells us that we should all be dressed in white clothes with a white headscarf - it attracts good-minded and positive spirits while colours like black, dark blue and particularly purple should be avoided. These could be risky since 'wrong' spirits or the spirits of the dead could be attracted by dark colours, crash the ceremony and even have impact on the wedding and life of the participants. The Western paradigm that insists things are either good or evil is hardly applicable in her practice of Vodou - there are certain spirits that are called for different reasons and occasions. Nadia instantly bubbles along her ideas of sewing white headscarves by herself for all of the guests so we would have something that unites us aesthetically - Ezili likes lace which could be incorporated onto the female scarves, as well as pearls. It is an embodied experience says our priestess, practicing Vodou is entering the sacred gates of Ife to offer respect and honour to the legacy of those who came before.

The ceremony would last for more than three hours and we should prepare a wedding vow that we could say during her 'blessing', maybe some spirits would appear and possess some of the guests - the probability that a spirit possesses a guest who has never participated in a Vodou ceremony is very low but still possible - if it happens you might not even be aware of it. Sallie normalises Vodou and the possessions of spirits, she tells us that she would explain the process of the ceremony to our guests before we start, to take away the potential fear and doubts about Vodou, spirits, possessions, and trance.

Nadia and me have met Sallie about three times in her shop prior to the wedding ceremony. I bought and studied her book "Vodou Visions" in order to step into Sallie's spiritual world, we purchased some candles, oils, and perfumes that we would offer during the ceremony, we decided to let it happen in Sallie's peristil and discussed about how we could explain to our guests in a few words what to expect.

On Saturday, May 11, 2013, we invited our guests to meet at The Merchant Cafe where Nadia and me used to play several Sunday mornings during brunch time. While having lunch and cheering to today's wedding we prepared a list of offerings that Sallie wanted us to bring for the spirits. White foods like cup cakes, white grapes, mayonnaise, whipped cream, white and sparkling wine, white desserts and milk, white chocolate, powdered sugar, flour, white pastries,

rice, bananas, mild cigarettes, lace, hand mirrors, jewelry, candles, perfume, oils, incense sticks, sweet liqueur, roses and flowers, other white fruits and vegetables were chosen by our guests - everyone would bring something. We walked around the French Quarter and bought the offerings in different supermarkets and stores with our American and European friends who flew in from San Diego, Chicago, London, but most of the 30 guests were living in New Orleans. At 18.00 in the evening we all met at the Loa bar to cheer with rosé sparkling wine and to distribute the headscarves to our friends - not anyone has ever participated at a Vodou wedding ceremony - only a few knew about Sallie's ceremonies that annually take place at the International House Hotel lobby on St. John's day. Mardi Gras Indian Queen Kelly has not had any experience with Vodou before and even brought her sister who was very interested in participating at such a rare event. Other friends also came in accompany, either because they did not feel relaxed enough to appear alone or because they have never received an invitation to a Vodou temple and wanted to share the experience with their best friends, partners, or siblings.

At around 19.00 we were supposed to start with the ceremony at Sallie's peristil which is situated in the Bywater neighbourhood, a wooden old shotgun house, restructured as a temple, in Rosalie Alley, a very small way that cuts through the block of Piety and Desire Street. On the wooden fences along "Vodou Alley", leading to the sanctuary, there are sprayed skulls and skeletons, painted white and dark roses and other flowers, boney creatures with sunglasses on, smoking cigarettes, a cylinder on top of their dead heads, colourful depictions of ancestors and spirits, psychedelic crucifixes, red hearts, skulls with big eyes and open jaws in all colours, spreading a mystic atmosphere. As Nadia and I arrive at the Alley, a bit late, all of our friends already gather at the entrance to the peristil, taking pictures of each other with the painted skulls, everyone is dressed in white - of the 35 guests I do not know at least eight of them, those are friends and acquaintances that did not want to miss such a private Vodou event. As we enter into the peristil, a big open space room, seeming a dark loft, with a white large wooden pole standing on a concrete basis in the centre, the walls are decorated with altars, Sallie is about to welcome the participants giving them a short introduction into how the ceremony will be held and what to expect. With a long white skirt, and a beautiful lace headscarf, she speaks in a calm voice, smiling and seemingly being happy about the big interest and the ceremony that we are going to celebrate together for our union. She introduces to the three drummers who will constantly lead the rhythm to the compelling songs that are the centre of each ritual, to the individual spirits that we are going to call, inviting them to take over our bodies and merge with our souls - they use us to have the earthly experience they cannot have and we try to attract

them with our offerings - she will then give us a sign when we should put down our offerings around the pole. She says that most probably only the musicians or her practitioners, male and female assistants of the ceremony, might get possessed by the spirits since they are experienced with getting in trance - but if it should happen to anyone of the guests they should stay calm and let them be guided - she as a priestess knows how to handle the spirits and nobody should be afraid. You might feel dizzy, physically weak, hear voices, but the practitioners will come to hold and guide you. The possession is a very special form of trance or altered state of consciousness, Sallie is a spiritual guide and teacher who accompanies and commemorates the major life passages of her extended family through birth, marriage, death of loved ones. She explains that the dead are part of our human spiritual community and need to be honoured and respected. Inviting everyone to participate actively through moving around the pole, dancing, clapping, and even singing, Sallie starts the Vodou wedding ceremony.

Sallie and the practitioners, men and ladies in their 20s and 30s, are mainly assembled in a circle around the centre pole, sometimes they stand next to each other in a line, exactly vis-à-vis of us, facing the bridal pair - behind us there is the open white double wing door to the temple - apart of the dusk light entering the peristil from the door the room is only illuminated with an innumerable amount of candles - distributed on the altars, on the floor, around the pole, some coloured electric dimmed light chains hang from the ceiling. All the guests are assembled in a bigger circle around the pole, standing next to each other, incorporating the musicians. On the walls I see paintings and pictures of various saints, spirits, some branches of trees, air fans hang from the ceiling. The drummers are sitting on my right hand side, playing various conga like drums, djembe, other bigger drums, and the guy with the piece of iron is also present. I remember that two of the three drummers also played at the head-washing ceremony, the third musician does not seem to have lots of experience with drumming during ceremonies - he is a bit behind and waits for the others to start with the rhythm. Sometimes, the practitioners do also accompany the drums with bells, tambourine like drums, shakers (with rice grains inside), and artisan produced African musical instruments with dried pumpkin sounding like a cabasa which is called asson - a ritual rattle strung with beads and an attached bell.

I remember what Sallie told us at the meetings in her shop: the rhythm of the drums and the bodies of the dancers are also given to the Loa. The drum rhythms carry the prayers, dreams, and hopes to the place where the dead wait to answer - the drumbeats are like stepping stones over the water on which the spirits walk into our bodies - it is the drummer's job to offer up a

relentless wave of rhythm overwhelming the dancers' conscious resistance to possession. In that sense the drummers are not only musicians but also practitioners, through their drumming it is often themselves who get possessed by the spirits.

The first hour of the ceremony is dedicated to opening prayers, libations are poured from the doors, to the centrepole, in the form of a crossroads. The practitioners call the spirits individually with different prayers following a certain litany - the asson often serves for saluting and is used not only as an instrument but also as a spiritual tool. Mainly the Manbo leads the singing role, her lyrics are responded by the practitioners, then they use to sing the whole litany together - everything is in Kreyòl and hardly anything is understood by the participants. They call on Legba, pour libations at the door which is the entrance to the ritual space, and later on Courir de Mardi Gras because we wish to enhance creative energy and masculine energy - they call on Ezili Freda, Ayida Wedò, and other spirits which I do not figure out precisely. Hand clapping is an important element and sometimes substitutes the drums while only the Manbo or one practitioner is singing - only when all practitioners sing or when we are all dancing the drums tune in. At the beginning our guests seem to be a bit anxious, nervous, timid, uneasy. Hardly anyone is clapping, only a few are luffing with the beat, I try to imitate what the practitioners do and do some rhythmic dancing steps - they are short and seem to go on forever. Nadia and I also clap more than our friends, trying to be a bit interactive, giving our guests the feeling that they can contribute to dancing and clapping if they feel like. By the time I also try to sing with the practitioners without understanding a word - but I like the rhythm and the melodies, having the imagination to get some key words at the refrain. I walk around the temple and distribute some of the headscarves that are left in our basket to the guests that still dance without a scarf. During the short breaks of calling on the different spirits the practitioners seem to be very relaxed, they certainly take the ceremony seriously but are not as strictly devotional as you would see catholic priests doing a service in a frozen stiff manner - they are talking to each other, laughing, taking a sip of water, exchanging instruments.

After around one and a half hours I recognise more intensity and interaction of Sallie, the practitioners but also from the side of the guests who feel more comfortable, most of them clap hands, follow the few dancing steps, remaining on the same position. The drummers take less pauses and the ceremony seems to be more fluid, Sallie is alternately dancing and spinning with some practitioners around the pole while they are accompanied by singing - a female practitioner takes over the lead voice, speaking, reciting, singing, clapping. Rotationally, Sallie,

the lead singer, and some practitioners dance in three or in four around the pole, with particular dancing steps, once a lady is holding a long spear with a shaft, seeming a machete or a sword - feathers, scarf, and cloths are affixed on it smelling like rose water, the lady is dressed with an embroidered cloak with sequin and pearls - passing every participant who can touch the shaft with their fingertips; they are then passing in front of the participants with candles, with a bottle of water, sprinkling some drops on the floor around the pole. Manbo Sallie engages with Laplas, a male practitioner, in a mock battle, Laplas is cutting the air with his machete, two drapo (sequined flags) carriers are dancing aside of him. They salute each other with several pirouettes, exchanging double handshakes symbolising the crossroads.

I have the feeling that the guests slowly relax and get smoother, especially when they are more incorporated into the ceremony through touching something, making some more diverse dancing steps. The practitioners also pass along the altars which are positioned on the walls - Sallie explained that she has several altars in her temple, for specific spirits, her ancestors, and beloved ones - there are different paintings, pictures, family photos, personal items on them, the altars are not a static creation. With the various offerings during the ceremonies the altars grow and so grows your relationship with the Loa - candles, incense, glass of water, bottles of rum and sparkling wine, collected pebbles, bricks and stones from cemeteries are at the bottom of the altar. Jars of honey and cinnamon, pumpkins, atomisers of perfumes, oils, pastries, necklaces, bracelets, and other kind of hair decoration are spread around the lace table cloth.

At some point Sallie starts the vèvè ritual. Each spirit has a certain symbol representing that spirit - such a symbol is called vèvè. She uses cornmeal for drawing them on the floor, circling around the pole, for each appropriate Loa Sallie draws a vèvè. The practitioners, almost a choir, sing songs for the vèvè drawing; when Sallie finishes one of them she kisses the vèvè, performs three pirouettes in the four quarters, with a candle, a libation bottle, and the asson; during the drawing and afterwards the appropriate litanies are sang by Sallie and the choir. Crossroads with the candle are made above the vèvè for fire, water, air, earth, and the spirit - the vèvè is like the door through which the spirit enters the temple and the person who gets possessed. Sallie and the practitioners invite the spirits to 'dance with us', words like "Ago! Ago! Ago-é!" and "Ayibobo" are sang frequently as responded by the choir. The cornmeal drawings are beautiful and seem a bit magical doors - where a piece of concrete was just before now a wonderful white symbol for a certain Loa is decorating the space around the pole; Sallie then invites us to put our offerings around the pole and next to the vèvè drawings. The practitioners hand us some fire

from the candles that are placed around the pole so we can enlighten our coloured and perfumed candles, as well as incense sticks. The fruits, vegetables, and jewelry are put everywhere. Sallie calls us for the blessing ceremony of the bridal pair, we change position and walk to the opposite side of the double wing door, to the place where she mainly used to lead the ceremony. Our priestess sings some prayers in Kreyòl but talks to us in English so we and the rest of the participants could understand her. She thanks us for bringing so many new faces into her temple who are interested in the Vodou religious ceremonies. At this point I see the vèvè drawings on that side of the pole and recognise the symbols for Ezili Freda with the heart shaped vèvè, as well as the serpents of Danbala and Ayida together with their vèvè. Sallie starts to sing again and the choir responds accordingly, as mentioned by her during the meetings she puts a certain root underneath our tongues. We prepare our wedding rings which are made of lace and exchange them - while standing Sallie does the same with us as she did with the vèvè drawings - performing pirouettes with a candle, a bottle of libations, in four quarters. We are asked to kneel down right before the vèvè for Ezili Freda, Sallie says some more prayers in Kreyòl, the whole peristil has fallen into total silence - the drummers do not move anymore, nobody dances, none of the participants says a word or even blinks with the eyes - the room is extremely silent as you can hear the flickering of the candles. Sallie created a magical atmosphere during the last two and a half hours and the ceremony sought for its culmination. She let red and white leaves of roses rain down on us while Nadia leans with her head on my right shoulder - Sallie encourages us to speak our wedding vow which we perform to the surprise of all in German. She holds our hands and blesses our union, wishing us a marriage full of luck and love, a fulfilling life with lots of babies; inviting us to stand up again, handing us over the gris-gris bag that she has prepared during the ceremony Sallie looks at me, her deep glance tells me that it is now time to kiss Nadia - while doing so all our friends are applauding and cheering to our union, continuously the drummers revive the beat with ever more power, the practitioners and all participants start to dance around the pole and the ceremony turns into a powerful dancing celebration.

Queen Kelly and Zee, Marco, Sean and Gena, and other friends approach us to express their congratulations when suddenly one of the male practitioners starts to stumble around the pole. I instantly remember Sallie telling us that there are many stages and degrees of possession trance, which can include anything from a light trance or visionary condition to the full state of possession. The guy staggers lightly, one of the drummers jumps up and holds him so he does not fall down but can continue his trip - he is laughing and seems a bit drunk - together they take some rounds around the pole and a few minutes afterwards the possession has taken an end.

While most of the participants and practitioners have already started with consuming the offerings of grapes, sparkling wine, white bread, cupcakes, chocolate, and other sweets one of the dancing drummers seems groggy and mimics sexual intercourse - the guy who was possessed before guides the drummer around the pole. The practitioners are laughing and I don't know why - Manbo Sallie approaches me to tell us that Gede la Flambo is among us, he does not need to be called or invited to ceremonies - he appears and possesses as he likes to. Gede represents sexual energy and his gestures are a bit obscene - she is laughing at the drummer's moves who is guided by Gede - Sallie says it is a good sign that this spirit appears at our wedding ceremony, it could have a positive impact on the reproduction of kids, if we want we could ask him some questions. The drummer is taking sips of rum and water, spraying it around with his mouth - he hands me his bottle, after taking some sips Nadia and I ask him about how many kids we could expect from our union. He is waggling but responds in full sentences, his eyes rolling.

After more than three ceremony hours the practitioners and participants slowly cease to dance, the drummers stop to drum, some are eating up the offerings and having some wine, we walk up to each musician and practitioner to thank them for holding the ceremony. They seem to be very happy for us and with how the ceremony went - usually the peristil is not filled up with so many people at the events each Saturday evening, drummers are not always available, and it is more interesting to celebrate a ceremony for a special occasion like a wedding.

### **Ceremonies for tourists?**

Generally seen, the organisation of such a ceremony is definitely possible for other Vodou interested visitors to the city. Sallie writes on the homepage of her botanica that "*as an initiated Vodou priestess and registered minister, Sallie Ann Glassman is qualified to perform customized ceremonies.*"<sup>100</sup> Additionally, a lists with several of such ceremonies which are guided by her is given on the homepage. Hence, if Sallie feels serious intentions of the visitor in the will of doing a Vodou ceremony with assistants, singers, and musicians in her peristil, she is certainly open to plan and carry out blessings, healings, spiritual baths, head washings, weddings, or other kinds of cleansings and banishings. Those personalised and customised ceremonies are, objectively seen, a religious service, just as the catholic baptism of a child or a wedding in a downtown chapel of Las Vegas. Sallie's homepage is not catered to tourists but to anyone who is interested

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<sup>100</sup> Source: <http://islandofsalvationbotanica.com/island-of-salvation-botanica/healings-treatments-altars/>, retrieved in July 2014.

in knowing more about the spiritual belief system, healing products, and the potential organisation of tailor made events. As the implementing priestess and "service provider" of religious ceremonies she highlights the difference of *her* ceremonies and other Vodou related events or products that are to be found in the city: *"Ceremonies can be privately performed for you by Sallie Ann or by her full ensemble of initiated drummers, singers, and dancers. These are not performers, but actual Vodou practitioners—the real deal."*<sup>101</sup>

Supply and demand of a "real deal" Vodou ceremony are relatively low. There are only a few priests and priestesses who are able to hold a Vodou ceremony in New Orleans. Furthermore, tourists are primarily interested in the 'gimmicky' commodities and scary versions of Vodou, they are hardly interested in participating at long lasting ceremonies taking place in a backstreet neighbourhood temple. With the Hollywood version of Voodoo in mind they would probably leave disappointed from a ceremony how I have experienced it. Only those visitors who are interested in Vodou already before arriving in New Orleans would go to Sallie's shop and potentially ask her to participate in one of her weekly ceremonies. The difference of Sallie's events and specifically mass tourism oriented commodities is that you would not just bump into a ceremony when walking around the city. There is only a hand full of ceremonies taking place in public (at the IHH, on the bayou, or a cemetery) in a year. Therefore, tourists or people who are interested in participating at such ceremonies need to be informed about when and where they take place. This information is not broadly diffused and can only be found on particular websites.<sup>102</sup>

### **Perceptions of religion and belief in the supernatural**

Religion and the belief in the supernatural, in particular Vodou, are perceived very differently in New Orleans from locals, practitioners and participants, and tourists likewise. The population of New Orleans is predominantly catholic and only a very small percentage has ever participated in a Vodou related ceremony since access is limited but possible if you are interested, as in the case of the few public ceremonies. Active practitioners and regular participants do have the possibility to join private services which take place in sanctuaries, congregation houses, spiritual temples, or in a so-called peristil throughout the city. Tourists are rather interested in the stereotypical form of Voodoo and are attracted to the various products such as guided tours,

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Sallie posts information regarding the events organised by herself on the Island of Salvation Botanica site, the International House Hotel boosts their event through their own channels.



souvenir shops, visionaries or self-proclaimed priestesses such as the Voodoo Bone Lady, and respective museums where a Hollywood version of Voodoo is made visible and consumable.

The belief in Vodou as a religion and *"Voodoo culture is not as embraced by the general public as the others! Catholicism and catholic traditions are big"* (interview 20), says Helen Regis who is also aware that *"Voodoo reaches only a small segment of the population"* (interview 20). Dorian Rush, working for the Louisiana Cultural Economy Foundation, she is a singer, ukulele player and generally very interested in all kinds of cultural activities of the city, also rates the public and private ceremonies as different occasions of perceiving Vodou as a belief system:

*"The belief in the supernatural is very big in the city of New Orleans! There is a lot of Voodoo here! The only thing available for tourists is when event planners bring in priestess or legitimate Voodoo priests. It's a brief and superficial presentation of what is actually going on in Voodoo culture - you have to be invited to the Voodoo culture - you cannot just show up - you have to know someone! The curios and medicinal herbs that they sell in Voodoo shops are real - but when it comes to the rituals, they are closed - they act for a many hours! The public ceremony on June 23 is still real but it's superficial. It's for the masses! A lot of people don't understand Voodoo and are afraid of it - it's associated with dark things but it's not a dark art - people only see the potions and revenge. It's part of raising people's awareness that it's a very human culture, tactile, lots of hands-on stuff, realistic ways between people and the earth - the most tactile - meaning hands-on, that you can pick up and feel religion - it's not just a concept like sitting in church and praying to god - it's like to pour a glass of water, they start talking and the bubbles start to form, and that's the proof that the spirit has come into the room! It's stuff that you can feel and see, it's difficult to explain - it's very bright in white colors, lot's of dance, fresh flowers, rum, cigars, ... I know about it because I was invited and I was privileged to participate face-to-face to some ceremonies ... but that's not the norm in New Orleans, it's represented superficially very well - but I don't know how the true meaning is represented - it's more secretive!"* (interview 17).

The belief in the supernatural by New Orleanians can be best observed on a daily basis in the few shops selling spiritual supply. Apart of Sallie's rather small scale Island of Salvation Botanica in the Healing Center the biggest store is located on Broad Street named the F & F Botanica Spiritual Supply shop. When I entered it seemed to me like a huge supermarket selling all kind of spiritual products: candles in all colours and sizes with images, essential oils and fragrances,

herbs, roots, perfumes, potions, soaps, small and big plastic or wooden statues of saints and figures of personalised death, spiritual books and guides, incense, bath supply, etc.

*"They have candles for everything that brings luck! They have candles for every different saints - it is somewhat of saint worship - this is part of the mix of influence of different religions but predominantly catholic, but it's an overlay with others. Voodoo is somehow an overlay of many African traditions and religions - you pray to saints, have candles, bring worship, ... it's similar to Catholicism. It is less Voodoo and more a local form of Catholicism that informs our culture"* (interview 34).

The mentioned candles made out of soy, beeswax, or paraffin, soaps, perfumes, oils, roots, etc. are believed to bring money, keep money in the home, preserve youth, protect from enemies or any negative influence, bring love and peace, heal from specific diseases or prevent them, increase passion and lust, or serve as a spell-breaker, among many others. The shop makes clear (with a small information board at the cashier and on their website) that they sell all of the herbs for their spiritual value - making no claims for medicinal or pharmaceutical benefits. I wandered around to have a look at the abundance of products and listened to a conversation between a client and the salesman. The young black lady lamented to have problems with her partner and wanted some supply that could help the relationship to overcome the difficult time that they are presently facing. She was interested in buying candles and stood in the section of candles labelled with 'Love'. The salesman almost needed to know every detail concerning the relationship issues, if they were already married, going to be married, communication problems, suffering from depression, if there would be the suspect of another lover, influence from the family, for how long the heart-ache would be going on, and seemed extremely competent as he proposed different kinds of candles for different problems - it was an open, confidential, serious conversation as it could happen in a pharmacy. The salesman did not act as he would have to sell a car by listing the reasons of advantages pretending that a certain product would suit best to the buyer. It was almost 18.00 in the evening and the shop was about to close - the salesman approached me for announcing the closing time and if I would have a question or need anything in particular. Although I did not have the intention to purchase anything at the beginning I took the chance to get into a similar conversation as he had with the lady before, trying to explain what I wanted, and observing how he would ask what I am finally looking for. Having had the feeling that he really wanted to help me I answered confidentially to more questions than I actually wanted (usually I am very discrete about personal topics and only give few information

about myself) - he was a stranger to me but at the moment I responded to very private questions about my father's state of health and the psychological conditions of my mother. I exited the shop as the last customer of the day with a blue glass candle (and was afraid if I could take it on the plane), a soap, and some perfumed oil which should be a spiritual support for my parents, and myself.

### **Destigmatising Vodou in New Orleans**

*"About Voodoo, I must say that it is hard to get authentic Voodoo in New Orleans, it is very hidden, true Voodoo is like Catholicism. Sallie Glassman is the only person who is visible as a real Voodoo priestess"* (interview 6)

As denoted in this chapter, it is not only tourists who have a distorted perception of Vodou in New Orleans since only a very small percentage of locals would call themselves as interested in believing or practicing other religions than Catholicism. Particularly the comment of Maida Owen from the Louisiana Folklife Programme gives the impression that Vodou is stigmatised in the city: *"many people treat Voodoos in a disrespectful way because they are scared of Voodoos"* (interview 6). 'The Voodoos' are the ones who practice their religion, either in public or private ceremonies.

Felice Guimont is not only working as a nurse at the Musician's Clinic, or performing as a singer-songwriter with her band on stage, she is also a spiritual believer and practicing Vodou with Sallie. The songs on her album IME released in 2008 speak about love to god and her spiritual belief. Felice openly talks about her religious faith in Vodou and Catholicism, together with Sallie she gives interviews to journalists and TV stations in order to spread awareness about the beautiful side of Vodou:

*"I belong to Sallie Ann Glassman's church and I am always interviewed for journals and TV shows, documentaries, ... in the background but still present! I am working for cultural and for spiritual awareness - the best way to attack and control people is to attack the thing that they believe in the most - attack things that will influence people - so you would attack religion! The other thing is, especially in New Orleans, Voodoo and Catholicism are two shades away from being identical here! I love Catholicism, I love god and I believe that god or a spirit is in control of everything. What I find through going to Voodoo rituals and what I am learning is that there is an equal saint! [...] Voodoo is as beautiful as Catholicism, the rituals, the songs, the energies, but unfortunately so many people have attached a very dark and negative connotation to it - like*

*black magic, like Hoodoo! It makes people afraid - I was terrified and scared to death at the first ritual with Sally!"* (interview 7).

Felice's awareness raising activities in the public are a form of destigmatising Vodou and its practice from its general perception as something wild, scary, and probably magical. She would not want to ban all the Voodoo shops and visionaries in the French Quarter but would like them to spread a in rather positive way about what Vodou signifies in New Orleans - being aware of that in Haiti and on other Caribbean islands different forms of Vodou do exist, which are not practiced in New Orleans: *"The potential for Voodoo ... it just needs to be educated - there is a tremendous need for education on authentic Voodoo!"* (interview 7).

Catholicism is perceived as a rather 'safe' religion, it is communicated generally in a positive manner, while many different versions are cursing about Vodou, also due to the tourism industry, making economic gain with the tourists' interest in experiencing something scary or magical. *"Voodoo is a culture that's going away - there are other religions in town, it's a catholic town. Voodoo is fascinating but it's always a hash-hash practice, never well known!"* (interview 5).

With the book 'Vodou Visions' by Sallie Glassman and with the help of Felice the religion, concept, and spiritual context of Vodou is given a more serious and positive image:

*"Part of my role, as I accepted it, is to make Voodoo palatable - acceptable, respect to be acknowledged - it's gonna be a tremendous undertaking because Voodoo has been attacked and misconstrued, it's been attacked negatively in the media for decades intentionally! Voodoo has been used consistently to provoke fear and denial in the Afro-American community since the beginning of slavery - and it's been done extremely effectively! With that being said, my personal goal as a Voodoo practitioner is to change that whole image into a positive image!"* (interview 7).

The ceremonies led by Sallie in the public or in her peristil do welcome new participants who are searching for spiritual healing or inspiration, a safe haven composed of spirits, saints, and other practitioners of the Vodou community, but are not oriented towards the inclusion of nosy and enquiring people. Sallie does not ask a fee for participating, no supplies have to be purchased at her shop, nor does she request anything else but following a few instructions - white dresses are desired and some offerings should be brought in order to call on the spirits to join the ceremony.

In the following excerpt of my interview with Felice, she mentions that also other priestesses make Vodou services in New Orleans, for example priestess Miriam (a black lady in her 60s) who runs the Vodou Spiritual Temple, a mix of a private museum, botanica, and a small temple in the backroom of the shop. What I have seen is that she caters her products or requested services more to visitors who are either interested in the dark side of Vodou or who want to have more information about it than they can get in souvenir shops:

*"People come from all around the world to participate at our Vodou ceremonies - but we do try to not take advantage of it! Tourism does not affect it at all - my experience is that with modern technologies like TV shows and internet more people are aware that Sallie exists - many people come here because they need to take care of those things by Vodou - she is the only one here! There are many other Vodou priests here but ... a lot of people talk about Sallie and ask how can you have a white priestess when Vodou comes from Haiti ... I don't know priestess Miriam. Sallie does authentic Vodou and she does not practice the dark side of Vodou - we don't do any negative cult - but she is aware of it to protect herself. She doesn't cater her ceremonies for tourists, sometimes it's only us! Our goal is to destigmatize Vodou - that's basically what our goal is" (interview 7).*

Eric Lolis Elie noted that the participation at spiritual churches and congregations is growing among the local population and that the overall interest is increasing since some years. Particularly, he mentioned the importance of the continuity of traditions in New Orleans over a long period. As many other cultural activities have developed over centuries and survived despite prohibition, slavery, or the loss of many lives due to diseases or natural catastrophes (especially cultural expressions of the black population such as second lines, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indians) the traditional habit of New Orleanians is also an important factor for the practice of Vodou and the spiritual belief: *"The [spiritual] churches work very hard to stomp out all messages of African religions, so it exists - but a lot of it exists because it has been maintained by people in New Orleans. A lot of people have gone back to Cuba and Haiti to study it recently. I don't know how much African religions survive in New Orleans because of the traditional sense" (interview 32).*

Especially in the 1800s there might have been only two major figures who were responsible for keeping the Vodou tradition ongoing, these are the charismatic persons of Marie Laveau and Dr. John. Through their ceremonies and appearance in public the image of Vodou has been kept alive, adapting it to the dominant Catholicism of the city. Vodou has and has been transformed,

shifted, by way of lending colours, rhythms, and dancing it impacted second lines and the beaded costumes of Mardi Gras Indians, the Cajun root doctors might probably have exchanged herbs, oils, incense for their treatments with Vodou practitioners. The magical and spell-based form of New Orleans Hoodoo is an alternated and washed-out practice coming from the Haitian bòkò trade (WALKER, 2011). Although Sallie disrespects the commodified tourism version of her religion being sold in the French Quarter and in souvenir shops she is aware of that this fascination is doubtlessly helping Vodou to be funded and kept alive. Moreover, Sallie stresses a steep growth of interest in Vodou and spiritual practices not only in New Orleans (2007).

## 8. Conclusions

Every single day when I woke up in my field in New Orleans, when I went out of my house to make interviews or to do participant observation in the streets, at parades, at music gigs, ceremonies, presentations, or any other relevant event concerning the five living cultural heritage elements, when I sat down with my fieldwork diary to make notes, when I transcribed the qualitative interviews on my computer, and right after dinner before going to bed I asked myself: How is culture commodified and what are its practices? In this section I finally give concluding remarks about my main findings of the case study.

Being in the field is hard work - not because of the quest of collecting useful data through observations, literature, interviews and other forms of formal or informal communication - neither because of the physical power that is needed to dance through a second line on a hot Sunday afternoon in June or to play a gig on stage on a humid Friday night - and nor due to the mental power that is needed when selling beer and observing the festival crowd interacting with and taking pictures of parading Mardi Gras Indians at the same time. Being in the field is hard work because I was constantly thinking about my research - I never had a chance to pause, every communication or situation could be of importance for finding pieces of answers to my question. In New Orleans I have learned to be tough and always stay concentrated on my research regardless of how many things I had to conduct - it is a city where you *"gotta fight back"* (citation of my neighbour James), otherwise the city throws you off. From the Mardi Gras Indians I have understood that you are not supposed to bow down from difficult or hard situations and *"keep on going."* If the locals would not live this philosophy the city of New Orleans would not have been rebuilt for so many times (or the city would have never been developed, thinking about the labour of the many slaves) and all the distinctive cultural expressions and practices would probably not have survived either. As expressed with the words of Matt Sakakeeny: *"in a state of precarity the only safe bet is to roll with it"* (2013: 180).

In New Orleans rules a certain ambiguity of cultural producers. These people can have several identities and roles within their cultural community. As Connie Atkinson explained to me at the very beginning of my fieldwork in a small Sicilian family run Po-boy corner store: *"everything is inverted"* (personal communication). Hence, it is hard to distinguish between a cultural producer and consumer, between a performer and the audience because *"one day people are*

*participating in parades on the floats and on the other day they are standing down in the crowd, it's flipped!"* (interview 58). At one evening musicians are performing on stage, at the other they are listening to their friends and colleagues - they may be masking Indian on a Super Sunday and participate at a second line in their home neighbourhood the next week: *"it's a multi-identity people!"* (interview 58). The producers are also the consumers - seeing, sensing, and listening to themselves enact their identity. During this process they are objectifying their own subjectivity.

But music, rhythms, and beats are a distinctive part of the various identities in the city of jazz, blues, R'n'B, soul, cajun, music from brass bands and Mardi Gras Indians. After two fieldwork periods I might not have understood the entire depth of the meaning and significance of music for the various cultural groups that I have encountered. Towards the end of my second stay though I was confronted with a short but powerful statement by Flag Boy Zee. Together with Queen Kelly he participated at the Vodou wedding in Manbo Sallie's peristil. The Mardi Gras Indian couple had not joined a Vodou ceremony ever before, the practices, belief system, and accompanying rhythms by the musicians were something rather new to them. During the ceremony I actually expected Queen Kelly and Zee to dance, clap, spin, and sing, hence to interact with the music more than the other guests, because I have seen them moving and singing almost unrestrained at Indian practices and parades. Against my expectation they rather acted timidly like most of the local and non local guests. After the ceremony Queen Kelly and Zee approached us to hug, greet and congratulate before leaving - I asked Zee how he had liked his first Vodou ceremony with the ulterior motive to understand if it were something completely different or rather similar to Indian practices. I could read his mimic and witnessed an ambiguous expression, then Zee simply responded with the words: *"they have another beat"* (personal communication). As mentioned above, I doubt to understand this statement entirely and my interpretation might not be complete. *The beat* is part of the cultural identity - a metaphor for the cultural understanding, life-style, and confrontation with their own culture (e.g. Mardi Gras Indians) - and *the other*. *The beat* and the associated music genre are the basis of inter-cultural communication as well as conflicts within different groups in the same city.

I have understood from my data that the cultural actors predominantly do not force the commodification of their cultural activities themselves (except the musicians). The cultural elements, the producer's identity, or their traditional events are transformed into commodities primarily by tourism related businesses such as event organisers (festivals, conventions, etc.), restaurants and hotels, tour operators and guides, among others. For example, krewes



organising Mardi Gras Carnival floats do not promote their routes to visitors. It is the individual hotels and the NOTMC who are commodifying Mardi Gras Carnival into a touristic product. The same applies to tourism-centred second lines which are organised by conventions, hotels, or festivals. These tourism related businesses approach Social Aid and Pleasure clubs, Mardi Gras Indian tribes, or Manbo Sallie Ann Glassman for holding a Vodou ceremony. These actors are asked to perform at certain 'staged' events offering deals with mutual benefits of economic profit. Many of the analysed conflicts are created because the social, cultural, and economic benefits are not satisfactory to the cultural actors. Moreover, top-down imposed regulations which are controlled and executed by police officers, regarding when and how neighbourhood-centred parades can take place, represent reasons for conflicts among different groups (e.g. second lines are not allowed during the weekends of the Jazz and Heritage festival, a limited number of second lines and Super Sundays is allowed per year, high parading fees have to be paid for organising second lines, in increasingly gentrified neighbourhoods such parades are sought to be limited etc.).

### **Culture is commodified with intellectual property rights**

Culture and identity are increasingly "*claimed as property by its living heirs, who proceed to manage it by palpably corporate means*" (COMAROFF, COMAROFF, 2009: 29) - this statement is also true for the case of New Orleans. For activities within the elements of music, second lines, and Mardi Gras Indians I argued that culture and identity are certainly claimed as property - but they are not necessarily managed by palpably corporate means.

I have experienced that music in New Orleans plays a particular role for the 'cultural fabric' of the city due to its integral significance for any kind of cultural activity. Music is everywhere and always, this is one of the reasons why it is such a contested and much discussed topic among musicians, music lovers and supporters, politicians, tourists, new residents, bar and venue owners, non-profit organisations, and those who want to make profit with the performance of musicians.

I have analysed that many issues arise because music is not commodified enough. Although concerts of jazz, blues, R'n'B, and other genres attract millions of tourists annually, giving work to thousands of resident and touring musicians, the music sector does not produce as many dollars as in New York City or Chicago. Intellectual property rights can be managed by corporate means (to stay with the words of Comaroff) because most of the musicians treat their artistic

and musical performance as a business. Making music is the base for earning money and paying one's bills in everyday life for many New Orleanians. These rights can actually be transformed into real cash with royalties (there are different royalties from deposited lyrics and melodies, as well as for publishing rights which are often shared with labels for music production, promotion, or distribution). In New Orleans a system for commodifying musical, artistic, cultural, or intellectual property into cash equivalence with royalties does not work well. Since most of the musicians in the city do not get access to their entitled money they remain poor, inefficient, and often unsatisfied with the situation of performing. Musicians, its potential managers, booking agents, and labels could make significantly more profit with their profession, hobby, or family tradition with the presence of a dedicated music industry. The limitations of making revenues with music is not only adverse for the musicians themselves but turns down the whole local music economy. The major problem is that the system lacks at the very base of where musicians are entitled to getting royalties for their songs - money from intellectual property rights is hardly cashed in. Revenues from PRO (Performance Rights Organization) or the national BMI (Broadcast Music Incorporated) cannot be accessed by most of the local musicians because the majority of the local venues does not participate at a royalty distributing system. As a consequence musicians might not even be aware of the entitlement of royalties from live gigs, radio streams, merchandise, CD sales, etc.. Additionally, many performers lack in skills such as the auto-management regarding the collection of royalties from different entities, the search for gigs, the capacities and self-esteem to negotiate favourable fees, and the sources to communicate professionally with festival and event organisers. Moreover, many musicians are underestimating their rights and promotional value. Most of the bands do not get paid a fixed fee for playing gigs but are dependent on the voluntary spending of listeners (tourists and/or locals), or on the sponsoring of corporate businesses at festivals. This volatile situation makes musicians vulnerable in life but also in terms of contracting power for gigs and marketing from journals or magazines.

Luckily, several non-profit organisations and foundations support the musicians with necessary activities. They offer training courses about the mentioned urgently needed skills, and provide services for advocacy, tour management and promotion, talent scouting, etc.. Additionally, they do specific awareness raising about the rights of performing artists (copyrights, performance rights, etc.) to musicians but also to live music venues. Other organisations help the musicians with city-wide (and probably state-wide) missing social welfare services such as affordable

health care and music education programmes for children - the next generation of musical cultural producers in New Orleans.

In comparison, this topic is handled differently by Social Aid and Pleasure clubs and Mardi Gras Indians. Culture and identity are claimed as property by its living heirs but it is rather not managed as corporate means. Being a member of a Social Aid and Pleasure club or a Mardi Gras Indian tribe is not perceived, lived, and practiced as a job. Only occasionally tourism-centred parades are performed for cash (such parades are paid by tourism related businesses and are performed in the French Quarter, in hotel lobbies, for conventions, and at festivals). Generally, the club members and Indians do not choose to be part of these 'cultural groups' because the performances for a tourist audience are regarded as a money-maker. This is inherently different from musicians who choose to be musicians in order to make money with performing music.

*"They always have some cheesy second line and Indian pictures on the newspaper front page!"*  
(interview 21).

Many Mardi Gras Indians (tribes and individuals) have begun to protect their artistically elaborated suits with a copyright. The same applies to Social Aid and Pleasure club members, grand marshals, and other related dancers wearing beautifully decorated costumes and suits, as well as insignias of their clubs at the annually organised second lines. I have analysed from interviews and observations that the principle goal of copyrighting the artistic labour is not necessarily making cash. The goal is to protect the artistic work from being a potential benefit for others (in the Indian interpretation this is equalised with exploitation). Mardi Gras Indian suits are copyright protected with the rationale that, for example, a photographer cannot cash in money for selling his picture without sharing the revenue. Hence, Indians are not principally focused on making money with their suits but do feel entitled to have a benefit if others also profit from the Indian work of sowing a suit. The creation of a suit can cost thousands of labour hours (designing, creating, sowing) and thousands of dollars for purchasing material (feathers, rhinestones, sequin, pearls, and many more).

*"A lot of the second line and Social Aid and Pleasure club members will tell you this, they feel used! Because the city is showcasing them on their advertising and tronning them out when there is a special event but they really don't do much to support them otherwise!"* (interview 22).

Furthermore, if I say that the 'second line culture' and the Mardi Gras Indian identity are managed by corporate means, I have to add that this management is not only carried out by the clubs and tribes themselves. I have analysed that this 'culture' and 'identity' of the 'exotic other' are mainly managed by the tourism industry and the city (NOTMC, the city's tourism marketing agency, is a public-private entity). Festivals, conventions, other corporate tourism enterprises such as marketing and promotion agencies, and even the film industry are in fact managing their identity. For example, the film industry is represented by the HBO series "Treme" showing the culture and life of second liners and Mardi Gras Indians. The Treme show is the commodification of a whole neighbourhood or the entire city - "*the city itself is the main character; the city's story is the main story*" (REGIS, 2011: 394). Images, films, pictures, stories, and information are bundled within an attractive package which is marketed to visitors. My results show that clubs and tribes have diverging perceptions of how 'their culture' is managed and represented. Such different opinions of how, for example, 'Indianness' is used by corporate means results in identity crises among the various tribes. Different aspects of the Mardi Gras Indian culture and the respective practices such as live performances of parades in public, traditional or commercial music concerts, the exhibition of suits in museums, or the sale of suits are heavily discussed among them. The practice of claiming intellectual property rights for performances or suits remains contested and unclear for the Mardi Gras Indian tribes.

### **Culture is commodified with the right to perform**

*"Most communities hide their treasures inside museums but New Orleans' treasures are living in the streets"* (interview 9)

The streets as the socially constructed space and place where most of the analysed events are celebrated throughout the year is also the public area where conflicts are created and discussed. The assembles of double or single shotgun houses, Creole cottage, mansions, and French-Spanish-Creole influenced architecture form real neighbourhoods and stabilise a sense of community. The street life in New Orleans has remained lively throughout the many neighbourhoods with or without modernity and gentrification. People are greeting each other even if they have never met before, the open container law is unofficially extended to the whole city, streets with names such as Desire and Piety cross, Mystery Street starts or ends at the entrance of St. Louis III cemetery. Residents are fighting for the rebuilding of quarters and neighbourhoods without letting real estate agents and developers open the doors to the tourism industry (e.g. the example given in the Bywater neighbourhood during the protest second line

which was also focused against tourism industry development). The residents' goal is to find solutions for restoring the cultural energy of these areas by repairing the infrastructure and to support small businesses in the art and cultural sector. While tourism is essential for the survival of the city through its economic importance it does little to maintain the neighbourhoods. Moreover, residents are afraid of its Disneyfication through the global expansion and institutionalisation of tourism in New Orleans (OSTENDORF, 2013). The parading on the streets is an expression to request the right to perform on the streets as the neighbourhood's territory of cultural expression. Particularly second lines transform urban space, creating an alternative social order that private clubs actualise by 'taking it to the streets', as the show of Action Jackson on WWOZ Radio is called. Hirsch's concept of landscape (1995) as the relationship between two poles of existence, the quotidian and the ritual life, foreground and background, the cultural process of mediation between two dimensions of space can be adapted to these neighbourhoods which is further described by Helen Regis (1999).

*"New Orleans is such a truly different city from all the other cities in the US!" (interview 23)*

In the case of music, I have analysed that the right to perform is the root for many disputes between local stakeholders: performers, bar and venue owners, new residents and neighbourhood associations, city hall, and those who like to listen to live gigs. On the one side, there are influential business people and groups, politicians, and the corporate capitalist tourism industry, who are trying to introduce laws regarding the performance of music in venues and in public. On the other side, the 'cultural community' organises collective social reactions to this top-down system. These reactions are expressed with protest marches, counter-festivals, and the formation of cultural coalitions and associations, who are trying to assemble like-minded interest groups. The general regulation of the performance of cultural activities is perceived as negative commodification of cultural heritage. The enactment of restrictions, orders, and norms (with executed punishment) about when, where, for how long, and who is allowed to perform music is heavily negotiated among these groups. So-called grassroot organisations of the cultural or music community claim that 'music is not a crime'. Performance hours on the streets and in venues, decibel levels, and certain places where music is performed in public should not be regulated. With the slogan 'New Orleans means music' they further argue that the right to perform should be extended but not restricted. The city hall is trying to settle the conflict through collaborating with the grass-root organisations. Through protest marches and

awareness-raising campaigns they achieved an involvement in decision making processes which enabled them to have a significant impact on future ordinances.

Tourism definitely has an influence on these conflicts. The gentrification through increased tourism refers to the shift of a middle-class neighbourhood into a relatively exclusive enclave marked by a diffusion of corporate entertainment and tourism related venues. Especially in areas such as the French Quarter (and slowly also in the Tremé or Bywater-Marigny neighbourhood surrounding the Vieux Carré) median incomes and values for property increased, high rentals have dislodged lower-income people and Afro-Americans. Tourist attractions as well as entertainment clubs, hotels, shops, and other related businesses dominate much of the neighbourhood. The changing flows of capital into the real estate market in combination with the growth of the tourism industry boost the significance of consumption-oriented activities in residential areas and ease gentrification (GOTHAM, 2004). Tourism-induced gentrification has its own distinct dynamic where the formation of alliances between private developers and local government, the reinvention of public institutions, and resident associations are gaining power over what happens in the neighbourhoods. The power relations between the various groups of old and new residents, tourism related businesses, and cultural actors are shifting. This leads to situations of conflict concerning who rules over giving and taking the right of performing music or other cultural practices. Although the city council is keen on dividing the city in zones (entertainment zone, cultural overlay zone, etc.) where different restrictions about the performance of music and parades are regulated the local city hall faces difficulties in finding solutions of collective satisfaction. Local musicians performing on the streets or in venues (which are often subject to be closed down) claim the right to perform on certain street corners or sections, as well as in certain bars which are becoming contested social spaces. Regulations and zoning contribute to advantageous or disadvantageous decisions regarding which products can be commodified. Regulations also raise issues about the cost of practicing culture in public, for example, the license fees for Mardi Gras Carnival krewes are significantly lower than the for Social Aid and Pleasure clubs who are organising second lines. This further leads to historically based racial issues that additionally create conflicts over the restrictions about expressing cultural practices in public.

## **Culture is commodified through entertainment**

*"At that time we had a campaign, showing that people had fun in the French Quarter, and a woman showed up and she literally started yelling at us, saying: quit promoting French Quarter as a place to come to party!" (interview 15).*

In the introduction of this dissertation I mentioned that the tourism industry sells in primis an experience. In the case of New Orleans, visitors can expect an entertaining experience increasingly through participating and dancing at second lines, watching Mardi Gras Indians, and listening to brass band jazz gigs, next to rather common entertainment activities such as gambling in the casino, drinking on Bourbon Street, shopping in the Riverwalk mall, or catching beads from Mardi Gras Carnival floats. The French Quarter, the unquestioned tourism centre, is the city's prime area where tourists are dragged to enjoy New Orleans. For many years, the formerly residential neighbourhood, was systematically promoted as *the* absolute party location by the local tourism marketing agency. As a consequence, a dense net of bars, hustler clubs, souvenir shops, and other entertainment venues have settled along the popular eight blocks of Bourbon Street, and consequently in other streets throughout the Vieux Carré. Slowly, NOTMC, the most influential corporation concerning strategic tourism marketing in New Orleans, tries to promote also other areas of the city - but whatever the visitors should explore in New Orleans, they should seek entertainment.

Having analysed literature, tourism promotion flyers, my own observations, and data from the city and the cultural economy initiative I conclude that local cultural activities are promoted as entertainment. This begins with the fact the cultural economy initiative snapshot speaks of entertainment enterprises when listing music venues - but this is acceptable. Generally, the cultural economy initiative groups events and products related to music, festivals, parades, and others within the entertainment segment of their classification. The city's zoning code speaks of an entertainment district when defining the extended area around French Quarter and the CBD. The cultural activities that are reproduced as entertainment commodities give way to the experiential meaning of the cultural activities for the performers themselves. Through the reproduction of minstrel shows, regarding Afro-American parades, particularly the white audience and visitors do not know exactly what such staged parades are representing. Hence, the visitors cannot be aware of the significant differences that exist between these two versions.

The minstrelsy and entertainment-like appropriation of black cultural tradition (such as second lines and Mardi Gras Indian activities) by New Orleans' tourism sector goes without any acknowledgement of the popular Afro-American tradition on which it is based (REGIS, 1999: 475). From the circulated videos, images, and published photographs in tour guides, online travel blogs, and other tourism promotion material, as well as from the staged shows, the message that is directed towards tourists is that Afro-American traditional parades are pure entertainment and party events.

*"If they are anything like me, my culture, my spirituality, which is all intertwined that's sacred - it's not something you give to someone to market it" (interview 54).*

Coming back to Bourdieu's concept of the two-faced reality that symbolic goods represent a commodity and a symbolic object the analysis of my data results in the fact that particularly the commercial value is perceived as the demanded entertainment asset. The cultural value, which remains independent, strictly remains with the expression of the individual's cultural identity. The common discussion and distinction of cultural performances into 'real' and 'fake' leads me to the conclusion that the commercial value is associated with the 'fake' version of a performance, the cultural value of a symbolic good is connected to the 'real' form of practicing cultural activities.

The initially introduced concept of Picard (1996) regarding the differentiation between 'sacred' and 'profane' cultural activities finds particular application. Paid performers of second lines, whose task is to bring the 'second line culture' to the audience do inevitably 'hold back' significant aspects. Regarding the concept of living cultural heritage, the power of Afro-American parades derives from its *"distinctive spatial practices"* (REGIS, 1999: 475) and the personal social bonds with club and tribe members. The dance-driven events gain specific meaning from the surrounding of certain neighbourhoods and streets of where they originally take place. All these aspects get lost at tourism-centred entertainment parades.

In New Orleans even religious assets are marketed as mass-entertainment commodities. I have analysed that cemeteries, ceremonies such as funerals, and certain aspects of the belief in the supernatural are transformed into products that are supposed to amuse. Regarding Vodou, the tourism industry profits from the religion's general sceptical perception which is mainly based on Hollywood movies. Objects like dolls or skulls, Vodou, Vampire and ghost tours, as well as the



celebration of death represented by a souvenir shop called Jazz Funeral are promoted with an entertaining character. As a consequence, devoted practitioners within the local Vodou community tend to spread the positive aspects of the religion, trying to destigmatise its practices and belief in publicly accessible ceremonies. The 'real' side of Vodou is increasingly being revealed and communicated to those who want to experience more than just Bourbon Street Vodou.

Due to the commodification of certain cultural activities into entertainment commodities conflicts occur among the involved stakeholders. The main conflict of interest is about the fact that the city, as the official institution of promoting the destination and its attractions to the world, does hardly invest in the various groups of cultural actors. I have analysed that particularly musicians, performers of second lines, Mardi Gras Indians, and cultural organisations who are working with these groups share the same opinion. Those cultural actors feel caught in a vicious circle of where the city makes profit on the back of the cultural activities performed.

*"I really do want to see the city putting as much money, effort, time, energy into actually protecting and encouraging the culture as they do in selling it - because they are gonna look up in five years and there is not gonna be anything left to sell" (interview 46).*

Many groups of cultural actors are dependent on the indispensable work of non-profit organisations, foundations, and similar associations which are carrying out social and cultural programmes. Many cultural actors could not afford to continue with their cultural activities without the support of such organisations. They are dependent on their various programmes for affordable health care, crime prevention, music and artistic education, or support in finding gigs and training for auto-management. For example, Mardi Gras Indian chiefs need funds for the courses they are organising for young Indians who want to learn how to sew the colourful suits. Some popular musicians have started with special programmes where kids can study instruments in a school-like environment in the afternoon because public schooling hardly offers music education anymore. Social Aid and Pleasure clubs also operate special crime prevention and cultural awareness-raising programmes for the young generation. These projects and programmes which are significant for *"keeping on going"* with culturally relevant activities are funded with private donations, fund-raising events, or through other sponsors. Local non-profit organisations are competing for a small amount of publicly available funds. Only a small financial

contribution to the urgently needed programmes is allocated from city and state public institutions.

This investment would be perceived as safeguarding and protection measures of local living cultural heritage elements. Many cultural actors and representatives of non-profit organisations stated that this kind of preservation actions would be beneficial against the ongoing loss of authentic integrity of certain cultural activities.

*"The question is do we still have authentic cultural products that are produced in the French Quarter? It is a system that kinda feeds on itself. [...] The more the city, state, and private tourism businesses, and organizations that promote cultural tourism as entertainment, over time you get less authentic products because everyone is trying to achieve not the ideal but the typical product"* (interview 49).

Whether this typical product is a jazz melody from the 1920's played on Royal Street, a picture of a brass band musician sold on Jackson Square, a 'New Orleans style' house in the French Quarter, or a Mardi Gras Indian singing on Bourbon Street - local cultural actors and those who are working with them have the impression that these images become simplified whatever complex characteristics they might have had earlier in time. Through the reproduction of cultural activities for tourist entertainment purposes there is the potential of misrepresentation. Certain groups of cultural producers are not considered in the reproduction process which can lead to a 'watered down' version of certain cultural elements, as New Orleanians use to express this phenomenon. My interlocutors agreed on the fact that the cultural actors themselves should be more integrated into the marketing and export of cultural activities. Presently, it is merchants, promotion agencies, and other tourism related businesses such as bars, hotels, restaurants, night-clubs, and casinos who are managing the marketing of cultural activities: *"It is a difficult problem, the more you try to increase the productivity without the involvement of the producers the more likely you get an artefact, an artificial or superficial product"* (interview 49).

*"It's New Orleans. You're different here."* With this slogan the NOCVB, the local agency for marketing New Orleans as a business tourism destination, promotes the city's ethnic and cultural diversity. Visitors are attracted by the experience of being 'transformed' and by the quest for the 'exotic other'. I have analysed that New Orleans generally markets itself as a destination which is exquisitely different - different from the rest of the US. *"New Orleans has*

*culture*" was often mentioned by my interlocutors and during informal conversations with the many cultural actors, residents, and visitors. The marketed difference is based on 'the culture' that other US cities cannot offer to their tourists. One of the issues with this overall strategy is that the city promotes the diversity of New Orleans as a whole rather than promoting specific parts of its diversity. In trying to promote and export the cultural distinctiveness of New Orleans, there is again the risk of misrepresentation of this 'culture' and of not involving the actual cultural producers themselves. This results in the analysed conflicts about disagreement over how tradition should be presented and carried forward.

With several examples I have shown that tourism in New Orleans is an agent of cultural change. Tourism is a force of cultural enrichment, awareness raising, and a source of income. Tourism triggers collective struggles over meanings and definitions of 'what is local culture'. These discussions do constantly shape and constrain the issue of 'what is cultural tourism'. The remaining question for the future is whether local cultural activities are adapting to the practice of cultural tourism and the proliferation of commodification or whether local culture keeps on going along the backstreets of New Orleans.

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## Annex

### A - Background and definitions about the UNESCO concept of cultural heritage

The term *Cultural Property* was officially used for the first time in legal texts for the first and second peace conferences in The Hague in 1899 and 1907<sup>103</sup> (FRIGO, 2004). These texts state the definition of "cultural property"<sup>104</sup> indicating that it shall cover "*movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people...*" (UNESCO, 1954: 8). The term "cultural heritage" itself was not further defined in any official document at that time.

The concept of heritage has become popular among international organisations since the 1950's. It was used, for example, under the *European Cultural Convention* in 1954<sup>105</sup>, under *The Venice Charter* in 1964<sup>106</sup> and in agreements executed under the auspices of the European Council in 1969.<sup>107</sup> The scope of heritage has broadened from a concern of tangible heritage such as monuments and sites to groups of buildings, historic urban and rural centres, historic landscapes and to non-physical heritage including environments, social and cultural factors, and intangible values. The different terminology of "historic monument" (Venice Charter 1964), which was reinterpreted as "monument" and "site" by ICOMOS in 1965 (when the Venice Charter was adopted), and as "cultural property" including movable and immovable (UNESCO 1968) was finally reconciled at the *Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* of UNESCO in 1972 (AHMAD, 2006).

That Convention regarded heritage as both cultural and natural, dropping its earlier term of movable and immovable cultural property. The definition of monuments and sites as mentioned in the ICOMOS statutes adopted in 1965 was rephrased and "groups of buildings" was introduced as a third category. In order to ensure that groups of buildings and urban settings were being protected the description of cultural heritage included the three categories of

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<sup>103</sup> The *Convention on Law and Customs of War on Land*, The Hague IV. (Article 56 deals with the protection of cultural property) and the *Convention Concerning Bombardment by Naval Forces in Time of War*, The Hague IX. were adopted at the first and second peace conference respectively.

<sup>104</sup> stated in the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict on May 14, 1954.

<sup>105</sup> The Council of Europe referred to languages, history and civilization as the common cultural heritage in Europe.

<sup>106</sup> The "unity of human values" and "ancient monuments" are regarded as "common heritage" in the Venice Charter at the II. International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments.

<sup>107</sup> Such as the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*.

monuments, groups of buildings, and sites.<sup>108</sup> The distinction between cultural and natural heritage is stated clearly as cultural heritage refers to creations made by man and natural heritage as physiographical formations made by nature. UNESCO's interest in traditional culture, linked to the idea of cultural diversity, dates from the 1970's (UNESCO 2004). It is also one of the founding principles and strategic thrusts of the organisation.

The conceptual elaboration of cultural heritage progressed one step forward with the set-up of a "Committee of Experts on the Safeguarding of Folklore" in 1982 and the creation of a special "Section for the Non-Physical Heritage." This resulted in the adoption of the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* in 1989 encouraging international collaboration and considering measures to be taken for its identification, preservation, dissemination and protection. The concept of folklore is described as being "part of cultural heritage and living culture" and considered as "traditional or popular culture." The terms used in these recommendations can be seen as the predecessors of the focus on dividing cultural heritage into physical and non-physical. The latter has been more seriously discussed in the 1990's<sup>109</sup> in order to demarcate "living cultural expressions" from the traditional notion of cultural heritage, that, as mentioned before, predominantly comprised heritage sites and monuments only. In 1993<sup>110</sup> the term folklore, which was considered to have pejorative connotations (SEEGER, 2001), was replaced by "intangible heritage".

In 1993, the Republic of Korea proposed to the UNESCO Executive Board the establishment of a "Living Human Treasures Programme." A decision inviting Member States to establish such systems in their respective countries was adopted by the Board (UNESCO, 2003a). Such Living Human Treasures are considered as "persons who possess to a high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage"<sup>111</sup> and as bearers of heritage who continue to transmit their knowledge and skills to younger generations.

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<sup>108</sup> The *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* by the Council of Europe in 1985 defines the term "architectural heritage" also as monuments, groups of buildings and sites.

<sup>109</sup> UNESCO (1989) Draft Medium-Term Plan 1990-1995.

<sup>110</sup> UNESCO (1993) International Consultation on New Perspectives for UNESCO's Programme: The Intangible Cultural Heritage.

<sup>111</sup> see also on <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00061&lg=EN>

Even more attention has been given to "intangible heritage" in 1997<sup>112</sup> when the creation of an international distinction for manifestation of intangible cultural heritage and associated cultural spaces was proposed. The resolution of that manifestation was adopted in the same year<sup>113</sup> and can be understood as the basis of the "Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity", which was launched in 1998. This proclamation was concerned with identifying and assigning the status of such masterpieces. The 2001 proclamations used to be the kick-off for a serious discussion about intangible cultural heritage resulting in the first UNESCO session which was dedicated only to intangible cultural heritage, taking place in the same year.<sup>114</sup> The main concern of that meeting was the elaboration of working definitions so that cultural heritage could be finally distinguished in tangible and intangible.

This goal was finally achieved with the 2003 Convention of the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage focusing primarily on declaring the protection and preservation of intangible heritage as important as tangible heritage. Other purposes of the convention were based on raising awareness at the local , national and global levels concerning the importance of valuing intangible heritage and its conservation measures as a full part of cultural heritage and "*of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof*" (UNESCO, 2003b: 3). Furthermore, the proclamation and the convention were established as an attempt to protect the world's cultural diversity and to counteract against negative effects of globalisation, such as the processes of modernisation and loss of identity (NAS, 2002: 142).

Since then UNESCO but also other international organisations (such the Council of Europe, European Commission, and the UNWTO) are predominantly focused on enhancing the development of safeguarding measures for intangible cultural heritage by working on implementation strategies of the 2003 convention. One of these is the promotion of the establishment of the Living Human Treasures Programme among its member countries, which are encouraged to preserve particular and culturally significant skills and/or knowledge of individuals.

After this short historical background about the evolution of the concept of cultural heritage, starting from cultural property and ending with the clear distinction between tangible and

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<sup>112</sup> International Consultation on the Preservation of Popular Cultural Spaces, 1997,

<sup>113</sup> see also on <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001102/110220e.pdf>

<sup>114</sup> UNESCO (2001) International Round Table: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Working Definitions.

intangible cultural heritage, I will provide some definitions of the single terms in the following. The aim is to facilitate the understanding of their exact meaning.

### **Tangible Cultural Heritage (TCH)**

Before the 2003 Convention was put in practice different terms being classified under physical heritage existed. The more modern classification representing physical heritage (created by man) was based on terms such as cultural property or architectural heritage. In order to avoid confusion with many terms having more or less the same meaning they were then grouped to cultural heritage. The scope of defining cultural heritage has broadened considerably from a mere concern for individual buildings and sites to include groups of buildings, historical areas, towns and environments. Many countries are not conform with UNESCO's definition for cultural heritage, i.e. Australia considers "place, cultural significance and fabric", Canada refers to "material culture, geographic and human environments" and China to "immovable physical remains" (AHMAD, 2006). Nevertheless, UNESCO's latest definition can be considered as a common understanding of what is meant by tangible cultural heritage which shall be explained below. Its definition is structured in three main domains, namely: monuments; groups of buildings; and sites; reflecting the official definition for cultural heritage of the World Heritage Conference in 1972. Although the non-physical heritage was properly separated at the 2003 Convention its initial meaning has not been altered ever since.

The sub-division of *monuments* is comprised of:

- "architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;"

According to *groups of buildings* the following is defined:

- " groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;"

The term *site* is officially described as:

- "works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view."

While the tangible cultural heritage is designed to survive long after the death of the person who produced or commissioned it, the fate of the intangible heritage is much more closely related to its creators as it depends in most cases on actively performed practices and on oral transmission.

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**

*"Intangible heritage is best defined as a map, or a compass, through which human beings interpret, select, reproduce and disseminate their cultural heritage as a whole. So, just as tangible heritage is not the sum total of all the physical possessions of a society, intangible heritage is not merely an encyclopedia of its values and intangible treasures. Intangible heritage is a tool through which tangible heritage is defined and expressed, and through which the inert landscape of objects and monuments is turned into a living archive of cultural values"* (APPADURAI, 2002: 12).

Historically, intangible cultural heritage has been comprised by terms like folklore, living traditions and popular culture. It is made up of processes and practices and is considered as *"fragile by its very nature"* (BOUCHENAKI, 2004: 3) due to its dependency on human actors as well as social and environmental conditions. Its safeguarding remained rather neglected for a long time because tangible heritage was given preference until Bolivia proposed a conventional protection of folklore in 1973. Although the protocol was not successfully approved it helped to raise awareness of the need to recognize non-physical assets within the area of cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage focuses on a wide array of cultural expressions, many of which are in flux and constant evolution, and therefore always retaining a degree of ambiguity. It is a major element in defining and forming identities of peoples, communities, and nations. The principle medium of intangible cultural heritage is the human body (D'ORVILLE, 2004), as rituals and other practices of ICH have a highly performative character. Since boundaries between domains are extremely fluid and vary from community to community, it is impossible to impose rigid categories externally. According to the UNESCO 2003 Convention this list of domains is rather inclusive than exclusive and therefore not considered as complete. Member states use different systems of domains with a wide degree of variation. Some are dividing up the manifestations of intangible heritage, while others use broadly similar concepts but with alternative terms. Additionally incorporated sub-domains are for example domains like "culinary traditions", "pilgrimage" or "places of memory" (UNESCO, 2009: 3).



By the term intangible cultural heritage we understand:

- *"practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage". (2003b)*

ICH is considered as being:

- *"transmitted from generation to generation" and it "is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity." (2003b)*

UNESCO's description of Intangible Cultural Heritage is furthermore manifested inter alia in the following distinctive domains (2009):

- oral traditions and expressions: languages are considered as vehicles of ICH and are used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values and collective memory. Additionally, languages play a crucial part in "keeping cultures alive".
- performing arts: vocal and instrumental music, dance, theatre, pantomime including cultural expressions of human creativity that can also be found in other intangible domains.
- social practices, rituals and festive events: these are described as *"habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups"*. Furthermore, this domain helps to reinforce a sense of identity and continuity with the past.
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe: this domain includes knowledge, know-how, skills, practices and representations which are developed by communities by interacting with the natural environment.
- traditional craftsmanship: this domain is considered as the most tangible manifestation of ICH, although *"the 2003 Convention is mainly considered with the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft products themselves."*

### **Natural Heritage**

A clear definition of natural heritage was made public first by UNESCO in Article 2 of the World Heritage Convention in 1972. In a trivial version it could be summarized that cultural heritage differs from natural heritage in the way that cultural is made by man and natural is created by nature.

Natural heritage initially referred to places with special characteristics and/or beauty, but untouched by human presence. It is furthermore conceptualised in terms of ecology, environment, and a systemic approach to a living entity (KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, 2004). In general natural heritage is composed by three domains: natural features; geological formations; and natural sites. (UNESCO, 1972)

The domain "natural features" is defined as:

- "consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;"

According to the second domain UNESCO defines natural heritage as:

- "geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

The last domain which symbolizes heritage created by nature is described as:

- "natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty".

## B - Questionnaire

For this research I am interviewing experts in the cultural heritage and tourism sector, with the aim to define the concept of **Living Cultural Heritage (LCH)** and its **commodification for tourism in New Orleans**. The questionnaire is organized in two parts - while the first considers the selection of LCH elements and its definition, the second part concentrates on the commodification process & influence of tourism on LCH.

### 1. What is your **main field of activity**? (max 3 choices)

Performing artist (e.g. Musician, Dancer, Artist, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scholar, Author, Journalist, ...	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization of cultural events (e.g. festivals, parades, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tourism Industry (e.g. TO, TA, PR, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Institution (e.g. Museum, Foundation, Association, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>

The following statements define the **innovative concept of Living Cultural Heritage (LCH)**, which expands UNESCO's terms of **tangible** (monuments, buildings, sites) & **intangible** cultural heritage (knowledge, skills, social practices, performing arts). The concept of LCH can be described as a cross-sectorial approach towards cultural heritage, a new way of understanding objects, spaces and practices by focusing on the "living" element associated with them.

### 2. How much do the following elements **represent the LCH of NO**, in your opinion? (0-5, 5 absolutely representative)

LCH element	representativeness
Music genre in general (e.g. live music in bars/venues, street music, church, ...)	
Music, food and art festivals (e.g. FQF, Jazz Fest, neighborhood festivals, ...)	
Parades (e.g. Mardi Gras, St. Patricks, Easter, Dances, ...)	
Second Lines, Jazz Funerals; Mardi Gras Indians/MGI	
Religion and the belief in the supernatural (Vodou, ...)	
Missing element? Please specify:	

### 3. To which degree do you feel that **each statement applies to the case of New Orleans?** (0 - 5max)

Community is defined as a group of people sharing the same interest within a location, cultural area, &/or organization.

LCH statements for NO	agree
LCH comprises tangible and intangible cultural heritage	
LCH implies strong links between the community, its location, & the activities performed at the location	
LCH cannot be identically reproduced or copied in any other place of the world	
LCH creates relations between physical cultural assets and communities	
The community itself is responsible for safeguarding and maintaining the knowledge, skills, values, and the locations of its performance	
The community actively preserves its cultural heritage because it potentially has meaning for most members of the community in everyday life	
The community & the location are equally essential for the interpretation of LCH on behalf of visitors:	
LCH could not persist if the community and/or the tangible assets were absent from the location	

Do you have any **comments or additional statements** that apply to the case of NO?

4. How much are Music/Festivals/Parades/2.Lines/Religion currently contributing to (0-10 / 10 is highest)

Music	Festivals	Parades	2. Lines/MGI	Religion	contributing to ...
					... raising cultural awareness and pride
					... local economic development
					... empowerment of a community
					... ensuring conservation and safeguarding practices
					... representing a resource for tourism
					... community involvement in tourism activities

*In the following I would like to ask you about the **role of LCH for tourism in NO**: Since tourism has become an important resource for NO in the last decade (in 2010 the tourism spending was around 3,2 billion US\$, around 46.000 jobs are directly related to tourism), I am particularly interested in the current **process of commodification** of culture for tourism purposes and the influence tourism has on the local culture.*

5. What kind of **influence does tourism currently have on the living cultural heritage of NO?**

Are you aware of any issues or positive effects in your field of activity?

6. Are there any **issues/conflicts** concerning the commodification and production of culture for tourism - among the performing artists, different associations/clubs/foundations/organizations/institutions/city government?

7. How can tourism **contribute to preserve the local culture** in NO?

Can you give some examples?

8. Is the **touristic commercialization** of the living cultural heritage representative for the city?

Is the tourism promotion and marketing **in favour of the cultural actors?**

9. Where do you see **potential** for other and/or additional products of culture to be offered on the tourism market? **What is missing** in the cultural tourism offer?

10. Does the **current system of the tourism industry contribute to ...**

(Y-YES, N-NO, P-PARTIALLY, ?-N/A)

Sustainable tourism product characteristics	Music	Festivals	Parades	2. Lines/MGI	Religion	
... a positive impact of tourism						
integration of local community into tourism activities						
local ownership/participation in decision making						
consumption of local products						
cultural education of tourists						

tourist contact to local community						
preservation and valorization of the element						

**11. Which actions are necessary for a sustainable cultural commodification process and who is responsible for its implementation?**

**12. How would you describe the role of the neighborhood of Tremé for the LCH in NO & its touristic potentials?**

**Age group** 18-30y  31-45y  46-60y  60y+

**Since how many years have you been active in NO?** always  up to 20y   
up to 10y  more than 20y

Please choose the 3 main institutions where you acquired your **skills of expertise!**

primary school  high school  university  community  family  autodidactic  work

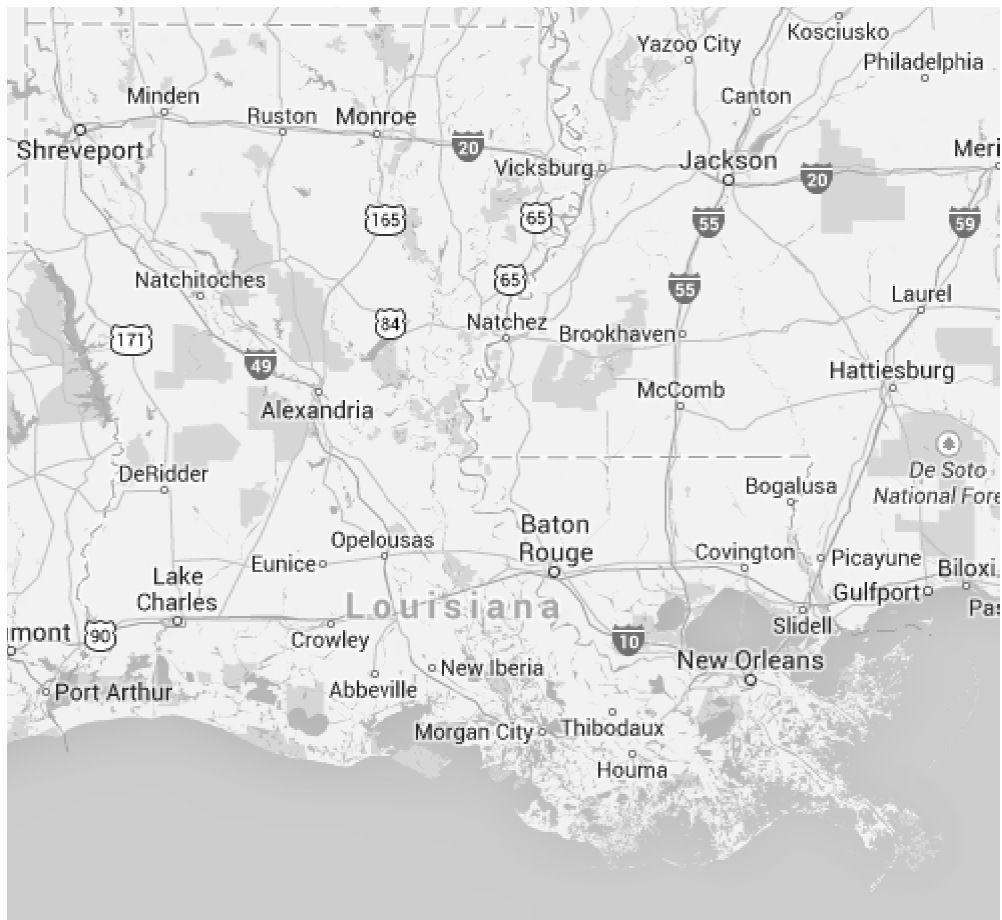
**Thank you very much for your kind participation!**

## C - List of interviews

ID	Surname	Name	Date of Interview	Institution	Position
1	Lionhart	Roselyn	11.04.2012	David and Roselyn Productions	Street Performer
2	Bultman	Bethany	11.04.2012	NO Musicians Assistance Foundation, NO Musicians Clinic	President
3	Ward	Martha	12.04.2012	Prof. emeritus, UNO	Professor Emeritus for Anthropology
4	Queen	Kelly	12.04.2012	Mardi Gras Indian Creole Osceola	Queen
5	Morigeau	Stacey	19.04.2012	NO Musicians Clinic	Program Officer
6	Owens	Maida	19.04.2012	LA Folklife Program	Director
7	Guimont	Felice	20.04.2012	Musician, Vodou practitioner, nurse	Working at the Musicians Clinic
8	Krummel	Jordan	20.04.2012	Tulane Student	MA student
9	Hardy	Arthur	25.04.2012	Mardi Gras Guide	Guide
10	Jaffe	Ben	25.04.2012	Preservation Hall	Musician and Owner
11	Fontenot	Kevin	26.04.2012	Professor at Tulane	Dep of History
12	Blanks	Aaron	30.04.2012	Grand marshal	For second lines
13	Gay	Patricia	03.05.2012	Preservation Resource Center	President
14	Grams	Diane	07.05.2012	Professor at Tulane	Dep of Sociology
15	Romig	Mary Beth	09.05.2012	City of New Orleans, Mayor's Office	NO Local Organizing Committee, Assistance to the Mayor, PR and Communications
16	Lombard	Lionel	09.05.2012	Artfully Aware	NGO
17	Rush	Dorian	10.05.2012	LA Cultural Economy Foundation	Program Officer
18	Phillips	Wayne	14.05.2012	LA State Museum	Curator of Costumes and Textiles and Carnival Collections
19	Perkins	Chuck	15.05.2012	Cafe Istanbul, Artist	Manager, Musician
20	Marshall	Don	15.05.2012	Jazz & Heritage Festival Foundation	Executive Director
21	Regis	Helen	23.05.2012	Professor at Louisiana State University	Dep of Anthropology
22	Lousteau	Meg	24.05.2012	VCPOA	Director
23	Rampsey	Jan	25.05.2012	OFFBEAT magazine	Publisher and Founder
24	Santiago	Donna	28.05.2012	Backbeat Foundation	Founder and Executive Director
25	Walton	Shana	30.05.2012	Nicholls University	Prof of Anthropology
26	Wick	Reid	31.05.2012	Grammy Records	Production Manager
27	Lombard	Onaje	31.05.2012	GMC+Company Advertising	Account Manager

28	Magill	John	04.06.2012	Historic New Orleans Collection	Expert of Urban History
29	Smith	Arthur	04.06.2012	Louisiana State Museum	Director of Marketing and Communications
30	Weiss	Toni	04.06.2012	Professor at Tulane	Dep of Economics
31	Brown	Christian	08.06.2012	Krewe Rex	President
32	Elie	Eric Lolis	08.06.2012	Journalist and Author	
33	Action	Jackson	08.06.2012	Radio WWOZ	Journalist, Moderator
34	Perkins	Elliott	12.06.2012	City of New Orleans, Historic District Landmarks Commission	Executive Director
35	Aiges	Scott	15.06.2012	Jazz & Heritage Festival Foundation	Program Manager
36	Lacen-Keller	Barbara	18.06.2012	City Council of New Orleans	Director of Const
37	Gavrell	Alison	21.06.2012	Cultural Economy Initiative	Project Coordinator
38	Salaam	Ausethia	21.06.2012	Cultural Economy Initiative	Project Coordinator
39	Guerin	Roland	23.06.2012	Musician	Bass Player
40	Rice	Toni	25.06.2012	Multicultural Tourism Network	Director
41	Reimer	Amy	25.06.2012	International House Hotel	General Manager
42	Marsalis	Delfeayo	16.04.2013	Musician	Leader
43	Spears	Cleveland	30.04.2013	Spears Consulting Group	CEO
44	Susemihl	Norbert	01.05.2013	Musician	
45	Gromko	Sarah	07.05.2013	Sweet Home New Orleans	Program Manager
46	Mobley	Sue	07.05.2013	Sweet Home New Orleans	President
47	Nathan	Jeanne	10.05.2013	Creative Alliance of New Orleans	Executive Director
48	Krieger-Benson	Hannah	13.05.2013	MACCNO Spokes person	Volunteer, Spokes person
49	Tannen	Robert C.	14.05.2013	Urban Planner, engineer, Artist	
50	Ellestad	Ethan	15.05.2013	MACCNO, Foundation for Louisiana	Spokes person, program manager
51	Schramm	Marci	20.05.2013	French Quarter Festivals Inc.	Director
52	Taylor	Bill	20.05.2013	The Real NOLA	Director
53	Walker	Tamara	21.05.2013	Social Aid and Pleasure Club Task Force	Director
54	Edwards-Burd	Essence	31.05.2013	New Orleans Afro-American Museum	Manager
55	Miller	Howard	05.06.2013	Mardi Gras Indian Chief	Creole Wild West
56	Lewis	Ronald	05.06.2013	Museum of Dance and Feathers	Founder
57	Atkinson	Connie	23.03.2012	Professor at UNO	Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies
58	Raeburn	Bruce	23.03.2012	Professor at Tulane	Jazz Archive

## D - Map of Louisiana



Source: google maps



## Photo annex

Photo 1: <sup>115</sup>	Protest Second Line, April 25, 2013
Photo 2:	Musicians and supporters in city hall chamber during the protest march on January 17, 2014
Photo 3:	Trumpeter Norbert Susemihl playing with his band in Preservation Hall during French Quarter Fest, April 2012
Photo 4:	Brass band playing on the corner of Bourbon Street and Canal Street, April 2012
Photo 5:	Trumpeter Norbert Susemihl playing with the Jazz Vipers in the Spotted Cat Music Club on Frenchmen Street, May 2013
Photo 6:	Musicians playing along the Riverwalk, May 2012
Photo 7:	Brass band playing on Jackson Square, May 2013
Photo 8:	David & Roselyn playing on Royal Street, April 2012
Photo 9:	Nadia & the Rabbits playing at LOA bar, April 2013
Photo 10:	Nadia & the Rabbits playing at The Merchant, April 2013
Photo 11:	Nadia & the Rabbits playing at Cafe Istanbul, June 2013
Photo 12:	Nadia & the Rabbits playing at Cafe Istanbul, June 2013
Photo 13:	Nadia & the Rabbits playing at Radio WWOZ with Roland Guerin, May 2013
Photo 14:	Bike second line passing under the I-10 at North Claiborne Avenue, May 2013
Photo 15:	Chevron banner sponsoring the French Quarter Festival, April 2012
Photo 16:	Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr. and the Wild Magnolias performing at the French Quarter Festival 2013
Photo 17:	Rebirth Brass Band performing at the French Quarter Festival in 2013
Photo 18:	Participation at the research of Helen Regis, painting of Jazz Fest, May 2013
Photo 19:	Floats at the St. Patrick's Day parade on St. Charles Avenue, 2012
Photo 20:	Floats, marching bands at the St. Patrick's Day parade on St. Charles Ave, 2012
Photo 21:	Grand Marshal in the foreground, with a guy helping to fence the dancing area, the brass band in the background, April 2012
Photo 22:	Grand Marshal of the Single Men Social Aid & Pleasure Club at Jazz Fest, 2013
Photo 23:	Single Ladies Social Aid and Pleasure club, 15th anniversary second line, 2012
Photo 24:	Mardi Gras Indian tribe at a Super Sunday in March 2012, on the big patch you can see an illustration of Mardi Gras Indians parading underneath the I-10 overpass along Claiborne Avenue.
Photo 25:	Mardi Gras Indians with weapons at a Super Sunday in the 7th Ward, 2013.
Photo 26:	Queen Kelly and Flagboy Zee from the Creole Osceola posing after a Super Sunday in the 7th Ward, 2013.
Photo 27:	Mardi Gras Indian patch, artwork by Ronald Lewis, exhibited in his House of Dance and Feathers. The patch depicts in the foreground a native American Indian with long black dreads and feathers on his head, riding a horse, a gun in his hand. In the background a white man is hanging top down from a tree, his head is chopped off. The Indian holds the white man's head in his left arm.
Photo 28	Crystal ball reader on Jackson Square, May 2013
Photo 29:	Vodou altar in the peristil of Manbo Sallie Ann Glassman, May 2013
Photo 30:	Situation during the Vodou wedding ceremony, May 2013
Photo 31:	Vévé drawing on the floor around the centre pole, May 2013
Photo 32:	Situation at the end of the Vodou wedding ceremony, May 2013

<sup>115</sup> I have made an effort in getting all approvals from copyright holders for using the images illustrated in this work. Should there be any infringement of copyright please contact me.

Photo 1



Photo taken by the author

Photo 2



Unknown, appeared on MACCNO

Photo 3



Photo taken by the author

Photo 4



Photo taken by the author

Photo 5



Photo taken by the author

Photo 6



Photo taken by the author



Photo 7



Photo courtesy by Cecilia Gamba

Photo 8



Photo taken by the author



Photo 9



Photo courtesy by Blue Moon Photography

Photo 10



Photo courtesy by Blue Moon Photography

Photo 11



Photo courtesy by Blue Moon Photography

Photo 12



Photo courtesy by Blue Moon Photography



Photo 13



Photo courtesy by Roland Guerin

Photo 14



Photo courtesy by Nadia von Jacobi

Photo 15



Photo taken by the author

Photo 16



Photo 17



Photos taken by the author

Photo 18





Photo 19



Photo 20



Photos taken by the author

Photo 21



Photo 22



Photos taken by the author



Photo 23:



Photo taken by the author

Photo 24



Photo taken by the author



Photo 25



Photo taken by the author

Photo 26



Photo taken by the author



Photo 27



Artwork by Ronald Lewis, photo taken by the author

Photo 28



Photo courtesy by Cecilia Gamba



Photo 29



Photo courtesy by Cecilia Gamba

Photo 30



Photo courtesy by Cecilia Gamba

Photo 31



Photo courtesy by Cecilia Gamba

Photo 32



Photo courtesy by Cecilia Gamba



## **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the current situation of commodification of living cultural heritage. This is a process of transformation and commercialisation of local culture into saleable and consumable commodities for the tourism market. The cultural activities and those who produce them have become an important attraction pole for visitors in the modern world of tourism. Disagreement about the representation and reproduction of cultural activities lead to conflicts of interest among the many stakeholders who are active in the fields of culture and tourism. In order to group the cultural activities I apply an innovative definition of living cultural heritage which builds upon an integral understanding of intangible, tangible, cultural, and natural heritage by UNESCO.

For my study, I have chosen to focus on the city of New Orleans, USA, because its *Cultural Economy Initiative* (enacted in 2006) and the local cultural industries closely collaborate with the booming tourism sector (nine million visitors annually) to create strategies to convert cultural activities into commodities. Tourism and the cultural sector employ around 76.000 direct employees and represent the two largest sectors on the labour market. To put it in a slogan form: culture is big business! The resulting commodification of cultural activities into touristic products leads to conflicts of interest between local stakeholders, namely, performers, residents, participants, organisers of cultural events, public institutions, and tourism businesses. The focus of my study is to analyse these conflicts with respect to five living cultural heritage elements: music, festivals, parades, second lines and 'Mardi Gras Indians', as well as religion and belief in the supernatural. I further examine how the interests of the tourism industry significantly shape and alter the performance of cultural activities, how these changes are perceived by the cultural actors, and what reactions they elicit.

The anthropological research I have conducted is based on the methods of the extended case study (BURAWOY, 1998) and the situational analysis (GLUCKMAN, 1958; MITCHELL, 1959). An ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in 2012 and 2013 in New Orleans, where I collected data with the use of various participant observation methods, including a series of qualitative interviews. Among my interlocutors were performing artists, members of parading clubs, Carnival krewes, Mardi Gras Indian tribes, cultural institutions (foundations, museums, associations, etc.), scholars and journalists, representatives of the tourism industry as well as of city and state governmental bodies.

For each living cultural heritage element I identify several scenarios of conflicts, which are linked to the influences of the tourism industry. For example, concerning the case of music, the implementation of a noise ordinance is impeding musical performances in certain venues and on the streets located in the city centre. Moreover, the relatively low remuneration for musicians, adverse working conditions (mainly on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter), and a poorly

organised music industry further exacerbate these conflicts. Regarding festivals, the question arises whether such events are organised purely for the purpose of profit maximisation. The hosting of parades leads to issues about tourism-induced regulations and the invention of new traditions at Mardi Gras Carnival events. So-called 'second lines' and events by Mardi Gras Indians are especially afflicted by these problems because of their increased commodification. These dance-driven street parades, led by brass bands and celebrated by the black population of New Orleans, are increasingly transformed as tourism attractions. As a result the performing associations and tribes are facing difficulties with copyrights, payment, as well as performance conditions and contracts. The increasing commercialisation of Indian as well as the local 'second line culture' can lead those affected to suffer from identity crises due to the perceived disdain of "their culture". The analysis concerning the living cultural heritage element of religion and belief in the supernatural reveals how cemeteries, funerals, the morbid character of the city, and Vodou ceremonies are transformed into tourist attractions.

In sum, the main issues that I have identified in my study are about (i) intellectual and cultural property rights, (ii) the right to perform, and (iii) the question of whether cultural elements in general should be valorised and marketed as mass entertainment practices.



## **Zusammenfassung**

Das Ziel dieser Dissertation ist die Analyse der aktuellen Situation der Kommodifizierung von Kultur. Dies ist ein Prozess der Transformation und Kommerzialisierung lokalen kulturellen Elementen in verkaufsfähige Güter für den Tourismusmarkt. Die kulturellen Aktivitäten und jene die sie produzieren sind in der modernden Welt des Tourismus wichtige Attraktionen geworden. Die Repräsentation und Reproduktion von Kultur führt zu Interessenskonflikten zwischen den lokalen Stakeholdern, die im Tourismus und Kulturbereich tätig sind. Ich definiere die unterschiedlichen kulturellen Tätigkeiten als 'lebendes Kulturgut' (living cultural heritage). Diese Definition greift die Konzepte bezüglich des immateriellen, materiellen, kulturellen, und natürlichen Kulturguts von UNESCO auf.

Für diese Forschung habe ich die Stadt New Orleans, USA, ausgewählt. Seit 2006 gibt es in New Orleans die "Initiative Kulturwirtschaft" (Cultural Economy Initiative) welche eng mit der aufstrebenden Tourismusbranche zusammenarbeitet. Gemeinsam feilen diese Institutionen an Strategien wie die lokalen kulturellen Elemente in Güter umgewandelt werden können. Tourismus- und Kultursektor bilden die beiden größten Beschäftigungsfelder (rund 76.000 Menschen werden in diesen Wirtschaftssektoren beschäftigt), dies bedeutet für den lokalen Kontext: mit Kultur macht man gutes Geschäft.

Die Kommodifizierung von kulturellen Aktivitäten in Tourismusprodukte führt zu Interessenskonflikten unter den lokalen Akteuren, diese sind Musiker, Bewohner und Teilnehmer, Organisatoren kultureller Events, öffentliche Institutionen und Unternehmen im Tourismusbereich. Die Forschung fokussiert auf jene Konflikte, die in Zusammenhang mit den fünf ausgewählten Elementen des lebenden Kulturerbes auftreten: Musik, Festivals, Paraden, 'second lines' und Mardi Gras Indianer, Religion und Glaube an das Übernatürliche. Desweiteren analysiere ich inwiefern die Tourismusbranche zu Veränderungen der kulturellen Aktivitäten beiträgt und welche Reaktionen dies bei den Akteuren auslöst.

Die Forschung basiert auf anthropologischen Erhebungs- und Analysemethoden wie die erweiterte Fallstudie und die Situationsanalyse welche von Burawoy (1998), Gluckman (1958), Mitchell (1959), und anderen ausführlich beschrieben wurden. In den Jahren 2012 und 2013 habe ich mittels ethnographischer Feldforschung durch qualitative Interviews und teilnehmender Beobachtung relevante Daten gesammelt. Meine Interviewpartner sind aus den Bereichen der darstellenden Kunst und Musik, Mitglieder von Organisationen kultureller Ereignisse (soziale Vereine, Krewes, Mardi Gras Indianerstämme, etc.), kulturelle Einrichtungen (Stiftungen, Museen, Verbände), Wissenschaftler, Autoren, Journalisten, aus der Tourismusbranche oder von öffentlichen Institutionen des Bundesstaates Louisiana und der Stadt New Orleans.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass es in allen fünf kulturellen Elementen meiner Analyse zu mehreren konfliktreichen Situationen kommt, welche auf den Einfluss der Tourismusbranche zurückzuführen sind. Bezüglich des Fallbeispiels der Musik ergeben sich heftige Diskussionen wegen der bevorstehenden Einführung einer Lärmschutzverordnung für Bars und im öffentlichen Bereich. Die relativ geringe Bezahlung an Musiker, unvorteilhafte Arbeitsbedingungen (besonders auf Bourbon Street im French Quarter), und die lahme Musikindustrie tragen zusätzlich zu den Interessenskonflikten bei. Bei den Festivals dreht sich die Analyse um die Frage ob solche Events hauptsächlich veranstaltet werden, um finanzielle Einnahmen zu steigern. Die Organisation der weltweit bekannten Mardi Gras Faschingsumzüge führen ebenfalls zu Unstimmigkeiten aufgrund von verordneten Veränderungen und der Erfindung neuer Traditionen. Problematische Beziehungen, hervorgerufen durch die Kommodifizierung, ergeben sich auch bei den sogenannten 'second lines' und Events von Mardi Gras Indianern. Diese tanzorientierten Umzüge der afro-amerikanischen Bevölkerung, sie werden von Blasmusikbands angeführt, werden immer mehr als Tourismusattraktion vorgeführt. Die Vereine und Stämme, welche diese Events organisieren, sind daher Problemen wie Urheberrecht, Entlohnung, Bedingungen während Aufführungen und Verträgen ausgesetzt. Die erweiterte Kommerzialisierung indianischer Identität und der lokalen Kultur der 'second lines' resultiert in Identitätskrisen bezüglich der Missachtung "ihrer Kultur." Die Analyse des Kulturelements Religion und Glaube an das Übernatürliche zeigt, wie Friedhöfe, Beerdigungen, der morbide Charakter der Stadt, sowie Vodou Zeremonien als Tourismusattraktionen angeboten werden.

Mit meiner Analyse habe ich folgende Hauptkonflikte bezüglich der Kommodifizierung von Kultur identifiziert. Konfliktherde sind das Recht des geistigen und kulturellen Eigentums, das Recht kulturelle Aktivitäten auszuführen, und die Frage ob diese Kulturelemente als Unterhaltungstourismus vermarktet werden sollen. Diese werden zwischen den zahlreichen kulturellen Akteuren, der Tourismusbranche und der Stadt als Kontrollbehörde ausgetragen.

## Curriculum Vitae

Personal Information	Name:	Bernhard Bauer		
	Date & place of birth:	1983, Vienna		
	Nationality:	AUSTRIAN		
Languages		Understanding	Speaking	Writing
	German native			
	English	excellent	excellent	excellent
	Italian	very good	fluent	very good
	Spanish	very good	fluent	very good
	French	good	fair	fair
Professional Objective and Interest	<p><u>Research:</u> Social &amp; Cultural Anthropology, Geography, Tourism Studies, Community Involvement, (Intangible) Cultural Heritage</p> <p><u>Work:</u> Project coordination, management &amp; consulting services for social/cultural/tourism analysis and development; business development; international relations &amp; communication; training &amp; skills development;</p>			
Countries of Work & Study Experience	Albania, Austria, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Italy, Spain, USA			

### Education

10/2010 - 10/2014	10/2014 - Discussion of the dissertation 08/2014 - Submission of the dissertation
PhD programme in Social and Cultural Anthropology	03/2014 - 08/2014 scholarship <i>Abschlussstipendium</i> granted by the University of Vienna for finishing the PhD research 04/2013 - 06/2013 second fieldwork mission in New Orleans, USA, supported by the scholarship <i>Forschungsförderungsstipendium</i> , University of Vienna
University of Vienna	03/2012 - 07/2012 first fieldwork mission in New Orleans, USA <u>Thesis:</u> Commodification of the living cultural heritage in New Orleans. An anthropological case study. (written in English)
06/2013	Two-week summer school course at the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research at Syracuse University, NY (with a scholarship granted by the University of Vienna)
Participation at the IQMR summer school Syracuse, NY	<u>Subjects covered:</u> Qualitative and quantitative data analysis, interpretative approaches, data-triangulation, within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and political science;
10/2008 - 10/2009	Post-graduate full-time Master programme <u>Subjects covered:</u> Tourism Economics, Economics of Culture, Sustainable Tourism Development, Social and Cultural Policy Development and Formulation, Tour Operating, Hospitality Operations, Marketing, E-Commerce, Tourism Distribution Channels, Personal Development, Training and Skills Development, etc.
International Master in Tourism and Leisure	<u>Thesis:</u> A Critical Review on UNESCO's Mission to Sustainable Tourism Management and Development. (written in English)
MIB School of Management, Trieste, Italy	
10/2002 - 01/2008	01/2008 - final exam 11/2007 - submission of the thesis
Master programme in Social and Cultural Anthropology	01/2006 – 09/2006 - studies at the UCR (Universidad de Costa Rica) in San José, Costa Rica, for taking courses and conducting fieldwork for the master thesis (with the Joint-Study scholarship for Latin American studies granted by the University of Vienna)
University of Vienna	<u>Subjects covered:</u> Social Research Methodologies, International Development Co-operation, Conflict Studies, Anthropology of Consumption, Central- and Latin America, Geography, Spanish, Ethnohistory, Management of Museums and Exhibitions, etc. <u>Thesis:</u> The Cultural and Social Significance of Alcohol Consumption in Costa Rica: An Anthropological Case Study. (written in German)
10/2005 - 01/2008	<u>Subjects covered:</u> Human Geography, History of Social Geography, Political Geography, Urban and Regional Geography, Physical Geography, Natural- and Climate Geography, Statistics I & II, etc.
Studies of Geography and Regional Research	

### Publications

BAUER, B., JACOBI, von, N. (2014) *Condividiamo - indirizzi operativi per valorizzare il territorio a scopo culturale e turistico*. Provincia di Milano, Milano.

BAUER, B., SINHA, N., TRIMARCHI, M., ZAPPINO, V. (2014) *Tourism Community Involvement Strategy for the Living World Heritage Site of Hampi, India: A Case Study*. In: GRAVARI BARBAS, M., BOURDEAU, L., ROBINSON, M. (Eds.) *World Heritage Sites and Tourism: Global and Local Relations*. Farnham, Ashgate. Copyright © 2013. ISBN 978-1-4094-7058-8.

BAUER, B. (2009) *A Critical Review on UNESCO's Mission to Sustainable Tourism Management and Development*. MIB School of Management, Trieste, Italy. (MA thesis at the MIB School of Management)

BAUER, B. (2008) *Die soziale und kulturelle Bedeutung des Alkoholkonsums in San José, Costa Rica. Eine anthropologische Fallstudie*. Universität Wien. (MA thesis at the University of Vienna)

### Relevant Work Experience

2014 2012	<p><u>Position:</u> Tutor for the first and second edition of an online course for e-commerce export initiatives in Latin America.</p> <p><u>Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tutoring of a module of the BID INDES course "Enhancing e-commerce for public administrations and private SME's"</li> <li>Composition of a "Best Practice analysis of e-commerce exporting countries" for the course teaching material including interactive exercises for course participants (around 40 participants from public institutions of export commerce chambers in Central and South America);</li> <li>Management of the online forum discussion with course participants;</li> <li>Correction of exams and overall course evaluation of participants.</li> </ul>
Inter American Development Bank	
2011 - 2014	<p><u>Position:</u> Senior Anthropologist, Expert of Social and Cultural Development</p> <p><u>Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and survey design for the proposal procedure;</li> <li>Research for the institutional, cultural and tourism development project "CondividiAMO" in collaboration with the Politecnico University of Milan,</li> <li>Conduction of 45 structured qualitative interviews with experts of the project area (Abbiatense/Magentino/south-west of Milan) and 100 quantitative interviews with the local population including statistical analysis of data;</li> <li>2 day training course for decision makers of governmental agencies and public institutions about institutional and cultural development, tourism product development, creation of tourism itineraries with the Bridge-IT Methodology;</li> <li>3 presentations of interim/final research &amp; project results for public institutions;</li> <li>realisation and writing of a final report including a public presentation in 2014 in front of public institutions and key stakeholders of the project territory;</li> </ul>
Politecnico di Milano Provincia di Milano	
06/2011 - present	<p><u>Position:</u> Consultant for Sustainable Social, Cultural and Tourism Development</p> <p><u>Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consulting Services and Technical Assistance for Social, Cultural, Economic and Tourism Development Projects (selected projects listed below)</li> <li>08/2014 - 12/2014: National Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 for the Dominican Republic</li> <li>11/2013 - 11/2014: Enhancement of the Ethiopian Tourism Statistics Management System</li> <li>07/2012 - 12/2012: Baseline Study for the Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Development Program</li> <li>01/2012 - 06/2012: Development of tourism products for the "Ruta Cultural" and elaboration of a quality label program for the destination Puerto Plata, Dominican</li> </ul>
Target Euro SRL Italy	

	<p>Republic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 06/2011 - 12/2011: E-commerce development and strategy for exporting SMEs in Columbia and Peru</li> <li>• Proposal writing for around 20 project tenders</li> </ul>
06/2009 - 03/2011	<p><u>Position:</u> Project Officer</p> <p><u>Activities:</u> Project Management and Technical Assistance in the Department of Cultural Heritage and Preservation (selected projects listed below)</p> <p>2011: Eastern Partnership Culture Programme</p> <p>2010 - 2011: Gansu Cultural and Natural Heritage Project</p> <p>2009 - 2010: Tourism Strategy for Hampi World Heritage Area, India</p>
HYDEA SRL	
Firenze, Italy	
05 - 08/2008 05 - 08/2007	<p><u>Position:</u> Area Manager in Valencia, Spain (in 2008); Area Manager in Sevilla, Spain (in 2007)</p> <p><u>Activities:</u> Management for the Austrian Tour Operator PDM in Spain for the People to People Ambassador Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross Cultural Communication Management among American students &amp; Spanish host-families, solving misunderstandings, language barriers, &amp; personal issues;</li> <li>• First contact person on site for tour delegates, partner institutions, host-families and programme participants in cooperation with the headquarters in Vienna;</li> <li>• Organisation, coordination and distribution of American students to host-families;</li> <li>• Working in close collaboration with the Spanish language school Instituto San Fernando concerning teaching, preparation of info-sheets and care of host-families</li> </ul>
PDM Schüler- und Studentenreisen	
Vienna, Sevilla, Valencia	
01 - 04/2008	<p><u>Position:</u> Intern, Meetings Assistant, Department for Conference Services</p> <p><u>Activities:</u> Assistance to the Conference Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation at all plenary sessions of the Permanent Council, conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings of OSCE institutions and the OSCE Parliament at the Headquarter in Vienna</li> <li>• Minutes writing, reporting, drafting and editing of reports and documentation of the above mentioned events for distribution to OSCE internal staff and field offices;</li> <li>• Conducting data collection, writing of analytical papers and synthetic reports;</li> <li>• Technical and administrative assistance to the Meetings Assistant Team;</li> <li>• Participation at the OSCE General Orientation Training Programme;</li> </ul>
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe	
Vienna, Austria	
09 - 10/2004	<p><u>Position:</u> Intern, Assistant to the Project Director</p> <p><u>Activities:</u> assistance for a community-based urban development project in Durres at the Albanian NGO with Headquarters in Tirana;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation and preparation of public events with the Municipality of Durres, drafting, editing and correction of reports and papers;</li> <li>• site visits with social workers and preparation for the election campaign of a representative board for the community in the project area (Keneta, Durres);</li> <li>• assistant to experts for monitoring and evaluation of the project from the urban planning agency Stadtland.</li> </ul>
Co-PLAN Habitat Development	
Tirana, Albania	

